

SUSTAINABILITY OF QUALITY EDUCATION: A PANACEA FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

One of the essences of education is to produce human resources that are skillful and knowledgeable to be able to make man a critical resource upon which economy of a developing nation like Nigeria hinge upon. Basically, education is instrumental to National Development, particularly in developing countries. Nigeria is endowed with rich natural resources which would have made Nigeria one of the greatest and richest nations in the world today but the low quality of manpower has bedeviled the achievement of these goals. It is a notable notion that education is a veritable tool to produce the needed manpower to maintain the effective exploitation of our rich natural resources, hence, it is therefore imperative that education obtained or provided in Nigeria should be qualitative and functional, in other words, education should be able to produce the desired quality of personnel that can manage the resources that are available in the country. In pursuant of National development in a country, focus should be on sustainability of quality and functionality in education acquired. Through adequate monitoring of the attributes that make up quality and productive skills in education, there will be hope for development in any country.

Introduction

One of the expectations from education is the production of opportunities which enhance the quality of life of individuals. Quality of life has economic, political, cultural, moral and interpersonal dimensions. The extent to which education effectively addresses

these components of “quality” life determines, in part, the functionality of that education. These components as mentioned above, constitute the essential ingredients not only for quality life, but also for development in general, hence, it is argued that education is an “action area”

in development and that education is a pre-requisite variable in other action areas of development especially in terms of national development. The reliance on education for national development poses challenges for the education sector. The provision for quality and functional education has being emphasized in the National policy on Education recently revised in 2008.

The main trust of this paper therefore is to examine the attributes of quality and functional education and the sustainability of quality in education in other to achieve the goal and role of education in national development.

Education and National Development

Development is a term associated with advancement of a situation; it is a gradual process of change, improvement, upgrading and expansion in knowledge, skills and attitudes such that potentialities and capabilities are manifested for optimum performance. Development is also a term used to describe progress by nations or communities in terms of provision of necessities and infrastructure development. National Development is the ability of a country or countries to improve the social welfare of the people e.g by providing social amenities, good education, pipe borne water etc. According to Dike [2005], the poor socioeconomic condition in Nigeria and the inability of the leaders to create conditions necessary for higher national development after several years of civil rule [or democracy] should be a concern to any person who cares about Nigeria. The

concept of national development [economic, political and social] is said to bring with it valuable and positive changes that improve the living standards of the people, as it creates employment opportunities and reduce poverty, among other things. In particular, economic development increases the efficiency of a system in the production of goods and services to meet the basics needs of people in the society. The achievement of these objectives hinges mostly on the quality of education provided for the citizenry of a nation. [Yisa 1988]

As highlighted in the National Policy on Education [FRN] [2004], "Education in Nigeria is an instrument per excellence for affecting national development". Education in Nigeria has witnessed active participation by non-governmental agencies, communities and individuals as well as government intervention. Considering the crucial role of education to national development, all hands must be on deck to ensure that the citizenry are educated if Nigeria is to join the developed nations. [Ughabugo, 2009].

Nwabueze [1995] captured the fascinating scenario thus, that education is everybody's business. Everyone is involved in it, not remotely or merely as a member of society, but personally and intimately either as a parent, guardian, teacher, non-teaching worker in an educational institution, student, pupil or learner. Thus, whatever happens in it excites everyone's interest; often in a frenzied madden way.

Without a proper education, the society will drift backwards due to many

factors ranging from growth in population not matched by the commensurate capacity to feed, shelter and clothe the new realities. Condition of living will be hard, standard of living will fall and the leaders no matter how many times they fly to London or Washington, will not be able to secure any advantage that will advance the growth and development of the society. No matter how much they spend on roads, good roads will not be there. No matter what they spend on National Power Holding Company [NPHC] there will be no light and the worst of it all is that no matter what the expenditure on health, the citizens will not be healthy, [Ughabugo, 2009]. Education is the major issue in the National agenda. Unless it is addressed, the entire society will be consumed by the consequence of lack of it. There will be more crime in the society, the level of poverty will be on the increase and good health will continue to elude the people while the unending and apparently endemic problem of ethnic hostilities, religious acrimony and violence will likely consume the entire society. [Mato, 2003].

Concept of Quality in Education

Quality is a qualifying term and it is generally used normatively to mean standard or excellence. In the write-up by Plato and Aristotle, quality is that which is distinctive and characteristics of a thing. In other words, quality is a distinguishing attribute of a thing. When we talk about distinguishing attributes of any given education, we are referring to its content, method and the structure of its system

which passes judgment about the standard, worth or excellence of that education [Igbadumhe, 1992]. Talk about quality education is an implicit call to pass a judgment on the consequences of that education on its recipients; kind of competencies, the disposition and in short, the immediate and long effects of that education.

Thus, quality in education can also be referred to criteria such as its contributions to manpower needs, its contributions to the solution of social ills in the society, and by reference, to the general mode of conduct; ethos of the recipients of that education. This measure of quality education is essentially product-oriented involving the measurement of out-put.

Another way of assessing the quality of education is the assessment of what goes into the educational system [inputs] and how these are managed to achieve efficiency. Quality in this sense, refers to those attributes, features and characteristics in an education system conducive for optimizing outputs.

Imperative in Quality Education

From the analysis given above of quality education, it can be summed up to imply that there are two broad manifestations of quality in education.

1. Inputs or process manifestations
2. Outputs or products manifestation.

The major determinants in these manifestations of quality in education are the curriculum and instruction taken as a continuum in the education process which

in other words, is the imperatives for quality education.

For assessment of quality in education to be made, one should consider the products and processes of that education which demands a deliberate and critical examination of the school curriculum, its instructional systems including human and material resources and their effective management. Talks about quality education devoid of these issues are empty and without foundation [Igbadumhe, 1992]

In assessing the quality of any given educational system, educational planners must answer five basic questions stated below:

1. To what extent does the educational system through its curriculum reflect adequate diagnosis of the environmental setting of its location? This diagnosis is necessary to detect or identify the appropriate learning needs and the socio-economic and political climate of the area the education is meant to serve.
2. What resources [human and material] are needed for the effective functioning of the educational system; what provisions are made for securing those needed resources; are the resources available, appropriate, relevant and potentially valuable for the type of education?
3. How are these resources [inputs] processed and utilized; first, to

generate results and second, to maximize gains through inter and extra administrative arrangements and pedagogical arrangements.

4. What is the level of efficiency and adequacy of the entire inputs and processes in terms of their relevance and appropriateness, teachers' competencies, pupils' behaviour, time allotted and money voted?
5. What are the cumulative outcomes: immediate pupils' gain and the envisioned contributions of such gains to the individuals and to societal development?

These five questions are presented as a summary of educational planning imperatives for quality education.

When Nigeria's education system was irrelevant to national needs, aspirations and goals especially during the colonial era when emphasis was on literary education which could not provide the needed manpower for national development, notable educators and other stakeholders worked hard and came out with acceptable policy on our educational system first published in 1977, 1998, 2004 respectively in keeping with the dynamics of social change and the demands on education. At present, the 5th edition has been published due to the need to update previous edition.

Nigeria's philosophy of education [FGN, 2004], emphasizes the following:

1. Education is an instrument for National Development. To this

end, the formulation of ideas, their integration for National Development and the interaction of persons and ideas are all aspects of education.

2. Education to foster the worth and development of the individual for each individual sake and for the general development of the society.

The FGN [2004], identified the national goals of education to be

1. A free and egalitarian society
2. A just and egalitarian society
3. A united strong and self-reliant nation
4. A great and dynamic economy
5. A land full of bright opportunities for all citizens.

From the aforementioned analysis, there is an indication that the NPE has made adequate provision for education to be a veritable tool for national development in the country.

In the recent edition of the National Policy on Education [2008], emphasis is now placed on functional education. In other words, education should be able to inculcate in the recipient the knowledge, skills, attitudes and abilities for self-reliance. The reflection of the objectives of the National Policy on education is passed through the curriculum which serves as instrument used in schools.

Sustainability of Quality in Education

The saying that quality is not achieved cheaply, means in essence that

we must work for quality. There should be a deliberate effort in education to ensure the effectiveness of curriculum and instruction which should address issues of relevant to the educational purposes against the immediate and future needs of the given society; the content, methods and materials, and their efficient management. Sustaining quality education can be achieved by having an in-built system of evaluation for continuous monitoring of educational practices from the pre-planning stage through planning to implementation stage.

Conclusion/Recommendations

In conclusion, to achieve national development, there must be emphasis of quality/functional education in Nigeria. For the sustainability of quality education, there should be effective and proper monitoring of educational practices from pre-planning stage through planning stage to post-planning stage [implementation]. Nigeria is a developing country and it can not afford to neglect the educational sector that is most crucial in the provision of the needed manpower for national growth and development, therefore, education offered to citizens should be functional.

It is therefore recommended that all hands should be on deck both from the government, educational planners, implementers of the curriculum [teachers] and other stakeholders to concentrate on providing quality education considering the attributes that constitute quality as highlighted in the write-up.

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