



THE ROLE OF QUALITY EDUCATION IN NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT: THE INTERFACE¹

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ABSTRACT: *This paper examines the interface between education and national development. Education is the bedrock for national development but in Nigeria there is a wide continuum between the two as the reality on ground still proves that we are still far from actualizing this. Lack of quality education in our nation continues to stare at our faces with indices such as: high rate of Nigerians travelling abroad for study, parents sending their children to private schools, paying high for after school tuition, engaging teachers for private lessons at home and so on. Hence, quantity is replacing quality. Therefore, this paper conceptualizes education, quality education and national development, discusses the indices of quality education. It also outlines factors militating against quality education in Nigeria; highlights the interface between quality education and national development, and chart ways of enhancing the quality of education as a platform for national development in Nigeria.*

KEYWORDS: Quality Education, National Development, Interface, Education, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Education is a long-time investment that its dividend or proceeds do not come about immediately. It is like investing in the foundation of a multi-storey building that consumes a lot of resources, yet its state of progress may not be visible because the foundation is buried underneath. In other for structures which are raised on hidden foundations, but visible to all, not to collapse, there is a need for the foundation not to be neglected no matter the resources it will demand or consume. It is therefore pertinent for all stakeholders in the educational sector such as: government, parents, proprietors/proprietresses, teachers and even students/pupils, to change their orientation and perspective of expecting immediate dividend in the investments on education. This is a major reason why parents or business individuals and even some governments will rather invest in something else rather than in education. Obviously, education in this country is the least of our priority. This is evident in the kind of budgetary allocation to the educational sector by government; also, at the family level, unwillingness of parents to spend on their children's education. This view is aptly shared by Aja-Okorie (2015) that "It is a common knowledge that education and some other sectors suffer from inadequate funding in Nigeria" (p.268). Also, in the same vein, Ezekwasili (as cited in Aja-Okorie, 2015, p. 23) asserts that "under funding of education in Nigeria has been in deepening crisis for several years". She also opines that, "One of the many reasons for this crisis is the inability of Nigeria governments to meet the UNESCO recommendation of 26% annual budget to education sector" (p. 268).

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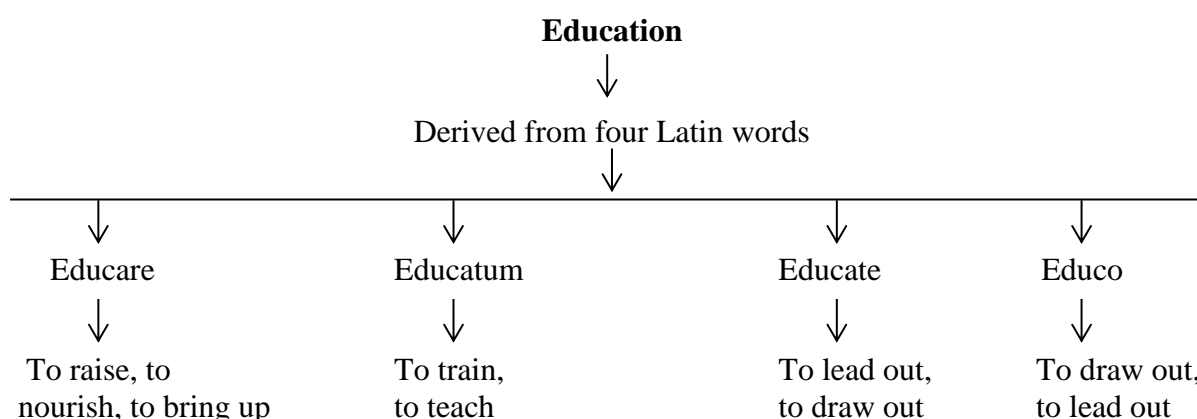
Education demands patience much more than a farmer. This singular reason has eroded education of all the attention and resources needed to ensure the quality of education that can enhance national development in this country. Therefore, this paper is a clarion call on all the stakeholders in the education sector to do the needful for the sake of our children, the future leaders of this great nation. Thus, the thrust of this paper is to emphasize the role of quality education that can bring about nation building and national development.

Statement of the Problem

One major means of assessing the quality of services rendered is to ask the direct beneficiaries their level of satisfaction. “I was not taught”, “it is not part of our curriculum”, “we did not have a lecturer or teacher in the course or subject” are common expressions from Nigerian graduates at all levels of our educational system. It is very glaring that our graduates are no more comfortable and competent to identify themselves because of the obvious gaps noticeable in their professional performances. Many scholars have written widely on the fallen standard of education in Nigeria with emphasis on certain factors responsible such as: inadequate funding, wrong policies, poor laws and regulations, wrong curriculum, lack of adequate qualified personals, inadequate infrastructure, lack of interest from some learners, exam malpractice saga etc. These imply that the kind of education we operate will in turn determine the level of our socio-economic development. This is because as noted by Thomotuya & Inko-tariah (2016) that “Education is the veritable instrument for generating all genre and levels of manpower in any nation” (p. 101).

The Concept of Education

Education is dynamic as well as a comprehensive concept which has a very wide connotation. Since education is associated with human life, it is very difficult to describe a single meaning to it. According to Ravi (2005) “the concept of education is like a diamond, which appears to be different colours when seen from different angles” (p.23). However, the meaning of education according to Ravi can be understood from its roots in four Latin words, that are, Educare, Educatum, Educate and Educo.



Going by the meaning of the Latin word “Educare” the meaning of education is simply to raise, to nourish and to bring up a child physically and mentally. This definition is very



crucial because, the child is the foremost important factor in education. The aim of ancient education is centered round the mental, spiritual and moral development of the child. Dreyer (as cited in Ravi, 2005, p. 4) sees education “as a process in which the knowledge, character and behavior of the young are sharpen and molded”.

The Concept of Quality Education

The word ‘quality’ in advance learners’ dictionary denotes a standard of something compared to others, something good, grade of excellence or worth. Put it differently, quality is not anything sub-standard but anything that has degree of high rating. Obviously, the education sector has falling short of the above. That is why parents are sending their children with their little resources to private schools paying high school fee with the belief that they are of higher quality than government schools. Families are also paying for after-school tuition as they don’t believe that private or government schools can fully provide what their children needs. Others even engage teachers for private lessons at home besides buying of modern electronic learning materials that are all around us. All these duplications of efforts are pointing to one singular fact, there is no more quality in our education as it used to be. Hulme, a professor of development studies arguably states that “Quantity is a political priority, but quality which is important, isn’t spoken about. Why has quality decreased so much, and why is it so bad in many countries?” (as cited in Obasi, 2010, p. 42).

What then is qualitative education? It is not too easy to define or give a universal description of the term “quality education”. However, according to Pigozzi (as cited in Thom-otuya & Inko-tariah, 2016, p. 104) states that “quality education is one that welcomes the learner and can adapt to meet learning needs, it is inclusive”. For the purpose of proper understanding, this paper identifies the following as indices of quality education.

- (i) Proper funding
- (ii) Conducive and appropriate teaching and learning environment
- (iii) Effective quality control to ensure standard
- (iv) Sufficient classrooms/staff quarters
- (v) Adequate and proper equipment and teaching aids
- (vi) Good motivation of staff.

Obasi (2010) on his own part identifies four (4) indicators of quality education which are:

- (i) Effective and efficient performance of graduates in the society
- (ii) Employability
- (iii) Level of discipline and patriotism of graduates
- (iv) High rating of an institution/ school and its products nationally and internationally.



Quality education according to UNICEF (2000) is characterized by:

- (i) Learners who are healthy, well-nourished and ready to participate and learn, and supported by their families and communities
- (ii) Environments that are healthy, safe, protective and gender-sensitive and provide adequate resources and facilities
- (iii) Content of teaching that reflects relevant curricula and materials for acquisition of basic skills especially in areas of literacy and others.
- (iv) Processes through which trained teachers use children-centered approaches in a well-managed classrooms and skillful assessment to facilitate learning and reduce disparities.

Therefore, quality education cannot be less and much more than all that have been stated above.

Constraints against Quality Education in Nigeria.

Scholars have identified several factors militating against sound education in Nigeria to include:

- (i) Inadequate funding
- (ii) Lack of qualified teachers
- (iii) Inadequate infrastructural facilities
- (iv) Poor education policy
- (v) Incessant strikes
- (vi) Examination malpractice
- (vii) Poor reading culture
- (viii) Moral degeneration in the society etc.

The Concept of National Development

The word “development” in its real sense could connote or invoke several meanings. But first we take it that development in human affairs implies the continuous promotion of the well-being and security of persons in such a way that they are constantly able to optimize the realization of their potentials. In view of this, Kolo and Ashituabe (2004) observe that it is discussed as a process, strategy or outcome. The authors believe that the term concerns “positive transformation in the society’s concrete efforts to grapple with its problems and maintain the tempo of efforts meant to improve the quality of living in the society” (20). Hence development is a multi-dimensional process which involves changes in structures, attitude and institutions as well as the acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality and eradication of absolute poverty.



Aluwong (2008) simply puts, “it is the process of improving human lives” (p.10). Todaro (1979) further observes that development has three (p.3) dimensions:

- i. Raising people’s living levels-their income and consumption levels of food, medical services, education, etc through relevant economic processes.
- ii. Creating conditions conducive to the growth of people’s self-esteem through the establishment of social, political and economic systems and institutions which promote human dignity and respect.
- iii. Increasing people’s freedom to choose by enlarging the range of their choice variables e.g. increasing varieties of consumer goods and services.

It can be deduced from the above discussion that development must be concrete in the sense that, noticeable changes must be recorded by which an entire social system moves away from a condition of life widely perceived as unsatisfactory, to ones perceived as materially, socially and spiritually better. Aluwong (2008) on his part further opines that, “Development must focus on human harnessing and utilization. Its thrust must focus on mobilization of a productive labour force, gender roles equalization, man-power, planning and development, and functional education system. It must lead to life-sustenance, self-esteem and freedom” (p.10). In view of this, development could be seen as a synonym that suggests “progress and improvement”, growth plus change in all facets that reflect a particular vision. Besides, it means a reduction and elimination of poverty, inequality and unemployment within a growing economy.

Therefore, the concept of development is universally considered to be sensitive because there is a strong correlation between life and development. This statement is valid because the quality of life an individual life to a large extent is determined by the level of development around him or her. This view is equally shared by Todaro (1979) that “development encompasses all that has to do with sustenance of life, self-esteem and freedom from servitude” (p.101). This definition definitely unravels the fact that development is something that touches the very life and sustenance of human existence. It portrays the self-esteem of individual community or an entire nation.

Nigeria is still classified as one of the developing countries in the world considering the fact that the quality of living of an average Nigerian as described by WHO’s report is considerably poor or below average. Hence, the term “national development” refers to the growth and development of the entire nation not restricted to a particular section or some selected individual as is witnessed today in our country Nigeria. Arising from the on-going, if it is accepted that development encompasses what have been stated, it appears inconceivable for us to achieve this desired state in human affairs, without enlisting an active role of language as a means of carrying along the persons who constitute the objects or beneficiaries of development. In other words, if national development is seen as the sustainable socio-cultural, economic and technological transformation of a society, then quality education becomes an important variable in the development process. This is because education has played a significant role in the rise and fall of civilization. Education is the portrait of human development; it reflects the quality of civilization in a society.



LITERATURE REVIEW

The importance of quality education as a panacea for national development in any country cannot be over emphasized. The notion of quality education is all encompassing and not a one-sided approach. It entails the government, the school and academic construction, the teacher, teaching method, the learner's conformity to the moral demands from society and requirement of human resources from stakeholders. In his opinion Bernard (1999) feels quality education is all about the progress of the child. In his words:

In all aspects of the school and its surrounding education community, the rights of the whole child, and all children, to survival, protection, development and participation are at the centre. This means that the focus is on learning which strengthens the capacities of children to act progressively on their own behalf through the acquisition of relevant knowledge, useful skills and appropriate attitudes; and which creates for children, and helps them create for themselves and others, places of safety, security and healthy interaction (p. 123).

One of the goals of Universal Basic Education states that "elementary education was to be made freely and compulsorily available for all children in all nations" (UNESCO, 2013). However, most of these declarations and commitments are silent about the quality of education to be provided. It is in this vein that an old educationist has this to say that "Indeed, each of us judges the school system in terms of the final goals we set for our children, our community, our country and ourselves" (Beeby, 1966, p.31). But unless conscious and planned effort from all the stakeholders and the government are involved at every stage and component of educational activity, quality of education for national development will only be a mirage. The government has the greater responsibility towards quality education. In their view "If twenty six percent (26%) of her budget is spent on promoting quality education, the human capital would have been so enhanced to produce commodities for the daily need and use of her people" (Thom-otuya & Inko-tariah, 2016, p.101). This point is further buttressed by Usen & Offiong (2016) as they maintain that "Education gives individual an opportunity to improve and stand the chance to make positive contribution to the nation for national development" (p.63). We therefore wish to state that quality education begets quality accelerated national development as this forms the pivot of this paper.

The Interface between Quality Education and National Development

An interface is a shared boundary across which two or more separate components interact. It also means to connect with or act with each other.

There is an interface between quality education and national development that requires the synergy of both. This is because quality education is a veritable tool for national development and transformation of a society to a greater height. In other words, no nation can be well developed above the quality of education its citizenry received. This is due to the fact that, human beings are generators of development. This view is shared by Inyamah (2010) who observes that, "for any nation to be termed developed, its high percentage of her citizenry must be educated" (p.5). It is therefore pertinent to note that, national development is driven by human beings. This implies that education is the wealth of any nation and the power of the people. We therefore wish to state at this point that, because of the direct relationship



between education and national development, we shall examine the three basic interrelated ways quality education interface with national development. These include:

1. Quality Foundation

Education is fundamental to development, by implication, “fundamental” is something that is “foundational,” “prime” or “primary” to another thing or to achieving something. It is to this end that several governments of nations over the world affirm the importance of education in development by declaring “education for all” as a goal for achieving national development in such countries. Okimededim (2015) states that “The primary education is the starting point to good life” (p.482). In Nigeria, the starting point of our educational system is the primary school. Therefore, the improvement of the quality of our education must start at the primary school level. The obvious reason has been that the foundation of our education system is being laid at this level (Sani 1998 p. 271). Attesting to this fact, King (2011) arguably states that “In the primary years, quality teaching is essential to give students the foundational literacy and numeracy on which lifelong learning depends” (p.2). He adds, “Quality and well programmed education system will empower the citizens on skills necessary for innovation” (p.2). Education creates citizens who show the qualities of dynamic leadership and sense of responsibility towards their nation. That is why it is often said; education is the backbone of national development because the development of a nation depends on the quality of her population who have acquired quality education. Therefore, quality foundation especially at the primary level is the bedrock for mobilization, sustaining the interest and producing the needed man power and agents for a nation’s development. Where this is either omitted or lacking, there cannot be any meaningful development as such.

2. Quality Acquisition of Skills (Psychomotor)

Fundamental skills required early in childhood make possible a life time of learning. Kings (2011) opines that “It is the knowledge and skills that children and youth acquire today-not simply their school attendance –that drive their employability, productivity, health, and well-being in the decades to come, and that will help ensure that their communities and nations thrives” (p.2). In view of this, there are three main domains of learning according to Bloom’s Taxonomy. These domains are: cognitive (thinking), effective (emotion/feeling), and psychomotor (physical/skill). Teachers are normally advice to attempt engaging them for a holistic lesson and constructive learning tasks. This diversity helps to create more well-rounded learning experiences. But of these domains, the third is often neglected at all levels of our educational system in Nigeria. Thus, failing too early to expose and harness the potentials of the upcoming agents of development. We often forget that the child’s ability to use his/her hands is critical not only to self-concept but to ability to earn a living. That is why countries like China, Japan, etc. that are on top of the ladder of technology have shifted their weight educationally more on this third domain as a platform for raising hands for national development. It is therefore imperative that attention must be given to acquisition of skills at the onset of pupil’s education and continued to be emphasize at other higher levels of our educational system as a means of raising hands for national development.

3. Quality Investment (Funding)

Getting results requires smart investment. Therefore, quality needs to be the focus of education investments. For the reason of value for qualitative education, federal government



and members of senate will do well to make at least 26% budget allocation for education in Nigeria as recommended by UNESCO. This allocation according to Usen & Offiong (2016) “will help to cushion and solve many problems facing education sector in Nigeria” (p. 66). For instance, the records of the budgetary allocation had the following percentage:

FG budgetary allocation to education (2009- 2018).

Year	Budget	Edu. Alloc.	% of budget
2009	3.049trn	N221.19bn	7.25
2010	5.160trn	N249.09bn	4.83
2011	4.972trn	N306.3 bn	6.16
2012	4.877trn	N400.15bn	8.20
2013	4.962trn	N426.53bn	8.55
2014	4.962trn	N493bn	9.94
2015	5.068trn	N392.2bn	7.74
2016	6.061trn	N369.6bn	6.10
2017	7.444trn	N550bn	7.38
2018	8.612trn	N605.8bn	7.03
Total	55.19trn	N3.90bn	7.07

Source: Vanguard Media Limited, Nigeria.

From the above statistics, it is obvious that Nigeria has huge funding deficits. Poor funding of education hurts development. Also, regardless of several challenges facing the country, the federal government is underfunding the educational sector and by extension other levels of government too. In his reportage for Punch newspaper of June 20th, 2018, Clifford Ndujihe attest to the poor funding of education which has led to frequent strikes both by the teaching and non-teaching staff of university. That between 1992 and 2017, university lectures went on strike twenty (20) times with adverse effects on the educational sector in this country. Ndujihe quoting the industrialist, Aliko Dangote, states that “inclusive and quality education opens the door to development and growth. Nigeria must rise to be proactive and innovative in education financing”. It is therefore necessary that government should significantly improve the funding of education if the goal is to leverage on education for rapid development. The implication is that if government fails to invest in capacity building, there is no way Nigeria can experience development, because the first determines the success of the second. The first is the beneath structure while the second is the super structure.

CONCLUSION

To build a nation, the citizens need to have qualitative education. Quality education is very essential ingredient that can propel and bring about national development in Nigeria. Lack of



qualitative education on the other hand, has hampered the development and deprived Nigeria from joining the league of developed nations and has remained a developing nation for many decades now. We wish to therefore conclude by saying Nigeria had experienced quality education before with quality graduates that were able to compete favourably with those of any others in the world. Therefore, all hands of the stakeholders in the educational sector must be on deck to ensure that Nigeria recovers its lost glory in order to achieve national development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The authors therefore wish to put forward the following recommendations based on the foregoing as essential points to consider in enhancing quality education for socio-economic development.

1. The federal government should consider starting primary schools just as it has unity colleges and higher institutions across the states. These primary schools will serve as models in times of quality to both states and local governments' primary schools.
2. Emphasis must be placed and if possible, shifted on skills acquisition at all levels of our education. Our education system must aim at producing graduates at all levels that do not just have the certificates but skills. As a country we must deemphasize certification against performance. More subjects and courses that are more skill oriented should be introduced at all levels of our education as it is obtainable in most developed countries
3. Funding of schools should meet up to UNESCO recommendation of 26%. This, will bring about meeting myriad needs in the educational sector ranging from lack of infrastructure, inadequate trained personnel, lack of conducive environment for learning, lack of well-equipped library, poor salary and motivation of teachers just to mentioned few.
4. Review the education policies and curriculum to meet the contemporary societal demands of technology. Our education must aim at producing graduates that can handle modern equipment and gargets that are in use in other parts of the world.

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