

CHALLENGES FOR PROSPECTS OF EDUCATION FOR ALL AND SUSTAINABILITY

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Education is today generally recognized as an essential precondition for democracy and sustainable development. Two aspects of education are especially relevant quality and access. All people deserve opportunities regardless of the social standing, gender, ethnicity or individual disabilities. Generally, it is accepted that education is a prerequisite for nation building. According to Ukeje (2001), educational system is the master determinant of all aspect change. It has in fact come to occupy a strategic position as the central determinant of economic, political, social and cultural characters of society. The definition above identifies education as one of the fundamental factors that increases efficiency and effectiveness of labour. Concluding from this premise (Narayanan, 2007) asserts that education determines sustainable economic development of a nation.

That is education is one of the variables that assist in the development effort of every nation. Scott and Gough, (2004) described it as, the best hope for humanity and most effective means in the quest to achieve a sustainable education. UNESCO, (2005b) elucidates that sustainable development deals with the well being in three realities of sustainability, viz: the environment, the society and the economy. It promotes life-long learning that is based on local needs, perceptions and conditions. Education for sustainable development (ESD) is life wide, as well as life-long because it engages non-formal and informal education. In these ways, education for sustainable development builds civil capacity for community – based decision making, social

tolerance, environmental stewardship, adaptable workforce and improved quality of life. ESD promotes competency based education, which is education in action, education that enhances individual practical ideals and thought (Cunningham & Cunningham, 2006).

“Education for all” requires good teachers and well designed institutions. In addition to imparting important skill to individual persons, capacity building is essential for better management of the education sector for the sake of quality control and performance – based human –resources management. However, sensible recommendations are often only implemented slowly or not at all. This is not only due to diverging opinions on how to teach. It is also a matter of funding. The education sector is personnel intensive and it depends on an expensive infrastructure with school building, libraries and much else.

In Dakar, (2000) the world education ministers made a commitment to achieve “education for all”. This commitment goes beyond the millennium Development Goal (MDG) of all universal primary education for all boys and girls by the year 2015, as declared later in 2000 at the UN millennium summit. “Education for all includes pre-school; attention to young children and adult literacy programmes, and focuses on equality.

Education has often been described as the bedrock for national development. It is globally a vital element for social development and economic growth. This explains why nations have expended a lot of resources on education. Education is fundamental to the construction of a knowledge economy and the society in general

(Okebukola, 2000). Education is often linked to schooling, improves productivity, health and reduces negative features of life such as child labour, as well as bringing about human empowerment. This is why there has been a lot of emphasis in the recent times for all citizens of the world to have access to basic education.

The Goals of Education For All (EFA) And Millennium Development Goals (MDGS) As Educational Reforms Strategy.

The goals of EFA and MDGs are indeed the most significant reform strategy to meet the demands of the international Community. As explained by Obanya (2004) United Nations Millennium Declaration conveying the MDGs adopted in January 2000 and the Dakar EFA Goals of April that same year can be said to have elaborated on its education dimensions.

The eight Millennium Development Goals set targets to be met in areas considered basic for building a solid foundation for sustainable human development Obanya (2004) explains human development of the world are expected to work in realizing the set targets by the year 2015, the same target date for the realization of the Dakar EFA Goals. Education is needed to varying degrees in realizing every one of the eight MDGs. Every MDGs has a strong education component, especially when taking into consideration the expanding vision of the Jometien declaration. The goals of MDGs as prerequisite which Nigeria must comply are:

- i. Eradication of extreme poverty and hunger
- ii. Achievement of universal primary education
- iii. Promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women.
- iv. Reduction of child mortality
- v. Improvement of maternal health
- vi. Combating HIV (AIDS), malaria and other diseases.

- vii. Ensuring environmental sustainability
- viii. Development global; partnerships for development

Education for All (EFA) is an International endeavour to which Nigeria is committed. It foresees quality basic education for all by the year 2015. It also foresees the provision of opportunities for life long learning for all citizens, younger, old, in and out of school.

The EFA Goals Are:

- ix. Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.
- x. Ensuring that by 2015, all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities have access to free and compulsory primary education of good quality.
- xi. Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes
- xii. Achieving a 50 percent improvement in all levels of adult literacy by 2015 especially for women and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults.
- xiii. Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005 and achieving equality in education by 2015 with a focus on ensuring girl's full and equal access to achievement in basic education of good quality.
- xiv. Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all, so that recognized and measurable learning outcome are achieved by all especially literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

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It is in response to these goals and initiatives that Nigeria adopted the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), as a reform measure in 2004-with the following targets:

1. Value re-orientation
2. Job creation and employment generation
3. Poverty reduction
4. People empowerment through education in order to achieve the first three targets.

NEEDS recognized that about half of Nigerians are children, that they are the bridge to a prosperous future. Therefore their children must be given the priority it deserves. Thus, it became imperative that provisions must be made, actions taken to provide basic education for every citizen of the country. Education Statistics for 1996 shows that only 14.1 million children are enrolled in primary schools out of 21 million children of school going age. The completion rate was 64% while the rate of transition to junior secondary school was 43.5%. Today, the situation appears to be pretty the same because the EFA Report estimated the nation's literacy rate at 52%. The Report went further to say that there are significant shortfalls and inadequacies in Nigeria's institutional and personnel capacities for the delivery of sound basic education for all her citizens. In the words of the EFA (Obanya, 2009) Report "..... There are wide spread disparities both in the quality and access across the nation. Available infrastructural facilities, teaching and learning materials as well as qualified teachers are grossly inadequate".

In order to address these challenges i.e. universalize access to basic education, engender conducive learning, the Nigeria government enacted the UBE Act on the 26th May 2004. The Act mandates every State Government to provide free compulsory education for every child of primary and junior

secondary school age and every parent to ensure that his child or ward attends and completes his basic education. Failure to comply attracts penalty. The UBE programme as detailed in the Act has three components namely:-

- xv. Basic Education: This encompasses the nine years of schooling (primary and junior secondary education) for all children.
- xvi. Nomadic Education for school age children of Pastoral Nomads and migrant fishermen and
- xvii. Literacy and non-formal education for out-of school children, youth and illiterate adults.

The first component of the (UBE) programme is co-coordinated and managed the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC); the second by the National Commission for Nomadic Education (NCNE) and the third by the National Mass Education Commission (NMEC).

On-Going Education Reforms (UBE Included) In Nigeria: Emerging Policies and Initiatives:

According to the Executive Secretary of the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC, 2006) the under listed educational initiatives have resulted as a consequence of the education reforms taking place in the country. These are:

- i. Adoption of 9-years basic education programme (as an integration of primary and junior secondary schools (JSS).
- xviii. The adoption of a new curriculum structure (lower basic, middle basic and upper basic for the implementation of the 9-years basic education programme.
- xix. The restructuring of the existing subject profile for primary and junior secondary school leading to reduction in load but not contents.
- xx. The development of the draft of a new National Book Policy with the proposal of

- a Book Development Council Proposed, Vocationalization of the 3-year post basic education:
- xxi. An on-going review of the National Policy on Education to render it complaint with on-going reforms in education, NEEDS, MDG, EFA and other globally and nationally emerging issues.
 - xxii. The preparation of the national curriculum for the Integrated Childhood Care and Development (ICCD) and development of Care Givers Manual for effective implementation of the ICCD curriculum.
 - xxiii. Review of school texts in the context of these reforms.
 - xxiv. Plan to digitalize the school curriculum in order to facilitate use of ICT in learning and teaching.
 - xxv. The abolition of the present selection and screening examination into JSS.
 - xxvi. The introduction of selective examination of placing deserving students into the senior secondary education level.
 - xxvii. The establishment of a teacher corps to cope with the attendant demands of the 9-years basic education programme.
 - xxviii. A planned shift from undue emphasis on paper qualification to actual performance on tasks.

These curriculum reforms outlined above were the focus of the recent workshop organized by NERDC for the key implementers of the UBE program i.e. staff of the (i) Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), (ii) State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) and (iii) Local Government Education Authority (LGEA).

Basic Education in Sustainable Development

Basic education provides the foundation for all future education and is a

contribution to sustainable development in its own right. Its goals, as concerns those in the pre-school and primary school-age population, whether enrolled in school or not, is to produce children who are happy with themselves and with others, who find learning exciting and develop inquiring minds, who begin to build up a storehouse of knowledge about the world and more importantly, an approach to seeking knowledge that they can use and develop throughout their lives. Basic education is also integral to lifelong learning especially increasing the level of adult literacy. Basic education is aimed at all the essential goals of education: learning to know, to do, and to be (that is to assume one's duties and responsibilities) and to live together with others, as outlined in Education. "The Treasure Within" independent Commission on Education for the 21st Century Report, published by UNESCO (2005a), is thus not only the foundation for lifelong learning but also the foundation for sustainable development.

According to the Jomtein (1990), Declaration, basic education should emphasize:

- Access - Education for all
- Equity - In the terms of gender, social status economic Circumstance and geographical location.
- Quality - Outputs processes and product factors of education that promote sustainable real learning.

Access to basic education is a major requirement for poverty eradication; indeed, poverty cannot be eradicated without education. However, 110 million 6-11 year – olds still do not attend primary school. Millions more attend only briefly, often for a year or less, then leave without the most essential elements of a basic education or the skills to make their way in an increasingly complex and knowledge – based world. These will join the nearly 900 million adults, the majority of whom are women, who cannot read. Those denied an education suffer enormous social and economic disadvantage.

They are amongst those with the poorest health, lowest housing standards and poorest employment prospects in the world. In fact, they have less of nearly everything in life, except children.

Causes of National Inequalities in Education Includes:

- xxix. Poverty and Socio-Cultural Impediments to Education
- xxx. Urban Poverty
- xxxi. Rural Urban Disparity
- xxxii. Poor Households
- xxxiii. Gender Factor

Poverty and Socio-Cultural Impediments To Education

Poverty presents many families from enrolling all or some of their children in school or forces them to withdraw their children prematurely from school, because of the cost of education or the need to put their children to work either within or outside the home. It is easy to imagine how difficult it is for many families to afford the cost of sending their children to school and to provide the home environment and psychological support needed for the progress in learning. This explains the preponderance of children on the streets hawking goods during school hours. Poverty has become one of the main causes of low school enrolment, particularly in the case of girls in part of the north.

Poverty as a barrier to education, the cost of sending a child to school can be broken down into two components, the direct cost and the indirect or opportunity cost. Direct cost which is very heavy on parents include tuition fees, cost of uniform, food (eg mid-day meal), examination fees, textbooks and learning materials, pocket money and cost of transport. These are paid for by the household directly to the school or to the child in cash or kind for the purpose of schooling. The indirect or

opportunity cost is the hidden cost of the time that children devote to school. It is the value of pupils' time measured in terms of alternative uses or alternative opportunities forgone.

Officially, in accordance with National Policy on Education (FME, E-1981), Primary School Education is free. The reality is quite different, since the parents bear the cost of financing education which is quite of heavy on them. The Federal and State Governments are unable to finance education fully from their budgets. Although there are no tuition fees in public schools, administrators of public schools raise money by imposing fees and levies on pupils under one guise or another. For instance, parents are required to pay Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) fees, building levies, examination fees, report card fees and fees for extra lessons. In addition parents are required to provide their children with all learning materials, including textbooks, exercise books, pens and pencils as well as school books, pens and pencils as well as school uniforms. In some cases, they also have to provide money for transport to and fro school. Such costs are heavy on many parents, especially for those in rural areas, but also for many in the urban areas.

Urban Poverty

Ravillon and Chen (2008) explained that urban poverty is "a multidimensional phenomenon that takes into consideration earned income in addition to personal security and tenure of employment, access to health and education, disempowerment as well as a dynamic condition of vulnerability and susceptibility to risks and inability to manage assets". Anugwon (2001, P. 101) captured this when he stated that the "advent of the pronounced urban poverty in Nigeria can be traced to the eventual collapse of the world oil market". There is low level of sanitary condition as slum dwellings emerge in most neighbourhoods due to inadequate accommodation as a result of poverty. The

situation was depicted by Todaro and Smith (2007) in their explanation on how rapid expansion of urban centers have placed increasing strain on the resources of developing countries as governments attempt to provide adequate infrastructural facilities and services to the inhabitants. Poverty effects create a vicious cycle of poverty. This was underscored in the World Bank (2009) statement showing that poverty is characterized by cumulative deprivations such that one dimension of poverty is often the cause of or contributor to another dimension. Nnamani (2006), stated that to be poor is often to suffer ill health, to be socially excluded and to be vulnerable. In its widest term, it is described as deprivation of both material and non material well-being. According to Hossain (2005) poverty is a product not just of material conditions but of a physical weakness, social isolation, vulnerability and powerlessness. Sujuade (2008) painted a vivid picture of urban poverty to reflect lack of access to credit for business or house, inability to afford adequate housing, unhygienic living conditions, low quality public services, isolation social insecurity, lack of employment, inability to have regular job, economic stagnation, inability of urban household to meet up their required and necessary food need.

Todaro and Smith (2007) apply described the situation in which poor people live. The impoverished people suffer from under nutrition and poor health, have little or no literacy, live in environmentally degraded areas, have little political voice and attempt to earn a meager living in dilapidated urban slums. Nwodu (2007) described the characteristics of urban poverty to include low earning, lack of access to basic life need, infrastructures like health, education recreational and sundry facilities.

Soubbotina (2004) in his observation pointed out that income poverty in most cases

is associated with low health and education level which in turn results to low income.

Rural Urban Disparities

There is pronounced disparity in the provision of education in urban and rural areas. In developing countries, men living in rural areas are twice as likely to be illiterate as those living in urban areas. Differences between rural and urban women are only slightly less extreme. Such disparities reflect difference in access to basic education. Limited educational opportunities in rural areas are caused by a combination of factors, ranging from the administrative cost and difficulty of providing services to more remote areas with scattered populations, to the unwillingness of teachers to live in isolated rural areas, and to demands for child labor. Public spending priorities that concentrate resources on urban areas add to the problems of rural people.

Poor Households

Poor households have a more limited range of choice than wealthier households. Their access to goods and services is restricted by low income, they are more heavily reliant on physical labor, they have fewer assets, and they often live in the most remote and isolated areas. All these factors influence the capacity of poor people to educate their children. Any attempt to explain in terms of single causes why children do not attend school, or drop out before completing school would be flawed. The problems faced by poor communities vary from context to context, although there are some recurrent themes.

Gender Factor

Poor children are less likely to enroll in school and are more likely to drop out early, than children of well-off families. Moreover, poverty intensifies gender-determined inequalities. Girls from poor households are far less likely to have access to an education than those from wealthier

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households. Inequalities in education ensure that poverty is transmitted across generations. In most countries young girls are bearing the brunt of the crisis. There is at the very heart of education a system of gender apartheid chromosomes, rather than universal entitlement. Two-thirds of the children not in school and a similar proportion of adults who are illiterate are female. Cultural practices such as the early marriage of girls are an important casual factor for girls' drop-out from school, especially in the north of the country, and attitudes about gender roles result in some families giving greater priority to the enrolment and learning achievement of boys than that of girls.

Addressing the Problems Behind Exclusion

Gender is only one source of inequity in education. Household poverty is also intimately related to educational disadvantage. The poor are less able to afford education, they often live in the most remote areas that are farthest from government service-providers, they are more dependent upon child labor. Innovative approaches have been developed to overcome the problems associated with poverty. The first step towards overcoming exclusion involves understanding why the poor do not send their children to school. Participative research has a crucial role to play, because the poor themselves are the best policy advisers when it comes to identifying the causes of exclusion. Community – based organizations and NGOs have a role to play in facilitating that research and in monitoring progress, because they are often in the most direct contact with the poor. But there is a danger of research being divorced from the policy-making environment. That is why research programmes must be placed at the heart of government programmes and carried out with active government involvement –

priorities for the national action plan should include the following:

- xxxiv. The development of participative research strategies aimed at identifying the structural causes of exclusion, bringing together local communities, civil society and government.
- xxxv. The integration of education policies and monitoring into national anti-poverty strategies.
- xxxvi. More equitable public investment to improve the quality and accessibility of services provided in poor areas.
- xxxvii. The development of school curricula that meet the needs of poor communities.
- xxxviii. The adaptation of schools annual calendars and daily schedules to fit local circumstances, such as the agricultural season.

Benefits of Education

Investment in education benefits the individual, society, and the world as a whole. Board-based education of good quality is among the most powerful instruments known to reduce poverty and inequality. With proven benefits for personal health, it also strengthens nations' economic health by laying growth. For individuals and nations, it is key to creating, applying and spreading knowledge and thus to the development of dynamic, globally competitive economics. And it is fundamental for the construction of democratic societies. Knowledge is the perquisite for self determination and self realization. Being able to read and write facilitates the realization of individual rights and social participation.

Improves health and nutrition, education greatly benefits personal health particularly powerful for girls, it profoundly affects reproductive health and also improves child mortality and welfare through better nutrition and higher immunization rates. Education may be the single most effective preventive weapons against HIV/AIDS.

Increases productivity and earnings. Research has established that every year of schools increases individual wages for both men and women by a worldwide average of about 10 percent. In poor countries, the gains are even greater.

Reduces inequality, education is a great “leveler”, illiteracy being one of the strongest predictors of poverty. Primary education plays a catalytic role for those most likely to be poor, including girls, ethnic minorities, orphans, disabled people and rural families. By enabling larger numbers to share in the growth process, education can be the powerful tide that lifts all boats.

Has a synergistic poverty-reducing effect. Education can vitally contribute to the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals. While two of the goals pertain directly to education, education also helps to reduce poverty, promote gender equality, low child mortality rates, reduce fertility rates and enhance environmental awareness.

It promotes concern for the environment. Education can enhance natural resource management and national capacity for disaster prevention and adoption of new, environmentally friendly technologies (Igborgbor, 2010).

Economists have attempted to capture the benefits of education by estimating the rates of return on investment, both for individuals and for societies. The private rate of return or the benefit to individuals is generally calculated by comparing the financial costs of education in terms of future income flows. The social rate of return takes into account what society has to pay in order to educate the individual in question. Using data from 2000-2010, the World Bank built a strong case for investment in primary education on the basis of rates of return estimated at over 20 percent for Sub-Saharan Africa. The problem is that wages in

the region have fallen sharply since then, so the marginal returns to investment in education are lower than average returns. If education policy were framed in accordance with standard market rules for investment, it would be the marginal rate of return that influenced public-spending decisions. From a poverty-reduction perspective, what matters more than estimated rates of return are the real effects of education in terms of increasing the value of the main assets of the poor, namely their output and their labor (Unachukwu, 2010).

The benefits of education are especially strong in agriculture. Evidence from many countries shows a positive association between productivity and the number of years spent in school. Higher productivity in turn leads to increased output and income flows, reducing the vulnerability of poor households (Food and Agricultural Organization, 1997). Here too the potential benefits of education are cumulative, because growth in the incomes of the rural poor generates demand for small-scale enterprises and manufacturing.

The precise casual links between education and productivity are difficult to establish, but an enhanced capacity to innovate appears to be one of the most important. More educated households are more likely to adopt new technologies and to generate higher return from those technologies. It helps well trained workers increase productivity and improve the quality of work.

Investing in education is not only an important way to build a country’s human capital and move it closer to the knowledge economy, thus improving its prospects for economic growth and higher living standards.

The benefits of education are equally pronounced in labor markets. One of the reasons why education offers an escape route from poverty is that it creates opportunities to earn higher incomes, whether in the form of wages, or through trading activity. Education cannot

compensate for disadvantages associated with working in low-wage environments in which the poor are often discriminated against, but it can increase relative earning power (Narayanan, 2007).

Drives economics competitiveness: An educated and skilled workforce is one economy. Increasingly, comparative advantages among nations come less from natural resources or cheap labor and more from technical innovations and the competitive use of knowledge. Studies also link education to economic growth, education contributes to improved productivity which in theory should lead to higher income and improved economic performance.

Contributes to democratization: Countries with higher primary schooling and a smaller gap between rates of boys' and girls' schooling tend to enjoy greater democracy; Democratic Political Institutions (Such as power-sharing and clean elections) are more likely to exist in countries with higher literacy rates and education levels.

Promotes peace and stability Peace education spanning issues of human security, equity, justice and intercultural understanding is of paramount importance. Education also reduces crime, poor school environments lead to deficient academic performance, absenteeism and drop out precursors of delinquent and violent behavior.

Promotes concern for the environment: Education enhances natural resource management, national capacity for disaster prevention and adoption of new environmental friendly technologies. Environmental knowledge is the basis for a more sustainable use of natural resources.

Conclusion

Studies from around the developing world consistently show that expansion of basic education of girls earns among the very highest

rates of return of any investment, much larger for example than most public infrastructure projects. This is one reason why discrimination against girls in education is not just inequitable but very costly from the standpoint of achieving millennium development goals.

To build a strong, united and self-reliant nation, should be the contribution of both men and women, rich and the poor. It is high time we as a country reform our orientation to education so that women participate fully in education matters. When we educate women, we educate the nation. Female education therefore is a priority for any meaningful sustainable development and poverty reduction in any country.

Recommendations

From the ongoing the following recommendation were made:

xxxix. The only way forward is for government at all levels to make education a priority and increase the annual budget to 26% as recommended by UNESCO. If education is adequately funded and fund properly utilized our education system will effectively be revamped.

Even if the UNESCO'S recommendation of 26% of annual budget is currently not realistic, efforts should be made to raise the present percentage to a more realistic one. If this is done, strike actions, academic disruption syndrome will become minimal.

There should be a greater commitment of the private sector towards the development of quality education in Nigeria. Full participation of institutions will go a long way to the growth of education. Such partnership includes monitoring, supervision, appointment of quality staff and provision of enabling facilities.

Promote universal primary education, especially for girls, whose enrollment in

- primary school lags behind that of boys by at least 20 percent in developing countries.
- xl.iii. Pay special attention to the literacy needs of women in the community
- xliv. Develop microeconomic loan programs that will enable impoverished people to start small businesses. This strategy has proven especially effective in helping women, who are denied access to the traditional avenues of credit in many countries.
- xlv. Address the basic needs of those living in abject poverty by sponsoring or supporting soup kitchens and food pantries, organizing food and clothing drives, and providing safe shelter for street children and other homeless people.
- xlvi. Implement long-term solutions to the problem of hunger by developing methods of food distribution and access to food for low income populations.
- xlvii. Loan should be made available to students from low income home.
- xlviii. Government should facilitate education through providing infrastructure, books, equipments, teaching aids and school uniforms to help the children of the poor.
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