

# GOVERNMENT AS A CRITICAL FACILITATOR TO EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY

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## **Abstract**

*This paper examines the role of government in providing quality education that will aid development. However in Nigeria today, there is mounting concern about the state of schooling at all levels. This is rooted in the realization that literacy levels and academic achievement will determine individual's job attainment and earning as well as the general economic well-being of the society. Moreover, the quality of life in the society will be affected by the level and quality of social skills acquired in schools. It is in line with this that the paper looks at the various issues bordering on role of government in education and development, role of education in development and financing of education. Conclusion was drawn and recommendations were made.*

The global quest for government commitment to the sustainable development programs to eradicate poverty in rural and urban communities' calls for inclusive structures at all levels of education. Nigeria's educational policy is not the problem. It is the administrative bottlenecks, unavailability of resource materials, inadequate funding, teacher qualification, curriculum issues and policy implementation strategies. It is no longer news that Nigerian education stake holders at the federal, state and local levels have continuously struggled with reforming the education system to be more effective, and promote individual student achievement success and better living standards in the country comparable to global trends. The National Policy on Education (1981) sets a goal for the education system which states that there is need for functional education for the promotion of a progressive, united Nigeria. To this end school programmes need to be relevant, practical and comprehensive, while interest and ability should determine individual direction in education. The particular assignment given to education by government and policy makers in education has been based on the Nigeria's philosophy on education, which is based on the following:

- a. the development of the individual into a sound and effective citizen
- b. the full integration of the individual into the community, and
- c. the provision of equal access to educational opportunities for all citizens of the country at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels both inside and outside of the formal school system (FGN, 2004)

However, much as the government of Nigeria may be aware of the need to provide more resources to improve the quality of education in the country, there is a

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limit to the amount of resources that the government can allocate to education annually. The principle of increased financial allocation to education has a far – reaching financial implication for other competing social services and ordering of national priority. Thus, some question must be raised, such as; will huge financial problems on education deny road development and communication media or funds? Will it reduce the funds which will otherwise be available for public health services? What effect will huge educational outlay have on the creeping war which drought is wagging on the productive capacity of our farmlands? All these and other relevant questions are to be carefully considered in the provision of funds for educational services in Nigeria. Consequently, government has, more often than not, been able to provide quality education in Nigerian schools on the ground of economic inability.

There is no gainsaying the fact that huge investment in education has a long run positive impact on the socio-economic and technological development of a nation. Some third world countries like Malaysia and Thailand have understood this and have excelled tremendously because of their huge investment in the development of their human capital base through education.

The provision of education should not only be the concern of teachers and educational institutions, but also of the parents, the students, the employers of labor, the government and the international community. Since each of these stake holders has its own view about what constitutes good education? It has, consequently, been difficult task to agree on what should be a good practice in schools. This may be as a result of the prevailing conditions within the communities in which the universities are situated.

### **Statement of Problem**

Education is one of the basic needs of man. Up till now, it has not been possible for every child in Nigeria to attend school. Some have been constrained because of lack of fund in finance education. Others, simply because there is no available space in the existing educational institutions. Even where educational institutions are available, equipment and learning materials are often lacking. Some schools are better equipped than others, some better staff than others. Those who are able to get into the better equipped and staffed schools have greater opportunity for developing their educational potential than less privilege. And yet a few others have not even the opportunity of gaining admission into the ill-equipped and ill-staffed schools. Schools are very poorly equipped. Many of them are situated in environments that are in no way conducive to learning, libraries are mostly non-existent in primary schools. Textbooks, teaching materials, desks, seats, tables, in short necessary equipment are not sufficiently available. Laboratories are ill-equipped where they exist at all. The major challenges confronting education in Nigeria include poor infrastructure and inadequate funding.

Education in this country is inadequately funded which in many respects is responsible for most other listed problem above. Inadequate funding results in poor salaries and other emoluments, decayed and in adequate infrastructure and facilities,

over stretching of services, poorly maintained and sustained equipments and poor funding of practical research.

Incessant disruption of academic calendar and institution closures due to strikes are also as a result of poor funding of education in Nigeria. There is also a general neglect and lack of priority or misplacement of priority in education which explains why the crises in the sector have been allowed to linger for such a longtime.

But, Ezeugbur (2008) believed that it is only qualitative education that should lead to detectable gains in knowledge, skills and values.

According to Damichi (2003), it is only when education becomes relevant to people's need that it will arouse a sense of commitment, and then an understanding of the problems of the society. This is to say, that it is education, that is sustainable that can bring about nation building.

Sustainable education, according to Asiabaka (2008) leads to acquisition of skills, attitudes, understanding and knowledge relating to occupation in various sectors of economic and social life. It is a system of education that develops an individual. Sustainable education makes what is taught in the school to be relevant to the lives of the present and help them to be self reliant. Sustainable education will make educational system to teach and its relevance to the nation building. Through sustainable education, school will develop in each person an awareness which will lead to self development and contribution to nation building. Okoli (2008) maintained that "sustainable education" gears towards nurturing an educational system that drives the total development of the individual and in particular at the physical intellectual, moral and spiritual, it aims also on using education as a tool for improving the quality of life through reducing poverty, creating jobs and wealth. Sustainable education, according to Okwuanaso (2007) aims at developing entrepreneurial and basic business skills in the graduates to enable them to be self-reliance. It is education for sustainable development.

Education is a human resource infrastructure. It establishes the conditions for growth and development. It helps in understanding and appreciation of modernization process. Through the production of human resources, education enhances economic growth and political stability.

Adequate funding: The university secondary and primary education are poorly funded. This poor funding explains why the system is characterized by series of strikes. In most cases, government as well as proprietors does not appreciate the need to allocate a reasonable proportion of their budget into the three levels of education.

Okonjo (2002) noted that irrespective of the critical role that education plays in national development particularly in developing countries, the Nigerian education system is essentially characterized as being behind their counterparts by over seventy years in terms of funding, curriculum and instruction management as well as in effectiveness and efficiency in providing quality education.

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Policy consistency: As we desire a dynamic education system for national development and sustainability there is need for policy consistency. One major problem in Nigerian education system is policy inconsistency. Educational policies in Nigeria has always depended on the whims and caprices of our leaders. This explains different educational policies that emerge with different government Agbese in Akpan (2010).

This is actually the problem that education sector is facing. Nigeria has no clear-cut policy or legislation on primary education. Consequently, the fate of primary education hung on the balance as it swings to and from local governments, state and federal governments. It is based on this that Akpan (2010) remarked that

At a stage, primary education was almost grounded when local governments could not pay the salaries and allowances of the teachers prompting them to embark on several months of individual action to press for their case. The federal government was compelled to save the situation by taking over the payment of salaries and allowances of primary school teachers.

It is only in the UBE Act of 2004 that the responsibility of funding primary education is shared among the three tiers of government-local, state and federal governments.

The Federal Government of Nigeria's quest for national development including the recent roadmap will not be achieved by neglecting education at different levels. It is no surprise that in 2004, the Nigerian National Planning Commission described the country's education system as "dysfunctional". Reasons for this characterization induced the decaying institutions and ill prepared graduates (Library of Congress, 2006), as well as ineffective policies and unpractical approaches to education service delivery.

The biggest challenge facing the government is the inadequate public spending on education. Again the paucity and the unreliability of the data on educational financing makes it difficult to get an overall; picture of the level of resources going into education and how much of these resources are used. There is also a high degree of resource mismanagement through inflation of contracts and general official corruption. It is very revealing to know that the government has been aware of its failure in financing education industry as it should. This was shown when schools in some states of the federation were handed over to the missionaries. This lack of government total commitment in its responsibilities in education shows how sick the society is, morally speaking. (Olagboye, *Changing perceptions: Writing on Gender and Development*, Oxford, U.K; OXFAM, 2004).

Our problem in Nigeria is not making rules, laws and policies that can make society the best of all societies. Our problem is largely in the implementation of laws, rules or policies. Our personal and individual priorities and values override the societal and common good and priorities. So we consider ourselves first before the good of the people we serve. That is mainly the cause off the government's inadequate cause of the

government's inadequate public spending on education. Accountability has no place in the Nigerian system.

For quite some time now, our country has been in a state of crisis and confusion. The crisis has become so acute that some people including some Nigerians are beginning to refer to our country as a "failed state". A key index of the decay and rot in the nation is the state of education. The educational system in our country has virtually collapsed. Our educational institutions at all levels are under funded, understaffed, under equipped and cult-infested. Government is no longer able to meet even the minimum rudiments for educating our citizens. Examination malpractice has become an organized activity involving an unholy conspiracy between students, teachers, and invigilators. An uncomfortable high percentage of those who pass through our national educational experience can barely read and write. Our secondary schools have become glorified primary school and lacks academic environment. While our tertiary institutions have become glorified secondary schools. Teachers are not paid as at when due. Teachers are not promoted and are poorly enumerated too. It should be noted that Nigerian educational system cannot ordinarily achieve its set objectives if the idea of making teaching a true profession is ignored. From mere observation, teaching appears to be all-comers affairs in Nigeria today such that we find a good number of trained and untrained teachers in our institutions of learning. Regrettably, some of them do not know what and how to impact knowledge to their students, but are only interested in the salaries that are paid.

Our schools lack equipment and infrastructure that enhances mastering of skills. That is to say that all those people have gone through those institutions without the mastering or developing the basic skills they have gone there to acquire in the first place. How could it be otherwise, given the sorry state of those institutions? The consequences of this state of affairs are too terrifying to imagine. For example, what kind of graduates are those institutions that are training doctors and other medical professionals training out? Butchers or healers? It is against this background that the researcher views/sees government as a critical facilitator to educational development.

### **Definition of Terms**

Fafunwa (1987) sees education as the human acts of informing, forming and strengthening of the powers of the body and mind, a process of transmitting-culture for the knowledge to ensure social control and guarantee national direction of society. He also holds that the purpose of education is to develop altitudes, abilities and behaviors considered desirable by society (1986).

Durkheim, a great sociologist, says that education is a systematic socialization of the younger generation by which the latter learns religions.

According to Okafor (1981), education is a "process of the development of the potentialities, and their maximum activation when necessary, according to right reason, and to achieve thereby his perfect self fulfillment".

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We need to remind ourselves that all over the world, that education is an instrument of national development and transformation which while fostering the development of individuals also assures the building of strong, united and self-reliant nation. Because education is at the basis of all kinds of development, no nation ever rises above what she is willing to put into the education of her citizens. When the educational system collapses as it had done in Nigeria, the result is catastrophe, underdevelopment, socio- economic decline and poverty. Education is used to mean the consciously planned systematic imparting of acquisition of knowledge in a system called school. The implication of this is that the greater part of education should be functional. The ultimate end of education is man's happiness. This is in consonance with Aristotle's view, and ultimately speaking, the end of education is the attainment of the "summon bonum".

Furthermore, education leads one to self actualization and realization. Here, the individual discovers the worth and value of being human which reflects in his or her relationship with people. An educated person is also conscious of the respect and dignity, which every person deserves. There is no doubt that effective education can serve as a vehicle for solving global problems. The problems centers on how to achieve more effective education (Albert, 2005).

The eve of a new millennium is an appropriate moment for (UNESCO 2004) and other international organization to reflect on their missions and the challenges that lies ahead. Education for all remains the foundation for the achievement and sustainable human development.

### **Education and Sustainable Development**

Sustainable development is a phenomenon associated with the changes human conditions through the use of their creative energies. It is the unending improvement in the capacity of individual and society to control and manipulate the forces of nature in order to live a better and more rewarding life. Development implies creating the skills and capacity to do things, greater freedom, self-confidence, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and mutual well being.

Education is a social service which has been accepted the world over as a formidable and dynamic instrument of change. Quality education on the other hand means efficient product of educational Institution. Education for sustainable development is an emerging but dynamic concept that encompasses a new vision of education, which seeks to empower people of all ages to assume responsibility for creating a new sustainable future ( Hopkin *et al*, 1996).

Development can be defined as an increasing attainment of one's own cultural value. The conceptualization emphasizes the following notions. First that development is a process and not a state and the process here ultimately refers t to values and the values referred to are those of the people involved not the value of the western world or any other world. Therefore, development is the qualitative self improvement of man. This

equally applies to the whole society and, people. Development also implies creating the skills and capacity to do things, greater freedom, self confidence, creativity, self discipline, responsibility and mutual well being.

Education and sustainable Development deals with the well being in all three reams of sustainability that is environment, society and economy (UNESCO, 2005) in doing so it promotes life-long learning that is based on local needs, perceptions and conditions, but acknowledges that fulfilling local needs other has intentional effects and consequences. By engaging formal, non-formal and informal education ESD is life wide as well as life-long. In these ways ESD builds civil capacity for community-based decision-making, social tolerance, environmental stewardship, adaptable workforces and improves quality of life.

A key pillar of education is learning how to live together in peace and harmony. This involves, first strengthening one's own identity, self-worth, and self confidence and then learning to appreciate the culture of others, to respect others as individuals and groups and to apply the same ethical principles to decisions about other people that one would apply within one, own culture (Baker, 2006).

Education for sustainable development enables pupils to develop the knowledge, skills understanding and values to participate in decisions about the way we do things individually and collectively, both locally and globally, that will improve the quality of life now without damaging the planet for the future Education for sustainable development will enable and empower pupils to participate in local and global environmental issues.

### **Role of Government in Education and Development**

Government spends public funds on education because they believe that a better educated population will contribute to faster and more sustainable development. Employers pay for employee training because they expect to cover their costs and gain additional profits from increased productivity. And individuals are often prepared to spend time and money to get education and training, since in most countries people with better education and skills earn more. Educated and skilled people are usually able to deliver more output or output that is more valuable in the market place, and their employers tend to recognize that fact with higher wages.

Adedeji and Bamidele (2003) opined that economic returns to education are not always the same, however, returns to education may be lower if:

- The quality of education is low or knowledge and skills acquired at school do not match market demand. In this case investments in human capital were not efficient enough, resulting in less human capital and lower returns to individuals and society.
- There is insufficient demand for human capital because of slow economic growth. In this case workers' human capital may be underused and under reward.

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- Workers with lower and higher education and skills re deliberately paid similar wages to preserve a relatively equality of earnings as used to happen in centrally planned economies.

### **Financing of Education**

The eleventh and last section of the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, National Policy on Education is titled “Financing of Education”. Education is described in the policy document as an expensive social service and requires adequate financial provision from all tiers of government for successful implementation of educational programmes. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (1998) states that it is government’s ultimate goal to goal to make education free to all level. The financing of education is seen as a joint responsibility of the federal, state and local government and the private sector. Government, therefore, welcomes the contributions and participation of local communities, individuals and organizations. It is also stated in the policy documents that relevant sectoral bodies such as the Nigeria Education Tax Fund have been established to respond to the funding needs of education. The burden of funding education can also be eased by the Petroleum Trust Fund, Industrial Training fund and the National Science and Technology Fund.

There are however, certain patterns in balance between public and private spending on different levels of education. Most governments are committed to providing free primary and often secondary education because it is believed that not just individuals but the entire country benefits significantly when most of its citizens can read, write and fully participate in social and economic life. At the same time, tertiary education institutions, both private and public, usually charge tuition, because more of the benefits from this level of education are believed to accrue to graduates (in the form of much higher future earnings). In vocational education, education employers often play an important role in providing on-the-job training in vocational schools. Governments try to encourage employers’ involvement in order to save public funds and link vocational education to the needs of the labour market. Specific work skills are best developed through training during employment, especially in jobs involving substantial technological change. In low-income country like Nigeria, primary education in itself often improves the welfare of the poor by making them more productive workers, enabling them to learn new skills throughout their working lives and reducing the risk of unemployment. In addition, primary education for girls and women heads to healthier and smaller families and fewer infant deaths.

It has been reported that about N430 billion has been sunk in pursuance of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGS) (Agbaegbu 2010). But the education sector which is the hallmark of development and part of the MDGS has not been effectively handed by the office of the MDGS. The current Minister of Education Ruguuyatu. Ahmed Rufai lamented that inspite of the amount sunk into the project; more than 10 million children in the country were out of school. This is a veritable threat to the realization of the Education for all programmes of the government at all levels of



education by 2015 and by extension a threat to the realization of vision 20:2020. According to the Minister ‘we have to perform in the education sector because it is the key that drives other sectors, otherwise we cannot do much to meet the MDGs 2015 target’ (Agbaegbu 2010).

## **Conclusion**

Revitalization of education in Nigeria especially at all levels is a vital issue. Therefore, the federal and state government should consider the application of Total Quality Management (TQM) in education because education still remains the backbone for the accelerated development needed by the country in this millennium. Nigeria needs to revitalize her education in order to reduce poverty level, improved health care and abundant employment opportunities for all and to improve standard of living. Government should also provide proper guidance and support for learners at all levels, and equally ensure that the curriculum and assessment methods are relevant and are followed. In addition, government should ensure that resources in the schools or institutions should be managed and utilized more efficiently and effectively. Quality in education should be ensured by government (authorities) both at the local, state and national levels since it leads to development.

This explains why the government should declare education sector an emergency area and allocate adequate fund to it. This is because every development revolves on education. We cannot but agree that ‘education is too crucial, too sensitive, too involving, too overbearing and too profound to be left to government alone’ This presupposes that all hands should be on deck to create and nurture a dynamic education system that will enhance both individual as well as national development. In other words, education stakeholders – the government, the parents and educational institutions should be actively involved in the funding of education.

There is no gainsaying the fact that huge investment in education has a long run positive impact on the socio-economic and technological development of a nation in our bid to catch up with developed countries, Nigerian government must ensure that finances are made available to procure the necessary facilities needed, the infrastructures and the personnel. Our educational planners must rise and make policies that are not detrimental to the development of this nation.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the Discussion of the Above, the Following Recommendations Were Made:

- As those in authority, the government should set good example and shun the “get rich quick” syndrome and all other forms of corrupt practices. If all these are carefully observed and avoided, it would assist in stamping out corruption in our society.
- Both the government and the private sector should be adequately involved in the funding of education in Nigeria. Education of people is capital intensive and therefore could not be left for government alone.

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- The access to education in Nigeria should be expanded to cater for all. In other words, free education and scholarship should be made available. The current UBE programme is free on paper. In actual fact, one form of fee or the other is paid in schools.
- There should be policy consistency in education sector. Jumping from one educational policy to another does not guarantee stability in education sector. It is difficult to develop human capital when there is no stability in education system.
- The nation's leaders should exhibit that political will to develop human capital by being generous in the allocation and release of education fund.
- The realization of vision 20:2020 will depend entirely on overhauling the nation's educational system. This overhauling will be in terms of adequate funding, provision of the necessary teaching and learning materials, immediate stop of the brain drain through improved conditions of service.
- Government should plan to increase teachers' salaries and condition of services timely. This will help to retain trained and qualified teachers in order to work towards delivering national educational objectives.
- Infrastructures and training facilities in training institutions should be improved. Outdated equipments should be replaced with new and relevant ones to meet the challenges of the new millennium.
- Government should collaborate with individuals' philanthropists, churches and foreign agencies to fund schools.
- 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, disruption of academic 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 private organizations and religious institutions will go a long way to complement government's effort in the growth of education. Such partnership includes monitoring, supervision, appointment of quality staff and provision of enabling facilities.

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