

TECHNICAL EDUCATION FOR EMPLOYMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEMOCRACY IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The focus of this paper is the attempt at evaluating the place of technical education for employment and sustainable democracy in Nigeria. The role of education in general, on public enlightenment and democracy in the sense that the educated are easier to lead, although they are also easier to understand deviation from the tenets of democracy. The educated, especially in the Humanities and Social Sciences who fail in employment situation for a long time will constitute a ready instrument for use by the political elites. But education system with bias for technical education will not just produce job seekers but more of job creators. A critical analysis of the genesis of employment in Nigeria shows that the technological advancement of the country is mainly imported without recognition to the domestic resources available in the country. The disappearance and the high level of non-performance of Nigeria imported technologies have resulted in high unemployment in Nigeria and this is the main source of poverty in the country. Experience from Nigerian refineries in the form of foreign high technology is a case in point. The theoretical framework of analysis used in this study is the frustration and aggression theory as well as the group's violence theory. The paper recommended that it is important Nigeria adopt appropriate technology for this the intermediate technology of Schumacher (1911- 1977). This technology as the name implies is neither in the nature of the traditional type nor of the large scale sophisticated type. This technological development is labour using and capital saving as well as takes into consideration the available resources

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locally. This type of technology is recommended that will create more employment especially as the country considers restructuring the economy.

Keywords: Technical Education, Democracy, Technological Progress and Unemployment

The role of education in the development of a nation is not an issue of debate. Many studies of economic growth recognize the significance of the quality of labour that is a product of education, popularly known as human capital. Human capital has been shown to be partly responsible for the “residual” difference always noticed between the rate of posture change in output and those of the two popular factors of production labour and capital. The boarding of the concept of capital with the inclusion of the human capital component plays another role in the area of prolonging the time diminishing returns sets in as capital in its mere physical form experiences additions. On a more general outlook, education roles transcend that of economic growth, it shows up in all spheres of economic development questions.

According to Ofeimun (2004) the importance of education can be explained in line with the following sub-headings: education for training in both culture and civility, for the empowerment of the individual, as a source of national power, as a means of manpower development and for the purpose of general public enlightenment and democracy. It is important to note that a broad analysis of the role of education as stated above also implies some facts about how sensitive the educational system of a country can be at any point in time. The relevance of educational system is time bound. This leads to the question of what quantity and quality of human capital is required at the different levels of the development process of an economy. This is simply asking the question of the appropriateness of the manpower supply in line with the demand. This issue does not end at this static corridor, there is also the dynamic question of how the educational system prepares grounds for future manpower requirements of the nation. This idea has guided educational policies and reforms in different countries. For instance in Nigeria the universal primary education (UPE)/ the 6-3-3-4 system of the 1981 and the Universal Basic Education reforms of years 2000 recognized the need for education that will bring about technological advancement of the nation.

In a globalizing world the need for technological advancement is very relevant, however, of great significance are the questions of the type of technology and the source of the technology either adopted or developed. This requires a critical analysis for a happy marriage between stage theories of development and the doctrine of comparative advantage. The concern here is that while the simplest stage theories of development see development as following the stages of starting as primary producers followed by secondary activities or producers (manufacturing) and lastly service or tertiary activities, comparative advantage theory of trade from Hecksher/Ohlin, availability justification, considers countries specializing in the activities of relative advantage as determined by

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their relative advantage as determined by their relative factor abundance. Which one of these two sets of theories that tends to be a more limiting factor for an economy's choice of technology has always been weakened by issues involved in trade/commercial policies of nations? For instance while we hear of strategic industrial/trade policies in the developed world, in the developing world there is the issue of infant industry argument. These point to the fact that the initial stage of comparative or relative, disadvantage of a country does not completely determine the technology adopted or developed. This means that at least two shades of economy. According to Abdullahi and Ajoku (2001) production capability type of technology involves proficiency in the know-how of the current production technics. In the case of technological capability the emphasis is on both the technological development and acquisition of the products of and that of market information and skills that are part requirements to sustain production. Essentially, the need for this technological progress, another name for technological capacity building in an economy is that even with human capital that prevents diminishing returns to capital in a nation's growth trajectory, the absence of technological progress results in decline in the rate of growth of the economy. Here lies the significance of progressive advances in production methods, product types and qualities.

The base of sustainable technological progress has much to do with emphasis on technical education. The degree of importance attached to technical education in a country can be taken as a proxy for the level of seriousness of a country towards technological capacity development.

Nigerian economy has continued to show signs of weakness in many spheres as can be observed from many macroeconomics indicators such as the general price level (inflation), the high level of unemployment, value of the country's currency etc.), the social ills prevalent in the economy such as kidnapping, electoral violence, political thuggery, yahoo boys activities, well as the series of workers strikes and threats of strikes in the country. As a way of defining the scope of this work, issues concerning manpower development and political system stability in Nigeria take the centre seat. The question of persistent increase in unemployment in Nigeria points to a problem associated with either the process of human capital development or the nature of technological advancement vis-à-vis the industrial projects the country entered into. These are all questions of the relevance of the product of the education and training programmes of the country in relation to her choice of projects. In the area of the political system, Nigeria has been experiencing a chequered democratic political system. Nigerian democracy has witnessed series of military incursion. This experience of military activities in the process of democratization in Nigeria can be viewed from two perspectives. Is the activities an intervention into a failed democracy? Or is it a reason to consider democratic process a failure in Nigeria? Whichever is the right answer, the point is that democracy in Nigeria cannot yet be considered a success. This is because despite the long duration of the fourth republic now running in Nigeria since 1999, many attributes of a democratic political process are still not adequately practiced. Election in

Nigeria, an activity that is an integral component of democracy is still characterized with ore during and post-election violence that involve ballot box carting away, mass killing of party officials, electorates' staffers on adhoc basis, etc.

As a matter of fact it is generally accepted that democracy in Nigeria is still far from been in conformity with basic tenets of democracy which includes principles of equity, justice, far-play, freedom, accountability, rule of law as well as popular participation. Reasons adduced for the underperformance in Nigeria of the universal pattern or standard tenets of democratic practice include the following. The orientation from the colonial background, the military rule that has militarized the electorates, lack of political education as well as wide spread of poverty and the illiteracy level that is still high (Leke 2010, Ajayi & Ojo, 2014; Igwe & Amadi, 2021; Ogbe & Ojie, 2020; Omamuyovwi, 2021) one obvious issue about the various reasons for the continued threat to democracy in Nigeria is that the various authors concentrate on just specific aspects of the tenets of democracy. For instance, Ogbe and Ojie, 2020 see political education and information communication technology as a means of demilitarizing the minds of the electorates. To them this helps to solve the problem of the influence of military rule on the democratic process in Nigeria. Igwe and Amadi, 2021 looked at how political violence serves the vested interests of the political elite. This current study is an attempt to take a holistic analysis of the problems associated with democracy in Nigeria. In particular this study takes cue from Amartya Sen's concept of development as the process of explaining freedoms that people enjoy. This concept of freedom as explained in terms of entitlements and capabilities of the people (Thirlwall, 2006). Also of interest to this work is the position of Tam Cho as in Onuigbo, Emeand, Asadu, 2018. To Cho it does not follow that the higher the level of education, the higher the likelihood of participating in elections, but rather how the educational system is able to socialize the potential votes (electorates). Cho's position was modified for this study to explain how not just education but a prioritized education that emphasize technical education that could lead to more employment and sustainable democracy in Nigeria. In a nutshell the question addressed here is how solving the questions of human freedoms (development) through technical education transmitted or transmittable to employment and sustainable democracy and hence what should be government policy on technical education as regards to more employment availability in the Nigerian economy in the nearest future.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows section 2 reviews the related literature. Section 3 discuss the methodology of the work. The analysis and discussion of the findings are the concern of section 4 while section 5 concludes the study.

Literature Review

Conceptual Clarifications

Okojie (2002) defines education as all approaches through which individuals gain insight, develop skills and attitude or knowledge. It is therefore the process of building the human resource of a country and also helps in then more efficient utilization

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of physical resources. Ogunbayo (2021) in her definition of education tried to be more detailed and more embracing as she can be seen to include in the concept of education more vividly by implying institutionalized and non-institutionalized forms of education. This can be seen from her position as follows – “education refers to acquiring knowledge, skills, values, morals, beliefs, habits, and personal development facilitated by learning”. However, the main interest of this research work is the segment of education that has to do with technical education.

Technical Education

The term technical education has often been used interchangeably with vocational education. In this spirit, the National Policy on Education for Nigeria 2004 as in Hajiya, 2018, sees vocational and technical education as a single term that refers to educational process that involve in addition to general education, studies that involve technologies, sciences, practical skills acquisition as well as the acquisition of knowledge that are in relation to work in different sectors of the economy. Meanwhile some authors have differentiated between vocational and technical education. In this light, which is the position of this work, technical education is a special type of vocational education. Vocational education can be seen from two perspectives.

The first stage of vocational education involves training at below the secondary school level, while the second stage involves a post-secondary or secondary school equivalence. According to Okoye and Arimonu (2016) vocation education are specific-work defined programmes designed for acquisition of skills at the lower educational level. While, to them technical education occurs at the educational level between secondary school and first degree level, which is meant for the provision of general technical knowledge. According to Uwaifo (2009) the training of a country’s citizens in technical education leads to sustainable development and self-reliance. It should be noted that even as the source of technological development of a country matters, the technical know-how of the nationals matters more. This is because if the technological change is to come from within, the trained technical will take the lead, and if it is to come from outside, the level of know how available will determine the absorptive capacity of the imported technology. Again a proper planning of the appropriate technology ought to have excellent recognition of the available resources on ground as the only way to sustain the technology acquired.

Employment

Employment has two generic classes. These are paid employment jobs and self-employment jobs. This gives the concept of employment as work for pay or profit.

This paper adopts the definition of employment in line with the 19th International Conference of labour statisticians’ new resolution about statistics of work, employment and underutilization of labour in 2013.

In line with the above position, employment comprises all persons of working age who during a specified short time, which may be one week or a day, could be found in the following groupings. (i) Paid employment job (whether at work or not, but with a job); (ii) Self-employed (whether with an enterprise and at work or not at work). For unpaid family members not at work are considered as employed if their absence is no longer than three months in the past.

Democracy

Ibrahim, Audu, Tyav and Hamza (2021) defines democracy as a form of governance which involves rule of the majority through their representatives chosen through free balloting or election that could be direct or indirect.

According to Claude Ake cited by Adejumobi 2004, democracy is a governance method that involves popular power. The difference between these two conceptualizations of democracy lies in the fact that democracy has forms/versions. With the details in Ibrahim et al (2021) these forms include the classical sense of democracy which was the form practiced by the originators of democratic system of governance in the Greek city state of Athens, which recognized the inclusion of all mal adults as part of their general assembly unlike the case of representatives in the case of liberal democracy, that result from competitive elections. Claude Ake's definition of democracy may actually be viewed as the communist variant of democracy that advocates for a significant presence of the working class of the society in all affairs of the country. This should include both in the production and political affairs of the nation. Where workers should be seen taking the front seat. The practice of democracy also include that of the mixture of the different shades explained above. In all these forms of democracy, the democratic process in Nigeria falls with the concept of liberal democracy and hence this is the understanding of democracy with its characteristics implied in this research work

Sustainable democracy: The choice of democracy as form of political system because of its positive attributes which includes protecting the rights of the people to vote and be voted for, rule of law, etc. all geared towards the improvement of the lives of the people. It is therefore of utmost importance to ensure that not only the attainment of the tenets for the present generation is pursued but its sustenance is of importance.

In their view, Ogbe and Ojie (2020) see sustainable democracy as the act of thinking of how to resolve some challenges militating against the attainment of full blown democracy. This according to them this should involve continued promotion of the rights of the electorates, the culture and values of democracy in the society. It is seen as the act of developing and sustaining healthy democratic process and atmosphere. In this work therefore, we are cooking how technical education system in Nigeria, effectively organized can be of great assistance in resolving the root causes of the environments under which anti-democratic behaviours thrive in Nigeria.

Theoretical Review

Many theories have been put forward to explain the roots of anti-democratic behaviour and how they can be resolved some of these include technological determinism theory by Thorstein Veblen (1857 – 1926) which emphasizes the importance of media technology in terms of information dissemination. Again, there is the Marxian political economy approach. This is associated with Karl Marx (1818-1883).

This theory points to the problems of poor leadership and bad governance that lead to non-attainment of the tenets of democracy. Hence this theory calls for good leadership and governance.

The theories very relevant for this work are those of frustration aggression theory and the group violence theory. These theories are associated with (Schwarzmantel, 2010, 2011; Meklen, 2012) as cited in (Igwe et al 2021). These theories are associated with political violence. These theories explain antidemocratic activities as arising from frustration and aggression result from individuals in the case of frustration and aggression theory while in the case of groups violence theory, it is connected with dissatisfaction of a theory, it is connected with dissatisfaction of a system by a group of people that result in violence. This can be explained by the case of the “end SARS” protest of 2020 in Nigeria. It is the prayer of every well-meaning Nigerian that the level of unemployment of the youths in Nigeria, the strike actions of the university lecturers which have been affecting Nigerian students will not fulfil these theories in Nigeria come 2023 general elections.

Threats to sustainable democracy in Nigeria different authors have come up with different causes of anti-democratic behaviours. This range from poverty, greed and grievance, relative deprivation, wide spread marginalization, corruption in high places and general act of Jettisoning of the basic tenets of democracy. In these light there is fear of sustainability of democracy in Nigeria.

Technological Progress, Unemployment and Sustainable Democracy in Nigeria

The intension in this section is to link the nature and the source of the technological progress in Nigeria with unemployment in Nigeria and how it is transmitted to most of the issues associated with anti-democratic behaviors in Nigeria.

According to Thirlwall (2006) the concept of technical progress can be viewed from many perspectives, but for this work, three of these are sufficient. These include, first, this has to do with the concept of the “residual” which has to do with the effect of technology on the growth process. Secondly, in a more specialist way, it could be used to describe the attribute of the technical improvements, which may be used in adjectival sense, such as labour-saving, capital-saving or neutral technical improvements. This is to show which of the factors of production experiences reduction its usage with the improvement of technology, hence when it is labour-saving it means the improvement economizes in the use of labour. Lastly, it is used in the sense of the nature of the improvements in the design, sophistication and performance of plant and machinery, and

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the economic activities that channeled the improvements – research, invention development and innovation. This is in line with the fact that improvement in production which is the most approximate proxy for technical progress, result from an amalgam of research, invention, development and innovation. So that while research and invention bring about knowledge, development and innovation are the activities that utilize new knowledge.

Technological progress can have its sources from three different avenues. It could be through the domestic source which involves the presence of innovative and inventive activities of the nationals. People with vast technical education knowledge have a higher propensity to be involved in this, either on their own or as people that can be employed for faster training on the job. This is not to say that only products of technical or technological training can fit into this position, as we have another source of technological progress which has to do with “learning by doing” this is basically the issue of on the job training. Lastly, is the fact that technological progress can be derived from outside the country, either through foreign direct investment or as it is embodied in imports?

Another big issue technological advancement is the choice of appropriate technology. Technological progress that is not appropriate, for instance, that which is labour saving or high-imported technology is not conducive for a developing country like Nigeria. This is the case with most of the industrial establishments in Nigeria. The industry especially the refineries are cases in point. The best form of advancement in technology for a Nigerian should that will have a good multiplier effect on employment. This should be the Schumacher (1911-1977) intermediate technology. This technology as the name implies is neither in the nature of the traditional type nor of the large scale sophisticated type. This technological development is labour using and capital saving as well as takes into consideration the available resources locally.

Conclusion

Nigeria is currently in the fourth republic since 1999, a period of about 24 years running. This is very unlike the previous republic which had the longest lasting or only about seven years. This is actually applicable to the first and third republics, which were for the period 1960-1966 and 1987-1993 respectively, while the second republic lasted for only about four years, 1979 – 1983. An interesting question from the above analysis is whether the long lasting appearance of the fourth republic defines a sustainable democracy for Nigeria? What differences are there in the political environments running through the four republics that could testify to a sustained democracy in Nigeria judging from the duration of the fourth republic? These are questions that require some indepth inquiry. The main focus of this work is on how technical education could be used to enhance the sustenance of employment and democracy in Nigeria. Without doubts, the place of education in enlightenment and democracy is not an issue of debate. But for a country with increasing rate of unemployment and underemployment, the question of

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liberal education sounds contradictory. Given the nature of the Nigerian economy that is generously mono cultural, highly dependent on the crude oil sector and the quest for restructuring of the economy, the need for a prioritized educational system becomes of vital importance. Furthermore, the need to address the fast encroaching problem of the dearth of workmen such as mechanics, carpenters, tailors etc. also calls for specialized educational system. The sense in which the call for a technical education in the face of unemployment can be explained as follows. If we must restructure we must prepare for a specialist workforce relevant in the expected area of diversification. Also even as there is unemployment in Nigeria, the oil sector employs many non-Nigerian labour in the name of lack of indigenous specialists. Also the issue of technology transfer and the level of absorption of modern technology is a function of the technical training rather than the liberal education.

Education system that emphasizes technical training in all shade of human endeavour will encourage the growth of employers rather than that of employees. This is so because specialists from technical education will prefer to setup their micro or small scale firms as against looking for jobs. This will help to sustain democracy since less people will be either unemployed or underemployed. This will seriously reduce the people available to be employed by political to distort the process of democracy through all shades of thuggery.

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