

3

Human Resource Development in Nigeria: The Role of Dynamic Higher Education and Emerging Challenges

By

CHRIS NNADI, Ph.D
General Studies Division,
Enugu State University of Science and Technology,
Enugu.

Abstract

It is quite obvious that the functionality of human capital of any nation is predicated on the reality of education imparted on the labour force. The rapid economic growth of some countries such as Taiwan, Japan, Dubai, South Korea and Indonesia to mention just a few gives credence to the argument that huge investment in human resource development through a dynamic higher education results to economic growth and productivity. Without a functional human base, our rich physical and natural resources will ever remain dormant and untapped. This paper therefore attempted to show a positive link between dynamic higher education and human resource development which brings about economic growth. A dynamic higher education that can enhance human resource development is that type of education that encourages creativity, innovation, skill acquisition and entrepreneurial development given the nation's unemployment profile. Having noticed that there are some challenges facing higher education in Nigeria such as incessant industrial action, poor budgetary allocation to education industry, brain drain, cultism, dearth of facilities, examination fraud, poor housing facilities for students, among others, this paper therefore made some recommendations which include discouragement of brain drain, proper funding of education by the government of Nigeria, creating an enabling environment through the provision of learning facilities for both lecturers and students. It is hoped that when these recommendations are considered, the goal of human resources development through a dynamic higher education for the purposes of economic and technological advancement will be realized.

Nigeria as an independent nation is fifty two years, and by far the most populous country in Africa. According to Udo (1978) “out of every five Africans, at least one person is a Nigerian, with a total area of 923,800 sq. km she occupies 14 percent of the land area of West Africa. The population of Nigeria as of today is about 150 million with about 49% of them being women. (Eya, 2010).

The country is blessed with mineral resources, water, vegetable, livestock and other economic resources. She has a tropical climate which is hot and wet all through the year in the south but has a marked dry season in the north. The soil is generally fertile. Nigeria is relatively free from natural environmental hazards like drought, flooding, wind etc. Apart from the thirty months civil war of 1967-1970, she enjoys relative peace, except the recent resurgence of Boko Haram. With all these conditions and situations; one would expect that the nation should be a heaven on earth in terms of development.

Unfortunately, since 1960, politicians and military men have been promising good road, good water supply, electricity, free education, enough food, adequate medical facilities, better life, adequate security etc. In 2006, Nigeria ranked 159 out of 177 countries surveyed for the UN Human Development Index (HDI). Nigerians are still very poor, living on less than one US dollar a day with the exception of very minority few controlling the nation’s economy. A country which was one of the richest 50 countries in the early 1970’s, has retrogressed to become one of the 25 poorest countries at the threshold of the twenty first century (Eya, 2010).

The incidence of brain drain, high attrition, low enrolment and literacy rates is high in Nigeria as a result of poverty. Death rate is equally very high. One may ask, what are the causes of the above challenges in a country so endowed with all the necessary resources? This paper therefore is interested in exploring the role of dynamic higher education in human resources development and the emerging challenges.

Global Concept of Education

There is a general consensus by scholars of economics that education is the most potent instrument for the overall development of any nation (Odimegwu, 2005; Otu, & Adenuga, 2006, Olaniyan, and Olemakinde, 2008). It is with this belief that government and even the private sector of most economics of the world have continuously made bold steps in the development of educational systems. In fact, high quality education is believed to be an investment in human capital for the purpose of yielding economic benefits, enhancing efficiency and productivity of the nation’s economy (Olaniyan & Okemakinde, 2008). Whereas Otu & Adenuga (2006) hypothesized that there can be no significant economic growth in any society without human capital development, this paper believes strongly that there can be no productive

human capital without a functional education. In other words, there is a strong link between human capital, functional education and economic growth. While human capital is crucial to productivity and growth of a nation, functional education which is the bedrock of sustainable development is crucial to human capital development. A functional education system is that which takes global social, economic, political and technological trends into cognizance and ensures productivity of the work force through the inculcation of relevant knowledge and skills. This assumption is borne out of the view that the purpose for quality education is to create critical thinking that can bring about the development of new technologies and new methods of production in line with the demands of the new dispensation. This view is buttressed by the argument of Odekunle in Olaniyan et al (2008) who affirms that “investment in human capital has positive effects on the supply of entrepreneurial activity and technological innovation”. It is worthy of note that countries like Hong Kong, Korea, Singapore and Taiwan have recorded high levels of productivity through their workforce (Olaniyan et al, 2008).

Conceptual Framework

Attempt to define the concept of human resources in a restricted sense is difficult. Scholars of Economics have seen it from different perspectives and have therefore, generated controversy as to which definition is most appropriate. However, it is important to place the concept on the table for careful examination and purposeful discussion.

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, human resources is seen as a stock of competence, knowledge and personality attributes embodied in the ability to perform labour so as to produce economic value. It is the attribute gained by a worker through education and experience.

Husz (1998), defined human resources as “the time, experience, knowledge and abilities of an individual household or a generation, which can be used in the production process”. The broadness of the group that actually fall into this definition made some economic scholars to simply refer to it as the labor force.

Becker (1993) noted that the degree of functionality of human resources is dependent on the amount of investment put into it.

In line with Becker’s view, Odimegwu (2005) defined human resources as “human capability and productivity endangered through knowledge and skills acquired from education, training and experience, and facilitated by enabling environment”. He stresses that human resources has four cardinal aspects namely: education system, health, social services and good governance. This paper however believes that every other has a bearing on the education system. The acquisition of knowledge and skills necessary for improvement in the health sector, improvement in social services and general quality of life can only be realized through quality education of the nation’s

citizens. From the foregoing, it is clear that human resources unlike the physical resources is intangible and can therefore not be measured directly. It can only be assessed by the growth of the nation's socio-economic system, which includes the nation's Gross Domestic Product, literacy rate, level of industrialization and quality of infrastructural provisions (Odimegwu, 2005).

It is worthy of note that high population of a nation does not necessarily imply that the nation has a high potential for human resources development, which can be harnessed through the introduction of certain inputs such as sound and dynamic education for the actualization of goals and objectives.

Odimegwu gave the example of Nigeria, which cannot be compared with Japan, Norway, Sweden, Australia or Singapore in terms of technological advancement or socio-economic development, yet its population and the availability of natural resources are far higher than those available in those countries. What makes the difference according to Odimegwu, is the effective development, engagement and utilization of their human capital. One may be that those countries have become industrialized due to their high investment in the human capital through the instrumentality of functional and dynamic education system.

Sustainable Human Resources Development in Nigeria The Role of Dynamic Higher Education

The essence of education, formal or informal, primary or tertiary, is to explore the edges of possibility and probability needed to transform and improve upon the conditions of both the learner and the community. Though basic education is essential in taking an individual to the "threshold of self-sufficiency" by providing literacy and a knowledge of how and why things happen, higher education, on the other hand, has a special responsibility to conduct the scholarship and scientific research necessary to generate the new knowledge needed, and to train the leaders and teachers of tomorrow, laying emphasis on integrative learning and the ability to apply knowledge and skills to real world settings.

"Higher education has a vital role to play in shaping the way in which future generations learn to cope with the complexities of sustainable development. Universities and higher education institutions educate highly qualified graduates and responsible citizens able to meet the needs of all sectors of human activity; they provide opportunities for higher learning and for learning throughout life; they advance, create and disseminate knowledge through research and provide, as part of their service to the community, relevant expertise to assist societies in cultural, social and economic development; they help understand, interpret, preserve, enhance, promote and disseminate national and regional, international and historic cultures in a context of cultural pluralism and diversity; they help protect and enhance societal values by

training young people in the values which form the basis of democratic citizenship; they contribute to the development and improvement of education at all levels, including through the training of teachers”.

The three main activities of higher education are teaching and learning, research and development and service to the community. Within the ambit of sustainable development, Nigerian higher education institutions are provided with the tools to redesign their educational structures to provide answers to the environmental and developmental challenges confronting the nation.

The art of imparting knowledge is based on the knack to communicate, and higher education institutions provide the responsibility for training teachers and decision makers who need to be sensitized and trained to promote the goals of sustainable human resources development in schools and ultimately to the public at large. Re-orienting the curricula of all university programmes, be they in pure or applied sciences, in social science or in humanities, and introducing new teaching approaches and methods (multi and inter disciplinary, team work, project-based) towards programme of studies (academic learning), guidance (support and counseling in career choices), and activities (community engagement and curricula activities) – to respond adequately to the challenges of education for sustainable development (ESD) is therefore key to developing the knowledge, skills, perspective and values that empower people to assume responsibility for creating and enjoying a sustainable future. Life-long learning is equally important for Nigeria and higher education institutions are expected to mount appropriate programmes for training key professionals such as engineers, architects, economists, etc. in relevant aspects of sustainable development.

It is envisaged that through talks and seminars and generally the dissemination of research results, higher education would sensitize the public at large about the issues pertaining to sustainable human resource development. By extension, they could also, for example, promote adult literacy or assist in educating women on health and sanitation matters. The role of students, who form a huge potential for undertaking community service in the changing paradigm of sustainable development has not been fully tapped. Service to rural areas requires particular attention for which students can be of enormous assistance. Their involvement in rural areas can be a useful way of identifying developmental problems.

The investment in human capital through the provision of dynamic higher education accelerates economic growth. In view of these and many other empirical studies, most economic scholars have come to the conclusion that education is a major driving force of economic growth (Odimegwu, 2005). Education can, therefore, be seen as an investment in human capital for the purpose of productivity. It is critical to innovations, creativity and technological advancement. It should however be noted that

the impact of education on productivity varies widely across countries (Zezeza, 2003) depending on the amount of investment committed to it.

The rationale for huge investment in human capital through education is basically for the purpose of socio-economic growth (Babalola in Olaniyan et al, 2008).

High quality education therefore, requires dynamic curricula which addresses the challenges of the millennium and focuses attention on practical skills, knowledge and competencies aimed at actualizing the growth needs of the nation. For our education system to become dynamic and functional, the struggle towards deemphasizing paper qualification and eradication of all forms of examination malpractices including falsification and forgery of certificates must be a joint effort of all and sundry. Odimegwu (2005) rightly pointed out that it should be emphasized that merely turning out large numbers of graduates is not enough. Products of our educational institutions must be sufficiently skilled, empowered and supported by enabling policies and operating environments to be competent service providers, job and wealth creators.

He went further to explain that quality and dynamic education can best be understood from two philosophical perspectives, which according to him are complementary in nature. One view holds that equality education is one in which the learner's cognitive development is guaranteed. The other view states that quality education is one that nurtures the values and attitudes in the learner and prepares him for a responsible citizenship, emotional and creative development. This is an indication that a dynamic education has to do with effective schooling and better learning experiences without undermining the learner's characteristics, enabling inputs and outcomes.

From the technological point of view, one is quick to notice enormous and modern challenges that require in-depth training and better education to be able to meet with the technological demands of the time. The problem we apparently have today is the inability to distinguish between general education and functional education. Emphasis today must be on education that has value to modern society and has the efficacy of promoting socio-economic growth through effective utilization of new skills, knowledge and approaches. A practical approach to education makes the difference. This is why we should not stop at the education that provides mere paper qualification but that which results in creativity, innovation and skilled demonstration of knowledge. We need trained entrepreneurs that can practically harness the physical capital (natural resources) that will propel our nation to greater advancement in technology.

It is good education more than any other component that brings about the development and sustenance of human capital. It is to be noted that it is the resources inherent in human beings that make up the human capital. These resources inherent in human beings are “knowledge” (knowing what to do) “skills” (knowing how to do what is to be done) and attitudes (behavioural demonstration of a favourable inclination while doing that which is to be done). Personally the author regards attitude as the greatest resource and should be properly addressed in Nigeria. Many Nigerians have poor attitude towards anything belonging to the Government. Poor human capital development greatly hinders optimum realization of available potentials and utilization of opportunities to make the society better and improve the quality of life of citizens.

As pointed out earlier, education is the critical factor in human capital development. The question is what type of education will give us the needed human capital? Perhaps, it is through a dynamic higher education that the right type of training skills, attitude and aptitude are acquired. As stated in the National Policy on Education (2004) the goals of tertiary education shall be to:-

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

These goals according to the policy shall be pursued through:

1. teaching
2. research and development
3. virile staff development programmes
4. generation and dissemination of knowledge
5. A Variety of programmes including full-time, part-time block-release, day-release, sandwich.
6. Access to training funds such as those provided by the Industrial Training Fund (ITF).
7. Students Industrial Work Experiences Scheme (SIWES)
8. Maintenance of minimum educational standard through appropriate agencies.
9. Inter-institutional co-operation.

10. Dedicated services to the community through extra-mural and extension services.

A functional and dynamic higher education is that which takes global social, economic, political and technological trends into cognizance and ensures productivity of the work force through the relevant knowledge and skills. Agbe (2010) opined that countries that are at the forefront of technological advancement equally have the most educated population. This assumption is borne out of the view that the purpose for dynamic higher education is to create critical thinking that can bring about the development of new technologies and new methods of production in line with the demands of the new dispensation. This view is buttressed by the argument of Odekunle in Olaniyan et al (2008) who affirmed that “investment in human capital has positive effects on the supply of entrepreneurial activity and technological innovation”, it is worthy of note that countries like Hong Kong, Korea, Singapore and Taiwan have recorded a high level of productivity through their huge investment in the education of their workforce (Olaniyan et al, 2008).

Emerging Challenges

The major challenges confronting higher education in Nigeria include poor funding, incessant industrial action, brain drain syndrome, poor infrastructure, examination malpractice (sorting), cultism, and obsolete curricula, to mention but a few.

One is of the strong opinion that our educational system seems to be deficient both in structure and in curricula development, education that promotes productivity must be functional, well planned, well imparted with modern approaches and adequately utilized by beneficiaries for the overall growth of the economy. When new entrepreneurial skills and knowledge are adequately inculcated by qualified and erudite scholars, the positive link between human capital development and economic growth becomes obvious.

Inadequate Infrastructure

They include decent hostels, classrooms, functional libraries, laboratories, water, electricity, staff residential accommodations, good access road within and around the institution, recreational facilities, health care centers, security, etc. no meaningful teaching and learning can take place where all these are lacking as presently the case in most Nigerian tertiary institutions.

Examination Malpractice (Sorting)

The concept of an examination is one that is originally tied to life itself. Simply put, it is the notion that one is allowed a period to learn, after which a test is administered on what one has learned. Whether we call it a test, exam, stock-taking,

trial or examination is a gateway to promotion or stagnation; progress or redundancy. It is the only objective means of assessing knowledge and choosing between competitors. The sanctity of examination should therefore be at the root of our tertiary intuition value system. This is because the integrity of the certificate or degree obtained at the institutions and that of the institution itself depends on it. But it has become a tradition in most higher institutions in Nigeria to sell grades as a mere commodity, where grades are now bargained thereby, negating the sanctity of examination.

Cultism in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions

Cultism according to Amechi, (2010), is a plague eating up a large proportion of Nigerian education system and the issue of curbing or eradicating cultism has always received lip service. Some lecturers who insist on maintaining standard by refusing monetary inducement are forced at gun point to pass cult members. This has watered down the academic content of the certificates paraded by some Nigerian graduates.

Funding

Education in this country is inadequately funded which in many respects is responsible for most of other problems. Inadequate funding results in poor salaries and other emoluments, decayed and inadequate infrastructure and facilities, over stretching of services, poorly maintained and sustained municipal services and poor funding of practical and research.

Whereas the UNESCO's recommendation for funding education was 26% of annual budgetary allocation, in Nigeria the budgetary allocation into education as at 2009 was 2.2% (Guardian, 2009). This has always been the cause of the conflict between government and the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) resulting in incessant strike actions and keeping students at home perpetually and sometimes to come back towards the end of a semester for examination which they were not adequately prepared for, the consequence is usually the production of graduates with beautiful certificates but without adequate training and skills required for productivity.

Brain Drain

It is worthy of note that "for education to contribute significantly to economic growth and development, it must be of high quality to meet the skill-demand needs of the economy (Olaniyan et al 2008)".

Closely related to this problem of poor quality faculty, is the problem of brain drain syndrome. Evidence abounds on the high quality graduates that were hitherto produced by the higher institutions. Okafor (2006) noticed that in the past few decades, the first choice of most of our graduates of Nigeria's technical institutions is to immigrate to more developed countries. This is supported by the assertion of Mazrui in Okafor (2006) that at least for a while, Nigeria has also been very receptive to western

education. By the beginning of the twenty-first century, Nigeria had exported highly educated personnel to the United States (Proportionally) than had any other country of the world. Of all the new immigrants to the United States, Nigeria has the highest proportion of graduates.

The National Manpower Board Survey confirmed this assertion when it reported that in 1996 alone, Nigeria lost more than 1,500 professionals to other countries. The UNDP Human Development report of 1996 showed that more than 21,000 Nigerian Doctors are practicing in the United States whereas there is a serious shortfall of medical practitioners in our healthcare system (Odimegwu 2005). The present condition of poor quality human capital development can be blamed on the exodus of our qualified faculty and personnel whose duty would have been to impart the skills and competencies on the younger generation (Agbe, 2010).

The challenge of inadequate curricula development has been one of the banes of quality delivery in our educational sector. Although much has been done to move away from the educational system handed over to us by our colonial masters and to develop the New National Policy on Education in 1977 with emphasis on the 6:3:3:4 system, it appears still that a sustained impact of the new policy on our human capital has not been achieved. The problems inherent in our educational system of the colonial masters are apparently not yet resolved. This could account for why Nigeria's investment and policies on technological growth through education have yielded very little fruits. As noted earlier, Nigeria education system is still too elastic and has not made adequate provision for skill acquisition, competence through training and the utilization of knowledge in practical terms. As long as the curriculum is designed principally for the acquisition of paper qualification without a consideration of the present global socio-economic realities, the question of enhancing human capital through a dynamic education system will continue to be a mirage.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Without doubt, the role of dynamic higher education in the development of human resource cannot be overemphasized. Most economic scholars have through several empirical studies discovered that education is a major determinant of human resource development resulting in the emerging world economic order, they must improve their knowledge, stock and learning capabilities as education and training increasingly become significant. It is in line with this that human capital theorists agreed that "an educated population is a productive population". In view of the obvious fact that education and training are the fundamental investment in human resources, this paper suggests that a greater consideration be given to the development of dynamic higher education in Nigeria. To achieve this, the following recommendations are hereby proposed.

Reliable infrastructure in our tertiary institution environment such as decent hostels, classrooms, functional libraries, laboratories, water, electricity, staff residential accommodations, good access road within and around the institution, recreational facilities, health care centres, security, etc. are a must and not an option.

To ensure qualitative, functional and dynamic higher education, a concerted effort must be made by stakeholders in education particularly the National Universities Commission (NUC), National Board for Technical Education (NBTE), National Council for Colleges of Education (NCCE) and other regulatory bodies to ensure that the minimum bench mark for accreditation of courses is strictly and religiously adhered to.

Cultism is a plague eating up a large proportion of Nigerian education system. Government at all levels, the police, all security agents, teachers and youths, should join hands to eradicate this monster in Nigerian education system.

It is equally important to suggest here that all the factors that encourage brain drain should be properly addressed by stakeholders in education.

The factors include unfavourable political interference in higher education, lack of academic freedom, poor pay package and lack of sponsorship for academic research and development as well as inadequate provision of facilities that will promote quality training. In as much as it may be a herculean task stopping the mobility of faculty across countries, effort should be made by government to discourage brain drain as much as possible. The inculcation of the spirit of nationalism in line with principles of rebranding may go a long way to convince our brilliant professionals and professors that they must give priority attention to the promotion of quality education. They need to be encouraged to mentor others before disappearing from the scene.

There is no gain saying the fact that huge investment in education has a long run positive impact on the socio-economic and technological development of a nation. Some third world countries like Malaysia and Thailand have understood this and have excelled tremendously because of their huge investment in the development of their human resource base through education. There is therefore, the need for government to fund education as a matter of priority. Even if the UNESCO's recommendation of 26% of annual budget is currently not realistic effort should be made to raise the present percentage to a more realistic one. If this is done, strike actions, disruption of academic calendars and the brain drain syndrome will become minimal.

Issues relating to human resource development can as well be solved through a qualitative, functional and dynamic education system. Our present education system requires some reforms, which will bring about entrepreneurial skills, technological advancement and practical knowledge that can be effectively utilized in harnessing the

nation's abundant rich physical capital for better productivity that will lift this nation to greater heights.

References

- Agbe, N.N. (2010), *Enhancing human capital development through dynamic education System*: Keynote address at Annual Lit Conference organized by the Ladies of Ivory Tower (LIT); Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Oct. 11 – 15th.
- Akunyili, D. (2010), *Enhancing human capital development through dynamic Education System*: keynote address at Annual Lit Conference organized by the Ladies of Ivory Tower (LIT), Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Oct. 11 – 15th.
- Amechi, O. (2010), *The Nigerian educational system the journey so far*. a lead paper presented at annual lit conference organized by the ladies of ivory tower (LIT), Enugu state university of science and technology, Oct. 11-15th.
- Becker, G.S. (1993). *Human capital, a theoretical and empirical analysis with special reference to education*. National bureau of economic research. Chicago; University Of Chicago.
- Eya, P.E. (2010), *Enhancing human capital development through open and distance learning* being a lead paper presented at annual lit conference organized by the Ladies of Ivory Tower (LIT), Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Oct. 11-15th.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004), *National Policy on education*, Federal Ministry of Education Abuja.
- Husz, M. (1998), *Human capital, endogenous growth, and government policy*. frankfurt: Peter Lang Gmbh.
- Odimegwu, F.B.O. (2005). *Meeting the Challenges of Human Capital Development: The case for Reforms in our Educational Policies and Systems*. A paper presented at the 34th Convocation of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka.
- Okafor, E.E. (2006). *Rethinking african industrial and technological development: A critique of the role of higher education towards human capital development in Nigeria*. Ibadan: Department of sociology.

- Olaniyan, D.A. & Okemakinde, T. (2008). Human Capital theory: Implications for educational development. *European journal of scientific research*. 24(2) 157-162.
- Otu, F.M. & Adenuga, A.O. (2006), Economic growth and human capital development: The Case of Nigeria. *Economic and Financial Review* 44(3) 1-28.
- Udo, F.O. (1978), On the mechanics of economic development, *journal of monetary economics*. 22(1) 3-42.
- Zezeza, Paul (2003), Rethinking Africa's globalization, (1) *The intellectual challenges*, Africa world press Inc. asmara.