

RELEVANCE OF UNIVERSITY EDUCATION CURRICULUM FOR VALUE RE-ORIENTATION, POVERTY ERADICATION AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

This paper discussed relevance of university education curriculum for value re-orientation, poverty eradication and national development. In this paper, value re-orientation was elaborated on where there has to be equality and re-orientation of values among citizens of any country irrespective of sex, religion, culture or political inclination. Value re-orientation would enable men and women to realize their potentials on a level playing ground. Societal practices and values amount to many gender inequalities perpetuated through the process of socialization. Therefore, call for value re-orientation demands that both men and women should not be restricted, rather an equalizer which demands that each person be provided for according to his/her needs and creating maximum opportunities for the development of each, irrespective of sex should be encouraged. Poverty eradication can be seen as various efforts or steps taken to bring down the rate of poverty. Poverty reduction has been the dream of many past Nigeria political administration, which has not been realized till date. It is against this background that this study attempts to discuss the importance of entrepreneurship education and training for sustainable development, youth empowerment and self-reliance, as a panacea for poverty eradication in Nigeria.

Keywords: University Education, Value Re-orientation, Poverty Eradication, National Development.

The success of any administration is largely determined by the level of economic growth and the impact on the citizenry. Value re-orientation and poverty eradication are fundamental to the actualization of national development. A clear focus of all these reforms is to make Nigeria a great country.

This laudable vision and other reforms associated with it is expected to succeed if equity and fairness are part of the development plan. This is because development is about human being; child and adult, male and female.

Hence, the paper will address specific and glaring areas where value re-orientation and poverty eradication are needed to eliminate the barriers of national development. The following sub-headings are addressed:

What is University Education?

Tertiary education is defined by the National Policy on Education (FRN 2004 p. 36) as "the education given after secondary education in Universities, Colleges of Education, Polytechnics, and Monotechnics including those institutions offering corresponding courses". This means that tertiary education in Nigeria is designed to cater for students who have graduated from senior secondary school, have the desire to further their education and have met the requirements of University Matriculation Examination and Senior Secondary Schools Examinations.

Brick, (2006) stated that tertiary education refers to third stage, third level, or post-secondary education, that is the educational level following the completion of secondary education. It includes universities as well as institutions that teach specific programmes of higher learning such as Colleges of Education, Technical Training Institutes, nursing schools and distance learning centres, tertiary education is taken to include undergraduate and postgraduate education. The education of undergraduates and postgraduates of tertiary institutions is an integral aspect of tertiary education. The various courses and programmes taught within these institutions are contained within the curriculum of each tertiary institution.

These institutions according to the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004) are centres of higher manpower performance and the ultimate wheel of social engineering for the survival of individual and society. The goals of tertiary education in Nigeria as articulated in the FRN (2004)

section stipulates that government is saddled with the task of attaining tertiary education goals and objectives.

Role/Functions of Tertiary Education

Tertiary education is important because of the role it plays in the country and in fulfillment of the requirements of the National Policy on Education. Fundamentally, it is used by the government for the transmission of national goals, the development of individuals and the society at large. The vital role tertiary education plays in Nigeria is crucial to the success, growth and development of the country. It is so essential that the National Policy on

Education (FRN. 2004 p. 36) stated that the goals of tertiary education include;

- Contribute to national development through high relevant manpower training;
- Develop and inculcate proper values for the survival of the individual and society.
- Develop the intellectual capabilities of individuals to understand and appreciate their local and external environment.
- Provide both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to be self-reliant and useful members of the society.
- Promote and encourage scholarship and community service.
- Forge and cement nation unity and
- Promote national and international understanding and interaction.

The rise in demand for tertiary education in Nigeria is increasing annually and as such, its role of being a relevant means of manpower training is ideal. The extraordinary inflow of candidates pursuing admission into tertiary institutions particularly in universities every year is one of the most palpable reasons for making it a training ground for manpower development. Another explanation that accounts for this logical role of tertiary education is that given the huge influx of applicants annually, more youths can be educated and trained in formal tertiary educational institutions through this means. This will in turn become a veritable tool for national development since there will be available skilled manpower to occupy various sectors of the economy thus promoting economic growth and expansion (Adeloye, 2000).

With the current population explosion and mass aspiration for tertiary education by most youths in Nigeria, the role of being a means to develop and inculcate proper values for the survival of individuals and the society can also be achieved more easily. This is because through tertiary education, the social-economic and labour market demands of the society can be actualized. The Federal Government through proper educational policies can inculcate appropriate values in individuals via the Federal, State and privately owned tertiary educational institutions in the country. However, given the huge cultural divide amongst the various tribes and geo-political zones in Nigeria, it is essential that there is first a common national ideology which can then be transmitted to youths via tertiary education. Tertiary institutions should in fact be centres for the development of socially-relevant academic programmes which are vital for increasing globalization and a knowledge based economy (Isibor 2011).

Other goals of tertiary education in Nigeria such as building the intellectual capability of individuals to understand and appreciate their local and external environments, helping to sustain democracy in Nigeria. Also the development of physical and intellectual skills that will enable individuals to be self-reliant and useful members of the society are also essential responsibilities of tertiary education in Nigeria. In essence, the critical position tertiary education holds in the nations education sector cannot be undermined the development of tertiary education in the country remains an important factor. (Okhukola, 2004)

Concept of value, value re-orientation, poverty eradication, national development, conclusion and recommendations and references.

Concept of Value Re-orientation

Value reorientation connotes new ways of doing things (Anokam & Onyemerekeya, 2010). This means that there has to be equality and reorientation of values among citizens of any country

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irrespective of sex, religion, culture or political inclination. Value reorientation would enable women and men to realize their potentials on a level playing ground. Kannon (2008) asserts that societal practices and values amount to the many gender inequalities perpetuated through the process of socialization. She further stated that a study on gender socialization in some African societies has shown that socialization of children, through child rearing techniques and educational practices reproduces and reinforce such differences. Therefore, gender advocacy or call for value reorientation demands that both men and women should not be restricted, rather be an-equalizer which demands that each person be provided for according to his/her needs and creating maximum opportunities for the development of each, irrespective of sex should be encouraged.

Poverty is the state of being very poor. Poverty can be categorized into three, namely: absolute poverty, relative poverty and subjective poverty. These three concepts form the basis of poverty alleviation programmes in Nigeria.

- i. Absolute Poverty is a situation where an individual or household is faced with limited financial resources and as a result, unable to meet his/her basic necessities of life such as food, clothes, shelter and health care services. Individuals, families or groups are considered to be in absolute poverty when they lack the resources, particularly real income, to obtain the type of diets needed to enjoy some fixed minimum standard of living determined by a given society (World Bank, 2008).
- ii. Relative Poverty is a situation where an individual's or a household's income is less than the average income of the population in the society being considered. The result is that the individual or household has goods and services which are lower than those of other persons or households in the society (Garuba, 2010). Those who are in the relative poverty level have their resources far lower than those possessed by average individuals or households, to the extent that they are, in effect, excluded from ordinary living patterns, customs and activities.
- iii. Subjective Poverty is a perception of respondents about their standard of living. The feeling of whether one is poor or not depends on the absolute minimum standard of living below which one is categorized as poor (World Bank, 2008).

Poverty is widely understood as the condition of living on an income below a certain minimum threshold. The World Bank defines those living on/under US \$2 a day as living in poverty and those living on/under US \$1.25 a day, as living in extreme poverty internationally. It has been estimated that as at 2013, there were about 2.47 billion people in the world living in poverty with an income of USD 2 or less a day, most of them from developing or underdeveloped countries located in Africa and Asian continents.

Nigeria emerged from colonialism as a poor country. Her situation has been weakened by poverty, diseases and ignorance. This is in spite of the fact that the country is endowed with vast human and material resources to the extent that there should be no traces of poverty, but regrettably, the country enjoys poverty in the midst of plenty.

Poverty seems to have become a natural phenomena in the under-developed and developing countries. It is a relative term that means different things to different categories of people. To international community, it simply means living on less than \$2 per day; to the average Nigerian; it is the inability to acquire the basic needs of life; to the working class, it is the lack of access to basic government services such as education, food, health care, water etc. Greenberg (2005) defines poverty as a situation of insufficient material resources, poor access to health care and education, lack of rights, freedom, economic and social empowerment and opportunities.

The average Nigerian is poor, hungry and helpless despite the various economic empowerment programmes of the government .

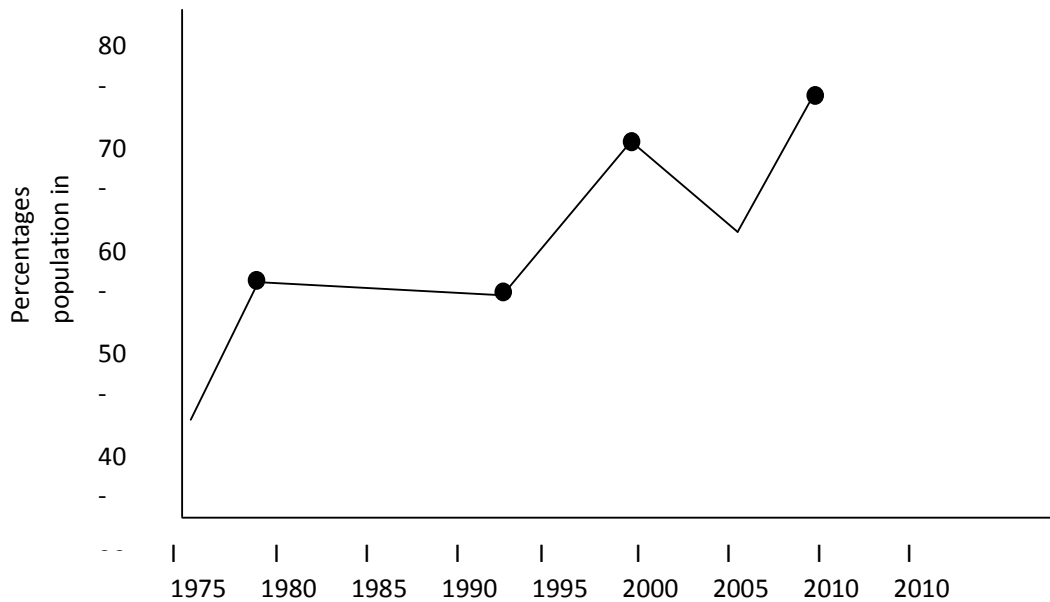


Figure 1 shows the poverty percentage incidence in Nigeria.

Figure 1: Poverty percentage incidence in Nigeria

(Sources: Nigerian Bureau of Statistics, 2016)

We note that the poor population percentage has always been on the increase since 1980 irrespective of the various economic intervention programmes and policies of the government. This has also translated to a direct increase in the total poor population (see Fig 2)

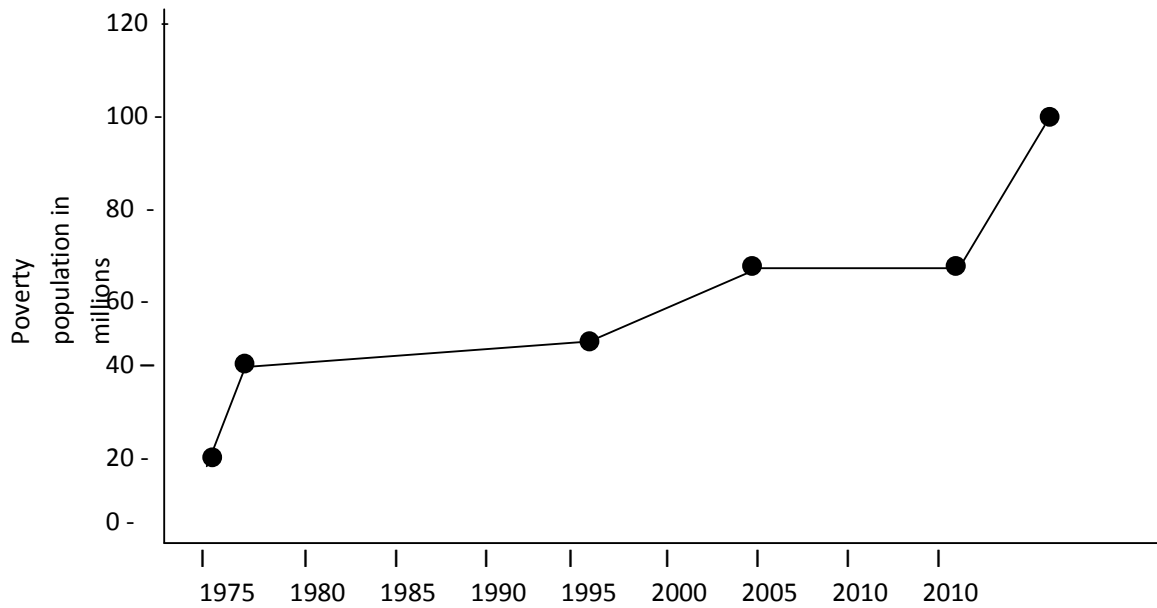


Figure 2: Nigeria's poverty population (Source: Nigerian Bureau of Statistics, 2016)

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The Nigerian scenario is one in which the poor gets poorer while the rich gets richer. The major challenges of the Nigerian government therefore remains the eradication of poverty. The Nigerian poverty shows that poverty knows no educational boundary since both the non – educated and all others with various forms of education (formal, technical or vocational are not spared).

Poverty Reduction

This can be seen as various efforts or steps taken to bring down the rate of poverty or the population of the poor in the society to the barest minimum. Poverty reduction has been the dream of many past Nigerian political administrations, which has not been realized till date. This fact is in connection with the idea that entrepreneurship which is and should be a strong weapon in poverty alleviation has not yet been optimally initiated. Aside the point that numerous young and middle – aged men and women are highly interested in and eager to learn some skills which would help them become financially independent, self-employed and be liberated from the shackles of poverty, there are still some forces or factors which militate against the actualization of entrepreneurship and poverty reduction in Nigeria.

Poverty Eradication

In Nigeria, most of the poverty alleviation measures or initiatives are embedded in entrepreneurship component, but have suffered several challenges, culminating in failure. Some of the schemes include; National Empowerment Scheme (NES), National Resources Development and Conservation Scheme (NRDCS) and Rural Infrastructural Development Scheme (RIDS). Entrepreneurship Education and training (EET) was initiated in the attempt of the Lagos State Government in alleviating poverty by including EET in the curriculum design and development in the university.

They also established training centres such as technical and vocational schools and apprenticeship centres for all. This was to absorb the unemployed and intending job seekers to eradicate poverty in the State. For example, the Lagos State Government has developed vocational and Acquisition Training Centers in all the twenty (20) Local Governments and thirty – seven (37) Local Council Development Area (LCDA) in the State. Therefore, the impact of entrepreneurship training in reducing poverty by providing jobs and adequate skills in Lagos State cannot be over-emphasized.

In order to make the policy thrust real, the Federal Ministry of Education (FME) established the polytechnic system, to promote EET, thereby serving as a platform for producing middle – level manpower for the growing industrial complexes and commercial establishments in the country. In the same vein, the Federal Ministry of Education has continued to provide financial and logistics support for EET. This is because of its potential as a strategy of poverty eradication, job creation, sustainable development and actualization of the Economic Transformation Agenda (Ladipo, Akuhemonkhan & Raimi 2013). Faced with scary unemployment figures in Nigeria and despite the initiative enunciated above, the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) approved the establishment of ninety – nine (99) Vocational Enterprise Institutions (VEIs) and Innovation Enterprise Institutes (IEIs) to complement the ongoing efforts of conventional polytechnics in Nigeria. The polytechnics, VEIs and IEIs in the country presently provide EET and award National Diploma (ND) National Innovation Diploma (NID) and National Vocational Certificate (NVC) respectively to worthy graduates (Ladipo et al 2013).

As society becomes more complex, life becomes tougher and education has become more problematic in function; therefore, different programmes (innovations) become necessary. In the attempt to produce skilled manpower, the Federal Government's attention should now focus on entrepreneurship education across all levels of education. Entrepreneurship education and other forms like ICT have been acknowledged worldwide as potent and viable tools for self – employment, job and wealth creation.

Apart from poverty reduction potentials of EET, its implementation could also serve as instrument for curbing social exclusion where cost of higher education is out of the reach of the majority and could as well serve as antidote for youth restiveness when the labour market is saturated.

Further, Nwachukwu, (2001) states that EET, if well positioned could play multidimensional roles of stimulating economic growth, social development, improving conventional education empowerment, wealth creation, poverty reduction and skills enhancement in a nation with recurring incidences of youth restiveness, EET is well suited to help youths and adults become self-dependent and self –reliant, while for those working in the industries, EET is helpful in the area of skills enhancement, mitigation of high job turnover and risk of obsolescence (Okolocha, 2012).

National Development

National development can be considered as a multidimensional phenomenon which can encompass the economic, social, political and technological factors. In this county, the practice has been to measure it mainly through economic dimensions such as growth in per capita income (Onyakanmu 2006: 83). It is however, pertinent to note that whether development is measured through economic dimension or per capita income growth or not, the development of any country is not possible in the presence of those factors which threaten and hamper the increase and population of entrepreneurs in the country.

National development can be described as the overall development or a collective socio-economic, political as well as religious advancement of a country or nation (Gboyega, 2003). This is best achieved through development planning, which can be described as the country's collection of strategies mapped out by the government. Therefore, since national development is all –embracing and a collective social; economic, political as well as religious advancement of a country or nation, women are supposed to be allowed fully to contribute their quota and God given talents towards national development so as to achieve the millennium development goals (MDGs) by 2015 and beyond.

Problems of National Development in Nigeria

There are series of development strategies put in place by successive governments, and sometimes with good intentions, but all attempts to generate meaningful development proved futile. A lot of factors have combined to fetter the nation's development.

First, there are in most cases, no executive capacity responsible for the formulation and implementation of the plan. What we usually see are officials entrusted with positions but without any meaningful executive authority.

Secondly, some of the previous development plans failed because there was little or no consultation of the general public when making decisions or planning. Planning is supposed to involve even the peasants in the villages. Even the Local Government officials who are close to the people were not consulted. Planning is not an edifice where technocrats alone operate (Mimiko, 2008).

Thirdly, lack of good government also militates against national development. When there is no good governance, development becomes a mirage. This is as a result of bad leadership in the country. Most of our leaders have no sense of commitment to development.

Furthermore, high level of corruption and indiscipline is another barrier to national development. Nigerian state is corrupt and is managed by corrupt leaders who have made the state an instrument of capital accumulation rather than using it to project the interest of the citizenry. A thorough corrupt state can hardly do a thorough good job even if supervised by a very good plan (Mimiko, 2008). Corruption and development are antithetical to each other. The two cannot cohabit, and so, where one is present, the other suffers.

Strategies for National Development

The beauty of any development plan is the faithful implementation of such a plan, which its success lies with the implementers. Development requires total commitment on the part of the leadership. The need for discipline and honesty on the part of the project implementers cannot be compromised. Such official should show enough discipline, interest, willingness, dedication and honesty. Without these attributes and the will to pursue set economic goals, all other ingredients of development present would amount to nullity,

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Development depends very much on human resources, knowledge and skill. This is because human resource development is sine qua non to Nigeria national development. This was demonstrated in Japan and Korea.

Stability and continuity of politics encourage investment and propel development. For instance, when Park was assassinated, his policies remained and were built on. Nigerian leaders must learn to build on policies rather than jettison them for new ones for the sake of party politics and personal interest.

Conclusion

This paper has carefully discussed on importance of university education curriculum, value re-orientation, poverty eradication and national development which have affected curriculum greatly. It also examined the problems or challenges of national development and outlined some viable strategies needed to engender sustainable development in Nigeria. If these strategies are implemented, the country would achieve its goals on poverty eradication and on national development.

Recommendations

Based on the above, the researcher made the following recommendations:

- (a) Government should embrace continuity in implementing national development plans especially when they are good and on-going.
- (b) Government should provide special incentives to teachers and health workers in rural areas, which are some of the factors that induce rural – urban migration.
- (c) The Federal Ministry of Education should organize broad-based sensitization campaigns for the general public on the essence of EET as a learning option. When this programmatic measure is carried out properly at all levels, it would fast-track attitudinal change and elicit positive commitment from parents, students, wards and all other stakeholders in the country. This measure is expected to correct the negative stereotyping of students on different EET programmes in Nigeria.
- (d) Federal and State Governments and other stakeholders should provide adequate funding for EET in their annual budgets. This will help to enhance the capacity of technical education programmes in meeting individual, group and national aspirations. Additional boost could come from the Tertiary Educational Trust Fund (TETFUND) as intervention support in critical area.
- (e) The National Universities Commission (NUC) should mandate all universities in Nigeria, to create entrepreneurship development centres, to put in place two compulsory courses on entrepreneurship for all courses on entrepreneurship for all cadres of undergraduate students, irrespective of their discipline. The same should be done for colleges of education and polytechnics.
- (f) Entrepreneurship development should be inculcated into the schools' curriculum to promote human empowerment and development through entrepreneurial skill acquisition training.
- (g) Regulatory authorities should have need for standardization and regular monitoring of EET in Nigeria. This would help the regulatory authorities to develop a strong institutional supervision mechanism to regularly monitor education in Nigeria.
- (h) Training and re-training of teachers in entrepreneurship education is paramount for pragmatic development to take place in Nigeria. This is because no nation can develop more than the standard of her teachers. Teachers of entrepreneurship courses should be sponsored to attend national and international workshops and conferences for the purpose of keeping them abreast of new developments in technical education methodologies.

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