Leapfrogging Education for Sustainable National Development in Nigeria: Addressing some Pessimism

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Abstract

Leapfrogging education for sustainable national development in Nigeria is the thrust of this position paper. A major bane of Nigeria's national development and nation building is the lack of a true sense of nationhood which education tends to address. In fact, education is the bedrock of development of any nation. The citizens are progressively becoming dependent on its products. This paper examined the meaning of education, development, sustainable national development and the problems militating against them. An insight onto the place of education for national development is also given. It also proffered some useful suggestions on the way forward to make the education sector relevant to the contemporary society and sustainable national development in Nigeria. Among other recommendations, this paper suggests that quality, functional and affordable education should be made available for all.

Keywords: *Education, development, sustainable national development.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Education has been recognized all over the world as a tool for empowering people, especially the youth, for sustainable livelihood and socio-economic development. In fact, education is considered as the key to achieving sustainable development. In achieving the sustainable development, much is needed in improving our educational system. Ajeyalemi (2008) cited in Olowo and Arogunrerin (2011) opines that the objective of using education as an instrument per excellence for bringing about national development in Nigeria (NPE, 1997, revised 1981, 2004, 2007, 2014) seems not to be realized yet. Quality education that will enhance economic development cannot be achieved with poor physical infrastructure. Hence, this paper tends to expose the missing link and proffer remedial strategies.

According to Okonjo-Iweala (2005) cited in Yakubu (2012), education is not only the sure foundation for achieving sustainable development, it is in fact, at the very-heart of the process, and as she also noted, if we want to create a society which is prosperous, stable and accountable, there is simply no alternative to paying more attention to education. Education is a very important and powerful agent of change and progress, it is also an instrument for empowering individuals, this is because it is, designed to affirmatively assist individuals to develop their skills and abilities so as to fulfill their potential and to lead productive and satisfying lives (Yakubu, 2012).

From the issues that sustainable development seeks to address, it is clear that sustainable development is a multi-dimensional concept requiring the participation of diverse stakeholders and perspectives. While this is so, it is pertinent to point out here that the overarching goal of sustainable development, in spite of evolving a core set of guiding principles and values, is still based on the Brundtland Commission's standard definition of meeting the needs, now and in the future, for human, economic, and social development within the restraints of the life support systems of the planet. It stresses the need for a balanced consideration of all the aspects highlighted above in our everyday decision making processes. It encourages governments, non-governmental institutions, corporate organizations, communities, families and individuals to take responsible decisions with the well-being of the whole environment in mind (Sampson, 2013).

Gboyega (2003) in (Oloya & Egbule, 2016) captures development as an idea that embodies an attempt to improve the conditions of human existence in all ramifications. Development will bring about improvement in personal security and livelihoods and expansion of life chances. The quest for national development should begin with having responsible citizens who are ready to contribute to the growth and development of the society. Hence, for Nigeria to experience real national development, her leaders must be sensitive and considerate and must think of reviving the nation's educational system.

This paper, therefore, is aimed at making contribution on how education can be harnessed to achieve sustainable national development in Nigeria.

The following questions will be addressed in this paper:
1. What factors are responsible for the snail speed pace of development in Nigeria?

2. What are the challenges facing education in Nigeria?
3. What is the role of education in achieving sustainable national development in Nigeria?
4. What is the way forward?

A. Conceptual Clarifications

For better comprehension of this paper, the major concepts are clarified below:

B. Concept of Education

The term, education, has no one universally accepted definition. Hence, the concept of education has been given different definitions by various authorities. This work intends not to bore the readers with the various definitions or connotations of the concept of education. However, education is defined as a systematic training and instruction designed to transmit knowledge and develop skills in individuals. Fafunwa (1991) sees education as an aggregate of all the processes by means of which an individual develops abilities, skills and forms of positive behaviour in the society in which he lives. Herbart (1776) cited in Ughamadu (2006) maintained that education is a process of developing should moral character for the good of the society. The Encyclopedia Americana (1997) defines education as "a process or the result of a process by which an individual acquires knowledge, skills, attitudes and insights.

C. The Concept of Development

According to Olisa and Obiukwu (1992), development involves strategy designed to improve economic and social lives of the people. Chrisman cited in Lawal and Oluwatoyin (2011) views development as a process of societal advancement, where improvement in the well being of people are generated through strong partnerships between all sectors, corporate bodies and other groups in the society. It is pertinent to state that development is not only an economic exercise, but also embraces socio-economic and political issues and pervades all aspects of societal life. Development therefore constitutes the process of planned change for which one approach or the other is adopted for the improvement and or transformation of the lots of the people.

D. The Concept of National Development

The acquisition of basic knowledge, skills and positive attitudes are basic ingredients needed by citizens to contribute manfully to the growth of a society leading to national development. The Nigerian Educational Research Council (1978) sees national development as the plan usually initiated by the government, for economic, social and political development of the nation. According to Oluwagbohunmi (2012) national development is the anticipated desirable positive changes that occur in educational, economic, political, socio-cultural and technological aspects of life which usher in an improved standard of living for the benefit of the entire citizenry.

E. Concept of Sustainable Development

According to Al-Roubaie in Ajibade (2013), sustainable development is a situation that requires meeting the basic needs of all and extending to all the opportunity to satisfy their aspirations for a better life. He goes on to say that sustainable development requires the promotion of values that encourage consumption standards that are within the bounds of the ecologically possible and to which all can reasonably aspire. Sustainable development has also been defined as the development that meets the needs and aspirations of the current generations without compromising the ability to meet those of the future generation (Abudul-Rasheed) cited in (Owolali, 2012). Similarly, in the words of Brundtland Commission cited in Egbule (2014) it is defined as a development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

II. THREATS TO SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

A nation has a developed economy when industries, factories, manufacturing companies and business enterprises take over from subsistence farming in the village and small-scale manufacturing. A developed economy is self-reliant with an economy based on highly sophisticated technology. The rapid growth and development of a nation's economy is to a large extent affected by certain factors. Some economists believe that if these factors are put in check, it would then be possible for a nation to forge ahead towards development Imoh-Obong (2008). The following, among others, are some of the factors that can hinder national development:

A. The Leadership Failure

According to Chinua Achebe, the trouble with Nigeria is the failure of leadership. Leadership is a critical factor in nation building and it should be understood in two important but related ways. Firstly, leaders are to possess personal qualities of integrity, honesty, commitment and competence, secondly, they must have the collective qualities of common vision, focus, and the desire for development of the elites as a whole (Fountain, 2000) cited in (Ikani, 2015). Visionless leadership has led to unemployment, violation of human rights, marginalization, political victimization, selfishness and so on. It is expected that a leader should place the national interest first before him, but today, the reverse is the case. This has led Nigerian citizens into ugly situations that are not favourable to nation building and national development.

B. Corruption and Misappropriation of Public Funds

Corruption is a major threat to national development in developing countries. Corruption is used here to refer to a condition or state of falsehood, impropriety, illegitimacy, illegality or injustice geared towards acquisition of power, money or position for private and sectional profit. This has continued to be the bane of the country's drive towards the attainment of economic and sustainable development. The upsurge of corruption in Nigeria, in recent times is disturbing because it constitutes an impediment to the actualization of developmental plans and projects in the country. According to Dike (2011), the menace of corruption leads to slow movement of files in offices, police extortion at toll gates, slow traffic on the highways, port congestion, queues at passport offices, and gas stations, ghost workers syndrome, electoral malpractices, among others. Corruption in Nigeria undermines democratic institutions, retards economic development and contributes to unstable and low quality educational system in Nigeria. It seems the treatment and the damages it has done to our educational system cannot be quantified. It constitutes an impediment to the actualization of quality education in Nigeria. Even the handicapped and mad persons on the streets recognize the havoc caused by corruption – as funds allocated for their welfare disappear into the air. Presently in Nigeria, criminals are celebrated and the war against corruption is asleep.

C. The Challenge of Ethnic Chauvinism/Regional Agitations

Historically, Nigeria is a creation of the British, which became a geo-political entity in 1914, when the northern and southern protectorates were amalgamated. This pre-mature "wedlock" has been a major threat to holistic development in Nigeria. After independence, the desire to achieve genuine "nationhood" became a matter of concern, since unity is a sine-qua-non to peace, progress, development and nation building. As a heterogeneous society with ethnic pluralism that is rooted in diverse cultures, majority of Nigerians are so conscious of their place of origin, birth and language. In fact, the ethnic factor has played a negative role on national integration and development in Nigeria. In Nigeria, ethnicity has adversely affected national consciousness which is a major ingredient in national development and integration (Oloya and Egbule, 2016).

The presence of the wicked and blood thirsty Boko Haram in the northern part of Nigeria - without any specific aim, the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP), the Niger Delta Liberation Force (NDLF) and the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), demands for a Sovereign National Conference (SNC) to discuss and possibly give birth to a Republic of Niger Delta and also request for resource control from the federal government, are major setback to nation building and national integration in Nigeria. The Igbos, on the other hand, are struggling for the actualization of the Republic of Biafra, through the Movement for Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB).

D. Insecurity

Safety and security of lives are topical global issues today. This is because security is so critical for meaningful development, peace and progress of any people or country. One of Nigeria's biggest problems that seem to have defied the efforts of the security agencies is insecurity of lives and property. For instance, the activities of the Boko Haram (insurgency) in North Eastern Nigeria have posed a security challenge that is virtually affecting all the sectors of the economy – this had severely crippled development in Nigeria. Yet, no serious attempt has been made to arrest this terrible and unpalatable situation.

E. Mono-Cultural Economy

Before the discovery of oil in Nigeria in 1956, she was famous in her agrarian economy through which cash crops like palm produce, cocoa, rubber, timber, groundnuts, were exported, thus making Nigeria a major exporter in that respect. Today, the above fact is a history. For a one dimensional economy like Nigeria, the implications are quite far reaching. Nigeria is a good case study because 80% of her foreign exchange earnings come from the sale of crude oil. Its annual (federal) budget is created based on projections on oil prices and quantity of oil sold. Unfortunately, due to the dwindling prices of oil in the global market, Nigeria is in a very pitiable state politically, economically, socially and otherwise.

F. Migration, Brain Drain and Exploitation of Labour

Brain drain is another big problem for many developing countries like Nigeria in the process of globalization. Many Nigerian students have opportunities to pursue their studies abroad. However, at the end of their programmes, many of them do not return home. Consequently, the country in general, and institutions in particular have lost those talented citizens (Bonga and Dafiaghor, 2014) cited in (Oloya and Egbule, 2016). Migration sometimes has destabilizing effects on the receiving country, especially, if it were sudden and in great numbers, as all who enter the country would be competing for available jobs, food, shelter and clothing,

Other factors are summarized as following:
- Chronic poverty and lack of basic services
- Political intolerance and weak opposition parties
- Non-inclusion i.e. the winners takes it all

- Inadequate educational opportunities and resources
- Lack of transparency and accountability in government.
- Massive youth unemployed and rural urban drift
- Lack of quality education and high rate of illiteracy
- Weak border and poor security system
- Climate change and environmental hazard
- Party defection and power tussle
- Violation of human rights and injustice
- Growing inequality among the citizenry
- Marginalization in sharing national resource.

III. CHALLENGES FACING EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

In Nigeria, much is not being derived from the sector due to neglect on the part of government, corruption, inconsistent policies and other factors as discussed below:

A. The Challenge of Funds

Despite the goals of education as stated in the National Policy on Education, education is still not adequately funded. According to Enaohwo (2016) funding or fiscal empowerment of educational institutions and governments, at all levels, remains the most intransigent challenge in policy implementation in Nigeria. The problem is so pervasive that an endemic and perpetual gap or hiatus exists between policy presumption/provisions and implementation or actualization at various levels. Thus, perceived gaps endure between the north and south because of the colonial approach to educational development in that era, while disparities among geo-political zones, state and local government areas, continue to prevail in contemporary Nigeria. It is pertinent the amount of money Nigeria allocates to education is far less than the 26% of government expenditure recommended by United Nations Educational and Cultural Organization (UNESCO 2001) Nigerian allocated about 8% for all forms of education. For instance, the N540.01 billion (less than 10%) allocated to the education sector by the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) in this year's (2017) budget is far short of 26% minimum recommendation by UNESCO.

B. The Challenge of Inadequate Teacher Professional Development Programmes

The successes recorded by multi-national firms such as Shell, Chevron, the banking sector among others in their various endeavours can be ascribed to regular training and retraining of their human resources to meet the challenges of a dynamic and highly competitive economic system. Educational institutions in Nigeria do not organize adequate in-service training programmes like seminars, workshops and refresher course that will help to equip teachers with the necessary skill needed in the area of ICT resources usage and management.

C. The Challenge of Government Inconsistent policies

Government policies on education often depend on the government in power. This leads to inconsistencies in matters affecting education. Specifically, funding of education programmes, provision and maintenance of education, facilities and equipment, staff recruitment, posting, capacity building programmes for teachers are affected by changes in government. Education institutions in Nigeria have seen little or no infrastructure improvements for the last few decades. Learning infrastructure is widely deficient due to insufficient budget by the various governments and diversion of funds due to inconsistent government policies.

D. The Challenge of Poor Physical Facilities and Infrastructure

Facilities are needed for effective delivery of a job-creation curriculum. The Nigerian educational system from basic to higher is characterised by acute shortage of quality facilities in the right quantity. At the primary or Basic 1 to 6 level, inadequacy of classrooms, furniture, office and laboratory equipment is prevalent. The situation is hardly different in public junior and senior secondary schools (Basic 7-12). At the university level, the findings of the 2012 needs assessment survey are particularly revealing.The severe shortage of classrooms, hostels, offices, libraries, laboratories and workshops for effective delivery of university education was documented (Okebukola, 2016). Ossat (2011) agrees that in the face of this poor availability of infrastructure, there is no way functional education for economic development can be achieved.

E. The Challenge of the Attitude of Teachers' toward Innovation

The attitude of social studies teachers towards innovative teaching and learning using ICT resources is also a problem. Not all social studies teachers are willing to accept new technologies for themselves.

IV. THE PLACE OF EDUCATION IN ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

The importance of education for any national development cannot be over emphasized; neither would it be an over statement to state unequivocally that education remains the only potent instrument as well as the prerequisite for the harmonious functioning of the citizens of any society which translates to economic, social, political growth and development of the society that is committed to it. Driving home the essence of education in this

direction, Ajonuma (2010) in Odionye (2014) sees education as the process of developing human capacity, skills, abilities, behaviours, and encompasses the social process of achieving competence, growth and development in an institutional or organizational setting. The National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014) has described education as an instrument 'par excellence' for effecting national development. It affirmed that education shall continue to be highly rated in the national development plans because it is the most important instrument of change. Truly, any fundamental change in the intellectual and social outlook of any society has to be preceded by an educational revolution because it is the surest means of developing the individual into a sound and effective citizen.

Quality education without any iota of exaggeration is an indispensable tool for national growth and sustainable development. It has significant impact and makes valuable contribution in many areas of human life, national security and sustainable development (Osakwe, 2009). It is important, therefore, that the citizens of any nation receive education of good quality. This type of education according to the National Policy on Education (2014) leads to the acquisition of both physical and intellectual skills which enable learners to be self-reliant and useful members of the society they will be fully occupied with various skillful labour/activities and may not have the chance to be involved in any action that will cause threats to national security and sustainable peace. Quality education should be a right to all Nigerians at all levels of education and as such, the provision of instructional resources required of for quality education is imperative.

The Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2014) further states that education in Nigeria is an instrument per excellence used for effecting national development and that for the benefit of all citizens, the country's educational goal shall be clearly set out in terms of their relevance of the need of the individuals and those of the society. There is therefore no doubt that the role of education, and tertiary education in particular, in human resource development and the overall economic, social and political development cannot be over-estimated. Education trains individuals to relate to and interact meaningfully with others in the society and to appreciate the importance of effective organization for human progress. Here, the school system within the educational system fosters this development. The school brings people of different cultural backgrounds together for a common purpose. This promotes mutual co-existence among the different students. Learners who strongly identify with their school are thought to have a more positive attitude towards teachers, other learners and the entire educational

enterprise (Armstrong, et al 1981) cited in (Orji &Maekae, 2013).

According to Nnabuo and Asodike (2009) education for sustainable development is lifelong process that leads to an informed and involved citizenry having the creative problem-solving skills, scientific and social literacy, and commitment to engage in responsible individual and co-operative actions. United Kingdom Panel for education for Sustainable Development (1998), states that education for sustainable development enables people to develop the knowledge, values, and skills to participate in decisions about the ways we do things, individually and collectively, locally and globally, that will improve the quality of life now without damaging the planet of the future. Education for sustainable development is a holistic approach for school's management and the curriculum, not a separate subject.

Education, in the life of a nation, is the live wire of its industries and also the foundation of moral regeneration and revival of its people. It is also the force and bulwark of any nation's defence and it has been observed that no nation rises above the level of its education. Seeing education in this perspective calls for proper funding from federal, state and local governments to make the sector produce the desired results which will stimulate national development (Orji &Maekae, 2013). Nzerem (2000) opined that education is a life-long process which enables an individual to develop his potentials in order to give service not only to himself but to the community at large. Education is expected to inculcate in an individual the right types of values and attitudes for survival, as well as enable him acquire appropriate skills, abilities and competencies, both mental and physical and be an equipment for him to live in and contribute to the development of his society.

Education has the potential of contributing meaningfully to the development of Nigeria in making a wealthier, safer and more secured Nigeria, if the sector is appropriately given their rightful place in the quest for national development. Education is one of the ways of developing human capital to facilitate national development. Education is an avenue for providing young people with a feeling of hope in the future and confidence in their ability to solve the social, political and environmental problems of individuals, their community, state or nation (Osakwe, 2009).

V. CONCLUSION

The indispensability of education for any sincerely national development drives; be it political, economical, socio-cultural or technological cannot be under-rated. It is therefore pertinent to state that every possible effort should be geared towards providing qualitative and quantitative education to the citizenry of every nation. On this note, the writers express

optimism that, if the recommendations made are properly implemented, Nigeria's drive towards sustainable development will be achieved. However, it is imperative to state that the acquisition of skills is not sufficient to achieve a sustainable national development in Nigeria. Hence, this paper emphasis the need to tackle the challenges of bad governance, corruption, insecurity, etc., and adequate instructional facilities should be provided before the much needed sustainable national development can be realized.

VI. SUGGESTIONS FOR THE WAY FORWARD

The task of achieving sustainable national development in Nigeria is quite enormous. However, a 14-point remedial strategy as recommended below is imperative:

- Establishment of partnership and collaboration arrangement with local and foreign institutions that are ready to promote entrepreneurship education in the Nigerian schools and institutions.
- At the basic education level, junior secondary students should be given opportunities in school to learn the rudiments of entrepreneurship as provided in the NERDC curriculum.
- The government should intensify her fight against corruption, injustice, terrorism, kidnapping, and insurgency–through the law enforcement and well restructure anti-corruption agencies.
- In the Nigerian context, for the education sector to contribute meaningfully to national development; there should be adequate funding of the three tiers of government. In fact, Government as a matter of priority should implement the minimum United Nations Educational and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) recommendation of a minimum 26% budgetary allocation to education.
- Qualified teachers should be employed and they should be properly remunerated and motivated to put in their best in teaching the students under them.
- The National Teachers' Institute, Kaduna, should be adequately empowered financially to enable it plan for wider and more encompassing programmes including such emerging skills as the use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) resources.
- Government at all levels should tackle as a matter of urgency the issue of dearth infrastructure and facilities in Nigeria's education institutions. In fact, adequate funding and provision of infrastructures should be given to education programme in order to yield positive results.
- Members of the public should be encouraged to endow universities for research, and also assist the indigent and brilliant students.

- Reformatting teacher education programme is indispensible. We need a profession full of inspiring, innovative, creative and knowledgeable teachers.
- The government should provide the technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, commercial and economic development; through entrepreneurship training to ensure economically self-reliant citizens-which has been linked to the rapid development of countries of the world.
- The government should organize public enlightenment campaigns through the National Orientation Agency, NYSC orientation camps, seminars and workshops on the ways of promoting national and sustainable development. The norms and values concerning acquisition of wealth should be re-examined; while hard work, honesty, integrity, moral uprightness should be rewarded.
- Effective development planning: governments should embark on a functional development plan aimed at promoting educational, political and industrial development.
- Quality, functional and affordable education should be made available for all.
- There is also the need to review the school curriculum, with emphases on skill acquisition to foster self-reliance and self-employment.

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