

---

# EDUCATION AND MANPOWER IN NIGERIA: THE CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS

---

By

**Theresa Ngohile Samu**

*Department of Primary Education Studies,  
Federal College of Education,  
Eha-Amufu.*

## **Abstract**

*This paper acknowledges the fact that there can be no meaningful development of any country without education as an instrument. It pointed out that although the government has been making effort towards manpower development through education, certain problem exist in our education system which hinder education from achieving its proper objectives. Recommendations for solving such problems are made.*

The link between education and development in human society cannot be easily described. Starting from the time of the early man, education has formed the bedrock of development. A shift from the use of crude implement to the use of mechanized equipment in agriculture was made possible through the process of education. A look at the industrial revolution in Europe and the technological advancement in Japan and other industrialized nations shows that all were the outcome of functional education systems. This was why Mackinnon (1985) observed the link between education and development and asserted that “Education is development”.

Education develops an individual and raises his capacity to produce and make meaningful contribution to the development of the society. This was why Enoh (1996) observed that education is the greatest stimulus for development because it strains the required manpower in which other developments depends.

## **Manpower Development**

Manpower is the labour force or work force of a country. In its broad concept, it includes all who are potentially employable, ranging from unskilled to the most highly

### ***Academic Excellence***

---

skilled workers (Encyclopedia of Education Vol.6). Development involves change for better. The Fourth National Development Plan (1981) described development thus: “development must be the development of man, the unfolding and realization of his creative potential, enabling him to improve his material conditions of living through the use of resources available to him”. Thus, in this paper, manpower development is described as all the processes involved in making individuals acquire knowledge, skills and capabilities which dispose them to be engaged in or for readiness for productive activities.

Manpower development involves quantitative and qualitative training of person to carry out job in the society. It is an important factor in the economy of every nation and no serious nation can afford to ignore it. Nigeria, it has been a major concern of the government since independence. It was clear to the government that political independence without economic self reliance would bring about no meaningful development. In this regard the government has emphasized and encouraged in many ways manpower development in various educational and socio-economic programmes. For instance, the government through Decree No. 47 established Industrial Training Fund (ITF) for the purpose of training students on-the-job-training, and the training of both students and staff of various training institutions.

All these efforts notwithstanding, one is still in doubt as to whether Nigeria is fully achieving her objective of manpower development. Are there not factors/issues in our development system that militates against high quality manpower development in our country? The major aim of this is to discuss current education issues and their challenges to manpower development in Nigeria.

### **Challenges in Nigeria Education**

#### **Finance (Inadequate funding)**

It is true that the government has been making visible efforts in ensuring that adequate and qualified manpower is developed for the economy of this nation. As already stated, many manpower training institutions are established. Some students are sent abroad for technical training. However, it is also true that Nigeria education is beset with financing problems. The government is finding it extremely difficult to implement the National Policy on Education. Some projects are partially executed while others are entirely abandoned. Hardly can any school boast of adequate teaching and learning materials. Teachers do not have job satisfaction and that is why we experience brain-drain at all levels of education. This lack of job satisfaction also encourages teachers' misconduct of extorting learners to enhance teacher's means of living.

### ***Education and Manpower ...***

---

If there is inadequate teaching and learning materials in schools how can learners be adequately trained? It will result in producing half-backed manpower for our economy. If higher intelligent and talented teachers should continue to abandon their jobs for greener pastures then our education system will be left with mediocre and since no nation can rise above the quality of educated citizens (Ajayi, 1981), we will continue to scarce. So, no matter how good our education plans and policies are, the stated objectives can hardly be achieved without adequate funds to execute them.

### **Gender Disparity in Education**

One cannot say that Nigerian constitution or the national policy on education discriminates against either sex in terms in terms of educational opportunities. However, it appears that women education has not received equal attention as that of their male counterpart especially in Nigeria.

In Nigeria, records from NUC (1997) indicate that disparity exists between male and female students enrolment. According to the report students enrolment from Benue State during the 1990/91 academic session was 7,145 for male and 5,821 for female while in 1991/92 academic session it was 9,462 for male and 7,264 for females. Although the situation is gradually changing and there is increase in female enrolment in schools now. Nzewi (1993) there is still wide gap between male and female enrolment in some parts of the country.

Gender inequality in education poses a great challenge to educational advancement and manpower development. When economic positions and careers are occupied mainly by males, who are by no means greater in national population, it would retard even and smooth socio-economic development. If women who occupy the major part of our population do not have the opportunity of competing favourably with their male counterparts they may loose. The change of providing required good service to the nation. Thus serious effort should be made towards reducing gender inequality in our education system.

### **Recommendations and Conclusion**

Any meaningful national development should include and involve quality manpower development. This can be achieved only with education as a major instrument. As such, major challenges in our education system should be solved to enable education play its expected roles. The following recommendations are therefore deemed necessary.

### **Funding**

In reality government may not find it very easy to fund education adequately now because of increase in students' enrolment, rising cost of educational materials and dwindling education foreign aids etc, but if the government take education as her most important responsibility, she can increase annual budgetary allocations for education and this would go a long way in solving education problems. Also the government should persuade and corporate bodies that make contributions towards education to increase their financial participation in funding education. Alternatively, educational institutions should look inwards and find possible sources of income to their institutions.

### **Gender Inequality**

It is believed that factors which include biological, socio-cultural, curriculum and religious issues deter women from engaging in some fields of study in school (Erinesho, 1994). Women are needed for our development. Therefore any barrier toward equal participation of women in education should be removed. The Federal government of Nigeria should regard gender disparity in education as a serious problem. She should make women education in science and technology areas free. There should be no discrimination in employment of candidates into job positions irrespective of sex. Families should encourage their daughters to acquire education instead of getting into marriage too soon. Textbooks and curriculum materials used in schools should be revised to ensure that they do not down grade or demean either sex.

### **References**

- Ajayi, K. (1988). *Emergent issues in the production and retention of teachers in Nigeria. Agenda for the 21<sup>st</sup> century*. Lagos: University of Lagos.
- Aliyu, M. (1996). *Promoting examination in vocational and technical education*. A paper presented at the national conference on examination ethics NTI Kaduna 15 – 19.
- Blakemohe, K. & Cooksey, B. (1991). *A sociology of education for Africa*. London: George Allen and Unwin.
- Enoh, O. A. (1996). *Main currents in Nigeria educational thought*. Jos: Midland Press.

*Education and Manpower ...*

---

Federal Government of Nigeria (2004). *National Policy on Education*. Lagos: NERDC Press.

Machinoh, A. R. (1985). Education in development in educational. *Journal for Canadian International Development Agency* 1, p. 20.