

EDUCATION AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT: NIGERIAN EXPERIENCE

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Conceptual Clarifications

There are certain key concepts like *education, development and national development* that need to be clarified and explained. The word 'Education' etymologically comes from two Latin words 'educare' and 'educere'. 'Educare' refers to train, to form or to mould. What this means is that the society trains, forms or moulds the individual to realize his or her social needs and aspirations. 'Educere' means to build, lead or to develop. The Humanist in supporting this view, stated that the function of education is to develop the innate potentials in the child to enable him fit in adequately to function in the society in accordance with the child's abilities, interests and needs. (Amaele et al: 2011). They went further to define education as "the total development of the child through established acceptable methods and techniques based on his abilities and interests to make up the socio-economic and political needs of the society and to equip the individual to take his rightful place and become useful citizen and contribute meaningfully to the development of the society".

For Fafunwa (1974), education means what each generation gives to its younger ones which make them develop attitudes, abilities, skills and other behavioural attributes which are germane to the growth of the society in which they live. Generally, education is the instrument used for the development of human beings in the cognitive, affective, psychomotor and psycho productive domains. This is achieved through the process of teaching and learning.

Development, in the other hand, is a multi- dimensional process involving re-organization and re-orientation of the entire economic and social systems. These dimensions include; utilitarian, behavioural, institutional and structural dimensions. At individual level, development implies increased skill and capacity to earn income, greater freedom of action, creativity, self discipline, responsibility and general material and psychological well being. This is realizable only in relation to the state of society

National development implies:

- i. Increased capacity to regulate internal and external relations.
- ii. Increase in ability to guard national independence
- iii. Self sufficiency in food production
- iv. High level of employment
- v. Equalization in the distribution of social services
- vi. Self Reliance
- vii. Independent control of the Economy
- viii. Equalization of Economic opportunity
- ix. Ability to solve internal problems
- x. Greater share of international trade
- xi. Quality Education

National development also connotes the ability of a state to provide a source of living for the majority of its inhabitants and elimination of poverty, provision of adequate welfare, shelter, clothing to its citizens. This implies socio-economic growth, social justice and positive changes in social relationship, intergovernmental relationship, popular participation in politics and overall restructuring and transformation of the society. This brings us to the question of What is the synergy between Education and National Development.? In order words how does education influence, impact or improve the quality of life of the citizens?

The Role of Education in National Development

“Education is the heart of national development and the source of quality human capital development that will propel Nigeria to be among the top 20 economies in the world” (President Jonathan, 2011.) “The quality of our workforce is a direct reflection of the quality of our schooling system” (President Jonathan 2010)

The above quotations underscore the fundamental importance Nigeria attaches to education as a vital instrument for national development. Since Nigeria got her political independence in 1960, she has demonstrated her commitment to education as a tool for personal and national development. In her effort to see education as a vehicle for national development, Nigeria fashioned out the National Policy on Education as part of the post independent Pan-African educational reforms in the early 1960s. Educational reform was then seen an essential ingredient of the nation-building efforts of the newly independent states of Africa. (Idris Wada, 2013). Nigeria also conducted a National Curriculum Conference in 1969 to change the existing education system which had become irrelevant and inappropriate to national needs, aspirations and goals. (National Policy on Education: 1977). Since then, there have been several other educational reforms all aimed at making the Nigerian educational system more relevant to nation-building and growth.

Education is basic to national development. Obviously, the standards and quality of the educational system and the capacity to innovate determine the place of growth and development of a nation.

It is therefore imperative or a *sin qua non* that each country must educationally grow its people to provide the foundation and thrust for true and sustainable national development (Chukwumerije, 2013). The primary objective of education is to produce good and useful citizens that will be instrumental to socio-economic development of their countries.

The teacher therefore, is very vital in the socio-economic and political engineering of any country that wants to develop. *Who is a teacher.* A teacher is a professional, who in a pedagogically and morally accepted manner, imparts knowledge, and learning experiences at his/her disposal to stimulate, guide, direct and facilitate learners to acquire adequate mastery of the skill being imparted” (Wokocha: 2013). Education to a large extent has contributed immensely to national development in the following ways:

- i. The educational system provides the needed manpower for national development. It is believed that an educated polity or nation is one that has enough manpower and each person occupies his or her rightful position to enhance national growth. (Afolabi and Loto 2010:340). Education, as an indispensable tool, imbues in the citizens and assists nations in meeting their political, moral, cultural and economic aspirations. Education imparts in the individual knowledge, skills, dexterity, character and desirable values that will precipitate and galvanize national development and self actualization. The implication of the above is that education moulds and trains the individual to be useful in the society and contribute positively to national development. This is what is obtainable in advanced political systems with quality educational system like US, Britain, France and even Singapore, South Korea etc. The quality of a nation’s education determines the level of its national development. This is why all governments (civil and military) in Nigeria since 1960 have demonstrated commitment to education. How far these commitments have achieved their objectives is a different matter. Education is the single most significant tool of social control for national development whether formal or informal. Even in the ancient Greece, the cradle Western Scholarship, education was a functional search light beamed on society for direction and advancement of the welfare of its citizens. (Corobosa, 2010). Another contribution is the production of political, social-economic, medical experts and other essential specialists that are key to policy making national development.
- iii. Education also permits social and group relationship. Through education, individuals are trained to relate and interact with others in the society and appreciate the importance of human interconnectivity to enable them accomplish common goals and achieve national

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- unity. Schools bring people of different cultural and religious background together and succeed in integrating them to realize common objectives e.g. Universities, National Assembly, national institutions etc, with minimum friction.
- iv. Through education, the culture of productivity is promoted by enabling individuals to discover and unlock their latent creative potentials in them and apply same to improve efficiency of their personal and societal efforts.
 - v. Education teaches good values to the citizens which make them good and useful citizens in the society. Such values include; honesty, selflessness, dedication, patriotism, national integrity, hard work etc. These are qualities of good leadership which are grossly lacking in Nigeria.

Impediments to Education and Development in Nigeria

For about two decades after independence, Nigeria maintained high qualitative educational standards and indirectly a positive development index. Teachers exerted to train their pupils and were highly regarded by society. Graduates of Nigerian Universities were highly sought after as they excelled in graduate studies in the best Universities in the world. But from 1980s, the fabric of Nigerian education system started to degenerate and today our school system is almost prostrate and in comatose. Primary school pupils hardly have enough seats to sit nor enough teachers. Most secondary schools hardly perform experiments or practicals while tertiary institutions are poorly funded and lack infrastructure. The Nigerian teacher is the most important educator in these institutions. Regrettably, his fortunes have been vacillated over time. Today, the erstwhile highly esteemed and respected teacher is treated essentially as the scum of the public. The Nigeria government in recent time has not sufficiently funded education to the extent of making a significant impact on the educational system.

From 1999-2015, the percentage of budgetary allocation to education has not exceeded 12 percent which is not meeting the minimum requirement

Other serious challenges to the educational system include;

- i. Poor implementation of education policies such as the 6334 system.
- ii. Constant change of educational policies
- iii. Emphasis on certificates and status
- iv. Inadequate infrastructures
- v. Improper implementation of ICT program in schools
- vi. Inadequate supervision of educational institutions (public and private).
- vii. Politicization of education in Nigeria to suit the interests of policy makers.
- viii. Poverty
- ix. Inequity in reward system
- x. Lack of synergy between theory and practice
- xi. Lack of commitment to national objectives
- xii. Corruption

Conclusion

This paper focused on education and national development and identified areas education contributes to national development through sound educational system. It also pointed out areas of challenges that impede national development due to lack of policy continuity, poor infrastructures development, poor motivation of teachers. For education to contribute meaningfully to national development, some vital recommendations have been put forward and if adhered to will address the problem facing our educational system. Education is a fundamental barometer for measuring progress of development. It is critical for growth and development of any nation

Recommendations

Education is too important to be left for government, or any one set of interest alone. The model of education policy design and governance needs attention by all interested. The dynamic nature of teaching and the innovations in teaching and learning require that teachers undertake recharging of their subject contents and pedagogy so as to be abreast with the new trends in the profession through continuing professional training programmes (Wokocha: 2013). For effective national development, good governance is imperative. The qualities of good governance include:

1. Rule of Law
2. Guarantee of security and safety of lives
3. Elimination of corruption and enhancement of transparency in governance.

There is a need for Nigeria to adopt and adapt the Singapore example of high reward for all in the educational system and selection of best brains to go into teaching profession.

Education is a vital instrument for national development. It must be noted that educational system cannot grow more than the political system which makes the policies that regulate education. A country that does not have good and quality leadership cannot tangentially have a sound a educational system that is capable of contributing adequately to national development. According to Adegoroge (2013) "the form of education that the world needs in 21st century is one that will emphasize the development of 'New Being'- a whole total packaged human being, whose training is based, not on discipline alone but on the full integration and internalization of human and societal values and respect for the environment in a holist interface that seeks to achieve justice, equity and world peace". There is need for change of attitude. It must be noted that Nigeria can appreciate the impact of education if we change our attitude towards national aspirations and give selfless service to the country. Our universities must play a central role in rebuilding Nigeria's economy and in meeting our society's most crucial needs; an educated citizenry.

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