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## **Education and National Development in Nigeria: The Underlying Assumptions and Practical Realities**

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### **Abstract**

The paper focused on education and national development in Nigeria: The underlying assumptions and practical realities. The paper indicated that education directly plays a vital role in national development. It does not only equip one with the necessary intellectual capacity to master ones environment, it helps one to cope with ones socio psychological, economic and political environment. The paper revealed that the contribution of education to national development in Nigeria however has not been very impressive. Indeed, somehow, it has become negative, in spite of the huge resources invested in it. The paper concluded that this state of affair may have arisen as a result of the shallow nature of the education system, faulty principles and philosophy, federal character and quota system, corruption and cheating, inadequate funding of education, politicization of education, inadequate motivation of teachers and poor quality of teachers. The paper suggested among others that education should be restructured for it to have both social and private values, education should be adequately funded, teachers should be properly motivated, JAMB should be scrapped and Tertfund facilities should be extended to private universities, National Orientation Agency should extend its services to schools in form of seminars, workshops and symposia.

**Keywords:** Education, National Development, Assumptions, Practical Realities.

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The importance of education in the process of national development cannot be over-emphasized. Education was conceived by Plato as the most important instrument with which to structure and produce a good society within which citizens can achieve utmost perfection. According to Plato in his 'The Republic', cited in (Ofoeze, 2008), education is the 'one great thing' by means of which the ruler can shape human nature in the right direction to produce a harmonious state. This could be due to the fact that if citizens are properly educated, they can readily see through the difficulties that beset them and meet emergencies as they arise. Education contributes to and enhances national development since it is a process through which people are trained to get relevant knowledge to undertake productive and creative functions that generate economic and social goods and services for the citizens (Ofoeze, 2008). Education develops in every individual intellectual empowerment and endowment and the society as a whole the necessary abilities and skills necessary for concretizing national development (Ukeje, 1986). According to Ofoeze, (2008), education constitutes a 'development value' desired for its epistemic sake. Education opens up and widens the human mind, leading it out to consider ideas, issues and events

objectively in their various ramifications. It affords individual citizens the capacity and facility to examine and choose between competing alternative courses of action for problem-solving in a rational manner.

Education satisfies a basic human need for knowledge, provides a means of helping to meet other needs which help to sustain and accelerate overall development. It provides essential skilled manpower for both the formal and informal sectors of the economy, provides the means of developing knowledge, skills and productive capacities of the labour force, and acts as a catalyst in encouraging modern attitudes and aspirations. Education equally helps to determine not only the income of the present generation but also the future distribution of income and employment. It should not be forgotten that education does not only influence social welfare through its indirect effects on healthy fertility and life expectancy, it also increases the profitability of other forms of social and physical investment (Robert-Okah & Osiobe, 2014).

The relevance of education to national development can be seen when Nigeria circumstance is compared with those of her peers of the 1960's – Singapore, South Korea, Malaysia, Brazil and Chile over the last fifty years. In terms of graduate output, while Nigeria stood at less than 4% of the relevant population cohort, it was 33.7% for Singapore, 28.2% for Malaysia, 37.5% for Chile and 16.5% for Brazil (Anya, 2013). On GDP comparison against population, as at 2011, Singapore with a population of 5 million had a GDP of USD 318.7 Billion (USD 50,000 per capita), South Korea with a population of 50 million had a GDP of 1.12 trillion (USD 22,000 per capita), Malaysia with a population of 28 million had a GDP of USD 278.6 billion (USD 10,000 per capita), Brazil with a population of 196 million had a GDP of USD 2.48 trillion (USD, 13,000 per capita) and Chile with population of 17 million had a GDP of USD 248.5 Billion (USD 14,000 per capita) and Nigeria with the dismal ranking of USD 235.9 billion for a population of 166 million (USD 1,500 per capita (Anya, 2013). When these data were juxtaposed against the statistics in relation to poverty level in Nigeria over the last 30 years according to Anya (2013), it revealed the following: 17.1 million in 1980, 34.5 million in 1985, 39.2 million in 1992, 67.1 million in 1996, 68.7 million in 2004 and 112.47 million in 2010, indicating Nigeria's progressive descent into poverty even in the years of bountiful returns from oil sales.

## **CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS**

### **Education**

Education was described as the key that unlocks the door to modernization. It is a process of human growth by which an individual gains greater understanding and control over himself and his world, a process, and activity characterized by continuous development and changes, the end product of which is learning. According to Ilueme & Kpokpo (2015), education is a total aggregate of all the processes by which an individual develops abilities, attitudes and other forms of behaviours which are of positive value to the society. It is the form of teaching and learning which leads to acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes that enables one to adjust and contribute to one's environment. In the opinion of Toby (2001), education is a process by which every society attempts to preserve and upgrade the accumulative skills, knowledge and attitudes in its heritage and cultural setting. This quality of education presupposes that it should constantly change and adapt itself to new demands and circumstances.

## **Development**

Development in the context of this discussion is taken to refer to the qualitative realization of a state of affairs, characterized by adequate and equitable distribution of social and material services and well-being, free individual participation in the affairs of the state and an overall human mastery of his environment in a structurally transformed society (Ofoeze, 2008). Development according to Ilueme & Kpokpo (2015) is the systematic use of scientific and technological knowledge to meet specific objectives or requirements. It is the process of social and economic transformation that is based on complex cultural and environmental factors and their interactions.

## **Contributions of Education to National Development**

Education has contributed to national development according to Chuka-Okonkwo (2015) in the following ways:

- It trains the individual for better appreciation of his cultural environment, technological realms and equips him with the ability to absorb new ideas, information and new data for resolving the constantly changing problems of his environment.
- It trains an individual to relate and interact meaningfully with others and to appreciate the importance of effective organization for human progress.
- It fosters in people those values that make for good citizenship such as honesty, selflessness, tolerance, dedication, hard work and integrity, all of which make for good leadership.
- It encourages the culture of productivity among the people enabling individuals to discover the genius in them and apply it to the improvement of the existing skills and technique of performing specific task, thereby increasing the efficiency of his personal societal efforts.
- Education improves the development of the youths who are future leaders to assume efficient leadership positions.
- Education supplies the needed manpower for national development.
- It trains individuals to be able to relate and interact meaningfully with others in the society and to appreciate the importance of effective cooperation for human progress.
- Enhances natural resource management and national capacity for disaster prevention and adoption of environmental friendly technologies.
- It improves personal health, enhances reproductive health and promotes child health and welfare through better nutrition and higher immunization.

## **Education and National Development in Nigeria**

From the discussion so far, education was regarded as having played a pivotal role in national development particularly in developed countries. It was as a result of this conviction that countries such as Nigeria allocated huge sum of resources to education as evident in the various National Development Plans (Ofoeze, 2008). Notwithstanding these huge sectoral allocations however, the realities is that contributions of education to national development in Nigeria has not only been unimpressive, rather in certain cases, it has been negative. For instance, inspite of

the huge annual student turn-out from the countries educational institutions, at all levels, there still exists, even in more acute forms, such social maladies as lack of national consciousness, lack of patriotism, squandermania of public funds, low productivity, acute unemployment, lack of creativity, ethnicity, god-fatherism, hero-worshipping, misappropriation of public funds, extreme parochialism and unbridled corruption and others among educated Nigerians.

There is a high level of arrogant behaviours among educated Nigerians. Arrogance in this context is a conduct disorder and emotional deviation that is crippling to the individual and society. According to Okeke (2007), it relates to behaving in a proud and superior manner, showing too much pride in oneself and too little consideration for others, haughtiness, being presumptuous, not being humble and meek. Arrogant behaviours are manifested in both staff and students in the campuses of tertiary institutions. Arrogant behaviours are manifested in forms of forgery of academic credentials, misconduct, examination malpractices, falsification of records, sales of grades by staff, sales of handouts, violent industrial unrest. Improper grading of scripts and manipulation of score cards, extortion of money from students and unsuspecting persons are fragrantly exhibited. 'Sorting' has become the order of the day in departments in some campuses. Academic and non-academic staff of tertiary institutions are prone to unofficial absenteeism and chronic lateness to work and classes, withholding or unnecessary delaying of students records and results, improper instruction and supervision, poor teaching, acts of strikes and lockouts, rape, possession and use of hard drugs, forging of NYSC call-up letters. Educated people in Nigeria drive against traffics, disturb the peace in their neighbourhoods, jump the queues, cross the lawns, defecate outside designated areas, urinate outside designated areas, make overt sexual gestures in public places.

Some intellectuals are also criminally-minded. These hybrid intellectuals have degrees of nastiness, dishonesty, perversion and corruption. This caliber of academics who Okeke (2007) referred to as 'manipulators' have entrenched fraudulent practices in the university environment. They have enthroned plagiarism, belong to syndicates that influence students admission, run business centers that contract term papers, project and thesis writing for students, misuse laboratory and statistical data, and are involved in all manners of unethical behaviours that erode the culture and tradition of the academy.

These unimpressive and negative contributions of education to national development could be attributed to a good number of factors. They are:

### ***Shallow nature of the education system***

Nigerian education suffers acute insufficiency in depth and breadth with the result that its recipients are grossly deficient in knowledge due to the shallowness and superficiality of the curricula and methodology. Recipients of this form of education do not adequately possess the necessary skills, ideas and creativity for national development, as obtains in advanced countries.

### ***Faulty principle and philosophy***

In Nigeria, education is tied to self-gratification with its corresponding 'pleasure principle'. Education in Nigeria is regarded as having private value rather than possessing social value. As a result, recipients of such kind of education use it for personal self-aggrandizement both in terms of wealth and power rather than for the benefit of the entire society. This has often resulted into such social vices as inter-tribal conflicts, intellectual bankruptcy, get-rich-quick syndrome. This

form of education therefore does not only lead to under-development but also anti-development of the nation state.

### ***Federal character and quota system***

Employment and promotion in the federal service and appointments into top government positions including the headship of armed forces do not only encourage mediocrity but also discourage meritocracy. This equally forms the basis of admission into federal schools, colleges and universities. Square pegs are intentionally placed in round holes. The negative impact of these discriminatory policies on the character of students of the country is immense. As a result, students who were victims of these discriminatory policies, on graduation develop negative sentiment against the country and its institutions rather than being nationally conscious. Rather than being patriotic, they become ethnically conscious and tribally biased.

### ***Corruption***

Corruption has bedeviled Nigerian education such that students who absent themselves from classes, tutorials and lectures and do not have the wherewithal to pass through graduate from these institutions. Such ill-prepared students and half-baked graduates successfully pass through tertiary institutions in Nigeria due to corruption. Such caliber of persons will constitute themselves into a nuisance and cannot in any imaginable means contribute to national development. They will rather subvert the process through such fraudulent practices as advance-fee-fraud alias 419, falsification of public financial records and diversion of public funds into private pockets.

### ***Cheating***

Students are usually cramped into inadequate classrooms during examinations due to inadequate classroom spaces. This encourages cheating among students, leading to all sorts of examination malpractice, making mockery of students assessment process. Also, due to shortage of lecturers, available lecturers are overburdened with the large number of scripts to grade. To lighten this burden, lecturers resort to multiple choice or fill-in questions which are easier to grade but which do not lead to proper assessment of students' competence at the higher level of blooms taxonomy of Knowledge. The outcome is that low quality student's graduate in flying colours with nothing to offer the society and end up as cheats.

### **Unemployment**

In a developing country like Nigeria, education expansion should not be carried out for its sake. Any expansion should be carefully planned and geared to meet the relevant needs of the society, for according to Ukeje (1986, p. 16) "One of the most disturbing paradoxes of our time is the situation whereby millions of people among the educated class are unemployed while millions of jobs are awaiting to be done because people with the right education, training and skills can not found". Sharing in this sentiment, the Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (MAN) cited in Ake (1988, p. 3) argued that "it is better not to be educated at all than to be educated and remain unemployed".

### ***Politicization of Education***

University education has become highly politicized in Nigeria. Infact universities have been established where there is no need for them, no resources provided for them except to score cheap political goals. The governor of a state may just hurriedly establish a university without due regards for standards, and implications for national development. Almost all universities established in Nigeria in the past twenty years have remained mere assemblance of ‘glorified’ secondary schools. We in Nigeria simply push our citizens through the door and corridors of schools and universities without minding whether learning and knowledge have been acquired or not. Nigeria does not take its citizens through a systematic learning procedure like other nations and this has negatively impacted on quality and by extension national development.

### ***Inadequate Funding***

Inadequate funding has hampered development of Nigeria education leading to shortages of classroom space, functional laboratories, hostel facilities and libraries and staff. Schools in Nigeria have overcrowded classrooms; many of these built several years back for a given number of students now take two or more of such number. In some cases, students sit on windows or stand outside whereas some carry chairs from one classroom to another. The recently published Needs Assessment Report of the Nigerian university system according to Anya (2013) makes a dismal reading. From under-provision of financial resources to the underdevelopment of needed infrastructure and lack of trained manpower, particularly academic staff, the story is one of criminal neglect. With regards to infrastructure, they were inadequate, dilapidated, overstretched and improvised; pressure is applied on existing facilities due to unplanned expansion of programmes. On manpower, the Report revealed on appalling average staff/student ratio of 1:22 for university of Abuja, 1:363 for National Open University (NOUN) and 1:114 for Lagos State University respectively. Asuru (2015) noted that the percentage of budgetary allocations to the education sector in Nigeria falls below the UNESCO’s recommended 26% minimum. Table 1 below shows the level of education funding in Nigeria.

Table 1: Federal Governments Percentage Budgetary Allocation to Education from 1995-2013

<b>S/NO</b>	<b>YEAR</b>	<b>ALLOCATION (%)</b>
1	1995	7.2
2	1996	12.32
3	1997	17.59
4	1998	10.27
5	1999	11.12
6	2000	8.36
7	2001	7.00
8	2002	5.9
9	2003	1.83
10	2008	11.83
11	2012	8.43
12	2013	8.7

Source: Adapted from Asuru (2015)

In comparative terms Nze cited in Asuru (2015) indicated in table 2 below that education budget in Nigeria was the least within the period under reference when compared to other countries.

Table 2: Selected Countries Annual budgetary Allocation to Education

S/NO	Country	Budgetary Allocation % Annual	Positive
1	Ghana	31.0	1 <sup>st</sup>
2	Cote d'Ivoire	30.0	2 <sup>nd</sup>
3	Uganda	27.0	3 <sup>rd</sup>
4	Morocco	26.4	4 <sup>th</sup>
5	South Africa	25.8	5 <sup>th</sup>
6	Swaziland	24.6	6 <sup>th</sup>
7	Mexico	24.3	7 <sup>th</sup>
8	Kenya	23.0	8 <sup>th</sup>
9	United Arab Emirate	22.5	9 <sup>th</sup>
10	Botswana	19.0	10 <sup>th</sup>
11	Iran	17.7	11 <sup>th</sup>
12	USA	17.1	12 <sup>th</sup>
13	Tunisia	17.0	13 <sup>th</sup>
14	Lesotho	17.0	14 <sup>th</sup>
15	Burkina Faso	16.8	15 <sup>th</sup>
16	Norway	16.2	16 <sup>th</sup>
17	Colombia	15.6	17 <sup>th</sup>
18	Nicaragua	15.0	18 <sup>th</sup>
19	India	12.7	19 <sup>th</sup>
20	Nigeria	8.4	20 <sup>th</sup>

Source: Adapted from Asuru (2015)

Table 2 indicated that budgetary allocation to education in Nigeria was the least among the countries so far considered. More worrisome was the fact that the little budgeted was not completely released, and more than 80% of what was budgeted was expended on recurrent issues.

### ***Abridged Academic Calendars***

Incessant industrial actions by university staff interlaced with students protests and internal wranglings have compromised academic calendars of colleges and universities in Nigeria. In a desperate move to normalize academic calendars, semesters have to be shortened and course outlines rushed. Instructions are hurried to complete defined course outlines or some are consciously left untouched. Quality is therefore compromised as students graduate without some portion of skills and knowledge they were required to acquire before graduation. This category of graduates cannot in anyway contribute to national development in Nigeria.

### ***Quality of Teachers***

Quality of teachers is a major determinant of the quality of education because according to Robert-Okah (2013), no educational system can rise above the quality of its teaching staff. Teachers as educational engineers and technicians are the soul of any educational system. The quality of teachers and their method of teaching in Nigerian universities have in recent times

declined. Besides, there is the problem of attrition and ‘brain drain’. A good number of lecturers leave the university on study leave for upward of four years or more thereby depleting the available stock. Among the academic staff, only a paltry 43% hold doctorate degrees in the entire system. According to Anya (2013), indeed only seven of the over 100 universities have up to 60% of their academic staff with doctorate qualifications. A state university has one professor and 25 Ph.D. holders; another has two professors and five Ph.D. holders whereas a third has only 29 full-time lecturers. Anya (2013) further revealed that in one of the state university in Nigeria, four out of the 47 professors are on full-time, others are ‘visiting’. In another, only 24 of the 147 Ph.D. holders are full-time. As a result, a tenured staff in one university can visit as many universities as possible irrespective of distance, without control. Some academics are always on the move, traveling from one university to another thereby compromising their primary obligations with their tenured-employer. This dangerous trend has given some state universities proprietors the impression that universities can be run without any programme for academic staff development and for recruitment of full-time academics.

### ***Political Forces***

Although sound policies and access to capital for investing in development priorities are very important for economic success, no country can achieve development without a strong political foundation made up of political players, systems processes and structures that are grounded in inclusivity and accountability.

The state of the nation’s politics is therefore vital in the pursuit of fast-paced national development. Political forces are however the most important obstacles to Nigeria development (Anya, 2013). The cries of marginalization from all over the country illustrates how non-inclusive politics is perceived and the recent expose of oil subsidy scam and pension fraud involving huge amounts of money underline the great deficit in accountability, honesty and integrity in our national affairs. The collection of half-educated political jobbers with no commitment to any vision or values have driven us into the paradox of being ruled by cabals and other private interests in an otherwise democratic dispensation (Anya, 2013). The current political dispensation is driven by greed, deceit, and dishonest maneuvers by scammers of all types-419iers credit card scammers and even ex-convicts which the misuse of presidential powers has inflicted on the polity. A former senator who was once a Deputy Inspector General (DIG) of police once cried out in obvious embarrassment on the floor of the senate that most of his ‘distinguished’ colleagues were those he had investigated for indictable criminal offences.

### ***Poor Treatment of Teachers***

Contribution of education to national development is also dependent on the disposition to duty and instructional attitudes of teachers. Poor remuneration of lecturers, the down-turn in the nation’s economy, galloping inflation and consequently low perception of lecturers according to Ololube (2011) and Robert-Okah (2013) have conferred low esteem on Nigerian university lecturers. Lecturers are demoralized and have no option than to seek for alternative sources of income. The ‘handout’ syndrome has become a notorious phenomenon, which most universities have fought without success. Examination grades are sold to the highest bidders. Lecturers chase contracts, engage in consultancy and full-time commercial activities whereas others graciously receive political appointments at the expense of their jobs. Some even work on part-time or full-

time basis in two or more establishments to make ends meet. These negative attitudes of lecturers cannot in all honesty produce graduates that can contribute to national development.

## **CONCLUSION**

The study so far indicated that education is the bedrock of growth and development. It is the producer of critical skills needed for national development. Education does not only open up and widens the human mind, it affords individuals the capacity and facility to examine and choose between competing alternative courses of action for problem-solving. The impact of education to national development however has not only been unimpressive but has indeed become negative. This is in spite of the huge amount of resources invested in it. This state of affairs may not be unconnected with poor funding, shallow philosophy, the policy of federal character and quota system, corruption and cheating, politicization of education and poor quality of teachers. For education to assume its proper responsibilities there is the need to do the needful in the areas of adequate funding, proper remuneration and motivation of teachers, depoliticization of education and enhanced school-industry collaboration.

## **Suggestions**

In order for education to take its rightful place and play a positive role in national development efforts in Nigeria, the following among others were recommended:

- Education in Nigeria should be restructured for it to have values for societal development rather than having a private value for self-gratification, personal aggrandizement and pleasure-seeking.
- Opening of new schools should be depoliticized to make them operate without much encumbrance for the realization of their set goals.
- Vast human and material resources should be committed towards development of education such that propagation of worthwhile skills and knowledge are guaranteed.
- Teachers' conditions of service should be enhanced to minimize 'brain drain', teachers attrition and academic fraud.
- Universities should be adequately funded as it could still embark on other revenue deriving efforts to make ends meet.
- JAMB should be restructured with each university conducting its own written entrance examination and interviews. This will enable them to make the right choices of candidates based on merit, thereby enhancing clients' confidence.
- Since private universities were established to provide improved access for higher education, improved academic standards and contribute to national development, government grants should be extended to them.
- There should be enhanced and workable school and industry linkage and collaboration. This will ensure effective skills development in all ramifications.
- There is an urgent need for re-orientation and re-prioritization of our national values by changing our manner of perceiving and doing things, placing national interest above sectional and parochial interests.
- The National Orientation Agency (NOA) should extend its services to school through seminars, symposia and workshops to re-orientate her value system.

- To cut down on over-head cost, non-essential services should be contracted out and the number of junior staff drastically reduced.
- Students' enrolment in the sciences, engineering, technology and agriculture-the productive sector of the economy should be increased through preferential scholarship/bursary awards and resource allocations.
- Adequate training in teaching through short courses and seminars in pedagogy should be given to teaching staff occasionally.

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