E-ISSN: 1115 - 8425 P-ISSN: 3027-012X
MPRI-JAEE | INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ASSESSMENT & EVALUATION IN EDU.
VOL. 06 NO. 8 – OCTOBER. 2024

EDUCATION-DEVELOPMENT NEXUS: THE NIGERIA'S EXPERIENCE

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DOI Unique ID: 10.70382/mejaee.v6i8.002

Abstract

Development as a concept and a process transcends individuals and society, thus, considered as a multidimensional process of change and transformation manifesting in economic growth, progress and prosperity in environmental, social, psychological, political and demographic components of society. It is about increasing the chances and improving the well-being of every individual to attain their full potentials in society, through human capital investment. Education has been equated to be the indisputable means of investing in people in order to explore their potentialities, creativity, innovation and self-consciousness. This conceptualises the concept of development as growth in the nation's or societal income and economy with corresponding enhancement of material well-being of individuals in terms of basic necessities of life such as education, food, clothing, shelter, skills, freedom, self-discipline. It showcases some development issues in Nigeria and argued that provision of qualitative education to citizenry directly affects the level of society's growth and

Keywords: Capital, Development, Education, Human and Society

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development. The growth theory however lays emphasis on growth rate differentials across countries, the role of externalities in determining the rate of return on capital investments, and assuming that both public and private investments in human capital help in generating external economies and productivity improvements.

Introduction

Education has been directly equated with the overall development process of human societies as it is the gate-way to the future and the key to economic, social and political advancement and sustainability. Education is the vital instrument for social and economic mobility at the personal level and an instrument for transformation of society at the national level. It also remained a social process in capacity building and maintenance of society, because it is a weapon for acquiring skills, relevant knowledge and habits for surviving in the changing world (Adepoju & Fabiyi, 2008). Education is an act or experience that has a formative effect on the mind, character or physical ability of an individual.

Education is a major tool for the socio-economic development of any nation and for individual socio-economic empowerment and poverty reduction. Educational system is vital because it produces the personnel required to function in various aspects/sectors of national life and development process (Ibidapo-Obe, 2007). Education played a significant role in the technological and economic development of the industrial countries.

The significance of education in the growth and development of a country makes different countries of the world to operate one system of education or the other, and because some policies on education may be more organized and effective than others, it became imperative for nations (Nigeria inclusive) to strive towards adopting various efficient means of strengthening their educational policies which ought to include a general improvement on quality of education to merge with other elements in the nation's development through a deliberate process of transmitting the nation's

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accumulated knowledge, skills, values and experiences from one generation to another.

Education, more especially at the basic or primary level, is one of the MDGs goals and second only to eradicating extreme poverty and hunger. Meanwhile, I argued that, education should be the first goal or target to be achieve, because with education an individual fights poverty and hunger to finish as he/she is empowered.

The Concept of Development

Development, just like most concepts in social sciences, has been variously conceived by economics, political scientists, sociologists and the likes. This is partly due to multi-faceted nature of the concept, as it affects every aspects of human life in society. For in economic terms, development entails the ability of a nation, whose initial economic condition has been more or less static for a long time, to generate and sustain an annual increase in its gross national income (GNI) at rates of 5 percent to 7 percent or more (Todaro & Smith, 2009:14). On another account it involves advancement in democracy, capitalism, human rights and good governance. To Sociologist's development is not only merely growth in the nation's or societal income and economy but assumes a human dimension and encompasses enhancement of material well-being of individuals in terms of basic necessities of life such as food, clothing, shelter, education and what have you (Bartoli, 2000:9).

However, as a socio-economic process, the concept of development was adopted after 1945 by developing countries in order to overcome their economic and institutional backwardness where improvement of the material condition of the populace and equitable distribution of resources and the elimination of poverty were key components of the process (Mohammed, 2002:5). To this effect, development has been define as the multi-dimensional process of change in the social structure, attitude, institution as well as the general acceleration of economic growth through reduction of inequality and

poverty. This includes improvement of the production techniques, level of output, per-capita income and general improvement of the welfare of people (Todaro, 1977 cited in Mohammed, 2002:5).

Rodney (1972:1) sees development as many sided process which at individual level involves increased skill and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and material well-being, achievement of which is tied to the state of the society. While it implies an increasing capacity to regulate both internal and external relationship at the level of society. This suffice that individual's ability to have relative access to societal resources for satisfaction of needs, access to rights and privileges, respect for one's dignity, freedom of expression and association represent individual's level of development. Societal development entails the provision of enabling environment and opportunities for individual members to pursue and achieve their goals and aspiration.

Nigeria's Development Situation

In Nigeria, security and other factors such as inadequate infrastructure – electricity, roads, effective regulations etc – serve as constraints to the provision of conducive environment and opportunities for individuals to thrive even with the country's appreciable economic growth in recent time. For instance, with 2014 statistical rebasing exercise Nigeria has emerged as Africa's largest economy, with 2013 GDP estimated at US$ 502 billion with oil as the dominant source of government revenues since the 1970s. The nation's economy grows at a rapid of 6-8% per annum (pre-rebasing), driven by growth in agriculture, telecommunications, and services, and the medium-term outlook for Nigeria is good, assuming oil output stabilizes and oil prices remain strong. Fiscal authorities pursued countercyclical policies in 2011-2013, significantly reducing the budget deficit. Monetary policy has also been responsive and effective. Following the 2008-9 global financial crises, the banking sector was effectively recapitalized and regulation enhanced.

Unfortunately, despite its strong fundamentals, oil-rich Nigeria has been hobbled by inadequate power supply, lack of infrastructure, delays in the passage of legislative reforms, an inefficient property registration system, restrictive trade policies, an inconsistent regulatory environment, a slow and ineffective judicial system, unreliable dispute resolution mechanisms, insecurity, and pervasive corruption. Economic diversification and strong growth have not translated into a significant decline in poverty levels - over 62% of Nigeria's 170 million people live in extreme poverty (Criminal Intelligence Agency, 2015).

Education and Human Development

Education both as an instrument (for overall societal development) and as a process has been variously described by scholars, with each trying to portray the importance and necessity of education as well as the processes and issues involved in its acquisition. That is, how individuals acquire at least basic literacy and numeracy.

Education requires of children a particular form of participation involving explicit and formalised task-oriented instruction in a highly specific and institutionalised social environment, which is usually a school. The school, understood as a distinctive social situation, is likely to be, in many ways, a very different learning environment to the one the child is used to at home (Nick, 2007). Education has often been seen as a fundamentally optimistic human endeavour characterised by aspirations for progress and betterment. It is understood by many to be a means of overcoming handicaps, achieving greater equality and acquiring wealth and social status. Education is perceived as a place where children can develop according to their unique needs and potential (Schofield,1999).

As one of the best means of achieving greater social equality, many people argue that the purpose of education should be to develop every individual to their full potential and give them a chance to achieve as much in life as their

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natural abilities allow, which is meritocracy. Few said that any education system accomplishes this goal perfectly, while some take a particularly negative view, arguing that the education system is designed with the intention of causing the social reproduction of inequality in human societies (Sargent, 1994).

Whether as a term or a concept, education is broad; hence we need to specify the focus of discussion, that is, the type of education we shall be referring to. Thus, our interpretation of education here refers to western type of education with emphasis on early or basic education. This is because education in general represents the ability to read, write, communicate and develop in whatever language, culture and manner. However, if we believe that education (as used here) should not necessarily be viewed from western perspective and western world view, then our society, looking at our level of needs and development must not be seen as uneducated or educationally backward (Aljannare, 1995:4). Our meaning of education and educated should therefore also be along Western thinking.

No matter how education is defined; it entails process, orientation, socialization, teaching, training, couching, tendering and moulding individuals towards the direction of society's goals. As a process, it always continues but it is more critical at early childhood. It involves channeling the perception, reasoning, thinking and creativity of an individual towards the upliftment of the society, either through socialization, training etc, in accordance to the societal needs and aspirations. (Farrent 1964 cited in Aljannare 1995).

Tanko (2001) also sees education as a process which is not only concerned with instilling knowledge and skills in individuals, but also with tapping out of the stock of creative potentials that lie within each and every individual, thus enabling us to develop ourselves to maximum capability and to contribute positively for the betterment of our societies. He conceptualizes education as the culture which each generation purposely gives to those who are to be its

successor in order to qualify them for at least keeping up and if possible for raising the level of improvement which is being attained.

To Oghuvbu (2007), education entails a systematic procedure for the transfer and transformation of culture through both formal and informal training of people in a society. It deals with the mental, physical, psychological and social development of the citizens in a given society, where the ultimate goal is manpower development aiming at national growth and development. From an understanding of the above explanations, one can argue that education is necessary not only for developing human but also for societal development. In other words, provision of qualitative education to citizenry directly affects the level of society's growth and development. This has been described by scholars like Todaro and Smith (2009) as investing in human capital, which is an aspect of human capacities that can raise productivity, just like investments in other sectors of the society.

It is not therefore an exaggeration to conclude that education directly contributes to both individual and societal well-being. As Alilonu (2006:3) puts it,

> Education connotes value and it is this value that should be desired, for that no sacrifice made to achieve it will be too much, because it makes individual to benefit him/herself and other members of the society. To this effect, education has both social and individual functions. Social function is helping every individual to become a more effective member of society by transmitting into him and passing along the collective experience of the past and present, while its individual function is enabling an individual to lead a more satisfying and productive life by preparing him/her to handle new experiences and challenges successfully, as well as becoming creative.

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Dewey (1897) argued that it was the job of education to encourage individuals to develop their full potential as human beings. He particularly stressed the development of intellectual potential. Schooling for all would help to foster the physical, emotional and spiritual talents of everyone, as well as their intellectual abilities. Dewey was critical of the rote learning of facts in schools, and argued for progressive teaching methods. People should learn by experience: by doing things rather than being told. In this way they would not just gain knowledge but would also develop the skills, habits and attitudes necessary for them to solve a wide variety of problems. Furthermore, individuals would develop the ability and motivation to think critically about the world around them. For Dewey, and similar educationists, a progressive education system is a vital part of a successful democracy. Since in a democracy power rests with the people, it is necessary for the people to be able to think for themselves when exercising their power. Liberal education would be incompatible with a dictatorship, where free and critical thought could threaten the authority of the state. Dewey hoped that the education system he proposed would promote flexibility and tolerance, and individuals would be able to cooperate together as equals (Haralambos and Holborn, 2007).

Thus, a young person's employment prospects are closely related to the education received. Access to basic education is widely recognized as an effective means of combating child labor and eradicating poverty. Indeed, education and skills development generate important economic as well as social benefits. Education and skills are central to increasing productivity and income. Boosting productivity requires technological change, which in turn is only possible if new and higher skills are available at large (World Bank, 2009). In other words, Olaniyan and Obadara (2008) opined that education is an as economic good, comprising both consumer and capital good. As consumer good, it offers utility to a consumer and also serves as an input (or skills which an individual uses) into the production of other goods. As a capital good, education can be used to develop the human resources necessary for entire

economic and societal transformation. This also relates to the concept of human capital, which states how the development of skills becomes an important factor in the production processes/activities. In a nutshell, education creates improved citizens and helps to increase the general standard of living in a society. Thus, production of educated and qualitative citizenry is likely to be associated with positive social change.

Education is the most powerful instrument yet known to man for social progress and improvement. Education can heal or destroy, make or mart, bind together or tear apart. It is costly but cost effective. To Afe (2003) education creates well educated people who will bring the talents, knowledge, skills and experiences into the development of the society. The more and better education a nation provides the more and better producers and consumers the country shall have (Okegibile, 2010). The relevance and necessity of education in human development is very obvious, as it improves people's ability to shape their lives, strengthen their functioning in society and contributing to their welfare directly (Ekeocha, 2008). Investing in human capital if well distributed and targeted to the poor, can facilitate social inclusion, help people to manage resources properly and protect their environment; it improves human rights and social justice. Similarly, basic education enables the poor to know their civil and political rights as well as the exercise of those rights.

Beyond basic education, investing in intellectual capital is fundamental to economic growth and development process. The acquisition of appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, manipulative and communicative life-skills; ethical, moral and civic values through education are critical for the survival of individuals. For instance, educating women will not only increase their income earning capacity, but also improve their reproductive health, lower infant and child mortality and benefit a family's socio-economic status. Investing in human capital, through education, is crucial in building strong institutions, improving governance, fighting corruption, eradicating poverty, environmental

protection and general accelerated economic growth (Ekeocha, 2008, Bako, 2010).

According to the World Bank (2011), it is difficult to list the number of ways in which education affects human development because there are so many! In addition to its basic value of teaching people how to read and write, education promotes creativity and innovation. Being educated empowers people to advance their interests and protect their rights. Educated people are more aware of how to stay healthy and to have a better quality of life. They also tend to earn more and have better jobs. But the quality of education remains quite low in a lot of countries—in general, children in developing countries learn far less than children schooled for the same number of years in developed countries.

In view of the above, Rousseau divides development into five stages (a book is devoted to each). Education in the first two stages seeks to the senses: only when Émile is about 12 does the tutor begin to work to develop his mind. Later, in Book 5, Rousseau examines the education of Sophie (whom Émile is to marry). Here he sets out what he sees as the essential differences that flow from sex. 'The man should be strong and active; the woman should be weak and passive'. From this difference comes a contrasting education. They are not to be brought up in ignorance and kept to housework: Nature means them to think, to will, to love to cultivate their minds as well as their persons; she puts these weapons in their hands to make up for their lack of strength and to enable them to direct the strength of men. They should learn many things, but only such things as suitable (James, 2005).

There is no doubt that this literature explained the relevance and the necessity of education for both human and societal development. Only that it is short of explaining how people are to be educated or how it should be given to people, what type of education we need in our contemporary societies, who is/are responsible for educating people in our society and what are the consequences of having uneducated population in a society. But despite that, one can argue

that in order to achieve sustainable human development in particular, and by extension the MDGs, it would be necessary to put machineries in motion aimed at sending every child to school (i.e. to achieve universal primary education) which is the MDGs goal 2.

Theoretical Framework

Several theories were advanced by different scholars on development, both as a process and as an action, and its instruments, education inclusive. But for this paper Growth Theory is found to be appropriate in explaining the process of development through investing in education as one of its ingredients. The Growth theory is a theory that explains that, incorporation of knowledge as well as education (human capital) are part of the factors that are at play in any development process. According to Todaro (2000), the growth theory provides a theoretical framework for analysing endogenous growth and persistent Gross National Product (GNP) growth that is determined by the system governing the production process rather than by forces outside the system. The theory differs from traditional neoclassical theories, since these models hold GNP growth to be natural consequence of long-run equilibrium. The growth theory however lays emphasis on growth rate differentials across countries, the role of externalities in determining the rate of return on capital investments, and assuming that both public and private investments in human capital help in generating external economies and productivity improvements. Models of endogenous growth usually suggest an active role for public policy in promoting development through direct and indirect investment in human capital formation and the encouragement of foreign private investment in knowledge-intensive industries such as computer software and telecommunications (Todaro, 2000).

On the other hand, this theory was criticized on its unrealistic assumptions that are not always appropriate for a developing country like Nigeria. Accordingly, factors like poor institutional structures, imperfect capital and goods markets,

and poor infrastructures are not given due consideration in determining the objective condition of people's life in terms of their level of education and poverty. However, the theory is able to explain the process of development through investing in education and considers it as one of the necessary ingredients for overall societal development.

Conclusion

The process of development, at all levels, require the putting together of resources and manipulating such resources for desired results. The first and most valuable resources for any development agenda is, unarguably, the human resources, which always has to be in place before material or any other resources. Investing in these invaluable resources through education therefore provides an active and dynamic human resources with full of initiatives and capacity to innovate and engineer growth in every sector of society. Suffice it to say that investing in educational sector is a direct and deliberate attempt to develop the society, as providing education to the people is not only aimed at producing a knowledge based population and society but also a tool for creative and sustainable development.

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