



THE ROLE OF EDUCATION ON NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Nigeria as a country needs a functional educational system that is capable of equipping learners with requisite knowledge, attitudes and skills to enable citizens to relate and adapt successfully to the rapidly growing global socioeconomic, cultural and political development. Accordingly, this paper examined role of education as it relates to national development. Specifically, it also examined how a functional education can lead to moral development, cultural/social development, economic development and political development of the Nigerian child to achieve total national development. The paper recommends among others that Nigerian government should increase the budgetary allocation to education to cater for the needs of education industry for a national meaningful development.

Key word: Education, Development, National Development.

Introduction

Education means what each generation gives to its younger ones which make them develop attitudes, abilities, skills and other behavioural attributes which are germane to the growth of the society in which they live (Fafunwa, 1974). According to National Policy on Education (2014), education is an instrument par excellence for effecting national development. Therefore, education is the instrument used for the development of human beings in the cognitive, affective, psychomotor and psycho productive domains. Education can be seen as the creation of sound mind in a sound body. Afolabi and Adesope (2010) see education as the process of human upbringing that involves formal, informal and non-formal acquisition of knowledge, attitudes and skills for the good and growth of the individual and of the society to which the individual belongs. This is achieved through the process of teaching and learning.

Development as described by Ogundiran and Oni (2006) is seen as an all-encompassing change, a process which builds on itself. Thomas (2000) says development connotes a vision describing the well-being of a nation. Mabogunje (1995) says that development can be described in two perspectives. The first is that development is about wealth creation for the use of the citizens and secondly is that every society succeeds best when in this direction it is able to adapt and transform its own institution as well as its more and general attitude of its people towards the attainment of these goals. Development is also seen in terms of frontier collusion between man and nature, man applies himself to his environment. Development should not be talked about in terms of physical environment changes alone but also the adequate intellectual development. Also, development is seen as increase in skill and capacity, greater freedom, self discipline, responsibility and material well-being.

Development can also be a multi-dimensional process involving re-organization and re-orientation of the entire economic and social systems. These dimensions include; utilitarian, behavioural, institutional and structural dimensions. At an individual level, development implies increased skill and capacity to earn income, greater freedom of action, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and general material and psychological well being.

Ugwu (2015) states the attributes of National development to include;

Increased capacity to regulate internal and external relations, Increase in ability to guard national independence, Self-sufficiency in food production, High level of employment, Equalization in the distribution of social services, Self reliance, Independent control of the economy, Equalization of economic opportunity, Ability to solve internal conflicts, Greater share of international trade, Quality education.

National development is the ability of a country to improve the social well-being of its citizens through the provision of such social amenities as medical care, infrastructure, quality education and other social services. This article examines education and moral development, education and social development, education and economic development and education and political development of the Nigerian child in relation to national development.

Impact of Education on National Development

“Education is the heart of national development and the source of quality human capital development that will propel Nigeria to be among the top 20 economies in the world” (President Jonathan, 2011.) “The quality of our workforce is a direct reflection of the quality of our schooling system” (President Jonathan 2010).

The above quotations underscore the fundamental importance Nigeria attaches to education as a vital instrument for national development. Since Nigeria got her political independence in 1960, the Country has demonstrated her commitment to education as a tool for personal and national development. In her effort to see education as a vehicle for national development, Nigeria fashioned out the National Policy on Education as part of the post independent Pan-African educational reforms in the early 1960s. Educational reform was then seen an essential ingredient of the nation-building efforts of the newly independent states of Africa (Wada, 2013). Nigeria also conducted a National Curriculum Conference in 1969 to change the existing education system which had become irrelevant and inappropriate to national needs, aspirations and goals (National Policy on Education: 1977). Since then, there have been several other educational reforms all aimed at making the Nigerian educational system more relevant to nation-building and growth.

Education is basic to national development. Obviously, the standards and quality of the educational system and the capacity to innovate, determine the place of growth and development of a nation.

As the saying goes, destroying any nation does not require the use of atomic bombs or the use of long range missiles. It only requires lowering the quality of education and allowing cheating in the examinations by the students and the consequences will be grave. The collapse of education is the collapse of the nation. One of the objectives of education therefore is to adequately equip the child with the necessary skills and knowledge needed for effective participation and contribution to national development (Ako& James, 2018). In other words, education provides the intellectual feat which is required for social, economic, political and technological development of a nation. Education is intended to improve the personal life of the student in terms of the knowledge and skills, which he requires and which enhance his quality of life and contributes to the well-being of his society (Ako& James, 2018). Nigeria as a nation, needs a functional educational system that can equip learners with requisite knowledge, attitudes and skills to enable them relate and adapt successfully to the rapid socio-economic, cultural and political changes in the society. Ako & James (2018) stated that the importance of education in the development of the society has made government at all levels to be committed to the provision of educational opportunities to its citizenry.

It is therefore imperative that each country must educationally grow its people to provide the foundation and thrust for true and sustainable national development (Ugwu, 2015). The primary objective of education is to produce good and useful citizens that will be instrumental to socio-economic development of their countries.

The teacher therefore, is very vital in the socio-economic and political engineering of any country that wants to develop. Who is a teacher? A teacher is a professional, who imparts skills, knowledge, information and attitude among others into learners (Afolabi & Adesope, 2010). No education can rise above the quality of its teachers (FGN 2014).

Education to a large extent has contributed immensely to national development in several ways.

The educational system provides the needed manpower for national development. It is believed that an educated polity or nation is one that has enough manpower and each person occupies his or her rightful position to enhance national growth (Afolabi & Loto 2012). Education, as an indisperable tool, imbues in the citizens and assists nations in meeting their

political, moral, cultural and economic aspirations. Education imparts in the individual knowledge, skills, dexterity, character and desirable values that will precipitate and galvanize national development and self actualization. The implication of the above is that education moulds and trains the individual to be useful in the society and contribute positively to national development. This is what is obtainable in advanced political systems with quality educational system like US, Britain, France, Singapore, South Korea and so on. The quality of a nation's education determines the level of its national development. This is why all governments (civil and military) in Nigeria since 1960 have demonstrated commitment to education. How far these commitments have achieved their objectives is a different matter.

Education is the single most significant tool of social control for national development whether formal or informal. Even in the ancient Greece, the cradle western scholarship, education was a functional search light beamed on society for direction and advancement of the welfare of its citizens. Another contribution is the production of political, social-economic, medical experts and other essential specialists that are key to policy making in national development.

Education also permits social and group relationship. Through education, individuals are trained to relate and interact with others in the society and appreciate the importance of human interconnectivity to enable them accomplish common goals and achieve national unity. Schools bring people of different cultural and religious background together and succeed in integrating them to realize common objectives e.g. Universities, national assembly, national institutions, NYSC and so on with minimum friction.

Through education, the culture of productivity is promoted by enabling individuals to discover and unlock their latent creative potentials and apply same to improve efficiency of their personal and societal efforts.

Education teaches good values to the citizens which make them good and useful citizens in the society. Such values include; honesty, selflessness, dedication, patriotism, national integrity, hard work etc. These are qualities of good leadership which are grossly lacking in Nigeria.

Obstacles to Education and Development in Nigeria

For about two decades after independence, Nigeria maintained high qualitative educational standards and indirectly a positive development index. Teachers exerted to train their pupils and were highly regarded by society. Graduates of Nigerian Universities were highly sought after as they excelled in graduate studies in the best Universities in the world. But from 1980s, the fabric of Nigerian education system started to degenerate and today our school system is almost prostrate and in comatose. Human and material resources are no more functioning well in our primary schools. Most secondary schools hardly perform experiments or practicals while tertiary institutions are poorly funded and lack infrastructure. There are no functioning laboratories while libraries are ill equipped with outdated books. Many are also with poor sporting facilities.

The Nigerian teacher is the most important stakeholder in these educational institutions. Regrettably, his fortunes have been vacillated over time. Today, the erstwhile highly esteemed and respected teacher is treated essentially as the scum of the public. The Nigeria government in recent time has not sufficiently funded education to the extent of making a significant impact on the educational system. From 1999-2015, the percentage of

budgetary allocation to education has not exceeded 12 percent which is far below the minimum UNESCO standard of 26 percent of the annual budget.

Ugwu (2015) further identified the followings as serious challenges facing the educational system in Nigeria;

Poor implementation of education policies such as the 6334 system, constant change of educational policies, emphasis on certificates and status, inadequate infrastructures, improper implementation of ICT program in schools, inadequate supervision of educational institutions (public and private), politicization of education in Nigeria to suit the interests of policy makers, poverty, inequity in reward system, lack of synergy between theory and practice, lack of commitment to national objectives and corruption.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the article agrees with the objective of education which is to adequately equip the child with the necessary skills and knowledge needed for effective participation and contribution to national development. Effective participation and contribution to national development by youths through formal education in present day Nigeria is yet to be achieved considering the caliber of students turned out yearly who find it difficult to defend their certificates when called upon to do so.

Education has not been able to promote cultural and social development among the youths neither has it been able to achieve political stability, unity nor guaranteed her citizens certain freedoms necessary for personal and national development. Something therefore need to be done and urgently too if the objective of education is to be achieved.

Recommendations

Education is too important to be left for government, or any one set of interest alone. The model of education policy design and governance needs attention by all interested individuals. The dynamic nature of teaching and the innovations in teaching and learning require that teachers undertake recharging of their subject contents and pedagogy so as to be abreast with the new trends in the profession through continuing professional training programmes (Wokocho: 2013).

For effective national development, good governance is imperative. The qualities of good governance include: Rule of Law, guarantee of security and safety of lives and elimination of corruption and enhancement of transparency in governance.

There is a need for Nigeria to adopt and adapt the Singapore and Finland example of high reward for all in the educational system and selection of best brains to go into teaching profession. This will lead to national development.

Education is a vital instrument for national development. It must be noted that educational system cannot grow more than the political system which makes the policies that regulate education. A country that does not have good and quality leadership cannot tangentially have a sound educational system that is capable of contributing adequately to national development. According to Adegoroge (2013), "the form of education that the world needs in 21st century is one that will emphasize the development of 'New Being'- a whole total packaged human being, whose training is based, not on discipline alone but on the full integration and internalization of human and societal values and respect for the environment in a holistic interface that seeks to achieve justice, equity and world peace". There is need for

change of attitude. It must be noted that Nigeria can appreciate the impact of education if we change our attitude towards national aspirations and give selfless service to the country. Our universities must play a central role in rebuilding Nigeria's economy and in meeting our society's most crucial needs; an educated citizenry. The present scenario whereby each government fashions out its own plan of action does not augur well for continuity and consistency which development effort in any nation demands.

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