

Education, Poverty and Development in Nigeria: The Way Forward in the 21st Century

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ABSTRACT This paper focuses attention on the issues of educational objectives, causes of poverty and effect on development. It examined the effect of poverty on education and how these could promote development. Identified causes of poverty includes; political instability, manpower, wastage, illiteracy, poor leadership, mental slavery. Possible solutions that could positively resolve the relationship between poverty education development are; well formulated manpower policy, in-service programme for workers, provision of basic necessities by government, re-assessment of our economic, social, cultural and political needs. Attempts are made to show how each of these issues could be integrated into our school system to reduce poverty rate and enhance national development.

INTRODUCTION

Kellerman (1980) defines education as the process of teaching and training of the child. It is the imparting or acquisition of skills for a particular trade or profession in which applicable methods are used. In the views of Fafunwa (1983), education is all positive 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 needs as well as the needs of the society where the programme is based. Ebong (1996) defines, education as a powerful instrument for the development of man and the society.

From these definitions, education is a systematic procedure for the transfer and transformation of culture, through formal or informal training of people in a society. It deals with the mental, physical, psychological and social development of the citizens in a given society. The goal of education is manpower development, aimed at national growth and development.

Growth is increase in size without scientific and technological advancement. Development means growth integrated with economic, scientific, political and home based technological expansion. Kindleberger and Herrick (1977), defines economic development to include improvements in material welfare, especially for persons with the lowest incomes; the eradication of mass poverty, illiteracy, disease and early death. An economy that has productive

employment among the working – age population rather than the situation of a privileges minority and a correspondingly greater participation of broadly based groups in making decisions about the directions, economic and otherwise, in which they should move to improve their welfare.

Case and Ray (1989) defines poverty as people with very low incomes. Poverty should be measured by figuring how much it costs to buy basic necessities of life, minimally adequate diet, what is a minimum housing unit? And so on. A country is said to be poor, if she cannot cater for her citizenry, and live in fear or lacks anything. One basic thing about poverty is “it is ever ready to gulp any amount or material in it” (Dukor, 1995: 28).

Development may be difficult in poor countries without qualitative and quantitative education. Also it may be difficult for a country to achieve economic development through education, if a high percentage of the population is living below or at poverty level, with series of hygienic problems. These results into poor feeding, housing and medical care; the characteristics of low-income third world, underdeveloped, less developed or developing countries.

GOALS OF EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

Fafunwa (1975: 20) identified the seven cardinal goals of traditional African education as:

1. To develop the child's latent physical skills.
2. To develop character.

3. To inculcate respect for elders and those in position of authority.
4. To develop intellectual skills.
5. To acquire specific vocational training and to develop a healthy attitude towards honest labour.
6. To develop a sense of belonging and to participate activity in family and community affairs.
7. To understand, appreciate and promote the cultural heritage of the community at large.

These cardinal goals of traditional education prepares individual for self-reliance, political and economic stability.

Muslim education came into Nigeria by over 300years before the arrival of Christian Education around the 1840's. however, Muslim education was retarded because education in the 13th century in Nigeria tended to mean Bible knowledge, Christian ethnic, Christian moral instruction, Christian literature, some arithmetic language and crafts; directed towards the production of good Christians (Fafunwa, 1975: 70).

The goals of Christian Missions Education was to produce teachers to assist in the teaching of the gospel and commercial activities. According to Boyd (1975 : 418).

"the church undertook the business of education not because it regarded education as good in itself, but because it found that it could not do its own proper work without giving its adherents, and especially its clergy, as much of the formal learning as was required for the study of the sacred writings and for the performance of their religious duties."

Also Bowen (1857:17) an early missionary, in Ejiogu (1988 : 3) stated that *"we desire to establish the Gospel in the hearts and minds and social life of the people, so that truth and righteousness may remain and flourish among them. This cannot be done without civilization. To establish the Gospel among any people, they must have Bibles.. they must read the Bible and this implies formal instrustion (i.e.) education"*.

It is sad to note that the goals of Muslim and Christian Education was not designed to promote our traditional education, neither economic growth and development in Nigeria. It was aimed at achieving selfish ends in religion and trade. The long run effect was underdevelopment and poverty, the result was human and material exploitation.

After independence in October 1960, Nigeria

faced first; the problem of political instability. Development plans were made by foreign experts, without scientific contents. Based on the second National Development Plan, in 1981, a revised edition of National Policy on Education was produced and put into operation, with the following national objective:

1. A free and democratic society
2. A just and egalitarian society
3. A united strong and self-reliance nation
4. A great and dynamic economy
5. A land of bright and full opportunities for all citizens.

Based on the national objectives the quality of instruction at all levels has to be oriented towards inculcating the following values:

- a. Respect for the worth and dignity of the individuals;
- b. Faith in man's ability to make rational decisions
- c. Moral and spiritual values in inter-personal and human relations
- d. Shared responsibility for the dignity of labour and promotion of the emotional, physical and psychological health of all children.

It is clear that the seven cardinal goals of traditional educational is similar to that stated in the National policy on Education. (NPE : 1981 : 1). There is a difference between national policy on education objective and that of the Christian mission. A proper execution of the present education policy, could results into growth and development. However, 42years of independence, Nigeria is the 17th poorest country in the world, despart the large quantity and quality of crude oil, produced in the country. Despite the increased number of university graduates produced from over thirty universities. In the country. What are the possible causes of underdevelopment and poverty in Nigeria?

Causes of Poverty in Nigeria

Dukor (1995: 28) stated that poverty is caused and will be caused by the following; defiance of God's laws, laziness, early marriage, pride, unwanted pregnancy, cheating, mental slavery, gambling, failure to adjust or re-adjust when situation detonates, taking wrong steps or approaches to issues, burden, police arrest, detention, drunkenness, court cases, fire outbreak, spending above one's income, illegal business, accident, borrowing and death of a

bread winner, it also includes, spending in anticipation, illiteracy, seizure of goods, dupes, illness, expensive burials/weddings, spiritual enslavement ie. The churches (the leaders) contribute nothing to our betterment but ruin our already tattered lives and we still follow them sheepishly.

He also identified lack of; the spirit of God, good road, water, good transport system, love, peace, good neighbourlines, good governance, steady supply of electricity as causes of poverty.

Unproductive labour could also cause poverty. A situation where individuals do not do what they are suppose to do. This results into inefficiencies due to non-placement of individuals in their proper places. Such inefficient individual make themselves 'good workers' by rendering "eye services" and pointing accusing fingers on others to cover their inefficiencies or evils. These are some of the effects of "quota system" in appointment into Federal or State Services.

Lack of political development causing political instability and exploitation. Example, is a situation where few opportunities, a wicked leader or rich person exploits the majority. This increases the rate of corruption in a country especially among workers.

A country operating a mono-cultural economic system may be poor. Nigeria since early 1970's have moved away from agricultural primarily to the production of crude oil, a commodity whose price can only be determined by foreign countries. Price mechanism has no direct control of the production and distribution of crude oil. According to Asemota (1999: 3):

"the oil sector which is dominated by the government is in a state of decay due to poor operating conditions and inadequate funding, vandalization and bureaucratic interventions. Public organisations in Nigeria enjoy monopoly status that hamper development rather than fostering it."

Western education is about one hundred and fifty-six years old in Nigeria. Despite this, some socio-cultural factors still hinders our economic development, causing poverty. Some Nigerians still believe that their economic capacity and security can only be guaranteed by having more male and a large number of children. As long as we continue to have more children without a corresponding increase in food production, our poverty level will continue to be on an increase. A man's production of children above his income,

will increase poverty level, from increased number of illiterates and criminal rates in the country.

We thanked President Olusegun Obansojo for launching the Universal Basic Education Programme (UBE) on the 30th of September at Sokoto, Sokoto State. However, it is necessary to know, if children could benefit from the UBE Programme without good food from their parent. In other words, can free and compulsory primary education survive without a reduction in the poverty level ? is it possible to achieve a technological breakthrough, education, in a country where teachers are poorly and irregularly paid their salaries?

I am of the view that, the reduction of poverty level should be a priority. It is true that education brings growth and development. It is also true that a hungry man is an angry man and cannot reason positively. As a result, asking an unhappy teacher at any level to teach an unhappy child, may not give positive result. This could hinder the achievement of education objectives in particular and national development in general. There is need, for proper integration of these issues, education, poverty and development.

National Issues and Nigerian Education

The major role of education is manpower development. Apart from this, the manpower developed must be able to help solve major issues our country faces. As a result education must be relevant to these issues, not separated from them.

The goals of Nigerian education, in terms of reward in naira, programme priorities and personnel, must be spelled out in such a way that the Nigerian public can understand how these goals speak directly to the major issues of today.

Discrimination or unequal opportunity. Common in housing, education recreation health and social mobility. Education must deal with unequal concepts of individual worth and the failure of many schools to be concerned about the problem Grant Venn (1970: 13).

The generation gap or non – involvement of youth. Continuous riots in communities, schools and colleges, drug abuse, dropping out of society, defiance of social institutions and the non-involvement of youths in contributing activities related to society's problems, and the economic liability of youth and so on are evidenced of the generation gap in Nigeria, especially in the Niger Delta Area. The schools should help in bridging

the gap between the youth, elders and government in Nigeria.

Under employment and unemployment. Majority of our youths with university degrees are unemployed. Some employed once are underemployed, due to inadequate technical skill on the job. There is lack of vertical or horizontal job mobility for many persons, city and rural depressed areas and the lack of relevance of much education in terms of a work role.

Lack of Quality and Relevance in Education:

A good percentage of children and youth leave primary, secondary and universities before graduation. These may be due to lack of fund, poor feeding, inability to read, write and so on, resulting from poor beginning, effect of family background. There is no opportunity in the system for transition from school to work, especially for those from poor homes.

Decay of cities and religions in Nigeria. As stated earlier, majority of the population are living at poverty level. The indication can be seen in welfare costs, health and housing problems, hunger, loss of tax income, lack of jobs where people live, industry shifts, population, traffic, crime, isolation of ethnic groups, non-responsible citizen involvement in political extremism and so on.

Disrespect for Law and Order: As a result of the inadequate management of the system, there are increase in violence, high crime rates, riots, low public opinion of courts and police, family breakdown, the youth movement and a lack of belief that the law protects those most in need of protection.

Lack of Hope for Many Adults: Retired workers are left uncared for. There is fear of early retirement, loss of self-dignity, belief that there is no place for the aged.

Conserving National Resources

The constant oil spillage resulting into air and water pollution, inadequate recreation facilities, human congestion, disappearance of local craftsmen and artisans and so on are examples of non-conservation of national resources in Nigeria.

Other issues are public funding of social programs and the structure and organization of education.

There is a rising cost of welfare services, education in equalities and so on. There is also the rigidity of primary, secondary and higher

education, the church, private individuals, Federal – State – Local Government responsibilities and control.

It should be noted that Nigeria depend upon education the major social institution to provide solutions to her problems. Nigerians must therefore endeavour to achieve her goals of education for national development through proper monitoring of the activities of the school not just in terms of what is ideal but in terms of the environment in which education functions, the attitudes of the people, and the role of the other financial, political and social agencies in our society.

The Way Forward in the 21st Century

From 1983 to 2002, education in Nigeria has been too successful in doing what society has expected it to do. Forty-three years of independence society tend to keep pressure on the schools to do more and better from year to year without corresponding increase in financial and managerial investment in education. Scientifically, when weakness appear, the response is to increase the resources, change the methodology or increase the effort. Unfortunately, the concept of what education is or what the school should do according to the Nigerian society is the same for the most successful. For example, Nigerians believe that schools that are, the most selective have the highest quality. They believe that the number of school leavers entering universities and graduates going into the world of work, even without jobs are marks of school quality Venn (1970).

There believes are responsible for increase in indiscipline on the part of school heads, teachers and students. It should be noted that our school today do most of the things that people want them to do and do then quite well. What must the school do, so that a good percentage of today's youth who are handicapped in finding employment and who encounter serious problems in making the transition from the needed manpower in a society that by the year 2005 will find only five percent of the work force, engaged in unskilled work.

In the 21st century, the school must change her job in the society from what it has been in the past. Technology has created a new relationship between man, his education and work; a relationship between man and his work. There is need for a true manpower policy. However, we

must take into account much more than present needs and predictable demand in the economy. It is technologically possible to produce all the things we need, it requires us to assess manpower policy in terms of how well it develops the human potential.

For positive utilization of available manpower, there is need for in-service and on-the-job training for workers and unemployed youths in Nigeria.

On how schools might change, Venn (1970) identified the following:

1. Involvement and participation of youth at an earlier age
2. Youth volunteer activities as a part of schooling.
3. Involvement of the school and its students in the major issues of our time.
4. Provision of ways for individual students to participate in real-life action, not always just in preparation for living.
5. Giving Youth Responsibility as well as Freedom

The schools should be able to make adequate provision for all academic categories of students. This is possible through a well-structured educational program, that could reduce or eliminate school drop-out rates in the short-run and poverty level in the long run.

Ray (1993) identified economic needs of the 21st century as; power to produce steel, cement and other building materials. As a result educational facilities should be provided to adequately train skilled manpower for medical, scientific and technological industries. Government should also produce fertilizer for agriculture, food, shelter, clothing, transportation facilities, chemical for construction of irrigation facilities and so on.

The provision of basic necessities of life could promote the achievement of life goals and the achievement of the goals of education. Good condition of service for teachers and regular payment of salaries could enhance their instructional performance.

There is need for re-assessment of our economic, social, cultural and political needs. Based on our assessment, there is need for determination of our educational need; by:

- i. Ascertaining the humblers of potential student in different target pupil population
- ii. Ascertaining the percentage of each target population that is served
- iii. Determining the extent to which the goals and objectives of the different target pupil populations are being met (Morphet (1975: 231). The Universal Basic Education

Programme is a welcomed idea in this regard. However, it should be framed with a well-formulated manpower policy especially at the lower and middle manpower level.

Two major religious organizations or bodies introduced formal education in Nigeria; the Muslim and Christian. They set out to achieve different goals as stated earlier. As a result left the country geographically at two different stages of qualitative and quantitative education. Hence the existence of educationally backward areas, tribes and states. In order to reduce this disparity, there is need for a compensation for the culturally disadvantaged area. Cost differentials for the culturally disadvantaged should be included in the program of Universal Basic Education, of the Federal Government. However, this will increase the cost of executing the UBE Programme.

According to Johns (1975: 234) Studies made by National Education Finance Project revealed that school systems with well-developed programs for pupils in the culturally disadvantaged area were spending about twice as much per pupil as for non-high-cost pupils.

In Nigeria, this may be less since we have quality unemployed teachers in some areas which could be used in the cultural disadvantaged state. There is need to reduce poverty level for effective implementation of education policies. Hence established poverty alleviation ministry. This ministry should be adequately funded. Functions should include: determination of income distribution, labour market monitoring through wages and salaries, allocation based on labour skill characterized by unborn ability, schooling effort and times income from property, distribution of income from the government and so on.

CONCLUSION

The achievement of national objectives of education could lead to national growth and development. Basically, national growth and development led to the death of "national poverty" in any nation.

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