
Food Insecurity: A Threat to Human Resource Development in the 21st Century

By

ELIZABETH USHANG APEBENDE, (Ph.D)
*Department of Educational Foundations and Administration,
Cross River University of Technology,
Calabar.*

SYLVEROUS BANBESHIE OGAR
*Department of General Studies,
College of Health Technology,
Calabar.*

and

ROSEMARY UNWAUNYIN AGBA
*Department of Early Childhood and Care Education,
Cross River State College of Education,
Akamkpa.*

Abstract

This paper discussed food insecurity as a threat to Human Resource Development. The authors emphasized on food security as a veritable tool to human resource development with emphasis on early life nutrition being necessary to establish good foundation for development. The concept of food insecurity was explained with emphasis on malnutrition which the authors say was caused by shortfall in nutrient intake which may be a barrier in both physical, mental and psychological development. Also, human resource development was explained. The authors explain that the human person is born with a lot of potentials – psychomotor and cognitive abilities which need to be developed for man to use to develop his environment. They explained that these abilities can be developed through formal education. Finally, the authors agreed that when there is enough food to eat, people can grow and develop in their areas of specialization and become a source of development to the nation. It was concluded that food in relation to other dimensions of

man's existence – health, work and play are vital for the achievement of human development.

The development of any nation depends on a variety of issues. One of which is availability of food. Food security according to Bayode and Omokhekpe (2010) is paramount to any nation in need of development. From birth, the intake of vital nutrients is essential to the foundation building of the individual person. Good nutrition particularly in the first three years of life is important in establishing and maintaining a good foundation. This has great implication on an individual's physical and mental health as well as economic productivity in the future. Nigeria is a great nation with over 150million people. The greatest problem in this nation is how to feed this population and to enable them make use of their potentials to develop the nation. Food is essential in the sense that it provides an individual with the necessary nutrients in quantity and quality. It helps build the body systems and provide energy to enable the individuals work. It is when an individual is capable of standing up to work that development comes to be. Nigeria has a huge population, yes, but does this population provide the work force needed for the development of the nation? The answer to this question is no, because it is not every one living in this country that has access to the required amount of food and nutrient for healthy life. Many do not have enough food to eat not to talk of their nutritional values. Some families may only be exposed to one meal a day. Others may eat but may not know when the next meal may come. These may be due to poverty or lack of materials for agricultural practice. Lack of food can give rise to ill health and it weakens the immune system of the body. This may lead to the inability of the body to fight back any infectious disease. People can easily get infected and would become weak. Many people in this country are found to be in that condition because they hardly find food to eat especially food with nutritional values. In many families children can get up in the morning and go to school on an empty stomach. Such children may be too weak to learn anything and such children can easily be infected with diseases because their immune system is weak. Food is really scarce but it is important that all must have food to eat. For a nation to develop its citizen it must have enough to each to enable them work.

Food Insecurity

Anderson (1990) referred to food insecurity as limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally and safe food or limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable food in socially acceptable ways. The 1996 world food summit plan for action as presented by Ifeanchu, Nte, and Nwagwu (2009) stated that food insecurity occurs when:

1. People experience a large reduction in their source of food and are unable to make up the differences of food and are unable to make up the differences through new strategies.
2. The prevalence of malnutrition is abnormally high for most times of the year and this cannot be accounted for by either health or care factors.

3. A large proportion of the population or group is using marginal or unsustainable strategies.
4. People are using “coping” strategies that are damaging to their livelihood.

Akpan (2009) stated that food insecurity may refer to deficits or shortfalls in actual per capita daily caloric intake below the minimum per calorie intake recommended by FAO and for maintaining the human body – 2450 kcal/day. It is a situation whereby an individual or group may not have enough food to eat and in some cases may not have any at all.

This condition is found mostly in developing countries of which Nigeria is one. Nigeria has been trying hard to meet the food needs of her citizens. Despite this effort this country is characterized by threat of hunger. Akpan (2009) also orally that about 70 percent of the population are living on less than (\$0.7) per day. Dede (2002) stated that hunger and malnutrition is a significant problem in Nigeria. According to him 29% of children in this country are under nourished. This is as a result of the high rate of poverty. People are poor especially those living in rural areas. Akinyele (2009) stated that vulnerable areas are the rural areas where food shortage, malnutrition, poor quality food supply, high food cost and sometimes total lack of food abounds. It is sad to say that Nigeria though very rich in both agricultural and mineral resources still has the problem of food insecurity. This is as a result of poverty, lack of job opportunities, and poor agricultural practices. In this write up, the authors are arguing that poor intake of food may result in the set back on the development of man both physically, mentally, academically and even psychologically. Nzeagwu (2010) agreed that lack of food affects the Nigerian nation in the following ways: it gives rise to dependence on food importation, malnutrition and under nutrition, severe hunger, starvation and premature death, serious health hazards, impedes rational development. In this situation, the government would turn their attention towards looking for ways of solving the problem rather than seeking for ways of developing its human resources.

Human Resource Development

The human person is born into this world with full tapped potentials. These potentials have to be developed to enable the individual take active part in the development of the society.

A resource according to Isyaku (2003) is a useful or valuable possession or a means of support for man in making a living. According to the Oxford Dictionary, a resource is a supply of something that a country or a person has and can use especially to increase their wealth. Azikwe (2003) defined resource as a source of supply, support or aid especially one that can be drawn upon when needed. To this therefore, the Human Resource would therefore mean the skills, abilities, that the human person

possesses and can be used when needed. Different individuals have different skills and abilities that can be used to develop their environment. At birth, every child is born with potentials that have to be developed. These may include the psychomotor and cognitive abilities. Through the help of education, these potentials can be developed. Education plays a very vital role in improving the skills and abilities that an individual possesses. These are very vital and valued for various activities in life. Eze (2011) maintained that education sustains the society by producing the right type of people required in a society.

Education according to him serves useful purposes both for the individuals and the society. In schools, there are different disciplines that man specializes on according to the potentials an individual may have. People graduate from the universities and become specialists in areas of their choice and help to meet the needs of the society. Apart from going to school, after graduation, there is need for an individual to get more knowledge in his area of specialization. These may include the process of attending refresher courses, re-training programmes, conferences, workshops, etc. These are all means by which people can gain more knowledge and develop their skills and abilities or upgrade their knowledge in their areas of speciality.

All these could easily be done if people could have enough to eat and maintain their health. If people do not have food to eat or the required nutrients, they may end up not having enough strength and energy to work. Instead of development, people may become too weak and sickly.

Food Security: A Threat to Human Resource Development

Any nation that thinks of development must lay emphasis on human resource development. The human person is endowed with a variety of potentials. These potentials are developed from birth through childhood to adulthood. This development can be through imitation or through teaching and learning as we have in formal schooling. People tend to perform better if they are exposed to training on their special areas. The present day education is growing faster and better than before. Especially with the introduction of the computer in this 21st century. People can sit in their home and study and become experts in their field of study. Nigeria is a developing nation and needs to expose her citizens to better knowledge so that they can use that to develop the nation. Nigeria is a blessed country with about 150 million people living in it. Nosike (2012) stated that the national population census of 2006 had 140million people living in Nigeria. That is, Nigeria is blessed with human resource. It has no need to import human resource to help develop the nation. These people therefore need to be developed so that they can support in building the nation in their own special ways. Nosike (2012) opined that Nigerians future prosperity depends on breeding youths who are well equipped to take their place in tomorrow's society.

Taking note of the need to improve the potentials of these people, the government of Nigeria has built schools and have continued to encourage people to go to school. A large number of people are in school while others are either working or undergoing one kind of training or the other. But this group of people cannot meet up with the demands of the nation. A good number of people cannot make any contribution to the development of the nation. These people are either too poor or are too weak to do anything. Poverty and hunger are the causes of the weakness on these people. According to Hagen-Zanker and Holmes (2012), many Nigerians are living in poverty. This according to them has given rise to hunger and malnutrition. Yishau (2007) orally that poverty in Nigeria is worn around the neck as if it were a gold necklace. Many people living in Nigeria are poor. They cannot meet their daily demands of food. The NPC (2004) as stated by Nosike (2012) showed that out of every ten Nigerians, seven live on less than one dollar per day. Hunger is a terrible disease that is torturing over a million of people in this country. People need to eat to enable them think of how to move forward. Without food life is meaningless. Individuals can easily become sick because of lack or poor intake of required nutrients. People are dying everyday because of lack of food. Many are in the hospitals wasting away. Those who are not sick look for means of getting food and money through foul means. These include armed robbery, political thuggery, prostitution, human trafficking, etc. Those involved in these activities are able bodied men and women that would have been a good source of human resource for the development of the nation.

When there is enough food to eat, people can grow and develop in their area of specialization and become a source of development for the nation. But if there is no food to support the growth people will either become weak or die and many may turn the evil way giving no peace to the environment.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, it is true that it is no longer necessary to debate the relationship between food and other dimensions of man's existence: health, work and play. Food provides the nutritional needs for development and maintenance of a healthy vigour in an individual or of the population. It is also a well known fact that the most important environmental factor affecting health is food. Human resource development can only be achieved through adequate nutrient intake and proper empowerment by government in the areas of agriculture (farming), skill acquisition and above all education of man in various disciplines. The skills of reading and writing improve the contribution of man to the development of the society.

Recommendations

“A healthy individual, they say builds a healthy nation”. Food security is inevitable for any nation in quest of development. For the human person to develop the following provisions must be met.

1. Government should encourage farming by providing farm inputs-seedlings, tools, fertilizers and training of agricultural extension workers to assist farmers for optimal yield.
2. Government should encourage food storage and preservation by building grain silos across the nation to ensure food security for the teeming population.
3. Adequate nutritional education should be organized for the rural population by building nutrition education centres in all the states and expansion of different nutrition units of various ministries of health by employing more trained nutrition personnel.
4. Agricultural specialists should be encouraged to cultivate greater quantities of vegetables, fruits, and cereals to ensure adequate feeding at low cost.
5. Dieting customs should be discouraged such as making eggs a taboo in some Nigerian communities and reluctance of other communities to consume snacks, rats, snails and crabs, depriving them of cheap source of protein.
6. Nutritional status of some rural Nigerians should be checked to access the effect of traditional cooking methods on the nutritional values of these foods.
7. A more effective transport and distribution lines should be established in the country to ensure even distribution of food among the different geo-political zones of the country.
8. Government should encourage local farmers by proving palliatives that will boost their production outputs.

References

- Akingele, I. O. (2009). Ensuring Food and Nutrition Security in Rural Nigeria. *International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI)*.
- Akpan, E. O. (2009). *Oil Resource Management and Food Insecurity*. Paper presented at the European Report on Development (ERD) Conference, Accra Ghana, 21 – 23, May.

Food Insecurity: A Threat to Human Resource Development in the 21st Century - Elizabeth Ushang Apebende, (Ph.D); Sylverous Banbeshie Ogar and Rosemary Unwaunyin Agba

- Anderson, S. A. (1990). Core Indicators of Nutritional State for Difficulty to sample Population. *Journal of Nutrition*, Vol. 120. <http://www.ers.usda.gov/briefing>.
- Azikiwe, U. (2003). Resource for Teaching and Learning gives the contribution of WCCI. *Forum Journal of WCCI Nigerian Chapter*, 4 (1).
- Dede, P. O. (2012). Farm Animals and Food Security in Nigeria. *Business Day*, 1st June.
- Eze, S.M. (2011). Education, Human Resource and Sustainable National Development in Nigeria. *Journal of Teacher Perspective*, 5(2).
- Hogan-Zanker, J. & Holmes, R. (2012). *Social Protection in Nigeria*. Synthesis Report. UNICEF. www.odi.org.uk.
- Ifeanacho, M. I., Nte, N. D., & Nwagwu, J. (2009). *The State Politics of Poverty and Food Insecurity in Nigeria*. <http://www.eurojournals.com/BBA.html>.
- Isyaku, K. (2003). Resource Management in Nigerian Colleges of Education. *Forum Journal of WCCI Nigerian Chapter*, 4 (1).
- Nosike, E. C. (2012). Entrepreneurship Education, a lead to Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for sustainability. *Journal of Resourcefulness and Distinction*, 1(1).
- Nzeagwu, N. I. (2010). Challenges of Nigerian Teachers Education in Resolving Civic Issues and Challenges in Nigeria through Social Studies in the 21st Century. In E. C. Iloputaife, B. U. Maduewesi and R. O. Igbo (ed.). *Issues and Challenges in Nigerian Education in the 21st Century*. Onitsha: West and Solomon Publishing Co. Ltd.
- Yishau, O. (2007) "The Monster Called Poverty". *Tell Nigeria's Independent Weekly*. No.21, May 21.