

## **Education and National Development: an Appraisal**

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### **Abstract**

**E**ducation is of utmost importance for the development of any nation. Over the last fifty-six years since independence, Nigeria has had to grapple with a number of educational policies all in a bid to achieve national development. The formation of the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) was a bold step in that direction. However, the achievements recorded so far are still largely abysmal, due to the disconnect between educational curricular and national aspiration. Given the aforesaid, this paper therefore examines government's efforts over the years in ensuring the success of the education sector, relying on secondary sources of information relevant to the subject matter. The research reveals that inadequate budgetary provision; poor infrastructural facilities among others are major challenges on the wheel of the education sector. In the light of this, the study recommends that educational curricular with emphasis on productivity and self-employability be developed to drive the educational system, since it is believed that entrepreneurial education has the antidote and the "magic wand" to drive the fulcrum of development. This research also calls on the Nigerian youth to re-channel their energies in areas that have capacity to propel national development in line with global best practice.

**Keywords:** *Education; Development; Funding; Learning; Policies*

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### **Background to the Study**

Montessori (1870-1952) once queried “...and if education is always to be conceived along the same antiquated lines of a mere transmission of knowledge, there is little to be hoped from it in the bettering of man's future. For what is the use of transmitting knowledge if the individual's total development lags behind.”

Corroborating with this opinion, Butler (1835-1902) affirm that “an art can only be learned in the workshop of those who are winning their bread by it.” The foregoing argument is the cornerstone for the development of this research. There is no gainsaying that education is a basic human right as enshrined in article 26 of the United Nations Universal Declaration on Human Rights, but the worry is that while education remains a basic right of citizens, technical and entrepreneurial education remains a critical factor for the rapid development of any modern nation. The world conference on education in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990 and the Dakar conference of 2000 produced broadly shared consensus on: issues facing education, policies offered to address the challenges to education, and principles which should determine several features of education in the coming decades.

Nigeria as a signatory to the conventions of the United Nations no doubt has achieved a milestone in her efforts at meeting the requirements set by the various world conferences on education. This can be attested to in the various provisions of 1979, 1989 and 1999 constitutions of the federal republic of Nigeria as amended. (Gomos, 2012). The development of the education sector is a mixed grill. However, we may make the initial comment that education has improved more quantitatively than qualitatively. (Ozumba, 2001)

Nigeria policy on education has not really attended to the problems inherent in the sector. This can be seen in the way and manner in which academic calendar is being frequently truncated due to one unresolved issue or the other. A system that cannot squarely fix its educational system is far from achieving her development needs on target. Industrialization cannot thrive because science and technology depends on an integrated education. In disintegrated education, we have orientation that is only disposed to transfer of technology (pirating) or mere theoretical science devoid of practical orientation. Where the scientific culture is dead, there, the technological spirit cannot blossom. (Ozumba, 2001)

### **Objective of the Study**

The objective of this paper is to assess the impact of government's policies on education as a catalyst for nation building. It is also intended to investigate the inability of educational policies to effectively drive the Nigerian economy inspite of the huge investment in the sector over time. Recommendations will be suggested on the way forward for tackling the myriad of problems militating against the achievements of the education sector

### **Theoretical Framework: Contingency Theory**

This research rests on the assumptions of contingency theory of Tom Burns, Joan Woodward, Paul Lawrence and Jay Lorsch (1958). Burns et al holds the view that no single organizational structure was inherently more efficient than all others, rather, since organizations differed in the tasks they performed and environment they faced, the appropriate organizational structure was in each case a function of such factors as technology, market and predictability of tasks. The rationale behind the choice of contingency theory as the framework for this research is on the basis that although the prevailing policies are striving to yield optimal results, there is a contingent need to review the policies especially as it has to do with the curricular, access, quality and reliability of the education system.

Commenting on contingency, Fiedler (1964) argued that what is of paramount interest to the leadership is how to achieve overall effectiveness in the organization. Within the framework of organizational leadership, Nigeria can borrow from the philosophical standpoint of contingency with the sole aim of repositioning the education sector which has the capacity to generate a trickledown effect. Likewise, Schumpeter (1883-1950) in Ering (2003) noted that in considering the course of development under western capitalism, which causes of development could not be separated from the causes of ordinary business cycles, that they were part of the same process. Schumpeter rallied his ideas on innovation and felt that only through innovation that developing nations like Nigeria could achieve their aspirations.

### **Literature Review**

The importance of education to societal development can never be over emphasized. For Plato (428-347 BC), education is the most important method of forming the state. He argued that the aim of education was to equip the citizens with the training skills needed for whatever position they are selected for.

Aristotle (384-322 BC) in the same vein emphasized that education should be strictly controlled by the state, be censored and made open to all citizens of the state.

Education in the words of Nwagu (1976) is the process by which every society attempts to preserve and upgrade the accumulated knowledge, skills and attitudes in its cultural setting and heritage in order to foster continuously the well-being of mankind; and guarantee its survival against the unpredictable and at times hostile and destructive elements and forces of man and nature.

Again Fafunwa (2004) describes it as “the aggregate of all processes by which a child or young adult develops the abilities, attitudes or further forms of behaviour which are of positive value to the society in which he lives. That is, it is a process of transmitting culture in terms of continuity and growth and disseminating knowledge either to ensure social or to guarantee rational direction of the society or both. While it remained a universal truth that education is a basic ingredient for the development of any sector in any society (Oyebisi, 2009), the 21<sup>st</sup> century is quite peculiar with its challenges and prospects. On the international scene, there is a great clamor for every individual to acquire education to enable them as well as the society to use education as a tool for development. This no doubt is contained in the declaration of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as universal basic education, which Nigeria is a signatory.

The high level of corruption and nonchalance on the part of stake holders have been blamed as a major reason for the fallen standard of education and by extension slow pace of development. In the views of Santas (2007), a well-educated person who has acquired knowledge and the appropriate skills with developed abilities and right attitudes is likely to participate more meaningfully in national development. The import of the above statement is that there is a direct relationship between education and development. The interplay of education and development is inseparable that the height of the attainment of one is the optimum for the achievement of the other. Little wonder then why growth and development of any society is measured based on the intellectual ability (ies) of its citizenry. This seems to be in agreement with the views of Cardinal Newman as captured in Anyamu (1997) who described education as raising the intellectual tone of the society, cultivating the public mind, facilitating the exercise of private life.

Many scholars have argued that the level of development of any given society is only but a conscious improvement on the achievement of the past. To align with the above statement is to admit the fact that the values of the society to which development owe its allegiance has only been cultivated through education. This was the central argument as contained in the opinion of Todaro when he stated that development was a multidimensional process involving the reorganization and reorientation of the entire economic and social system. Several literatures abound to support the argument that development is being midwife by education and likewise the measure of any country's development is in its nature, level, quality and quantity of education.

The central aim of education therefore is to secure the future for the future. In summarizing the interplay of education and development, Jefferson (1743-1826) argued emphatically that;

*What, but education has advanced us beyond our neighbors? And what chains them to their present state of barbarism and wretchedness but a bigoted variation for the supposed superlative wisdom of their fathers, and the preposterous idea that they are to look backwards better things, and not forward.*

Clark (1938) sums it this way “*In whatever direction we look, we find out that education is a powerful means of social progress. Any one working with it is working with probably the most powerful instrument man has yet devised for his own improvement*”.

### **The Concept of Development**

The term development has elicited several scholarly debates as to its actual definition. Some conceive of it in terms of economic growth, others see it as increase industrial outlay, yet others see it from the perspective of modernization. Williams (1975) defines development as the capacity of advance technology to increase the productivity of labor.

Rodney (1972) viewed the concept of development as “a many-sided process”. At the level of individual, it implies increased skills and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and material well-being. Todaro (1995) on the other hand sees development as involving both a physical process and a state of mind. The transformation of institutions is one aspect; the other aspect is that the thinking of the people must change. It is argued in some quarters that education as the major agency for both personal and national socio-economic development must be made central and pivotal in the policy planning of government. Investments in human capital development plays a critical role in long-term productivity growth at both micro and macro levels.

For the purpose of this work, we shall look at development as the process of a nation to harness and apply the ingenuities and resourcefulness of its citizens in achieving industrialization, modernization, economic prosperity, increased standard of living and self-sustainability, while competing favorably with the global community.

### **Methodology**

The methodology employed for the study is based on the ethnographic observation of events as they evolve over time. It focused on various educational policies of government that have been introduced since after independence and the developmental plan as instituted by successive governments within the same period. Content analysis was also used in analyzing Nigerian newspapers and magazines, academic and educational journals, books, archival and internet based documented source materials.

### **Education in Nigeria: the Old and the New**

Pre-colonial education in Nigeria was largely informal. It was at best a medium of social organization and socialization. The basic objective of education whether formal or informal, is to meet the needs of particular societies. Prior to colonialism, what could be regarded as our education was barely cultural integration where the young ones learn the rules of life through informal instructions, observation and participating in family/community activity. It organized the development of the particular community because through these varied activities, the needs of the community are met and leadership and responsibilities are passed to the younger and succeeding generations. As much as it is with formal (western) education, so it was with our traditional or indigenous education where specializations abound from place to place; although there is a common congruence when viewed from a holistic approach. This seems to explain why there was a near even development across the “Nigerian” landscape of the pre-colonial era.

The break from the pre-colonial form of education formally took its roots around 1842 at the arrival of Christian Missionaries. Although prior to this time, Borno had been established as an Islamic State in the 11<sup>th</sup> Century, spreading throughout the Hausa Kingdoms in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century and finally established the Sokoto Caliphate in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century. The entry of Western education in Nigeria was therefore closely bound up with the activities of various Christian Missionaries. By 1877, the British administration was finally established in Lagos. However, education was still the monopoly of Christian missions. Scholars observed that the schools' curriculum was heavily religion based, intensely denominational and shallow in content (Ifeanyi, 2004). The marked difference in educational development between the Northern and Southern Nigeria could thus be safely attributed to the overbearing influence of the two religious infiltrations on either side. This marked difference is not only in the educational development but permeated roughly every other sphere of the human society. It was arguably due to the imbalance in educational development and by extension in other areas of life observed in the Nigerian society that informed the introduction of the principle of *quotarization* in the Nigeria body polity in order to make for even spread and allocation of public responsibilities among the citizenry. It should also be stated here that part of the drawbacks of quotarization is that it encourages everything but meritocracy in the system. At independence Nigeria grappled with the enormous responsibility of institutional structuring to help get the foundation for national administration on a sound footing. Cardinal and critical among them was and is still the educational institutions.

### **Education as Panacea for Nigeria's Development: a Synopsis**

The national policy on education states that education is the bedrock of national development. In line with the above, Muazu (2009) perceived education as a vaccine that solves all problems, including development. To him, therefore, education serves as a catalyst for economic well-being, democracy and good governance, social justice, environmental preservation, peace building, and development among others. Government in its efforts towards increasing the spate of Nigeria's development has collaborated with international organizations such as UNESCO, COMPASS (Curricular Options in Mathematics Programmes for All Secondary Students), and UNICEF, working assiduously to improve on the standard of education delivery in Nigeria. The effort was corroborated by the establishment of Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) about a decade ago. The action introduced free education at the primary and up to junior secondary school level.

Agwadu (2005) contend that from ancient to the present day, societies have viewed education as a tool par excellence for transformation, promotion, development and sustenance of those ideals upon which the society depends. It is a deserved credit that transmission of cultural values, survival, provision of food and security goes to education from earlier times up to present.

Ajass (2007) noted that there is a correlation between advances in education and advances in other sectors of human endeavor. There is no gain stating the obvious fact that the survival of any nation and indeed Nigeria depends to a larger extent on the quality of education at all levels. In most developing nations including Nigeria, educational funding has been an intractable problem for government; the resultant effect is poor educational standard, which serves as a great impediment to Nigeria's development. In support of the above assertion, Combs and Hallak (1972 in Abimiku (1988) warned that;

*“Less economically developed nations that too quickly concentrate the full financial load of education on the central government are likely to end up handicapping both education and other public services”.*

From the foregoing, it is pertinent to note that adequate funding of the education sector is a critical aspect for optimal output. Adequate funding of the education sector will not only ensure effective learning and teaching, it will sue for improved infrastructure in the school system. The United Nations recommended that the minimum percentage for the education sector should be at least 26%. This target has hardly been met by any Nigeria government. In such a situation, much can hardly be achieved. As a developing nation, the Nigeria government must ensure that adequate funds are set aside for squarely tackling the myriad of problems facing the education sector.

Although annual budgetary proposals for the education sector is still far below the UNESCO recommended 26%, the Nigerian government in addition to its budget estimate is said to currently invest about 5% of its GDP in education; above the average for developing countries. According to the 10 year plan, it aims to bring this figure to 7% by 2015 and 8% by 2020. With an estimated budgetary allocation of ₦493 billion, representing 10.7% of total national budget proposal of ₦4.6 trillion, experts say there is light at the end of the tunnel.

Though this sum is about 15% above the allocation to the sector in 2013 which had ₦426.53 billion, representing about 8.5% of the total budget, Nigeria is still far away from meeting the UNESCO recommendation, thereby making the dream of a sound education system a wild goose chase.

Nigeria's development brick walls are traced to failure in the education sector among others, where resources geared towards education are not properly managed by those in authority. in his view, Usman (1985) noted that “most of what is ostensibly spent on education, is not all used for education, but for making of profits and super-profits for foreign business corporations and their Nigerian profligate business and political partners and agents as commission, fees, kick-backs, bribes and other legal and semi-legal and criminal earnings for those who control the very lucrative Nigerian education industry.

The Inspectorate Services Department of the Federal Ministry of Education (FME) is saddled with the responsibility of maintaining uniform standards of education and controlling the quality in Nigeria. It also harmonizes education policies and procedure of all the states of the

federation, through the instrumentality of the National Council on Education. The various parastatals under the FME are fashioned and put primarily to assist in midwifing a sound and solid delivery of a productive education system which is capable of architecture and engineering a development for Nigeria in line with global best practices. The sum of the terms of references of all the organs and agencies under the FME is to ensure the provision and delivery of education to Nigerians as both a basic human right and a critical element in human and national development

Nigeria has a tall ambition to be ranked among the top 20 economies of the world within the next six years, code named Nigeria Vision 20:2020. Achieving this dream ultimately rest on strategically building human capacity through strong learning systems. However a horde of challenges lie on the path to these ambitions. It is reported that around 11 million children in Nigeria are either out of school, or have poor progression from primary to secondary schooling. With a population of 166.2 million people as reported by the national Bureau of statistic in 2012, and currently operating one hundred and twenty nine (129) universities (still counting), with several polytechnics, monotechnics, colleges of agriculture, health technology, nursing and education, providing practical training for professionals in chosen fields, tertiary education is grossly inadequate for a country the size and population statistics of Nigeria. If there is any hope to rectify the situation, a drastic action plan is required to expand access and quality at all available educational levels. While the effort of private investors is quite commendable in this direction, the worry is on the quality of delivery and the cost for its acquisition. This is why the quality control mechanism must be left in the hands of impartial umpire who is versed with the development agenda of the nation and the mandate of the education sector in pivoting this agenda to its enviable destination.

Expanding access to education requires a massive infrastructural upgrade, including the provision of more schools that must be fully equipped with laboratories and other facilities .The declining quality of education, training and skills-acquisition has pose serious impediment to the employability of the labour force. This consequently has greatly and grossly undermined the competitiveness of the Nigerian labour force in national and global markets, making it strenuous for qualified Nigerians to access jobs globally, despite the emerging global hunt for talents. Suffice it to say that Nigeria finds itself faced with the paradox of simultaneous existence of surplus labour and scarcity of skills, due to a persistent skills mismatch, which further compounds the issue of unemployment.

Across the world, Small and Medium scale Enterprises (SMEs) have contributed in accelerating the economic development of host economies. Such feats are obvious in the economies of Asian Tigers such as Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and India who have contributed tremendously to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) through various productive activities as a result of entrepreneurial ingenuity. The World Bank and other multinational development agencies have for long put into cognizance the benefits of targeted assistance to SMEs in stimulating the growth, promoting economic development and reducing poverty in their intervention in developing countries, including Nigeria. Success stories of SMES across the globe confirm the views of economic experts that result-oriented entrepreneurship is the backbone of and yardstick for measuring a booming economy. Glaring example of entrepreneurial spirit is that mastered by Mark Zuckerberg, a young university graduate of Harvard in 2004. With his invention of Face book, one of the largest social networks, this platform with over 757 million daily active users (and growing)from all over the world, several organizations and SMEs have tapped into its usefulness for brand averseness, customer engagement, drive to web traffic, generate business leads, viral marketing etc. (Justice, 2013).

A cursory look at entrepreneurship in Nigeria shows that while some Nigerian graduates have all it takes to become successful entrepreneurs, aspiring entrepreneurs are faced with the problem of how to generate compelling business ideas for new entrepreneurial businesses. Evidently, Nigeria is lagging behind in preparing her workforce for the challenges of the rapidly changing global economy. The development of entrepreneurship will go a long way in providing the necessary impetus for economic growth and development. It will be crucial in boosting productivity, increasing competition and innovation, creating employment and prosperity and revitalizing the economy. It is the opinion of experts, and that of this researcher that improved and sustainable global economic development depends on a strong entrepreneurship education.

### **Conclusion**

The appraisal on the impact of education on national development has brought to the fore a number of issues hitherto left in the confines of government parastatals alone. From the research it has been proven that in as much as there is no deliberate effort on the part of stakeholders, Nigeria still has a long way to go with regards to effective returns on investment in the education sector.

All the three tiers of government must brace up to the challenge and work out a holistic approach to fix the education sector. It is crystal clear that the rot in the education sector is coursed by those privileged ones who were primarily hired to fix the system, many of whom went to school on scholarship from government. Little wonder Roosevelt (1882-1945) noted that *“a man who has never gone to school may steal from a freight car, but if he has a university education, he may steal the whole railroad.”*

The paper reveals that there is an urgent need for Nigerians to reassess their value systems. Some of our cultural and religious practices have been noted as pointers to why many yet do not access available educational opportunities. This aptly captures what Shehu Sani meant when he raised the alarm over the poverty rate in the North that *“the people have been chained by cultural and religious factors that make it impossible for them to free themselves from such bondage of poverty and underdevelopment.”* (Newswatch, April 23, 2012 p14). In order to theoretically situate the research problem, this paper anchored on the contingency theory of Burns et al (1958). The research however made some recommendations as a way forward in the education sector which includes that the educational pursuit of Nigeria should be structured such that its developmental aspirations would be mirrored by the educational policies and system in place.

### **Recommendation**

Atiku Abubakar, at the People's Democratic Party (PDP) Presidential Primaries held at Eagle Square, Abuja, in 2011, sent out a wakeup call to Nigerians when he thundered that *“no nation develops on good luck; but on hard work and deliberate planning”*

In view of the forgoing, the following are the recommendations for achieving the desired objectives in the education sector.

1. There is a need to address the issues of access, quality and relevance, equality, gender and efficiency of education.
2. It is suggested that the educational pursuit of any nation should be structured such that its developmental aspirations would be mirrored by the educational policies and system in place. There should be a direct relationship between education and national



- developmental agenda such that even while in schools, citizens already have an idea of what the aspirations of the State are and what is expected of them upon graduation .
3. Educational curricular with emphasis on productivity and self-employability should be developed, since it is believed that entrepreneurial education has the antidote and the “magic wand” to drive the fulcrum of development.
  4. Government should do all it can to meet with the UN requirement on budgetary provision in the education sector. This is in view of the fact that other factors rests on it.
  5. Government must declare a state of emergency in the education sector, so as to enable a holistic approach towards fixing the disconnect between education and national development. This in my opinion is in recognition of the fact that all other facets of development are ancillary to education
  6. Policy makers, planners, decision makers, educators, managers and other stake holders must key into this vision of making education in Nigeria work, otherwise the alarming spate of outsourcing “quality” education may not be mitigated in the near future. Of course this is not without its attendant effect on the economy of the nation, with capital flight and brain drain as primary features
  7. The research also calls on the Nigerian youth to re-channel their energies in those areas that have capacity to propel national development agenda in line with global best practice.
  8. Finally four principles should govern the main features of education system. They are; learning to be, learning to learn, learning to do and learning to live together

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