

Education: An Instrument of Investment in National Development

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ABSTRACT

This study examines education as an instrument of investment in national development. It stresses the fact that a nation develops in relation to its achievement in education. This explains why contemporary world attention has focused on education as an instrument of launching nations into the world of science and technology and with consequential hope of human advancement in terms of living conditions and development of the environment. This is because, education is the force and protection of any nation's defense 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. To attain national development through education in Nigeria, there should be serious commitment of government at all levels to effective educational policies from pre-planning stage through planning stage to post-planning stage (implementation) in realization of the fact that Nigeria is a developing country and it cannot afford to neglect the education sector that is most crucial in the provision of the needed manpower for national development.

Keywords: Education, investment, instrument, national development

INTRODUCTION

Education has been seen as the greatest force that can be used to bring about positive developmental changes (Lawal, 2013). He stresses further that the greatest investment a nation can make for the development of its economic, sociological and human resources is that of education. According to Abdul (2002), education provides us with people possessing the necessary knowledge and skills to win a nation's state and to even export brains. This according to Amaghionyeodiwe and Osinubi (2006) explain why the Federal Government of Nigeria geared a policy towards attaining national development. According to FGN (2006), education shall continue to be highly rated in the national development plans because education is the most important instrument for change: any fundamental change in the intellectual and social outlook of any society has to be preceded by an education revolution. According to Victor (2002), education refers to the total process of developing human ability and behaviours. Adeniyi and Taiwo (2011) state that education is an organized and sustained instruction designed to communicate a combination of knowledge, skills and understanding value for all activities of life. In Nigeria, much is not being derived from the sector due to neglect on the part of government, corruption, policy discontinuity, *inter alia* (Orji and Maekae, 2013). Education, according to Olubademo (2006), at all levels and

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in all its forms constitutes a vital tool for addressing virtually all global problems. Kazeem and Ige (2012) state that education is not only an end in itself, but a key instrument for bringing about changes in knowledge, values and behaviours and life styles required achieving sustainability and stability within and among countries. Education is an important key of achieving a sustainable national development (Wasagu, 2006). Despite the enormous interest according to him in the relationship between education and national growth the evidence is fragile at best. Adegun (2008) states that there is ample anecdotal and correlational evidence suggesting that education and national development are interrelated, but the evidence points in a variety of directions. From the above, it is clear that education has a critical function in national development. But in the Nigerian context according to them, education has not fully played its roles in this regard. This is the major reason this study sets out to promote the course of education having known that it is the only force that can drive the growth of an economy to vibrancy.

Education as the process of acquiring knowledge

Oghuve (2007) defines education as the formal process by society to deliberately transmit its accumulated knowledge, skills, habits, customs and values from one generation to the next. Todaro and Smith (2006) describe education as the process of acquiring knowledge, skills, attitudes, interest, abilities, competence and the cultural norms of a society by people and to transmit this life to the coming generations so as to enhance perpetual development of the society. According to Akintudire (2004), education is described as all efforts, conscious and direct, incidental and indirect, made by a given society to accomplish certain objectives that are considered desirable in terms of the individual's own needs as well as the needs of the society where that education is based. Adegbite (2007) asserts that education is the act of systematic development or training of the mind, capabilities or character through instruction or study.

According to Onuka (2008), education is a life-long process that has interpretation in purpose, type and level. It is a means of socializing people into the community, for upholding customs and traditions as well as modification or changing of same in conformity with existing ideologies, ideological expansion or reformation. Adeyemi (2011) describes education as production and reproduction of knowledge of people's way of life with the aim of preserving and maintaining the social structure that will be able to guarantee social order and changes in the society. Ekundayo and Ajayi (2009) consider education as a form of public good which has a highly positive externality to the society. It has also been seen as a pragmatic instrument for promoting socio-economic development in every modern society. Orji and Maekae (2013) see education as the total development of the individual child through acceptable methods and techniques according to his abilities and interests to meet up the needs of the society and for the individual to take his rightful place and contribute equally to the enhancement of the society. However, Fafunwa (2004) defines education as the aggregate of all the processes by which a child or young adult develops abilities, attitudes and other forms of behaviours which are of positive value to the society in which he lives. He stressed further that education is a process of transmitting culture in terms of

continuity and growth and for disseminating knowledge to ensure social control or guarantee rational direction of society. Holborn and Haralambos (2004) opine that education is a systematic procedure for the transfer and transformation of culture through formal and informal training of people in a society; it deals with mental, physical, psychological and social development of citizens in a given society. They also state that education is an institution that enables individual to think freely and rationally which makes social progress and innovation possible. Social progress and innovation according to them are the key elements of development, when a society progresses, its members are free; they think rationally and innovate certain social changes which will invariably enhance development. The National Policy on Education (FRN, 2006) provides a guide at attempting to fulfill the nation's objectives. This nation has five major objectives as stated in the Second National Development Plan namely:

- i Free and democratic society.
- ii Just and egalitarian society.
- iii United strong and self-reliant nation.
- iv A great and dynamic economy.
- v Land of bright and full of opportunities for all citizens.

From these broad policies, objectives were derived from the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2006) which spelt out the philosophy of Nigerian education. Each level of education derived its purpose from this philosophy.

Education and National Development

Orji and Maekae (2013) state that a developed society is the one that has succeeded in providing a source of living for the majority of its inhabitants and that in such society; premium is attached to elimination of poverty, provision of food, shelter and clothing to its members. This argument agrees with the definition of development by Todaro and Smith (2006) from the modernization paradigm which sees development as a multidimensional process which involves the sustained elevation of the entire society and social system towards a better life. They identify three basic components for understanding development. These components are sustenance, self-esteem and freedom. These represent common goals sought by all individuals and societies. According to them, sustenance is concerned with ability to meet basic needs, self-esteem is concerned with a sense of worth and self-respect, of not being used by others as tools for their own needs and freedom is concerned with freedom from servitude - servitude to nature, ignorance, other people, misery, institutions and dogmatic beliefs especially, that poverty is a predestination.

A development model that does not reflect these tenets needs a paradigm shift. In Nigeria, the process does not create opportunities for opposition to strive and majority of those in power are there on the basis of what to get and the development of their various communities is not their priority. The very concept of development, according to Kpolovie and Obilor (2013), implies the constant improvement in the quality of life in a nation through the improvement of the productive capabilities of individuals. They also maintain that since culture differs from one society to another, every society ultimately has its own system for training and educating the youths.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Education is a vital tool in the developmental process of any given nation. The relationship between education and national development has been established, such that education is now internationally accepted as a key development index and it is in recognition of this importance that governments all over the world have made commitments in their countries' educational policies for their citizens to have access to education. The principal institutional mechanism for developing human skills and knowledge is the formal educational system. Most Third World nations have been led to believe or have wanted to believe that the rapid quantitative expansion of educational opportunities is the key to national development, the more education, the more rapid the development. This work contends in the light of overwhelming literature that education is the greatest investment that the nation can make for quick development of its economic, political and sociological development. The following recommendations are proposed as means of attaining national development through education in Nigeria:

- i There should be serious commitment of government at all levels to effective educational policies from pre-planning stage through planning stage to post-planning stage (implementation) in realization of the fact that Nigeria is a developing country and it cannot afford to neglect the education sector that is most crucial in the provision of the needed manpower for national development.
- ii Sustainable training and retraining programme for teachers through regular seminars and workshops on teaching methods and school administration.
- iii Government should increase fund allocation for renovation, development and provision of improved infrastructural facilities including lecture rooms, adequately equipped library and laboratory.
- iv The private sector should also be made to participate in the funding. This will be successful if government on its part shows its seriousness and commitment to the system in terms of funding. The private sector can participate by providing research grants, awarding of scholarships and endowment of Professorial Chairs in universities. An enabling law should also be enacted making it mandatory for multinational companies operating in Nigeria to set aside a minimum of 5% of their profits to finance education and allied projects.
- v Government should develop, adopt and implement education curricular for secondary schools leading to acquisition of life skills.
- vi Government should build well equipped school facilities which provide clean, safe and stimulating learning environment for students.

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