

## **Coping with Population Education and National Development in Nigeria: The Role of In-School System**

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### **Abstract**

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Population education is a programme of creating awareness among students and the public about the various causes and harmful consequence of rapid growth of population. However, population the is the term typically used to refer to the number of people in a single area. Government conducts a census to quantify the size of a resident population within a given jurisdiction. This paper Focuses on Population Education and National Development in Nigeria, what roles in- school system could play. Salient issues such as the concept of population education, why population education, objectives/goals of population education, contemporary population education-related issues/problems to national development, the roles of in-school system and suggestions towards achieving desirable goals of population education in Nigeria.

**Keywords:** *Population, Population Education, National Development Role of in- School System.*

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### **Background to the Study**

Nigeria's chronicle from 1960- to date reveals much confusion, helpless and clear betrayal of the black race. Nigeria has a one fifth (1/5) of the Africa's Population and more half (1/2) of the population of West Africa's sub-region. The country takes five percent (5%) of Africa's area. Nigeria is a large country on the basis of both her land area, with her numerous environmental resources and her population size, as well human resources. Nigeria will get even larger with time, in her population. She is still regarded, however, as largely under-developed. Nigeria is the worst example of growth without development in Africa, a hotch-potch of traditionally and neo-colonially oriented economy. Whatever economic growth rate was recorded did not lead to any remarkable rise in the standard of living of the masses.

This is mainly on account of her population issues and her overall population development situation, the past and present administration has been pursuing programs which aim at improving the quality of life of the people through the provision of housing, education, health services, food and other essentials. The continued achievement of this objective has been hampered by the enormous rate of growth of the population and the economic recession. Government, business and civil society together with the United Nations have started to mobilize efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Agenda (SDA) by 2030. Universal, inclusive and indivisible, the agenda calls for action by all countries to improve the lives of people everywhere.

Following the millennium summit of the United Nations in 2000, 189 Nations made promise to free people from extreme poverty and multiple deprivations. This pledge turned into the eight millennium Development Goals with a 2015 target date of conclusion. Giant Strides were made globally to meet the goals however there was an apparent need for review as the target date neared. In September 2015, the United Nations with its 194-member countries again champion the development and adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals. (<http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/>,2017) implementation of the SDGs builds on the successes achieved during the implementation of the MDGs in Nigeria base on her population and the role of Population Education.

To anyone who is unfamiliar with population education (Layman) this paper answers such questions: - what is population education? What are the objectives of population education? Why/ Significance of population education. What are the contemporary population related issues and problems faced man? And what are the roles of in-school mechanism towards effective population-education programmes.

### **The Concept Population Education**

In different part of this country, many people have demonstrated their misconception of the subject matter:

Population education. It is often confused with family planning, or sex education or demography. However, population education is not synonymous with any of these three disciplines. Population education is an education process of learning about the population situation at the family, ward, community, nation and international levels, with the purpose of

making rational decision, wise and independent choice on population issues in order to improve the quality of life of the individual and the family. The 1962 census count whose figures were described as “worse the useless” by then Eastern Nigeria Government sparked off a chain of reaction. There were charges and counter-charges inflated figures and attempts to charge Federal Government to Count.

In Sierra-Leone, where United Nations assisted population education programme was initiated, population education is defined as:

*A study of the population situation and its implications for the family, community, nation and the world with a view to develop in learners/ students responsible attitude, values and skills through the process of rational and informed decision making for better quality of life of the individual and that of the society, both for present and for future (Joot and Joot, 1987.P.51)*

However, in Nigeria where population education programme is crucial, what may be accepted as an operational definition has emerged- population education is thus defined as: an educational process which provides for a study of population- situation in the family, ward, the community, the nation, and the world-with the purpose of developing in the citizens a more rational attitude and more responsible behaviour towards improving the quality of their life now and in future.

Population education deals with population growth as a phenomenon to be understood for taking decisions about family size and the national population policies. From the definition above, it may be concluded that population education focuses on raising the level of awareness and understanding of issues, relating to population and through this, develop in people positive attitudes that will ensure a worthy quality of life for everybody, every family, the nation and the world community.

### **Why Population Education**

Ignorance as the part of the individuals and community can be a major setback in effective improvement of standard of living at family, community national and international levels. There are very many genuine reasons today why Nigerians should be given population knowledge, information and awareness. Indeed, these should be given to all Nigerians, old and young, male and female, urban and rural inhabitants, rich and poor. We are all aware of and witness to numerous developmental problems, social, economic, political etc. facing Nigeria today. For instance, there are the problems of feeding the people, providing adequate educational facilities, housing, medical and health care, water, electricity, transportation and other social amenities and health environments. There are also problems of economic growth, socio-economic development, political stability and national unity, to mention a few.

Based on the fact that Nigeria is blessed with large area of arable land, and abundant natural and human resources, which could be exploited to achieve a better living condition for the people, it was argued especially during the 1970s, that Nigeria had in population problem, or that problem of development were not necessarily related to or determined by population

situation. In fact, the combination of vast land area, several natural resources and large population size could lead to realistic growth and development of a given nation, but now this could appear deceptive in considering issue of development, particularly the relationship population and development in the country (Nigeria).

From this point, UNESCO (1978), pointed out that population education is also necessary because our private individual or family choice and decisions on population matters often do not add-up to national or community interests or goals. Furthermore, it is quite probable that a significant portion of population problems encountered by individuals and families are the result of accident or lack of planning. Thus, population education is existing to fill the missing gap between population- related problems and awareness creation, skills acquisition in analyzing and evaluating prevailing attitudes, values and beliefs, and rational decision-making and action-taking in ways that will improve the quality of life at the levels of individuals, family, ward community, the nation and the world.

Nigeria will have to battle with the effects of more and more people at the various levels of government (national, state and local government area) and of development decision-making over the years. The rate at which the additions/ multiplications to the large population base occur will continue to be crucial. If the rate is moderate, the country may be able to cope, but if it continues to be high, then the problems could be even greater.

The following table presents a listing of Nigeria's (36) thirty-six States ranked in order of their total population on preliminary 2006 census figures:

**Table 1.**

| S/N   | State       | Population |
|-------|-------------|------------|
| 1     | Kano        | 9,383,682  |
| 2     | Lagos       | 9,013,534  |
| 3     | Kaduna      | 6,966,567  |
| 4     | Katsina     | 5,591,578  |
| 5     | Oyo         | 5,591,589  |
| 6     | Rivers      | 5,185,400  |
| 7     | Bauchi      | 4,676,465  |
| 8     | Jigawa      | 4,348,649  |
| 9     | Benue       | 4,219,244  |
| 10    | Anambra     | 4,182,032  |
| 11    | Borno       | 4,151,193  |
| 12    | Delta       | 4,098,391  |
| 13    | Imo         | 3,934,899  |
| 14    | Niger       | 3,950,249  |
| 15    | Akwa-ibom   | 3,920,208  |
| 16    | Ogun        | 3,728,008  |
| 17    | Sokoto      | 3,696,999  |
| 18    | Ondo        | 3,441,024  |
| 19    | Osun        | 3,423,535  |
| 20    | Kogi        | 3,278,487  |
| 21    | Zamfara     | 3,259,846  |
| 22    | Enugu       | 3,257,298  |
| 23    | Kebbi       | 3,238,628  |
| 24    | Edo         | 3,218,332  |
| 25    | Plateau     | 3,178,712  |
| 26    | Adamawa     | 3,168,101  |
| 27    | Cross river | 2,888,966  |
| 28    | Abia        | 2,833,999  |
| 29    | Ekiti       | 2,384,212  |
| 30    | Kwara       | 2,371,089  |
| 31    | Gombe       | 2,353,879  |
| 32    | Yobe        | 2,321,591  |
| 33    | Taraba      | 2,300,736  |
| 34    | Ebonyi      | 2,173,501  |
| 35    | Nasarawa    | 1,863,275  |
| 36    | Bayelsa     | 1,703,358  |
| Total |             | 138,598.34 |

**Source:** National Population commission of Nigeria census 2006

**Table 3:** Population of Nigeria (2024 and Historical)

| Year | Population  | Urban Pop % |
|------|-------------|-------------|
| 2020 | 213,996,181 | 50.1%       |
| 2022 | 223,150,896 | 52.0%       |
| 2023 | 227,882,945 | 53.0%       |
| 2024 | 232,679,478 | 53.9%       |

**Source:** Nigeria Population (2024)- Worldmeter

Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa and the (10<sup>TH</sup>) tenth in the world. These include the major demographic features as obtained two major sources, size the 2006 census and the PRBs World population sheet.

### **Objectives/ Significance of Population Education**

It is quite probable that a significant portion of population problems encountered by individuals and families is the result of accidents or lack of planning. Therefore, the general goals, objectives or significance of population education are: -

- i. To involve learners in learning process that will enable them broaden their awareness and understanding of population-related issues and problems which affect the quality of life.
- ii. To develop in learners, appropriate skills and attitudes needed to defined, analyses and evaluate the prevailing/ contemporary population-related issues and problems.
- iii. To help learners make rational decisions and behave in ways which will improve the quality of life of individuals, families, communities, national and the world in general.

### **Relationship Between Population Education and National Development**

Obviously, the population of Nigeria is large, which makes it a “giant” relative to other African countries. The large population implies a large pool of human resources for development. Nevertheless, the impact of population on development depends not only on the absolute size but also on its quality. As pointed out by UNESCO (1978) population education as an appropriate response to the contemporary population related issues and problems which affect and are affected by human groups and individuals. Among the contemporary population-related issues and problems faced by mankind (nation) are:

1. To obtain lasting peace between and within nations
2. To preserve quality of the environments (social and physical)
3. To conserve natural resources at a sustainable level.
4. To advance social and economic progress of poor individuals, families, communities and nations.
5. To feed, house, cloth, educate, care for and create jobs for the young people.
6. To stabilize/ balance population growth at a level sustainable by the economy at the individual, family, communal and national level.

### **The Role of In-School Mechanism**

The in-school mechanism here refers to the school system, starting from primary school to the university level as well as mass literacy programmes in the frame work of national school system as stated in the national curriculum in education since 1998- to date. The in-school mechanism for population education is the most effective and efficient as well important mechanism known, because it has the capacity of reaching every part of Nigeria and it involves the cream of citizenry, cutting across childhood of six years to adulthood of about twenty-five and above years. Thus, if the objectives/ significance of population education is to be achieved, it is necessary to identify those elements in our political and socio- economic settings which serve as vehicle for disseminating ideas with the view to utilizing them for propagating the message of population education.

It is also the mechanism that is seriously supported and financed by all the three tiers of governments in the country. It possesses well trained, qualified, competent and relevant personnel that can adequately be used to disseminate the message of population education,



and as teachers they can be relied upon to use effective skills, languages, methods, materials, times, rewards for achieving the desired objectives/goals. The influence from this mechanism also covers the section of the population within the range of educability and is likely to cover a longer span of life, to influence others (generations) coming from behind them. The influence of this mechanism is by all indications likely to be for reaching and long lasting. It is important to point out that, for the purpose of effectiveness and efficiency that the appropriate integrative or infusive population education with chosen core-subject is to be established or the school curriculum be expanded to accommodate population education. Special programmes within school system that bring immediate results like crash programmes, short-term courses, sand witch, workshops and seminars could be organized from time to time as the need arises.

### **Conclusion**

Nearly all nations of the world attach much importance to population census because of its helpfulness and usefulness to their national development. Nigerians should realize and appreciate that population education as an appropriate and effective responses to the contemporary population-related issues and problems which continues to affect human groups and individuals.

The National Policy on Population for sustainable development outlines multi-sectorial strategies for the challenges posed by population growth. The policy strives to inform all stakeholders about linkage between population and development issues, such as housing, food, health, education and employment and so berth. Some of the awareness strategies taken are comprehensive while others are limited. Why so? Very many Nigerians seem to demonstrate serious gap between population related issues and national development. It is hoped that population education and national development programmes through in-school system be given the desired adequate attention and action, will lead citizens forward- in rational thinking and behaviour as well decisions on population issues in order to improve the quality of life of the individuals and the families.

### **Recommendations**

A large proportion of the nation's population, both urban and rural areas have demonstrated their misconception of population education. Hence, attention and action programmes of population education need to be vigorously pursued through in-school system, through:

1. Government to appropriately integrated/ infuse population education with chosen core subject or expand the school curriculum to accommodate population education.
2. Communities and non-governmental organizations should complement government efforts toward. Programs of population education by conducting seminars, workshops, conferences and refresher courses run by school.
3. Population education should be incorporated into vocational training programmes to assist young people prepare themselves for reasonable and responsible parenthood.
4. Teachers are crucial to population education system/programme, therefore, it is important to state that, qualified, competent, working conditions and resources available to them should be adequately provided by the government, concerned individuals and non-governmental organizations.

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