

Human Capital Development and Functional Tertiary Education System for Sustainable National Development

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Abstract: The paper identified human capital as a crucial factor in sustainable national development. The Paper equally identified education as the only major means of developing and equipping human capital. But however, the paper observed that the government has not done enough to provide functional education which is the bedrock for human capital development as budgetary allocations over the years to the education sector have been very poor. The paper also observed that our type of education is such that develops only the brain to the detriment of the spirit, mind and soul which are the seats of true knowledge and wisdom. The paper observed through comparing Brazil's educational system with that of Nigeria, that Brazil has surpassed Nigeria in all aspects of development. In view of these multiple observations, the paper recommended among other things that government should allocate reasonable amount of money to the education sector and see that what is in the National policy of education in terms of technical and vocational education is implemented.

Key words: Human Capital • Development • Tertiary Education • National • Sustainable

INTRODUCTION

The importance of human capital development for sustainable national development cannot be over emphasized, just as the fundamental role of tertiary education system in developing capital for sustainable national development cannot be contested. The emergence of the concept of human capital development is an effort aimed at making people more productive through improvement in their skills, education, nutrition, health and other social indices. As observe by Egonmwan [1] human capital development concerns the upgrading of the knowledge and skills of the employee and the modeling and re-orientation of their attitudes so that they can be more productive and efficient in the performance of their official functions. The tertiary institutions therefore, hold the torch of illumination in this aspect.

It was in recognition of the uncontestable role of education in development that Adedeji [2] stated that education remains the only instrument for societal transformation. The extent to which a country invests in education will determine the level and rate of its

transformation. Education equips the capital with the required knowledge, skills and competences that would make them contribute in all ramifications to sustainable national development.

Conceptual Issue: Human capital development is the process of increasing knowledge, the skills and the capacities of all in a society [3]. Manpower is the basic resource in economic development of any nation. It is the indispensable means of converting other resources to mankind's use and benefit. How well we develop and employ human skills is fundamental in deciding how much we will accomplish as a nation.

It is clear and without doubt that no matter how advanced and completed the production or service technology an organization may employ, it is the human capital of the organization that will either make or mar the organization. For a developing economy like Nigeria's, there is the compelling need for a rapid mobilization and development of its human capital. To achieve this, functional tertiary education must be provided to the citizenry.

Functional education according to Aliyu and Ngadda [4] is the aggregate young adult develops the abilities, attitudes and other forms of behavior which are of positive value to the society in which he or she lives. To this end, one must determine the extent to which an educational system is meeting the needs of a particular society. As observed by Idowu in Williams and Anekwe [5] functional education is the total process of bringing up individuals to develop their potentials to the fullest and consequently to be able to contribute maximally to the growth and development of the society. Thus, for any nation to raise to the peak of development it should not ignore the development of its human capital through functional education.

Functional Tertiary Education and Human Capital

Development: Functional education according Ali in Williams and Anekwe [5] should be able to produce food for the people, create jobs and provide services which would eventually lead to the achievement of democracy. Functional education should be such that enables the young ones to develop positive values by moulding their attitudes and behaviours along the line of acquiring etiquette. This can be easily achieved once education is permitted to go beyond the garbage-in and garbage-out technique of leaching and learning which is mechanical in approach and offers little opportunity for learners to think for themselves.

Education should not be seen as the pouring in of information in the process of acculturating students. Education involves encouraging the emergence of what exists innately within the student. The purpose of education therefore, should be to help people manifest and express their essential self which is the spiritual self or the soul.

It was in recognition of this fundamental approach to teaching and learning that Akpan and Udo (6) stated that tertiary institutions must promote the total-man concept, that is, the development of the fundamental and foundational make-up of man from the spirit, soul and body dimensions. The focus should be to look at the physical and spiritual needs of mankind in building quality manpower for sustainable national development. It is not just enough to offer an education which will stimulate students intellectually, but also for the tertiary education system to have a package that is integrative in focus in terms relating to the needs of mankind in all life ramifications. This is an integral aspect of the promotion and establishment of a sustainable connectedness with

realities of life outside the “Ivory Tower” which in most cases is lacking in the curriculum of existing Nigerian tertiary institutions.

The Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) (7) clearly declared the goals of tertiary education to include:

- Contribute to national development through high level relevant manpower training.
- Develop and inculcate proper values for the survival of the individual and society.
- Develop the intellectual capability of individuals to understand and appreciate their local and external environments.
- Acquire both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to be self-reliant and useful members of the society.
- Promote and encourage scholarship and community service.
- Forge and cement national unity
- Promote national and international understanding and interaction.

The policy goes further to state that these goals shall be pursued through: (i) Teaching (ii) Research and development (iii) Virile staff development programmes (v) Generation and dissemination of knowledge (v) A variety of modes of programmes including full-time, release, sandwich (vi) Access to training funds such as those provided by the Industrial Training Fund (ITF) (vii) Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES). (viii) Maintenance of minimum educational standards through appropriate agencies (xi) Inter-institutional cooperation (x) dedicated services to the community through extramural and extension services.

The fundamental role of tertiary education according to the above stated goals should be to transform students into technological and entrepreneurial giants capable of providing solutions to organizational and national problems, but this has fallen far short of expectations. However, above stated goals and methods of pursuing them have shed some lights on existing inadequacies in our nation’s education policy and curriculum of study. There is need therefore, on the part of the Nigerian government to ensure that the stated goals and methods of achieving the goals are aggressively implemented by the policy implementers through adequate funding.

Students cannot acquire new technical skills using only their brain. They must also learn with their bodies. Japanese refers to it as “tenarai” which means learning

with ones hands. An action must be repeated often to teach the hands a new technique Egburajolo in Akpan and Udo, [6]. Japan, one of the most technologically advanced countries of the world is not blessed with natural resources as Nigeria, but has surpassed Nigeria in all aspects of development. Japan has attained this height because of its commitment to the development of its human capital.

Leadership and Functional Tertiary Education: It is obvious that bad leadership has contributed to the melt-down of the education sector in Nigeria. Nigerian leaders have not actually shown appreciable commitment to education as annual budget allocations to this sector over the years clearly show. Between 2000 and 2008 an average of 9.5% of Nigeria's annual budget for nine years was allocated to education as against UNESCO's recommendation of 26% [8]. In his contribution to show our leaders' lack of total commitment to the development of the education sector, Gbadegesin, [9] observed that eight years ago, in 2005 to be precise, education expenditure in Nigeria as a percentage of Gross National Income (GNI) was 0.85%. As a result, the country was ranked 167 out of 168 in the world. In comparison, Brazil's education expenditure was 4.09% of Gross National Income (GNI) with a ranking of 83 out of 168. Nigerian's public spending on education as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was 0.89% with a ranking of 136 out of 136. While Nigeria ranked 104 in the completion rate of primary education, Brazil ranked 1.3. While adult literacy rate in Nigeria is 48%, Brazil's is 82%. While the number of Brazilians living under one dollar a day is 11.6 million with a ranking of 44th in the world, Nigerian has 70.2 million living with less than one dollar a day and a ranking of second in terms of poverty. While hundred development index of Brazil is 0.792 with a ranking of 63rd, that of Nigeria is 0.452 with a ranking of 159th. The above statistics go along way to demonstrate the correlation between the underdevelopment of the mind and the pathetic underdevelopment of the nation and this calls for a reassessment of the nation's educational system.

CONCLUSION

The fundamental position of human capital in sustainable national development calls for a rethink on the part of government to put in place the necessary machinery to ensure effective development of its human capital. To achieve this laudable objective, the place of

tertiary education cannot be ignored. Functional tertiary education holds the master-key to human capital development. To this end, intellectuals in tertiary institutions of learning have a crucial role to play in this regard.

However, the government is equally under obligation to provide an enabling environment for intellectuals to operate. This includes protection of life, provision of funds, motivation, good salary package and provision of infrastructural facilities. The summary of this paper is that no nation can rise above the caliber of its human capital and that functional tertiary education should be the concern of government if human capital must be trained and developed and, if sustainable national development must be achieved.

Recommendations: The following recommendations are made in order to achieve sustainable national development through human capital development.

- Government should allocate reasonable percentage of the annual budget to education sector, by obeying the 26% recommendation by UNESCO.
- Students in tertiary education system should be made to learn more of the practical side of their various disciplines than listen to lectures.
- Entrepreneurship education should be practically emphasized and encouraged and taught at departmental levels in tertiary institutions.
- Government should provide adequate infrastructural facilities for teaching, research and learning in tertiary institutions.
- Adequate teaching personnel should be employed and adequately remunerated in our tertiary institutions.

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