

Sustaining Qualitative Education for National Growth and Development in Nigeria

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Abstract

Education has been regarded as the greatest force that can be used to bring about developmental changes. It is the highest investment any nation can make for the development of its economic, physical; social and human resources. Education provides the needed manpower, knowledge and skills to win a nation's state for sustainable all-round growth and accelerated development as well as holds the master key that unlocks a country's potentials towards national transformation and development. For a state or nation to achieve sustainable development, the quality of its education should be improved. Quality education connotes the education that is pedagogically and developmentally sound and educates the students in becoming active and productive members of society. This paper explains the importance of qualitative education to the growth and development of Nigeria. It looked at the concepts of qualitative education, national development and the nexus between education and national development. The paper provides an insight into the various challenges bedeviling qualitative education in Nigeria, such as; gender equity in education, shortage of teachers, inadequate infrastructure, overcrowding, funding, and so on. The paper made recommendations for enhancing qualitative education in Nigeria for enhanced growth and development.

Keywords: *Qualitative, Education, National, Growth, Development*

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Background to the Study

Education at all levels and in all its forms constitutes a vital tool for addressing virtually all global problems. Education is not only an end in itself. It is a key instrument for bringing about changes in knowledge, values and behaviour and life styles required to achieve sustainability and stability within and among countries. Education has been seen as the greatest force that can be used to bring about changes. Abubakar (2013), asserted that the greatest investment a nation can make for the development of its economic, sociological and human resources is that of education. Education according to him provides us with people possessing the necessary knowledge and skills to win a nation's state and to even export brains. Quality education connotes the education that is pedagogically and developmentally sound and educates the students in becoming active and productive members of society. Holborn and Haralambos (2004), viewed education as an institution that enables individual to think freely and rationally which makes social progress and innovation possible. Social progress and innovation are the key elements of development, when a society progresses, its members are free; they think rationally, innovate certain social changes which will invariably enhance development. From the foregoing, it can be perceived that education is an instrument or tool for achieving national development.

Education refers to a systematic procedure for the transfer and transformation of culture, through formal or informal training of people in a society. It deals with the mental, physical, psychological and social development of the citizens in a given society. The goal of education is manpower development, aimed at national growth and development (Enamiro, 2007). According to Anya (2008), education is the fundamental cultural process that prepares an individual to live and work, function and survive in a given society. Anya further conceptualizes education as an instrument for inducing social change. Furthermore, Enamiro (2007), regarded education as all positive efforts, conscious and direct, incidental and indirect, made by a given society to accomplish certain objectives that are considered desirable, in terms of the individual's needs as well as the needs of the society where the programme is based. Enamiro described education as a powerful instrument for the development of man and the society. In addition, Muoghalu (2013) stated that education is a tool for empowerment, emancipation and national development; that education constitutes one of the critical foundations for any meaningful socio-economic transformation of any country. Hence, education presupposes a comprehensive national system and a functional national structure. Therefore, one thing that education is not and cannot be is a philanthropic handout from state officials to needy citizens. Hence, education and national development are inextricably interwoven (Okeke, 2020).

Qualitative education is a key factor for the meaningful development in any given nation. The development of any nation is the responsibility of every citizen of that nation. To perform the task of national development every citizen is expected to access qualitative education. The Nigerian government made it clear in the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013) that education is an instrument par-excellence for effective all-round development. This implies that education empowers an individual economically, socially and politically. The policy went further to state that education shall continue to be highly rated in the national development

plans because education is the most important instrument for change; any fundamental change in the intellectual and social outlook of any society has to be preceded by an educated revolution. According Salawu (2011), education is a process, which enable a person not only to be able to read and write but also to be proficient in a given job or occupation to enable him contribute effectively in his society. Any meaningful provision of education must therefore, lay a sound foundation of life-long learning and acquisition of life skills and competencies.

The conception of qualitative education allows for an understanding of education as a complex system embedded in a political, cultural and economic context (Salawu, 2011). The Federal Government of Nigeria succinctly enumerated the national goals of education to include; inculcation of national consciousness and unity; the inculcation o the values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigeria society; the training of the mind in the understanding of the world around; the acquisition of skills abilities and competencies both mental and physical as equipment for the individual to live and contribute to the development of his / her society.

Education is a basic objective of national development and an important end in itself. An input and output of development, education is fundamental to the broader notion of expanding human capabilities that is the fulcrum of development. At the same time, education plays a key role in the ability of a developing country like Nigeria to absorb modern technology and to develop the capacity for self-sustaining growth and development (Todaro and Smith, 2009). In other words, education holds the master key that unlocks a country's potentials towards national transformation, and sustainable human national development. Education is a life-long process which frees a man from ignorance and superstition. Education enhances the quality of an individual and enables him to build up his personality in such a way that he is able to play an effective role in the development of the society he belongs (Okecha, 2008).

National development is a comprehensive term used to refer to the development of every area of the lives of individuals and their nation. It is the overall development or a collective socio-economic, political as well as religious advancement of a nation which is achieved through strategies mapped out by the government (Bhawna, 2016). This holistic development includes the development and reconstruction of areas such as education, agriculture, culture, sports, science and technology, and many others for the development of the individuals and the nation at large (Lawal and Abe, 2011).

Development is an eclectic paradigm of social change aimed at improving the condition and quality of life of the people, especially that of the majority of the poor and vulnerable people in the society. For development to be meaningful, it has to be sustainable, that is continue for a very long time, without causing damage to the environment, to the benefit of present and future generations. Jhingan (2007) noted that sustainable development means development should “keep going”. It emphasizes the creation of sustainable improvements in the quality of life of all people through increases in real income per capital, improvements in education, health and general quality of life and improvements in quality of natural environmental resources (Ilechukwu, Njoku and Ugwuozor, 2014).

A developed society, according to Kingdom and Maekae (2013), is the one that has succeeded in providing a source of living for the majority of its inhabitants and that in such society, premium is attached to elimination of poverty, provision of food, shelter and clothing to its members. This argument agrees with the definition of development by Todaro and Smith (2006) from the modernization paradigm which defined development as a multidimensional process which involves the sustained elevation of the entire society and social system towards a better or humane life. The authors identified three basic components for understanding development. These components are sustenance, self-esteem and freedom. These represent common goals sought by all individuals and societies. In addition, sustenance is concerned with ability to meet basic needs, self-esteem is concerned with a sense of worth and self-respect, of not being used by others as tools for their own needs and freedom is concerned with freedom from servitude- servitude to nature, ignorance, other people, misery, institutions and dogmatic beliefs especially, that poverty is a predestination. Therefore, the definition by this paradigm which emphasizes the basic needs of life in transforming the individual in the society to self-actualization is a true definition of development. Any development model as noted by Kingdom and Maekae (2013), that does not reflect these tenets needs a paradigm shift. Afolabi and Loto (2012), observed that a developed or educated polity is the one that has enough manpower and each person occupies his or her rightful position to enhance the growth of the society. Ajayi and Afolabi (2009), on their part averred that education is largely perceived in Nigeria as an indispensable tool which will not only assist in meeting the nation's social, political, moral, cultural and economic aspirations but will also inculcate in the individual knowledge, skills, dexterity, character and desirable values that will foster national development and self-actualization. Education is a very important key that can be used to unlock many closed doors in a country. When a nation understands the imperative of education as a catalyst to development, such a nation would experience astronomic socioeconomic growth in a short time.

However, for a developing country like Nigeria, there is the need to realize how education can be used to improve the economy. When illiteracy is eradicated, the citizens become enlightened and this results in the right actions expected by a good citizen. It is noteworthy that once the citizens live aright, the country will be in better shape. Also, an educated person, who is transformed, cannot be found in the act of robbery, murder, kidnapping, rape, and other vices, thus making the nation a place of peace and comfort where economic development thrives (Ogbonnaya, 2020). Therefore, it can be deduced from the above assertions that without education, Nigeria as a nation cannot get the needed manpower for material advancement and enlightenment of the citizenry. The trained nurses, accountants, pharmacists, pilots, engineers, teachers, medical doctors, and other professionals are all the products of education. This explains why it is argued also that the quality of a nation's education determines the level of its national development.

Conceptualization

The conceptualization is done under the following sub-headings;

Qualitative Education

Literally, quality refers to the standard of a thing as measured against other things of similar kind; the degree of excellence of a particular phenomenon. It also means a distinctive attribute or characteristic possessed by something. Quality education connotes the education that is pedagogically and developmentally sound and educates the students in becoming active and productive members of society. Qualitative education, according to Mailumo and Aii (2019), refers to the type of education that is concerned with the goodness of it. It also deals with the standards that are laid down for such a thing to be carried out. It also means the ability of the school to provide the necessary facilities required to aid teaching and learning that can lead to the achievement of educational goals in line with prescribed acceptable global standard.

Qualitative Education is multidimensional and lends itself to different interpretation subject to the discussant area of interest. It can be assessed from the point of conforming with and meeting the requirement and intended purpose satisfying the needs of the stakeholders guaranteed realization of minimal standards and benchmarks (Enaohwo, 2008). Qualitative education is the education that is relevant to the needs and aspiration of the society or nation. It can be determined by both the status and process variables as shown in Table 1.

The importance of quality education in nation building cannot be over emphasized. This is to say quality assurance is seen within the context of function i.e. how much value has been added to the knowledge, skills and abilities of learners regardless of their initial level of competence.

Table 1: Variables of Qualitative Education

Status Variables	Process Variables
Quality of School Facilities e.g. libraries, classrooms, textbooks, class size and school environment.	Mechanism of translating the status variables into desirable outcome e.g. methods of teaching, supervision and management of human and physical resources, service delivery
Teacher characteristics, e.g. Training, qualification, experience, dedication and commitment.	Appropriateness, enriched and current relevant curriculum.
Student characteristics e.g. innate ability, readiness and willingness to learn, health and nutrition status and motivation.	Adequate funding and accountability.

Source: Nwogbo and Okorji (2019).

Qualitative education is a key factor for the meaningful development in any given nation. The development of any nation is the responsibility of every citizen of that nation. To perform the task of national development every citizen is expected to access qualitative education.

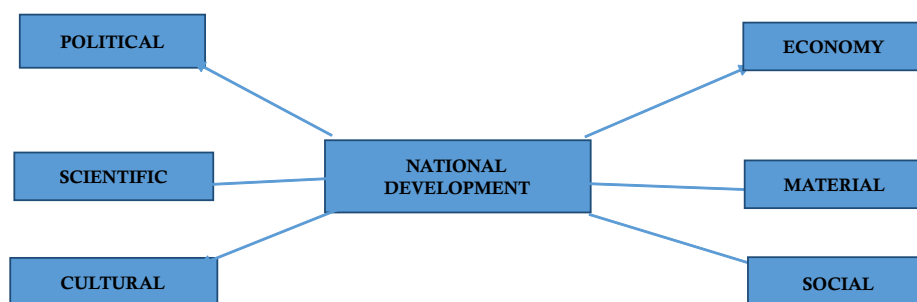
National Development

Development, according to Mba (2001), is an act of ensuring that the quality of life of the people reaches an acceptable minimum standard through education and functional literacy.

This means that development borders on re-structuring the social, economic, educational, political, cultural, legal and technological systems of a society for improved standard of living. In the same line of thought, Ezeuzo (2020), takes development to be a transitional process sustaining multifaceted improvement in human condition resulting from positive structural and functional changes in social, economic, political, techno-scientific and every conceivable spheres of human society. This means that development ensure holistic transformation of the society for improving the living standard of living of the people.

National development, as asserted by Obasi (2010), is the social process by which a nation harnesses and mobilizes all resources (human and material) available to it for the purpose of positively transforming its environment and ultimately improving the quality of the social, economic and political life of its citizenry. It is a holistic process involving the collective will and efforts of the people. Mezieobi (2013), conceptualized national development as a process of systematic transformation of the overall social, economic, political, scientific and technological life of a nation via effective, coherent, co-ordinate management system, result-oriented social mobilization strategy in which the citizens actually participate and exhibit positive attitudinal commitment in the overall reconstruction process for the improved human conditions of the people. National development, according to Bhawna (2016), is a comprehensive term used to refer to the development of every area of the lives of individuals and their nation. It is the overall development or a collective socio-economic, political as well as religious advancement of a nation which is achieved through strategies mapped out by the government. This holistic development includes the development and reconstruction of areas such as education, agriculture, culture, sports, science and technology, and many others for the development of the individuals and the nation at large (Lawal and Abe,2011). Moreover, national development implies the development of a nation as a whole. It can be best defined as the all-round and balanced development of different aspects and facets of the nation viz. political, economic, social, cultural, scientific, and material (Bhawna,2016). Figure 1 shows the facets of national development.

Figure 1: Facets of National Development



Source: <https://www.yourarticlelibrary.com/society/national-development-meaning-and-problems/76824>

Education and Nigeria's Growth and Development: The Nexus

Education is a crucial sector in any nation. It is a major investment in human capital development; and therefore, plays a vital role in long-term productivity and growth at both micro and macro levels. Education shapes the needed manpower for national development. Afolabi and Lotto (2012), observed that developed or educated polity is the one that has enough manpower and each person occupies his or her rightful position to ensure that the society is on high growth rate. More so, education is perceived in Nigeria as an indispensable tool which will not only aid in meeting the nation's social, political, moral, cultural, and economic aspirations but that which will also inculcate in the individual knowledge, skills, dexterity, character, and desirable values that will foster national development and self-actualization.

Education transforms an individual to be useful in the society and to meet up the need of the society for national development. It is imperative to state that therefore, that without quality education, a nation cannot get the required manpower for material advancement and enlightenment of the citizenry. The trained engineers, teachers, medical doctors, etc., are all the products of education. This explains why it is argued also that quality of a nation's education determines the level of its national development. Education again, promotes social and group relationship. Obasanjo (2012), asserted that education trains individuals to relate to and interact reasonably with other members of the society and to appreciate the need for effective organisation for human advancement and the school system within the educational system is expected to foster this development. The school brings people of different cultural background together for a common purpose; this enhances mutual co-existence among the different students or pupils.

Education promotes the culture of productivity by enabling individuals to discover the creative potentials in them and apply same to the improvement of the existing skills and techniques of performing specific tasks and by so doing increase the efficiency of their personal societal energies (Obasanjo, 2012). Education teaches people to be useful to themselves and their society. As a result, they have to be productive and discover their creative abilities and use this to perform specific tasks to attain self-actualization. It also develops the values which make for good citizenship in individuals, such as honesty, selflessness, tolerance, hard-work, and integrity, all of which creates an avenue through which good relationship crops up. Without any iota of doubt, it is very clear that education has critical functions in national development.

In affirmation of the importance of education, the Sustainable Development Goals 4 identifies quality education as critical for national development in all its ramifications. (United Nations, 2015), Education provides the recipients with the necessary skills for economic resources to enable them overcome poverty; as well as social skills for forging efficient relationships with other members of the society. Prior to the advent of Western education in Nigeria, the apprenticeship education system empowered recipients for gainful employment and consequently, poverty eradication in the society. Similarly, western or formal education has the potential to transform and empower individuals and, by extension, communities or societies (Nwogu, 2013).

It propels the development of technical capacities needed for economic emancipation (Olabisi, 2018); and also improves recipients' living standards. For instance, South Korea, which, in the 1960s, was classified as a very poor country, is currently being transformed into an economically powerful nation mainly by aggressive improvement of her education system (Olabisi, 2018). Similarly, Ghana reduced her national poverty rating by improving school attendance, among other things, from 2003-2008 (UNDP, 2015). That education can be a powerful tool for national transformation is therefore not in doubt.

Challenges of Qualitative Education in Nigeria

Education constitutes the major instrument for sustainable national and human development and serves as a veritable instrument around which every other activity revolves (Tahir, 2006). Nations that have recorded tremendous feats across the globe heavily relied on the instrumentality of quality education. Human beings are the architects and engineers of progressive change and development and they constitute the most important resource we can have internally.

Tahir (2006), identified a number of daunting challenges which the Nigerian education is confronted with. These include;

- i. Gender equity in education;
- ii. Dearth or shortage of teachers;
- iii. Overcrowded classrooms;
- iv. Inadequate infrastructure;
- i. Funding of education.

Gender equity in education: Gender disparity is a known feature of Nigerian educational landscape. Educational policies and practices in Nigeria are to say the least, gender insensitive and thus not fashioned to achieve gender balance in schools.

Shortage of teachers: There is no doubting the fact that no educational system in any nation can rise above the quality of its teachers. In other words, the success of the system rests on the availability of good and qualified teachers who are internally motivated. Wasagu (2006), observed that teachers are the way to improvement since they are the final brokers when it comes to educational policy. Former Minister of Education, Professor Ruqayyatu Rufai (2010), asserted that lack of qualified teachers was responsible for the dismal performance of students, especially in Mathematics and English language in the WASSCE examination. The poor performance turned out to be a child's play when NECO released its own SSCE results which showed that only 126,500 of the 1,260,765 candidates, (10 percent) of those who registered for the Body's examination passed five subjects including English language and Mathematics. The statistics also showed that only about 234,682 out of the 1,260,765 candidates who sat for the examinations made five credits in five core subjects which is the minimum requirements for university admission in Nigeria. That means only two percent passed the exams with five credits including English language and Mathematics. Therefore, sufficient, qualified and well-motivated teachers are a necessity for the success of the educational system in any nation.

Over-crowding: The introduction of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) which came with free school fees amongst other things brought about a sudden explosion in schools enrolment bringing about a rise in teacher-pupil ratio. Over-crowding in the classroom is now the order of the day from primary to university level. The result of this is that there are not enough spaces for the number of students in class/lecture rooms. This is not conducive for effective teaching/learning process. Effective teacher/student relationship is almost impossible in an over-crowded classroom.

Inadequate infrastructure: This refers to the physical and spatial enablers of teaching/learning. They include classrooms, libraries, laboratories, workshops, play fields, school farms and gardens as well as provision of water and sanitation. These have to be adequately provided to meet the minimum standards for promoting any meaningful teaching and learning. (Abubakar, 2013).

Funding of education: The managers of primary, secondary and higher education in Nigeria are in consensus that these institutions are not properly funded. This menace could be seen in the degree of dilapidation that characterizes the primary and secondary school buildings in many parts of the country. There is also the problem of non-payment of teachers' salaries and allowances which results in strikes thereby truncating the education process. Teaching and learning materials at all levels of the educational system are also not available and this is many times as a result of mismanagement and diversion of resources meant for these purposes for other uses.

Many authors have written widely on the factors militating against quality education in Nigeria. Etesike (2011), enumerated some of these challenges as; inadequate funding, inadequate infrastructural facilities, lack of qualified teachers, poor policy implementation, incessant strikes, and examination malpractice. Iwundu and Thom-Otuya (2014) mentioned the following as challenges to the Nigerian education sector: incessant strike action, inadequate funding, politicization and abuse of the education sector, bribery and corruption, unemployment and lack of emphasis on entrepreneurship education. Aiyamenkhue Edokpolo enumerated challenges facing the Nigeria educational system as; underfunding, poor infrastructure, inadequate classrooms, and teaching aids (projectors, computers, libraries, laboratories etc.), paucity of quality teachers, poor or polluted learning environment, social vices like examination malpractices, cultism, and infant hooliganism. Iwundu and Inko-Tariah (2014) added intellectual dishonesty among teachers, pull it Down syndrome, justice ability in the right to education as factors militating against quality education in Nigeria. (Thom-Otuya and Inko-Tariah, 2016).

Relatedly, Olagboye (2014), listed some of the problems that face quality in Nigerian education system as follows:

1. Supervisors lack training in supervisory competencies because some supervisors are promoted on the basis of seniority and length of service but not appropriate training and qualification.
2. Inadequate provision of infrastructural facilities, teaching aids, and instructional materials in schools.

3. Poor remuneration of teachers and poor conditions of service which reduce their commitment to teaching
4. Poor states accorded to teachers which dampen their morale and job satisfaction.
5. Presence of a large number of untrained and unqualified teachers in the school system.
6. Teachers' poor attitude to work and lack of interest in teaching.
7. The hap-hazard approach and lack of uniformity in educational policy formulation and implementation in the country jeopardizes national development.
8. Political instability and lack of political will among Nigerian leaders.

In addition, Mailumo and Aii (2019), observed that in the last 15 years, most of the graduates from faculties of education in Nigerian universities were incompetent as teachers. The observation which was made differently by the scholars maintained that they are incompetent in the knowledge of the subject matter and content; as well as in teaching, including communication skills. Theory is emphasized more than practical as they lack adequate teaching skills. Thus, the possession of the Bachelors' degree in Education does not necessarily make such 'qualified' teachers competent to teach at that level. Obanya (2004) found that secondary school teachers in four Nigerian states (Enugu, Kaduna, Lagos and Rivers) including the 'qualified' demonstrate poor quality teaching dominating classroom activities, 67% of the time.

Conclusion

Education is a social service and an instrument for national development. The World Conference on Education for All (EFA) held in Thailand in 1990, accepted the following characteristics of basic education; access, equality, quality and efficiency. This implies that any education that is not accessible, qualitative, efficient and non-discriminatory cannot be regarded as worthwhile to accelerate sustainable national development. The contributions of education to national development cannot be overstressed globally, as exhibited in the rapid growth and development of countries in Europe, Asia and America. Unfortunately, developing countries in Africa like Nigeria are encumbered with myriads of challenges in the education system and this has affected national growth and development. There is positive relationship between qualitative education and development. Nigeria's educational system has many challenges and dysfunctions which have impeded its development. Qualitative education is the only panacea to achieving meaningful national development. The ability and political will of Nigerian leaders to tackle the bottlenecks impeding the education system will ultimately help to improve on national development.

Recommendations for Enhancing Qualitative Education in Nigeria

In order to ensure qualitative education in Nigeria, Iheonunekwu (2013) stated that each element in the input-process - output framework of the education enterprise should be of acceptable quality to ensure high quality in education service delivery. By this, it is meant that quality management which results in quality education has to effectively address these elements in the education sector. There is the need for adequate planning, provision, organisation, evaluation and re-planning of the educational input, process and outcomes. For

example, if the educational input (financial and human resources) such as funding, learner enrolment, quality and quantity of teachers are in the right proportion, learner/teacher ratio, curriculum, textbooks, school materials and facilities, and so on, are adequately, proportionately and timely provided for, education delivery, quality management will be achieved.

Etetike (2011), recommended the following for advancing the quality of education in Nigeria:

1. There should be a massive campaign and public awareness as well as value re-orientation as regards what we expect education to be and produce for Nigerians.
2. Government should pay adequate attention to the sector so that there will be sustainability and improvement in the state of our education.
3. There should be adequate funding of the sector (26% of the national budget as recommended by UNESCO); provision of infrastructure and rehabilitation of the entire education system in line with what obtains in the developed world.
4. To ensure quality teaching/learning activities, there should be training and re-training of serving teachers in order to improve their knowledge base on content as well as keep them abreast of new knowledge and methods of curriculum delivery. Teachers should be exposed to computer and ICT education especially as the world has become a global village, education sector should be technologically improved as well.
5. Education personnel must be well remunerated to enhance commitment and job satisfaction.

In addition to this, the following recommendations are made;

1. There should be increased effort by the Nigerian Government towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which have direct relationship with national development.
2. There should be awareness, understanding and advocacy on the implementation of qualitative education programmes for national development, through seminars, symposia, workshops, training and other capacity building.
3. Adoption of an entrepreneurial and research-based educational system, especially at the secondary and university levels of education. In the emerging competitive global knowledge economy, nothing short of this could guarantee relevance, sustainability and global competitiveness.
4. Government at all levels; Federal, state and local governments should contribute their respective quota to the development of education. This will ensure a speedy achievement of quality education for national development in line with global best practices.
5. Government at all levels should strengthen her inspectorate divisions in the Ministries of Education, State Education Boards and Local Education Boards to ensure proper monitoring and evaluation of education policies to ensure full implementation.

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