

Economic Rationale for Formal Education: The Nigeria Example

Julius Ayo AKINWUMIJU

Department of Educational Management
University of Ibadan

Chinyere Onyemaechi AGABI

Department of Educational Management
Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Nigeria
chinyereagabi@yahoo.com

Abstract

Formal schooling and economic development go hand-in-hand in the modern economy and the suggestion that ex-colonies of the Western world should emulate that approach to development is now questionable in the face of happenings in this 21st century. It has been observed that the adoption of the western education system, with its emphasis on formal schooling, is the best means to modernization and to the enhancement of one's economic rewards. These roles of formal education were also seen as important means of training the manpower and the elites that would run the developing economies of their former colonies. Today, whether formal education promotes or hinders development is an issue of serious debate in many circles and among academics and policy makers in developed as well as developing nations in this 21st century. A plethora of literature abounds on the effects of formal education on economic development. Writers fall into two major classes: supporters of formal education and formal schooling; and revolutionists who advocate for a change in the system of education (the critics of formal education) in the face of recent trends in economic developments. This paper looks at the problems and prospects of formal education in economic development with special emphasis on Nigeria. The review of relevant literature was done in four parts in consideration of the classical views; the reformists' perspectives; the Marxists' views; and the radical utopians' views. It concludes with an appraisal of the diverse views.

Keywords: Education, schooling, educated manpower, economic development.

INTRODUCTION

In Nigeria and in the world in general, schooling has been adjudged and recognized as a route to success in life. It has been realized for some time now that completing secondary education (high school) raises earnings modestly, but completing college or university education raises them more substantially (FRN, 2004a; Agabi, 2015). You must go to school to get ahead, so says the old adage. You have no choice but to want to get ahead and be successful. For hundreds of thousands of people since the introduction and establishment of high schools in the middle part of the 19th century, these rules have enriched many. The longer you stay in school, the more money you will make in your lifetime - so goes one line of the success doctrine.

However, as events and facts change, this dominant doctrine loses force. At a time when upward of 85 to 90 percent of school-age cohort graduate from high school - that is, at a time when nearly everybody has the same credential – the value of that credential in differentiating individuals reduces to almost zero. Going by the economic principles of scarcity and choice, what everybody has is not valued in a market place that is governed by scarcity and specialization. The old glitter is gone and a new justification for schooling is sorely, urgently, greatly and extremely needed.

FORMAL EDUCATION AND DEVELOPING ECONOMICS

The Nigerian economy is currently undergoing a crisis situation. The crisis manifests in the form of high level of educated unemployment; low income; low value of the naira, low output of the industries; decline in purchasing power; eroded value of the naira at both local and international markets etc. In fact, in real value, the income that people now receive is far less than what they were receiving in the 80s and 90s (Agabi & Wali, 2012). This dismal condition of the state of the economy continues to be a matter of concern to everyone. This is because every individual is, in one way or the other, affected. The high level of unemployment which does not spare even the educated within the economy has started to generate discussion in various circles as to the worth of formal education. This is so much so that training in skills that were commonly associated with artisans are now built into the curriculum of formal education to guard against graduate unemployment.

Developing countries in general and Nigeria in particular spend a disproportionate percentage of their income on education. This is in spite of the fact that the increasing amounts of money being allocated to education is watered down and constantly rendered insufficient by rising inflation (Agabi, 2013; Anibueze & Okwo, 2013). In some states, prior to the 1990s as much as 40% of the entire government revenue was spent on education. More than 90% of this went to formal education and less than 10% was allocated to informal and non-formal education (Hinchliffe, 1989). Formal education is given higher priority because of the inherent belief that economic and other unquantifiable non-economic benefits of education outweigh its costs (Ayeni, 2009; Agabi 2012).

Studies on the economic venture to formal education, as reported by Blaug (1970), Bowles & Gintis (1972) and Psacharopoulos (1987) among others, show that returns to investment in education are comparable to the returns to any other form of physical capital. The escalating cost of education and dwindling opportunity for securing jobs after school combine with the fall in the value of salaries and allowances being paid to the educated to question the results of studies that indicate high rate of returns to investment in education. It is not unlikely that these results are influenced by the bias of the researchers. As observed by Reef (2016, p.7), “mass unemployment among Nigerian youths looms and remains a time bomb... inflation is also on a daily rise with exchange rates of the naira with other international currencies assuming an alarming height.”

Reef's (2016) observation supports the observations of Anibueze and Okwo (2013) that the issues in the funding of education in Nigeria are not just in the quantum of money that is made available for the education system but also in the purchasing power of such quantum of money in the context of minimum fund required for effective performance, in the existence of corruption, high inflation rate and uncontrollable increases in the demand for formal education and the associating increase in staff requirement. In the opinion of these researchers, formal

education is not being adequately funded in Nigeria, in spite of the growing demand; because the Western type of education adopted by Nigeria has become very costly to run, in view of the very rapid expansion at all levels of the education system. This situation is further compounded by the economic situation in the country; a situation in which the school system is producing more graduates than the economy can accommodate. Youth unemployment has persisted in Nigeria for decades even as tertiary institutions continue to produce graduates in different fields in their thousands every year.

In knowing the true worth of formal education, it is not enough to compare its returns to investment in physical capital. The returns need to be compared with returns to other forms of investments in alternative types of education such as vocational or traditional education. For instance, Bas (1989) in a related study discovered that the cost of formal education is much higher than the cost of traditional apprenticeship form of imparting knowledge and skills. The benefits to education measured mainly on one criterion (that is, increased earnings of the recipient) have been found to have very high returns. The returns, though high, have been on a downward trend since the late 60s. This trend has, however, been envisaged by Lipsey (1975) when he cautioned that for society as for individual, a point can be reached beyond which further education is not wise. In the same vein, Samuelson (1980) observed that the demonstration that College training was very much worth-while in the 1950s may need to be modified downwards in the 1980s with the threat of an oversupply of trained professionals. That is a situation in which growth in supply of skilled manpower is not matched with equal growth in the demand for skilled and educated manpower.

In the case of Nigeria, the profitability of education has been found to be following a downward trend. For instance, the adjusted social rates of returns to university education in Nigeria have been computed by Akangbou (1987) to have fallen from 16% in 1967 to 10.4% in 1975 and 7.2% in 1983. The continuation of this trend implies that the social rates of returns to university education would have become insignificant before the end of this century. What then is responsible for the declining returns to investment in education in less developed countries?

FACTORS THAT AFFECT RATE OF RETURNS TO INVESTMENT IN EDUCATION

Developing economies, especially in Africa, seem not to be growing as fast as their human population and rate of participation in formal education. This has often been attributed to the high spate of armed conflicts (as exemplified by security issues in Nigeria, Libya, South Sudan, Rwanda, and Egypt); corruption that manifests in massive looting of national treasuries and illegal exportation of national resources; bad leadership; and inappropriate/weak content education. In view of this, most African countries, including Nigeria, expanded school system curriculum to include more subjects that teach practical skills in civics, entrepreneurship education, information and Communication Technology, ICT; and to give more impetus to existing subjects in the vocational arts such as agricultural science and basic technology, home economics, creative and cultural arts. This seems to have impacted positively on job creation because the change in curricular content seem to have ignited the flame for self employment even though the majority continues to aspire for near-non-existent jobs in the corporate sector.

By the basic principles of demand and supply, the price of goods and services will drop when supply is significantly higher than demand. By simple logic the wage attracted by educated persons, by virtue of their education, will become smaller when there are many people (with relevant skills) available in the labour market. Hence as more and more people are getting

educated and acquiring relevant skills, wage employment (or salary job) is getting less attractive and the shift towards entrepreneurship and self-employment is getting stronger.

Other reasons for the reduction in the rates of returns to formal education are proffered by Thompson (1981) to include the following:

- Formal education is producing people with the wrong kind of skills;
- Education in itself does not create job opportunities, it only improves on employment prospects;
- The high cost of using educated manpower. In less developed countries, the wages paid to educated personnel are substantially higher by comparison with average per capital income than is the case in richer countries; and
- The cost of providing education in developing countries is generally higher, relative to national income, than in more developed countries; and therefore, it is correspondingly more difficult to make it pay in economic terms.

FACTORS THAT PROMOTE HIGH RETURNS TO INVESTMENT IN EDUCATION

The expansion of education systems and programmes to include a greater variety of learners and courses/subjects has not yielded the expected results. This is in terms expected returns to the growing investment in education level of unemployment is still high especially among skilled and semi-skilled labour force. In view of this, returns to education, especially in Africa, is still low. Agabi (2013) attributes this to the high inflation rates commonly associated with African countries and most developing countries of the world. In her opinion, the increase in the quantum of money allotted to education in the national budgets of Nigeria and most 3rd world countries is only a reflection of the inflation growing rates which reduces the actual market value of the supposedly big budget; the situation is worsened by the fact that most of these countries (Nigeria inclusive) are highly dependent on international borrowing and on imported educational resources. In essence, the expansion of education programmes, target population and national budget on education does not necessarily amount to improvement in quality of education and hence quality of graduates. The inflationary rate in Nigeria as at the time of writing paper in 2017 was put at 18.72% by the news media. In Agabi's (2013) opinion, returns to education is relative to the quality of education that was given and the demand for the particular skill that was acquired. A high demand puts the educated person with the relevant skill at an advantageous bargaining position. On the other hand, the proliferation of skills weakens the bargaining power of the one with the education on the proliferated skills. This is why general knowledge is being de-emphasized and specialization is being emphasized. It is also for this reason that more subjects that require special training are being introduced in schools at all levels of education.

Other qualities that promote high returns to investment in education which gave developed countries their advantageous position on and in which Nigeria and most African countries are lagging behind were identified by Hoselitz as quoted in Thompson (1981) to include:

- A highly developed economy with negligible or tiny substances sector and highly important exchange sectors;
- A highly diversified occupational structures with considerable degree of specialization and hence with substantial need for elaborate training programmes;

- The existence of relatively full employment and efficient labour markets;
- The existence of well-developed communication systems dependent upon assumed universal literacy; and
- A visibly high degree of social occupational mobility, yet with sufficient stability as to ensure a strong correlation between the training an individual might receive and the career that he might actually pursue.

Another way to look at the above is whether or not investment in education is not a pre-condition for the attainment of the indices of development. This brings us to the establishment of cause and-effect relationship. If we study the economics of less developed countries (LDCs) very closely, we would see that they believe that investment in education is the easiest way to every good thing. However, with the present predicament that Nigeria is facing, one is bound to believe that the pre-conditions stated above would lead to profitability of investment in education. The basic truth is that the rate of growth of the economy of various states in Nigeria is on the decline, in some cases negative. The economic down-turn is so bad that in some states, workers go for several months without their salaries being paid. So much so that both print and electronic media are replete with news of protest marches and work-to-rule actions by teachers, medical doctors, and various categories of workers (including pensioners) of different ministries and parastatals.

It is then necessary to think back and re-assess the role and the contribution of formal education in our national development. Perhaps we should look back at the suggestive negative aspects of the contribution of formal education to development. Majority of those who are engaged in various types of activities that ruin the economy and national development in general, are drawn from the educated class. The educated are in the lead for economic crimes like smuggling, currency trafficking, bunkering, drug trafficking, inflated contracts, kickbacks, embezzlement, money laundering and all manner of high level fraud that are damaging to the socio-economic development of the country. In spite of the penalties associated with these crimes when offenders are arrested, prosecuted and found culpable; these crimes are constantly perpetrated by the educated class and the elites in the society.

FORMAL EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: A HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

Formal education was first imported into Nigeria by the missionaries in 1842, just nine years after the abolition of the slave trade in 1833 by William Wilberforce. Its importation had dual connotations. First the education system was tied up with religion. The early missionaries used it as a means of propagating their tenets. They taught the local people how to read the Bible and chant the catechism. They helped in producing catechists. Secondly, formal education was also used as a vehicle for social and economic mobility. Young people were taught basic skills of reading writing and arithmetic (the 3Rs). The education system produced mere interpreters, people who could act as middlemen and interpreters between the white traders and the local merchants (Fafunwa, 1974). There is yet a more pronounced and more glaring connotation of engaging in another form of slave trade. This time around, unlike the former type of slavery (the physical slavery) of the 18th and 19th centuries, the introduction of formal education brought about acculturation. A change in outlook, as well as change in values and products.

Formal education equipped its products with increasing interest in the consumption of foreign goods than in being producers. The result is that despite the more than one-and-a-half centuries of exposure to formal education, Nigeria in particular and African countries in general

are still where they were, (i.e where the missionaries wanted them to be), consumers and not producers. As observed by Ademola-Olateju (2013), this pathetic situation was compounded by the unprecedented post civil war wage increase popularly called the Udoji awards. In his words:

Materialism became the new stupid standard. We developed complicated taste for foreign goods, and consumption of imports skyrocketed. When General Muritala Mohammed became head of state, he opened the floodgates to imports. Rice, fish, chicken and even frozen beef were brought in freely to satiate growing appetite (Ademola-Olateju, 2013, p. 1).

It is to be noted that formal education was brought into Nigeria through the Atlantic Ocean. Hence, the system first reached a small section of the population and found it difficult to penetrate to other sections for a long time. It did not reach the other sections until 1904. This resulted in educational imbalance and political stifling (Fafunwa, 1974; Aiyekpeku 1989), which the country is still struggling with in this 21st century.

Diverse educational planning approaches have been embarked upon with the hope of developing Nigeria's abundant human resources. Approaches like the rate of returns approach, the manpower development approach, the social demand approach, and the international comparison approach, etc. have all been used at different times in the course of human resource development in Nigeria (Taiwo, 1985) but in spite of these efforts, the situation in the country has not improved considerably.

Nigeria as a country is blessed with a lot of natural resources. A lot has been done to develop its human resources but the yields have not been perfect. The nation spends billions of naira on education each year, because as rightly observed by Taiwo, (1985) education has become an investment which must be financed by government as well as external sources. It is an investment on the future of the country, Nigeria. Yet Nigeria is still a third world country with an underdeveloped economy.

PERSPECTIVES ON ECONOMIC RATIONALE FOR FORMAL EDUCATION

The economic rationale for formal education can be viewed from various perspectives. This paper considers the classical, reformists, Marxists and radical utopian perspectives on the subject matter.

The Classical Perspective

After the Second World War, the United States emerged as a super power and started putting pressure on European powers to prepare their colonies for independence. At that same time, Western countries were trying to find the best tool for human resource development necessary in the running of a modern economy. Education was seen by many as an economic perspective. It was argued that educational programmes that are geared toward economic incentives will provide the greatest return to a country's development process. To achieve this, they favoured an education policy that functions on the operation of the market mechanism. They argue that as formal education is seen by individuals as an investment in good occupation, the demand for it will ultimately be in the belief that school redistributes occupation competence, and occupational competence determines economic rewards in a given society. The classical view was a popular

belief among many scholars as well as agencies and government leaders of most developing countries, in the 1950s. This was also the belief in Nigeria until the late 1970s. This group of writers point out that the problem of equity can be resolved by a policy that emphasizes equal access to educational opportunity. They argue that if this is done, social mobility will be attained. Notable among the classical writers are Fredrick Harbison, Charles Myer and Phillips Coombs.

Related Views on the Classical Perspective

Foster's (1965) thoughts on education seem to come close to the classical view. In his article, *The Vocational Education Fallacy in Development*, he put forward the ideas that formal school systems are indeed the best means to teach the basic competence necessary in mastering specific skills offered in vocational schools. Although he did not advocate a strictly capitalist mode of development in developing countries, he invariably supports a system that has as much market choices as possible rather than a centrally planned one. However, Foster does not hold the view that schools are primary agents of attitudinal and social change but rather supports the nature of occupational mobility and wage structure in a society which functions outside the school system.

However, Labelle and Verhine (1975) and Labelle (1977) point out many of the dysfunctionality of a formal education and did not entertain the views that the market mechanism will adjust the demand for education. They are firm in the belief that education, when used to induce change for its own sake (without entailing some rewards) is weak and ineffective. They supported this position by citing cases in Latin America where non-formal education had negligible impact on increasing social and economic rewards in comparison with formal education.

The Underlying Argument in the Classical View

The underlying argument for manpower planning is that most developing countries are faced with shortage of skilled manpower such as professionals and sub-professional staff and teachers. This situation is further compounded by the lack of absorptive capacity of the economy for educated people. Manpower planning therefore takes a careful sector-by-sector analysis of minimal essential needs at present as well as in the future; and then prepares the ground for training the number of people who can be absorbed in the economy. In this way, a country is able to avoid unemployment which is a major contributor to human resources wastage.

Harbison & Meyers (1964) are the strongest proponents of the manpower planning approach to development of formal education. They emphasize the importance of secondary schools to countries with low education level. They also emphasized technological and scientific development in the course of developing the formal school system. Similarly, Lewis (1962) argues that the reason for crucial manpower shortage is because of the deficiency in content and quality of secondary schools. The consequence of this deficiency is that schools are not turning out enough professionals, sub-professionals, technicians, administrators and managers that are vital for economic development. To Lewis, the small percentage of college graduates in most developing economies is ineffective in bringing about positive change; and its absence will not make any significant difference. He observes that the insufficiency in secondary school education is a great handicap because secondary school graduates constitute a great percentage of the personnel in medium and large scale businesses; and they are also the backbone of the civil service. Lewis is also aware of the higher cost and absorptive capacity of expanding formal

education system and he supports any education planning that emphasizes vocational, technical and adult education. This, he believes, will speed up the process of development.

Lewis (1962) may have expressed his thoughts decades before the era of knowledge explosion that is associated with the 21st century. However, his idea of a secondary education that is adequate for the development of a functional labour force for the national economy remains relevant in the contemporary society. This is reflected in the expansion of the curricular content of secondary education to include subjects in the vocational and technical areas; and in the inclusion of adult education programmes to take care of the education of adults who either missed formal education opportunities or did not complete a particular level of education.

The national policy on education in Nigeria (FRN, 2004a) is a typical example of an education policy that includes vocational, technical and adult education programmes in the national education agenda. It should also be noted that the inadequacy in the supply of skilled manpower to run the national economy as observed by Harbison and Meyers (1964) is still a major challenge in the provision of quality education in Nigeria, especially in the areas of primary and secondary education.

The school system in Nigeria still employs graduates who do not have teaching qualifications as teachers in the primary and secondary schools. This employment of untrained teachers is to make up for the shortfall in the supply of professionally trained teachers. As observed by Okeke (2004) and Agabi (2014), the Nigerian government violates its own education policy by employing untrained teachers to teach at the basic levels of education. The violation of the policy on the employment of trained and qualified teachers is a direct consequence of the inability of Nigeria's tertiary education institutions to produce enough teachers for these lower levels of education. The direct implication of this policy violation is that the quality of primary and secondary education remains a hindrance to the quality of tertiary education enrollment as it affects the ability of many of the students to cope with the intellectual requirements of tertiary education.

The Reformist's Views

Coombs (1968) articulates the problem of existing education systems in the world. In his book titled, *The World Education Crisis: A system Analysis*, Coombs argued that rapid change has occurred in all countries since the Second World War, which has brought revolution in science, technology, economics, politics, demography and social structure. He adds that even though the educational system has changed in line with the new social order, it has not changed enough to accommodate the new challenges exerted by the above factors. Consequently, disparities have occurred between the educational system and the surrounding environment. Coombs identified two dimensions to the education crisis in the world. The first dimension involves the increasing expansion of education which has been threatening world stability since 1945. This is because developed and developing countries have not made significant changes in their education systems and in economic policies designed to place in the labour force those who finish schools. The second dimension, on the other hand, is the reality that there is an immense shortage of skilled labour in developing countries to adjust the output of the educational system to the needs of a country's economy.

Pointing out the problems of formal education in the same way as Coombs (1968), D'Aeth (1975) argues that the increasing costs of formal education make it undesirable for third world countries to rely on full scale formal education systems. In his words:

Failure to give sufficient weight to the full range of circumstances affecting educational development in each country, and the tendency to see an over-simplified relationship between the expansion of education and economic growth, have led to the present sense of disillusionment (p. 35).

Another critic of formal education who is both a scholar and a statesman is Julius Nyerere whose attack on formal education and his desire for an alternative to it is presented in his article, *Education for self Reliance*, published in 1967. Since Tanzania is a poor rural country, Nyerere was opposed to the adoption of the British elitist school system after independence. He called instead for a system of schooling that will provide the knowledge, skills and attitudes that will serve the graduates of the system wherever they live and work in developing and changing the socialist state; and such system of schooling must not aim at university entrance. He advocated for a school system in which every school, especially at secondary and tertiary levels, is a self-reliant and economic community that must not only contribute to its own upkeep but should also make some contributions to national income.

In his book, *The Political Dilemma of Popular Education: An African Case*, published in 1972, David Abemethy adds to the view that formal education has a dysfunctional effect in the case of Nigeria. In this book, Abemethy suggests that an unplanned and uneven expansion of formal education in Southern Nigeria created a class of elites that became impatient with the political structure. This resulted in the increased tensions between the Northern and Southern regions of the country and eventually culminated in a civil war. In his opinion the provision of formal education must be balanced in the accommodation of the needs various socio-ethnic groups and regions that make up a country, for such system of education to yield the desired positive results for national development.

Abemethy's (1972) opinion is to be expected because he wrote and published his work two years after the end of the 30 month Nigerian civil/war. He is also not far from the truth. Nigerian history is replete with information on the haphazard manner in which formal education developed in Nigeria. It was initially so heavily laden with Christian doctrines that the Moslem North rejected it for many years and stock to Islamic education (Fafunwa 1974; Taiwo, 1985; Ogbondah, 2006). In the long run, in spite of the many years of free education, Northern Nigeria is still disadvantaged in terms of level of participation in the formal school system. This situation is further compounded by incessant insurgence, by militant groups, in which human life is constantly at risk in contemporary Nigeria. Similarly, Raheem, Oyeleye, Adeniji & Aladekoyi (2014) blame the socio-economic instability in Nigeria, not on education, but on regional imbalances arising from religion, distribution of natural resources and the topography of the various regions that make up Nigeria. In their opinion these factors are responsible for the neglect of some regions in national policies and national development activities.

While Abemethy (1972) blamed formal education for the creation of an elitist class that was impatient with the national political structure; Ayeni (2009) blamed the weakness of the formal education system in Nigeria on political instability that results in frequent changes in educational policies and programmes that are also not backed by sufficient resource support. In Ayeni's opinion, any educational reform that is not adequately supported with financial, material and skilled human resources amounts to a waste of time.

On the other hand, Gbadebo (2014) blamed the poor performance of the products of Nigeria's school system on the politicization of education in the country. In his words, "if failure is not good for the children of policy makers, majority of who now school in Ghana and South

Africa because of the out-of-balance school system at home, it is not good for any child in Nigeria” (p. 1). He tried to distinguish between change and reform. Agreeing that reform is a necessary and constant part of a democratic experience, Gbadebo asserts that change is good only if it brings about improvement; and any form of change that destroys good things, “as we always have in Nigeria” (P.1), is bad. He emphasized that the quality of public education should be improved to meet the high education standards that is exemplified by South Africa, United States, Russia and Finland. In his opinion, children who cannot meet this high standard of education should be allowed to grow at their own pace and should not be used on the basis of quota system to hold others back in this 21st century. The position of Ayeni (2009) and Gbadebo 2014 is that in the effective reformation of education in Nigeria, the interest of Nigerian children, rather than political interests, should be given top priority in any development plan for the education system. If this is done, the products of the Nigerian education system will be able to compete favourably with products of the education systems of other countries, anywhere in the world.

The Marxists View

The Marxist school of thought believes that a radical transformation in the social, political and economic structure of a country is necessary in treating the ills of formal education systems. Among the most articulate proponents of this view are Martin Camoy, Samuel Bowles, Herbert Gintis and Henry Levine. They all attribute the failure of formal education to the nature of the capitalist system. Camoy (1974) in his book, *Education as Cultural imperialism*, rejects Schumpeter’s view of imperialism and accepts Lenin’s dependence theory. He observes that the conditions of underdevelopment of most third world countries are the result of the economic and exploitative relations which the developed world has with them. He therefore sees formal education as a tool employed by capitalists to reproduce the social structure in which they remain perpetually powerful. Camoy (1974) supports his position with case studies of India, Nigeria, Brazil, Peru and the United States as evidence to prove the relationship between a capitalist economic development and the emergence of formal education systems that reproduce the economic, social and political relations of each society. He also rejects the classical view that the expansion of educational opportunities will help in the redistribution of income. To Camoy, income inequalities are the result of capitalist systems and unless the hierarchical structure of societies that governs schooling is changed, it will always be there.

Similarly, Bowles (1972) argues that the root cause of social inequality and underdevelopment is not in the education system per se, but rather in the capitalist system. He cites the Cuban education system as an example of the important part that education can play in the development process and in the abolition of class stratification. He observes that education contributed significantly to Cuba’s national development in the development of her workforce, with the inculcation of technical and scientific knowledge as well as other values, expectations, beliefs and model behaviours required for effective and efficient productivity.

The Radical Utopian View

Another group of thinkers who may be referred to as the radical Utopians maintain that a fundamental change in the society is necessary in adjusting the disfunctional formal education. Notable among this group of writers are Ivan Illich, Bob Godwin, Paulo Friere, Jaroslav Vanek

and Everett Reimer. They oppose the traditional style of education from different perspectives while at the same time maintaining a concern for the dignity and worth of the individual as well as the liberation of men and women from an oppressive and exploitative environment.

These Radical Utopians maintain that the key to understanding the problems of modern economy lies in the character of its consumption activities and in the ideology that supports them. Hence, they see schools as forms of bureaucracies geared towards the introduction of docile and gullible consumers. Modern social life, they add, is guided by “institutionalized values” which determine how one perceives one’s needs, and defines instruments for their satisfaction. Therefore, man’s contemporary problems, according to these Utopians do not need more institutionalization of values, and such institutions should not exist.

FORMAL EDUCATION IN 21ST CENTURY NIGERIA

Generally, formal education was expected to be the pivot to national development, social mobility and wage employment in the formal sector of the economy. Despite the differences one may have about kinds of criticisms forwarded by individuals from different schools of thought, it is reasonable to conclude that formal education was geared towards urban-modern sector development, and the formation of an elitist class. It has therefore not been very effective in its contribution to the development process in our agrarian society. Truly, if this is the focus of formal education, one may query its appropriateness for any country in the developing world where majority of the people live in rural areas; and the urban poor outnumber the urban rich by a wide margin, by virtue of the quest for the very limited job openings in the formal sector of the 21st century economy.

Nigeria and most African countries are just waking up to the reality of skill development as a viable tool for sustainable national economic development, hence the change from the slogan of education for nation building to agriculture for economic development (FRN, 2004b). The theme for today’s formal education should rather be education for better agricultural productivity because of the new emphasis on the development of agriculture as an alternative source of national income. It is in the light of this awakening that the teaching of agricultural science and civic education has attained a higher impetus at all levels of education in Nigeria, and especially at the tertiary level, in terms of institutional spread and improved funding. To this end, farmers in Nigeria now get support from federal government, in the form of soft loans, and distribution of seedlings and fertilizer. Formal education in Nigeria is also gearing towards the development of the non-formal sector of the economy. This is reflected in the content of the 6th revised edition of the national policy on education. In the effort at developing skills that promote self-employment, this 6th edition of the national policy on education is a great improvement on previous editions of the policy. This is because the policy is very specific on areas of vocational training that can facilitate self-employment; and it clearly outlines 34 subject areas for the development of trade or entrepreneurship skills at the senior secondary school level (FRN, 2014).

However, Akpomi (2017), in consideration of the fact that entrepreneurship education has attained higher impetus in the Nigerian school system as well as in the socio-economic activities of individuals; and in the corporate social activities of multi-national groups, recommends that formal education should be generally directed at self-employment starting from the basic education level. This, she believes, will ensure that the products of the school system would no longer need to depend entirely on the formal economic sector for job creation and

employment. Akpomi's recommendation is in line with Agabi's (2013) recommendation that educational toys used in pre-school should be such that introduce learners to the features of various forms of socio-economic activities. This prepares them gradually for lessons on related subjects at next level of education. Agabi also recommends that practical vocational training should begin at the primary school level so that the learner achieves some level of skill development by the completion of the nine year basic education programme.

These are clear indications that formal education in Nigeria is getting the necessary attention from professionals and may likely attain a state in which unemployment will be a matter of choice rather than job scarcity. It must however be stated that the achievement of this state will depend greatly on the interest of government and the ruling class in ensuring adequate funding for the education system. It can never be overemphasized that even the best education policies and programmes will achieve little or nothing if they are not supported by adequate and regular funding.

EDUCATION FOR SOCIAL MOBILITY

A great percentage of the population of most developing countries believes that formal education is a vehicle for social and economic mobility. This belief greatly influenced the popular demand for Western Education and resulted in the great improvement in level of investment in the educational sector (Aiyepoku, 1989; Taiwo, 1985; Ogbondah, 2006). This improved funding was directed at providing an education programme that can be accessed by all who desire to be educated. In the long run, this social demand approach to the funding of education proved to be too costly. This is because it produced more graduates than the modern economic sector could absorb. Consequently it impacted negatively on economic growth because it yielded a huge supply of educated but idle youth that became easy tools for political upheavals in the developing countries (Nigeria inclusive). The elimination of unemployment and the facilitation of positive socio-economic mobility therefore forms the rationale for the expansion of formal education curriculum to include a broader variety of subjects that encourage entrepreneurship and job creation by school system graduates.

Education for Wage Employment

Policy makers, employers of labour and individuals tend to consider formal education as a passport to jobs in the modern sector. In the effort to increase their chances for wage employment, students, on their part, tend to remain in school for as long as possible; sometimes for far more years than required by the available jobs. Due to the low private cost of public education, families try to educate their children to the highest possible level to increase their chances of securing a wage employment in the corporate sector (Agabi, 2015). The quest for qualification for wage employment in the formal economic sector results in a qualification syndrome. This reinforces the natural tendency and changes the objective of education at one level to the preparation for the-next higher level.

The general belief is that with the teaching of vocational subjects like agricultural science, entrepreneurship skills, cultural and creative arts, music, civic education among others, the desire for foreign goods by Nigerians will be curbed. It is also believed that it will help the school system turn out graduates that are better suited for Nigeria's economic reverse, from an

oil based economy that offers only corporate employment to an agro-based economy with ample room for job creation, self-employment and sustainable economic development.

CONCLUSION

From all available literature, it seems that the rationale for formal education hinges on bridging the chasm and creating a balance between education and work. This involves tempering the inflation of qualification; increasing job opportunities; modifying the supply and nature of education opportunities; reducing the disparities in wages between the modern and traditional sectors and between clerical and technical jobs; requiring the beneficiary to bear an increasing share of the cost of his/her education; relating wages to job specification rather than to academic qualification; and developing effective counseling and placement services in educational institutions.

This paper concludes that formal education in Nigeria introduced a new form of slave trade. It introduced mental slavery which promotes a form of acculturation, a change in outlook, taste and perception; and an increased interest in foreign values, norms and products. It is hoped that this state of mental slavery and acculturation will be reversed and totally eliminated in the struggle to uplift Nigeria's ailing economy. It therefore recommends the teaching of practical lessons on the production and uses of Nigeria's natural resources with special emphasis on the projection of our very rich cultural and agricultural resources. In view of this, the underlying rationale for formal education in 21st century Nigeria should be the re-establishment and enhancement of areas of Nigeria's traditional economic activities such as fishing, farming, cattle rearing, and the massive production of textiles and food that are native to Nigeria.

REFERENCES

- Abernethy, B. D. (1972). *The political dilemma of popular education: An African case*. Stanford California: University Press.
- Ademola-Olateju, B. (2013).
- Agabi, C. O. (2012). Education as an economic investment. *International Journal of Scientific Research in Education*, 5(1), 1-11.
- Agabi, C. O. (2013). Education for all as a development project in Nigeria. *Reiko International Journal of Social and Economic Research*, 7(1a), 123-142.
- Agabi, C. O. (2014). *Teaching and resource management in education*. Port Harcourt: Rodi.
- Agabi, C. O. (2015). Social demand approach: a vital tool in the achievement of cost effectiveness in Nigeria's Basic Education. *Elixir International Journal of Social Sciences*, 9(4), 36775-36781.
- Agabi C. O., & Wali, W. I. (2012). Teachers' welfare programme as a time management strategy. *Journal of Education in Developing Areas*, 20(1).
- Aiyepoku, T. F. (1989). *6-3-3-4 system of education in Nigeria*. Ibadan, NPS Educational Publishers.
- Akangbou, S.D. (1987). *Some issues of educational management in Nigeria*. Ibadan: Department of Educational Management, University of Ibadan.
- Akpomi, M. E. (2017). School-based entrepreneurship education: The planning perspective. In C. O. Agabi & M. E. Akpomi (Eds), *Concepts in the economics of education*. Port Harcourt: University of Port Harcourt Press.

- Anibueze, A. U., & Okwo, F.O. (2013). Counterpart funding for the Universal Basic Education in Nigeria: Implication for counseling. *Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 17(2), 11-16.
- Ayeni, A. O. (2009). Introduction to educational planning. In J. B. Babalola & A. O. Ayeni (Eds.). *Educational Management: Theories and Tasks* (pp. 12-31). Lagos, MacMillan Nigeria
- Bas, D. (1989). On the job training in Africa. *International Labour Review*, 128(4), 485-496.
- Blaug, M. (1970). *An introduction to economics of education*. Middlesex, Penguin.
- Bowles, S. (1972): Cuban Education and the Revolutionary Ideology. In M. Camoy (Ed.) *Schooling in a Corporate Society: The Political Economics of Education in America* (pp. 35-47). New York: David Mickey.
- Camoy, M. (1974). *Education as cultural imperialism*. New York: David Mickey.
- Coombs, H. P. (1968). *The world education crisis: A system analysis*. New York, McGraw-Hill.
- D'aeth, R. (1975). *Education and Development in the Third World*. New York, Saxon House.
- Fafunwa, B. (1974). *History of Education in Nigeria*. London: George Allen & Unwin.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) (2004a). *National Policy on Education (4th Ed.)*. Lagos, NERDC.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria, FRN (2004b). *National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy, NEEDS*. Abuja: National Planning Commission.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria, FRN (2014). *National Policy on Education (6th Ed.)*. Lagos, NERDC.
- Foster, P. (1965). The vocational education fallacy in development. In C.A. Anderson & M.J. Boroman (Eds). *Education and economic development* (pp. 11-25). Chicago: Aldrine.
- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Seaburg Press.
- Gabriel, O. (2015). *Youth unemployment*. Retrieved from vanguardngr.com/2015/or/youth-unemployment.
- Gbadebo, A. (2014). *Agony of education imbalance in Nigeria*. Retrieved from opinionnigeria.com.
- Harbison, F., & Myer, A. A. C. (1964). *Education, manpower and economic growth strategies of human resources development*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Hinchliffe, K. (1989). Economic Austerity, structural adjustment and education: The case of Nigeria. *International Development studies Bulletin*, 29(1), 9-10.
- Illich, I. (1972). Why we must de-establish schools. In M. Camoy (Ed), *The political economics of education in America* (pp 18-24). New York, David Mickey.
- Jamal, V., & Weeks, J. (1988). The vanishing Rural-Urban gap in Sub-Saharan Africa. *International Labour Review*, 127(3), 271-292.
- Labelle, J.T. (1977). Liberation development and rural non-formal education. In R.D. Neihoff (Ed.) *Non-formal education and the rural poor*. Kalamazoo: Michigan University Press.
- Labelle, J. T., & Verhine, E. R. (1975). Non-formal education and occupational strategies: implication for Latin America. *Mass, Harvard Educational Review*, 45.
- Lewis, W. A. (1962). Education and economic development. *International Social Journal*, 14(1), 68-90.
- Lipsey, R. G. (1975). *An introduction to Positive Economics*. Trowbridge and Esther, Weiderfield and Nicolson.
- Ogbondah, L. (2006). *Historical foundations of Western and Nigerian education*. Port Harcourt: Chrisbess.

- Ogundipe, M. A. (1989). *Investment in Education: How Worthwhile in Education. A Seminar Paper*. Ijebuode, School of Humanities, Ogun State College of Education.
- Okeke, B. S. (2004). *Teaching in Nigeria: The Bureaucracy and Professionalism*. Port Harcourt: Mercury International Publishing.
- Nyerere, K. J. (1967). *Education for self reliance*. Dar-Es-Salaam, Zambia: Ministry of Information and Tourism.
- Raheem, W.M.; Oyeleye, I.O.; Adeniji, M.A. & Aladekoyi, O.C. (2014). Regional Imbalance and Inequalities in Nigeria: Causes, consequences and remedies. *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences*, 4(18), 163-174.
- Reef, M. S. (2016). What Buhari should do now? *Daily Sun*, 13(3510), 14.
- Samuelson, P. A. (1980). *Economics*. Tokyo: McGraw-Hill Kongakusha.
- Taiwo, C. O. (1985). *The Nigerian Education System: Past, Present and Future (4th Rep)*. Ikeja: Nelson Pitman.
- Thompson, A. R. (1981). *Education and development in Africa*. London: Basingstoke.