

THE ANTIDOTES TO UNEMPLOYMENT FOR TRANSFORMATION IN EDUCATION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

This paper seeks to reveal the degree of unemployment and interrogate the efforts of transformation in education and sustainable development in Nigeria. A comparative approach is adopted. Foremost, transformation in education is examined ditto sustainable development. The link between education and sustainable development is demonstrated pointing out the challenges to sustainable development. The antidotal to unemployment and delusions in educational transformation and sustainable development that are identified are: promoting education and youth employment through a good grounding in spoken English; improving productivity of youth employment using indigenous languages to express new production techniques; and developing spiritual and material condition of the youth through the instrumental of Nigeria oral literature. When these are done, development can then be seen as a state of material and spiritual well-being of the generality attained through ethical attitudes and methods.

Keywords: Antidotal, Unemployment, Transformation, Education and Sustainable development.

Introduction

Goaded by the human tragedy of the World War II, Harry Truman, the former United States President, placed on the conscience of world leaders and the individual the collective responsibility for the transformation of the developing nations of the world. This apparently sets the stage for the dominance of issues of development in academic, social, cultural, political and economic discourses at the national and international levels. Post-independence Africa and Nigeria in particular has been a major laboratory for nationhood. This is in view of the proliferation of attempts for development. Development definitely has the pride of place either in trivialization or in particularity in most issues of various governments in the country.

Although there have been divergent views on what constitutes development, increasingly, however, there is a growing convergence on the fact that development is not guaranteed by simple infrastructural development or rise in a nation's GDP or national resources endowment. Gaining currency, through strong advocacy, is the concept of sustainable development seen as a multifaceted improvement in the lives of the people and increase in their capability and enablement to define their own problems and find their own solutions in harmony with their environment. The engaging issue within the transformation in education and sustainable development strive Africa particularly Nigeria is our concern here. Has the prevailing dominant problem of unemployment and misery has rubbished the attainment of sustainable development? Today, the country has had to contend with a dying sense of communal life, a chaotic socio-political order, institutional fragility, system decay, economic disequilibrium, violence and perennial political instability. All of these are products of unemployment. Unemployment has run down all efforts in tackling the onerous problems of achieving people-centred developments. In default, Nigeria has become a nation of absconding refugees at the mercy of xenophobic South Africans. Had Nigeria become an economic success rather than a poster boy for thieving incompetence, it would definitely have relieved the pressure in South Africa.

Definitions

Three main words/phrases capture the totality of this paper. These are unemployment, transformation in education and sustainable development. This paper shall seek to define and discuss these sub themes as they affect Nigeria and prescribe what is considered as the antidotal to nagging issue of unemployment which is seen as the emerging issue in all efforts to growth.

Unemployment and its Indices

Unemployment is simply the state of joblessness or involuntary idleness of workers. According to the World Bank Report on *African Development Indicators 2008/2009; Youth and Employment in Africa, the Potential, the Problem and the promise* (World Bank, 2008), in 2008 youth population made up of people aged 15 – 24 amounted to 1.2 billion people at the global level. This represented 18% of the total world population and 24.7% of the world's working-age population. (ILO, 2008a, ILO, 2008b). About 87% of them live in developing

economies (UN, 2007). In Sub-Sahara Africa, 64.1% of the total population lived in rural areas in 2007.

Table 1: African population, youth population and youth labour force, 1995-2015 (Projections)

	1995	2005	2015 Projection
Total population in millions	723	905	1,115
Youth population in millions	142	189	224
% Share of youth in total population	20	21	20
Youth labor force in millions	88	122	134
% Share of youth in total labor force	31	31	20

Source: ILO, **Economically Active Population and Projections (EAPAP) database;** available at <http://labosta.org>

Table 1 shows that in sub-Sahara Africa, the youth population grew from 142 million in 1995 to 189 million 2005. This increase means that the share of youth in the total population represented 20% in 1995 and 21% in 2005 respectively. It is estimated that the youth population will increase by 35 million between 2005 and 2015 to reach the number of 224 million. During the same period, the youth labour force will grow by 34 million to reach 135 million in 2015.

Youth Unemployment

Table 2 presents data on global youth unemployment rates from 2007 to 2010.

Table 2: Global Youth Unemployment and unemployment rates

	2007	2008	2009	2010
Youth Unemployment (Millions)	70.5	71.3	75.8	75.1
Youth Unemployment rate (%)	11.6	11.8	12.7	12.7

Source: Trends Econometric Models, September 2011.

See <http://www.ilo.org/empel/projects/WCMS-114246/lang-en/index.html>.

According to Table 2, the number of unemployed youth has increased at the global level from 70.5 million in 2007 to 75.8 million in 2009 and then slightly decreased to 75.1 million in 2010. This increase resulted in raising the rate of youth unemployment from 11.8% in 2007 to 12.7 in 2010.

Laying credence to the above assertion Shabani (2012) submits that global financial crisis has led to a significant increase in youth unemployment. Indeed, as shown in Table 2, at the height of the crisis, the youth unemployment rate grew from 11.8 in 2008 to 12.7% in 2009 corresponding to an increase of 4.5million. This was the highest increase in the youth unemployment rate over the past 20 years. Indeed, from 1997 to 2007, the average annual growth of youth unemployment was less than 100,000. (ILO, 2011).

According to the submission of Muhammadu Buhari when describing unemployment situation in Nigeria as reported by The Nation, April 27, 2015, with the title Unemployment is Nigeria's biggest problem:

“I went to 35 out of the 36 states of the federation. I went to some states about six times. From the airports to the streets, we saw youths running after our vehicles, sweating; some walking the whole distance they don't have jobs. This is the biggest problem. Our youths form 60 percent of our population in Nigeria without jobs”.

Transformation in Education

Education, according to Farrant (1980), is ‘the total process of human learning by which knowledge is imparted, faculties trained and skills developed; thus, education facilitates acquiring new knowledge and experience’ (p.18). Okebukola (2010) sees education in a broad sense as ‘a process of updating the knowledge, skills and values of the individual for the purpose of making that individual useful to himself or herself and to the community’.

There is no doubting the fact that a lot of energy has been dissipated in transforming education sector in Nigeria, and Africa in general. Throughout the ages, education, no matter its conception and form, has proven to be the core instrument for human development both at the individual and community levels. For the individual person, being educated becomes the key to guaranteed success in life and upward social mobility in the society. This compelled successive governments in Nigeria in transforming the education sector.

Efforts in transforming the education sector in Nigeria are measured through the several institutions, commissions and agencies created to manage the business and various issues in the education sector. Some of these are:

- UBEC – Universal Basic Education Commission
- SPEB – State Primary Education Board
- NERDC – Nigerian Education Research and Development Council.
- LEAP – Literacy Enhancement Assisted Programme Sponsored by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).
- PTTP – Pivotal Teacher Training Programme.
The programme is aimed at increasing the number of teachers for the UBEC. The project is contracted and run by NTI, Kaduna.
- JICA – Japan's International Cooperation Agency's Assistance in Primary Education.
The Japan government offered assistance in the areas of full rehabilitation.
- EGBENN – Enhancing Girls' Basic Education in Northern Nigeria.
- NEEDS – National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy
- SEEDS – State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy

With all these in place scholars such as PaiObanya, Ade Ajayi, and Ampah Johnson, have identified areas of concern with the state of education in Africa. Many of the accounts

are lamentations about the pathetic state of education in Africa (Ajayi et al. 1996). These equally contribute significantly to the rate of unemployment.

Sustainable Development

Development must involve two basic processes. The first has to do with improving and refining that which is already in existence and adapting it to contemporary requirements. The second process involves finding solutions to new problems or new forms of solutions to old problems. Both imply creative responses to social, political and economic affairs.

Again, sustainable development suggests an enduring, remarkable, non-terminal improvement in the quality of life, standard of living and life chances of the people. Such development must be capable of surviving generations over a prolonged period of time. It favours a progressive in human development encompassing enhanced creativity, for increased productivity.

Babawale (2008:7) sees sustained development as deliberate and systematic policy of ensuring the survival of a state in such conditions that the social, economic and political necessities that are imperative for the enjoyment of the good life and ensuring the greatest good for the greatest numbers are available now, without this constituting a denial of capacity of being able to enjoy the same benefits to generations yet unborn in the foreseeable future.

Another dimension of understanding the concept of sustainable development is to say that the society should be managed in an effective and efficient manner such that it benefits all and sundry, with enough resources still available for the continuation of the human race in future.

From the above submissions, the field of sustainable development can be conceptually broken into four constituent parts: environmental sustainability, economic sustainability, social sustainability and political sustainability. A necessary adjunct to the concern of sustainable development is the imperative of poverty eradication caused by unemployment, control of diseases, improvement of the standards of living of the people, good governance and the reduction if not the total forgiveness of debts.

Education and Sustainable Development

In recognition of the importance of education on enhancing sustainable development, the United Nations declared 2005 to 2014 as the Decade for Education for Sustainable Development. The UN recognizes that there can be few more pressing and critical goals for the future of humankind than to ensure steady improvement in the quality of life for this and future generations, in a way that respects our common heritage. Education for sustainable development is a life-wide and lifelong endeavor which challenges individuals, institutions and societies to view tomorrow as a day that belongs to all of us, or it will not belong to anyone.

Frankly speaking, sustainable development has been a common concern in all UN conferences and there has been a common consensus that education is a driving force for the change needed. It has also been pointed out that peace, health and democracy are mutually reinforcing prerequisites for sustainable development.

Kolawole (2016) reveals that the United Nation's in 2015 identified new areas of development and introduced 17 series of time-bound sustainable Development Goals project some of the items highlighted include:

- End poverty in all its forms everywhere;
 - End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture;
 - Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages;
 - Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all;
 - Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all;
 - Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all;
 - Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable; and
 - Ensure sustainable consumption and production.
- (Kolawole 2016:22)

No doubt, the goals identified above clearly represent the areas that are critical to our development on sustainable basis and germane to employment growth but there are challenges to sustainable development.

Challenges to Sustainable Development

Efforts at accelerating the pace toward sustainable development in Nigeria are impeded by a number of factors these are:

Poverty: In spite of huge natural resource endowment, majority of Nigerians remain poor. Youth unemployment is alarming, minimum wage of eighteen thousand naira (18,000.00) per month could not sustain many Nigerian workers, inflation has made useless of the minimum wage. Poverty in Nigeria engenders misgovernment and corruption that created it in the first place. Fuel pump price and high inflation rate has increased poverty and inequality for most people.

Illiteracy: The “deadly” duo of poverty and illiteracy, combine to erect huge walls against sustainable development. The rate of illiteracy in the country is high because of our level of development in the country. Achieving higher rates of literacy is a vital part of the effort to eradicate Nigeria Poverty but the relationship between the two is complex, because the effects of poverty are a major obstacle to literacy.

Corruption: Corruption is a global phenomenon, with Nigerian politicians well noted for high indices. The more reason, the country was described as being fantastically corrupt'. Corruption reduces the volume of financial resources available to serve public good. Thus, less funds are available for education through which the message of sustainable development can be delivered. Less funds are available for providing basic infrastructure including public transportation and energy that will enhance green living by the people. Healthcare delivery is also affected. Corruption accelerates poverty which in turn drive up illiteracy rate.

Poor environment for teaching indigenous languages and literature

It is impossible to convey ideas to the people to drive and/or promote development in the medium of English Language and literature without basic reading materials and research in indigenous languages. UNESCO (2014) states the aims of Education for sustainable development (ESD) as encouraging the transformation of education so that it is able to contribute effectively to the reorientation of societies towards sustainable development, this is only possible where research in indigenous languages is promoted and culture through meaningful education and functional curricula on literature and folklores.

The Antidotal

Up till this level, attempts have been to reveal the rate of unemployment and delusions on educational transformation and sustainable development in our country Nigeria. I have strong convictions that if we truly want to achieve sustainable development is our country, if we truly want our people to be liberated from poverty and ignorance, if we truly want Nigerian youths, irrespective of where they live, to have access to basic necessities of life and life in abundance through gainful employment the following recommendations tagged 'the anti-dotal of the heart of unemployment' must be considered.

Promoting Education and Youth Employment

Perhaps, for too long we have looked on helplessly as the spoken and written English of recent products of Nigerian education at all tiers has become an embarrassment to the system and a source of frustration to would-be employers in the private and public sectors of the economy of our country. A practical step to be taken is to ensure a good grounding in spoken English which is the most secure foundation on which to build the skills of literacy in the language. It has been found that in learning any language, motivation plays a very important part. It is therefore necessary to consider the motivation for learning English by Nigerian generally, and by pupils in schools in particular, and seek to reinforce such motivation. Two kinds of motivation identified are instrumental and integrative. When learners are interested in mastering specific areas of a language so that they can put them to use in their work, they are operating with instrumental motivation. On the other hand, when a person learns a language because he likes the language or its native speakers, his motivation is likely to be integrative. Promoting intelligibility in spoken English is promoting quality of education which will promote employment in turn.

Improving productivity of youth employment

On daily basis new production techniques are being required and identified. Improving productivity of jobs in the informal sector requires the introduction of new production techniques that can help reduce unit cost of production. In order to achieve higher productivity of the youth, our indigenous language should be assigned the roles to own and give practical expression to all new production techniques. The idea of coming to ‘sell’ or retrained employees in a strange medium may not enhance productivity growth. Our indigenous languages have to be recognized and be assigned roles in the efforts to improve productivity. Since we cannot achieve much in the medium of a foreign language, efforts have to be made to see that all the sustainable development goals, policies on improved health delivery services, economic empowerment programmes and sustainable agricultural practices should be immediately translated into the several indigenous languages that have standard orthographies.

Developing Spiritual and Material Condition of the Youth

Majority of our youths, are buffeted from all sides by monsoons of ethnic, religious, political and economic meltdown, all these have compounded the roles of unemployment. It is a psychological ill; unless the mind of the average Nigerian youth is purged of intolerance, greed and anger, crises may not cease in the country. A reconstruction of the mind of Nigerian youth will go a long way in ameliorating the psychological depression and cream up their mind for positive change in anticipation of securing a good job. It is the contention of this paper that African creative writer needs to engage in the politics of aesthetics so as to free the African mind with African literature.

Nigeria oral literature can be deployed in this regard in liberating the Nigerian mind from injustice, greed and anger. The best method of re-humanizing the polity and re-establishing the golden values of traditional society is to resolve to oral literature as a way forward. If this is done, we can then subscribe to development as a state of material and spiritual well-being of the generality attained through ethical attitudes and methods. Let me quote the immortal Shakespeare in *Julius Caesar* to underscore the need to take immediate steps at effecting the necessary change:

“There is a tide in the affairs of man. Which, taken at the flood, leads to fortune; Omitted, all the voyage of their life is bound in shallows and miseries. On such a full sea are we now a float and we must take the current when it serves or lose our ventures. (Julius Caesar, Act 4, Scene 3, 218-224)”.

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