

# QUALITY EDUCATION: AN IMPERATIVE FOR ACHIEVEMENT OF DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA BEYOND 2020

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## **Abstract**

Quality education plays vital roles in empowering the people with the right intellectual development, skills acquisition and social values which catapults any nation in quest of development to greater heights. Nigeria's development beyond 2020 to a large extent is dependent on availability and affordability of education to greater number of the citizens irrespective of age, economic, ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds. The intimidating number of job seekers in the labour market in Nigeria is an indication that the education system we are currently running do not empower school graduates for self employment neither has the state given sufficient attention to job creation to ameliorate the high level of unemployment in the country. Consequently the situation has plunged a good number of the youths into various anti-social activities like prostitution, armed robbery, kidnapping, drug abuse; drug trafficking, cultism and piracy. Quality education therefore is the only means of check-mating these vices and providing the right political culture, economic prosperity, social stability and egalitarian society envisioned for Nigeria beyond 2020. It is now that we have to work to ensure that Nigeria beyond 2020 will be better.

Those who conceptualized the issue of Nigeria beyond 2020 have thought well as they have put everybody, the educational, political, economic and social systems into perspective. It is a clarion call for all meaningful Nigerians to think of how to pull Nigeria out from the present unreliable and unpredictable educational, political, economic and social systems b *Onyeke*

eclosing the nation. The need for an educational system which can bequeath the youths with the right training, making them contributory members of the society is imperative. This journey has to start with the pursuance of quality teacher education to guarantee production of quality teachers coupled with proper maintenance of teachers' welfare packages since they are the implementers of the educational policy. Any experience that has a formative effect on the way one thinks, feels, or asks may be considered educational and should not be taken for granted. Nishihara (2003) observes that education frequently takes place under the guidance of others, but may be also autodidactic. That notwithstanding, Nigeria beyond 2020 shall remain the same if the teaching force is not catered for adequately. The desirability of educational opportunities to all and sundry in Nigeria is indisputable if Nigeria beyond 2020 shall be better than today. Against this background, the Federal Government of Nigeria has made giant strides to guarantee educational opportunities to its citizenry.

Vision 2020 seeks to position Nigeria amongst the 20 largest economies in the world with a Gross Domestic Products (GDP) of not less than \$900 billion and per capital income of not less than \$4,000 per year by the year 2020 (Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia 2010). The African News (2010) says that the vision is towards making Nigeria to have a large, strong, diversified, competitive and technological enabled economy that effectively harnesses its national endowments to guarantee a high standard of living and quality of life for its citizens. The Blue Print was unveiled on 25<sup>th</sup> September, 2009 to attain this objective.

According to Igbuzor (2006), the MDGs are targeted to achieving the eradication of poverty, ensuring universal primary education, promoting gender equality and empowering women, reducing child mortality, improving maternal health, combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, ensuring

environmental sustainability and developing partnership for development on or before the year 2015. In respect of this, the Federal Government of Nigeria targets:

1. To achieve Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of not less than \$900 billion and national per income of not than \$4,000 per year 2020.
2. Decentralization of governance; sustainability; electoral reforms; and land use/property reforms; public service reform; national security, human capacity development and critical infrastructures (with particular emphasis on power and transportation).
3. Government aims to generate 600,000 megawatt (MW) of electricity to make Nigeria truly among the league of twenty great countries by focusing on renewable and sustainable energy source.
4. By 2019, Nigeria's per capital would reach \$1,700 triple the figure of 2005, while it projects that at current level, Nigeria's population by 2020 would rise to over 200 million (Federal Government Blue Print, 2009).

The fear being nursed is that achieving all these targets by 2020 seems impossible with the increasing level of corruption, increasing falling standard in education, and the inability of government to meet their political promises like the provision of portable water, electricity, good roads and education for all.

### **Educational Opportunities for All**

Ogbonnaya (2009) looks at educational opportunities as a situation where adequate opportunities are proposed for all children to benefit from education or training.

When a nation offers educational opportunities to her citizens, that nation is bound to progress. To show Nigeria's commitment to educational opportunities to her citizens, she enshrined it in the 1999 Constitution as is stipulated in section 18(1) "government shall direct its policy towards ensuring that there are equal and adequate educational opportunities at all levels". In section I (4c) of the nation's NPE, this belief was emphasized thus "every Nigeria child shall have a right to equal educational opportunities irrespective of any real or imagined disabilities, each according to his or her abilities". In pursuance of that, Nigeria established agencies that would cater for provision of infrastructure and teaching material like Education Trust Fund (ETF), Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFUND), etc. In spite of all these arrangements, educational opportunities still elude Nigerians due to such impediments like high school fees, unemployment after graduation, corruption, brain drain, ethnicity and religious bigotry. Moreover, most educational institutions are still without good laboratories for practical works, classroom blocks are dilapidated, teachers are not well paid, etc. These affect teaching, learn and learning outcomes. Absence of educational opportunities has its bad effects on the political and social life of the nation. It not only breeds social vices and crippling economy, it fosters political and religious intolerance which run in contrary to better Nigeria beyond 2020.

### **Unemployment in Nigeria Beyond 2020**

To a great extent, the unemployment level in Nigeria has remained unabated due to the nation's inability to track down problems hindering quality educational outcomes. A glance at the Nigeria's Gross Domestic Products between 1980 and 2005 as published by International Monetary Fund (IMF) is necessary to highlight the bad effects of unavailable and unaffordable of educational opportunities in Nigeria.

Year	Gross Domestic Product	US Dollar Exchange	Inflation Index (2000-100)	Per Capital Income (as % of USA)
1980	50,849	0.78 Naira	1.30	7.22
1985	98,619	2.83 Naira	3.20	1.87
1990	286,374	8.94 Naira	8.10	1.49
1995	1,928,642	54.36 Naira	56	1.28
2000	4,675,394	102.24 Naira	100	1.11

***Quality Education: An Imperative for Achievement of Development in Nigeria Beyond 2020***

2005	14,984,454	131.01 Naira	207	1.96
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International Monetary Fund (IMF), 2005

From the above figures, it is shown that the inflation index had increased marginally. In 2005 for instance, the nation's expenditure rose to US \$13.54 million but revenue of only US \$12.86, resulting in budget deficit of 5 percent which affected employment level of the nation. In 2003, the overall unemployment rate was 10.8 percent (Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia (2020)).

The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) (2013) reports that 54 per cent of Nigerian youths were unemployed in 2012. Of this, females stood at 41.9 per cent while 48.1 stood for males. The report also said that "out of 46,836 youths recorded against different types of crimes, 42,071, representing 75.5 per cent were males, while the remaining 24.5 per cent were females.

Ayodele Omotoso the Director of National Planning Commission says that "unemployment in Nigeria dangle between 60-70 percent while the nation can only employ about 10 percent of the unemployed. The Minister of Labour was reported to have observed that "about 40 million Nigerian youths are unemployed, 80 percent of these are graduates that are unemployable and this has formed part of the impediments to the country's strive for national growth and development (Eze, Idoko and Fagbemi, 2009). The unemployable state of these youths is a product of several factors like strife between the government and university lecturers over academic autonomy and demand for proper funding of education by lecturers, failure in the moral infrastructure of education which has led to poor value for hard work; and consequently, the proliferation of examination malpractices in out educational institutions, brain drain syndrome, poor vocational guidance to the students from parents and academic advisers, etc. In pursuance of a better Nigeria beyond 2020, the Regional Vice President of World Bank, Oby Ezekwesisili is of the opinion that the issue of youth unemployment needs to be addressed from many entry points. The profile of unemployed youth has to enter the way we think of gender matters. Youth need to be effectively targeted in everything we do, so that they have a stake in the future (World Bank Report, 2010). The Minister was also reported to have regretted that despite efforts by previous administrations' strategies to combat the problem; socio-economic indicators have continued to show that the number of men and women joining the ranks of the employed, working under poor conditions and others in the vulnerable group have perpetually been on the increase. This figure, according to the Minister, is mostly made of unemployed youths between 18 and 25 years who constitute the leaders of tomorrow. Regrettably too, the figure did not include those not captured by the unemployment index and those that have not been looking for jobs because they believe that jobs are not there. The minister was quoted to have concluded that unemployment has assumed a different and worrisome dimension. Odukoya (2002) equally laments that there are thousands of educated but unemployed Nigerian youths who cannot pay taxes. By implication, these educated but unemployed have not contributed to the economic advancement of the nation in such a manner that they were expected. By design, Vision 2020 is expected to reduce the tally of unemployed youths if not eliminate unemployment among the youths.

Several factors are responsible for the present youth unemployment in Nigeria. These include: high level official corruption in the country. Against this point, Odukoya (2002) states, that there are also educated elites who have looted the treasury so massively that they could hardly be described as effective citizens. The effects of this cankerworm have eaten deep into the bone marrow of Nigeria's treasury, economy, politics and image (both home and abroad). Obayelu (2007) laments that corruption in Nigeria has affected our economic growth; reduced economic efficiency and development despite all the enormous resources; creates negative national image, devalues the quality of life, robs schools, agricultural sectors, hospital and welfare services of funds; discourages foreign investments leading to decrease in foreign investment, desecrates the rule of law and undermines the legitimacy and stability of democratic regimes.

**Consequences of Youth Unemployment in Nigeria**

1. Youth unemployment in Nigeria is a basic indicator which places the nation among the 20 poorest countries of the world (Encyclopedia of the Nations, 2010).

2. This has led to the high level youth unemployment in the country and the concomitant involvement of the youths in criminal activities and other social vices just to make ends meet.

3. Prostitution in Nigeria has gained recognition such that a more decent descriptive name ‘sex worker’ has been coined to shield the practitioner from the public ridicule of conceiving them as prostitutes. News 24: Africa: Features (2010) reports that there are as much as 15000 prostitutes in Abuja alone and more than a million women sex workers of 22 year-old in Nigeria. The report also has it that in West Africa; as many as seven million people are infected with HIV or AIDS. It is regrettable that government, instead of attacking the problem through job creation, embarked on mounting public awareness campaign about the disease on large bill boards along the Abuja main roads, urging the public to “stop the spread of AIDS” and spending millions of Naira advertising “stop the spread of AIDS” on newspaper. Another reason for prostitution in Nigeria is the patriarchal ownership of wealth supported by strong customary tiers.

4. Youths involvements in armed robbery have become rampant. In a report filed by the Maritime Safety Committee after their 74<sup>th</sup> session held from May to June 2001 to the International Maritime Organization (IMO), it was stated that there is a dramatic increase in piracy and armed robbery during the year 2000. There were 471 incidents of armed robbery representing an increase above 50 percent. The number of cases for 1999 stood at 162 representing 50 percent. The committee was extremely concerned that during the same period, the crews of ships were violently attacked by groups of five to ten persons carrying knives or guns as a result of which seventy- two crew members had been killed, one hundred and twenty-nine wounded and five reported missing. In addition, one ship was destroyed; two ships were hijacked; three ships went missing; and in three occasions, the attackers used explosive devices. At our various communities, there had been reports of armed robbers menacing the inhabitants killing, rapping and carting away people’s properties. There are incidents of bank robbery and terrorisms in big shops and supermarkets, on the roads and in institutions. This has led to the establishment of vigilante groups/Neighborhood Watch Association to help in controlling the activities of these miscreants in our society especially in the South–South Geo-political Zone of Nigeria. In view of the above, Onyeke (2009) notes that Neighborhood Watch Association/Vigilante Group is a recent security outfit established to assist the regular security in maintenance of peace and order.

5. Kidnapping in Nigeria of innocent citizens for ransoms have remained unabated. According to Police Yahoo (2010), unknown gunmen in Eastern Nigeria kidnapped three journalists and demanded a ransom of 250 Million Naira (1.66 million dollars). The report also said that from investigation, kidnapping for ransom is common in Aba and Akwa Ibom States. Reuters (2010) reports that kidnapping is wide spread throughout Nigeria as gangs have filled their purses by kidnapping Nigerian politicians, children and religious figures. By 2008, thirty three (33) cases of kidnappings were reported; in 2010, the situation has worsened that a total of 512 kidnappings have been recorded.

Drug peddling in Nigeria is another bad effect of unemployment. A report by the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (2010) indicates that Nigeria is the hub of trafficking narcotics in Africa. Nigeria narcotics trafficking organizations control the drug markets of Sub-Saharan Africa, and operate drug distribution network from strategic locations throughout the world. The reports also states that Nigerian drug peddlers in addition to transporting large portions of heroin into United States, they smuggle American cocaine to Europe and Africa, especially from South Africa as well as export marijuana – the only narcotics cultivated in Nigeria to other countries in Africa and Europe.

The solution to all these problems lies in empowering the youths through job creation and offering them good education/skill acquisition training that would enable them make a living and contribute to the economic, social and political development of the country. To this end, the National Economic Empowerment Development Strategies (NEEDS) proposed to create 7 million new jobs. To that effect

### ***Quality Education: An Imperative for Achievement of Development in Nigeria Beyond 2020***

too, the Federal Government established 9 new federal universities spread across the six geo-political zones of the country; a strategy to transforming their dream into realities (Ademuwagun, 2014).

Corruption among highly placed government officials/politicians who loot the country's treasury contribute greatly to youth unemployment Nigeria. The money they divert to their private accounts is sufficient to make significant impact on job creation for the teeming youths. Vision 2020 becomes realistic in Nigeria when the majority of its citizens has gainful employment and potentially contributes to the growth of the society.

According to Ezema (2012), "quality education is a potent instrument that helps individuals to acquire appropriate attitude, skills, ability and competence needed to co-exist with others and be able to contribute maximally in building a variable and suitable society. Education empowers the individual by equipping him with knowledge and skills, the benefits of which includes.

1. with sound knowledge and skills, the individual is positioned to contribute to national development;
2. with good education the individual is made employable especially in the person's area of specialization;
3. good education provides the nation with quality teachers, carpenters; architects, lawyers, engineers, doctors, managers and administrators etcetera;
4. good education revolutionizes morally bankrupt country like Nigeria into an ethical generation where human right and privileges are respected; and,
5. good education paves way for industrialization and increase in gross domestic products especially in areas of food security and health.

Government of Nigeria has severally made frantic efforts to provide good education to the people and those who avail themselves of the available educational opportunities end up being educated. The dividend of accessing the educational opportunities provided by government provides the nation with men and women of integrity that contribute to the national development with their experiences, talents, training, competences and skills.

### **Conclusion**

It is understood that youth unemployment is a factor that needs to be addressed in the actualization process of the vision of Nigeria beyond 2020. Equal educational opportunities contribute immensely in solving the problem of unemployment in Nigeria. Creation of jobs for the teeming youths graduating from schools is a measure dissuading the youths from engaging in such dangerous and painstaking activities like prostitution, armed robbery, drug peddling, cultism and other crimes. Opening up closed factories/industries and rescinding of the privatization policy paves way to better Nigeria. Corruption should be fought from all angles as it the greatest contributor to the rising wave of insecurity and youth involvement in crimes in Nigeria. It is believed that if all these measures are put in place effectively, Nigeria beyond 2020 would be a paradise.

### **Recommendations**

Towards the realization of vision 2020, the following recommendations have been adduced:

1. Our education system should be made practical oriented as a sure way to making our youths self employed.
2. The nation's wealth should be properly distributed so as to make everybody have a fill of it.
3. Government, non-governmental organizations and individuals should embark on the establishment of new industries and rehabilitation of battered ones to pave way for job creation.
4. Looting of nation's treasury and display of such loot in form of costly cars and buildings should not be encouraged; while stringent measures should be handed down on culprits.
5. The issue of privatization should be revisited since privatization encourages loss of jobs in exchange of profiteering.

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**Quality Education: An Imperative for Achievement of Development in Nigeria Beyond 2020**

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