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Higher Education and Human Capital Development in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria

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Abstract - Higher Education in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria seems unable to produce the required manpower for the industrial sector of the economy. This study therefore seeks to examine the relationship between higher education and human capital development in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. The correlational research design was adopted for the study. The population for the study consisted of human resource personnel of major oil companies and commercial banks in the region. This stood at 656. The sample of the study stood at 460, representing 70% of the population. The stratified random sampling technique was used in drawing the sample. Two null hypotheses were developed and tested at 0.05 level of significance, using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis. A structured instrument, Higher Education and Human Capital Development (HEHCD), was developed for the study. The instrument comprised 3 sections and 15 items, five in each section. The results indicated no significant relationship between higher education and manpower requirements and productivity of industries in the Niger Delta region. It was concluded that higher education in the Niger Delta fails to meet the manpower requirements of industries in the region. Besides, it does not contribute significantly to industrial productivity in the region. It was recommended among other things that universities in the Niger Delta Region should collaborate with industries operating in the area for their manpower needs.

Keywords - Management, Higher Education, Human Capital Development, Correlational Research Design, Niger Delta Region, Nigeria, Africa.

INTRODUCTION

The area described as the Niger Delta region of Nigeria lies between latitudes 4° and 6° north of the Equator and 4° and 8° east of the Greenwich. It comprises the states of Akwa Ibom, Cross River, Edo, Imo, Rivers, Bayelsa, Delta, Abia and Ondo, making it coterminous with all of Nigeria's oil producing states. Stretching over 20,000 km of swamp land in the littoral fringes of the country, it embraces one of the world's largest wetlands, over 60% of Africa's largest mangrove forests, and one of the world's most extensive. Comprising mainly of a distinct aquatic environment which embraces marine, brackish and fresh water ecosystems, it encompasses the most extensive fresh water swamp forest in West and Central Africa, and manifests an intricate network of creeks, rivers, streams, swamps, braided streams and Oxbow lakes, besides a stretch of flat and fertile land mass (Afinotai & Ojatorotu, 2009). It extends over an area of about 70,000 square kilometers, which amounts to about 7.5% of Nigeria's total landmass and the coastline extends for 560 km, roughly two-thirds of the entire coastline of Nigeria. The region has a population of 27 million people of which 75% live in rural areas (NDDC, 2004).

Higher education can play a vital role in human capital development for improved productivity in work organizations. Higher education can help organizations become more innovative and competitive. It can be an indispensable tool for economic, social, political and cultural development of any nation. Higher education supplies the necessary manpower for work organizations, whether social, economic or otherwise. However, despite Nigeria's huge investment in higher education, it is not exactly clear to what extent human capital has impacted on the economic growth or progress of Nigeria (Umo, 2007). It is against this background that this study was carried out to examine the contributions of higher education to the development of human capital in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria.

Human Capital Development

In general terms, human capital represents the investment people make in themselves that enhance their economic productivity. Human capital refers to the technical skills and knowledge acquired by workers. Education is an investment in human capital, that is, in the skills and knowledge that produce a return to the individual in the form of higher earnings. The provision of higher education is seen as a productive investment in human capital, which the proponents of the theory have considered as equally or even more equally worthwhile than that of physical capital.

According to Babalola (2003), the rationality behind investment in human capital is based on three arguments:

- i. that the new generation must be given the appropriate parts of the knowledge which has already been accumulated by previous generations;
- ii. that new generation should be taught how existing knowledge should be used to develop new products, to introduce new processes and production methods and social services; and
- iii. that people must be encouraged to develop entirely new ideas, products, processes and methods through creative approaches.

According to Rossilah (2004), human capital theory provides a basic justification for large public expenditure on education both in developing and developed nations. The theory is consistent with the ideologies of democracy and liberal progression found in most Western societies. Its appeal is based upon the presumed economic return of investment in education both at the macro and micro levels. Efforts to promote investment in human capital are seen to result in rapid economic growth for the society. For individuals, such investment is seen to provide returns in the form of individual economic success and achievement.

Most economists agree that it is the human resources of a nation not its capital nor its material resources that ultimately determine the character and pace of its economic and social development. Altbach and Teferra (2004) assert that:

Human resources constitute the ultimate basis of wealth of nations. Capital and natural resources are passive factors of production, human beings are the active agencies who accumulate capital, exploit natural resources, build social, economic and political organization, and carry forward national development (p. 102).

The importance of education and human capital has been brought out in many studies of economic growth and development. Altbach and Levy (2005) developed a human capital model which shows that education and the creation of human capital was responsible for both the differences in labour productivity and the differences in overall levels of technology that we observe in the world. More than anything else, it has been the spectacular growth in East Asia that has given education and human capital their current popularity in the field of economic growth and development. Countries such as Hong Kong, Korea, Singapore, and Taiwan have achieved unprecedented rates of economic growth while making large investments in education.

There are several ways of explaining how the huge expansion of education accelerated economic growth and development. The first is to view education as an investment in human capital. A different view of the role of education in the economic success is that education has positive externalities. The idea that education generates positive externalities is by no means new. Many of the classical economists argued strongly for government's active support of education on the grounds of the positive externalities that society would gain from a more educated labour force and populace (Van-Den-Berg, 2001). Smith (2006) reflects such progressive contemporary thought when he wrote that by educating its people, a society:

derives no inconsiderable advantage from their instruction. The more they are instructed, the less liable they are to the delusions of enthusiasm and superstition, which, among ignorant nations, frequently occasion the most dreadful disorders. An instructed and intelligent people besides, are always more decent and orderly than an ignorant and stupid ones (p 68).

Smith views the externalities to education as important to the proper functioning not only of the economy but of a democratic society.

Another way of modeling the role of education in the growth and development process is to view human capital as a critical input for innovations, research and development activities. From this perspective, education is seen as an intentional effort to increase the resources needed for creating new ideas, and thus, any increase in education will directly accelerate technological progress. This modeling approach usually adopts the Schumpeter (2003) assumptions of imperfectly competitive product markets and competitive innovation, which permit the process of generating technological progress. Education is seen as an input into the intentional and entrepreneurial efforts to create new technology and new products. Proponents of this view of education point out the close correlation between new product development and levels of education. The countries that are at the forefront of technology also have the most educated population (Van-Den-Berg 2001).

The review of empirical tests of the theory by Garba (2002) shows that cross-country regressions have shown positive correlation between educational attainment and economic growth and development. Investment in human capital has positive effects on the supply of entrepreneurial activity and technological innovation. Gary (1993) asserts that education as an investment has future benefits of creation of status, job security and other benefits in cash and in kind.

However, Ayara (2002) reports that education has not had the expected positive growth impact on economic growth in Nigeria. Hence, he proposes three possibilities that could account for such results, which are:

- i. Educational capital has gone into privately remunerative but socially unproductive activities;
- ii. There has been slow growth in the demand for educated labour;
- iii. The education system has failed, such that schooling provides few (or no) skills.

Babalola (2003) asserts that the contribution of education to economic growth and development occurs through its ability to increase the productivity of an existing labour force in various ways. However, economic evaluation of educational investment projects should take into account certain criteria according to Altbach and Teferra (2004) which are:

- Direct economic returns to investment, in terms of the balance between the opportunity costs of resources and the expected future benefits;
- Indirect economic returns, in terms of external benefits affecting other members of society;
- The private demand for education and other factors determining individual demand for education;
- The geographical and social distribution of educational opportunities; and,
- The distribution of financial benefits and burdens of education.

Education plays a great and significant role in the economy of a nation, thus educational expenditures are found to constitute a form of investment. This augments individual's human capital and leads to greater output for society and enhanced earnings for the individual worker. It increases their chances of employment in the labour market, and allows them to reap pecuniary and nonpecuniary returns and gives them opportunities for job mobility.

Education is a source of economic growth and development only if it is anti-traditional to the extent that it liberates, stimulates and informs the individual and teaches him how and why to make demands upon him. Accordingly, a proper educational strategy would manifest itself in four major development-producing capacities. According to Bronchi (2003) the first is the development of a general trend favorable

to economic progress. The reference is to social mobility, a general increase in literacy necessary for improved communication. The second capacity emphasizes the development of complementary resources for factors which are relatively plenty and substitutes for relatively scarce factors. That is, educated people would be more adaptable to varying production needs. The third capacity underscores the durability of educational investment. Bronchi argues that education has greater durability than most forms of non-human reproductive capital, which implies that a given investment in education tends to be more productive, other things being equal, than some outlay on non-human capital. Finally, education is an alternative to consumption, for it transfers to round-about production the resources that would otherwise be consumed now.

Economists regard expenditures on education and training as investments in human capital. It is called human capital because people cannot be separated from their knowledge and skills the way they can be separated from their financial and physical assets. Education, training, and health are the most important investments in human capital. Many studies have shown that higher education greatly raises a person's income, even after netting out direct and indirect costs of schooling. The earnings of more-educated people are almost always well above average, and the gains are generally larger in less-developed countries.

Formal education is not the only way to invest in human capital development. Workers also learn and are trained outside schools, especially on the job. Even college graduates are not fully prepared for the labor market when they leave school and must be fitted into their jobs through formal and informal training programs. Studies indicate that on-the-job training is an important source of the very large increase in earnings that workers get as they gain greater experience at work.

In addition to providing return to the individual, investment in education results in spillovers that benefit others who work with or near individuals who have made the investment. Spillovers provide the economic justification for public subsidies for education and motivate community interest in improving the educational attainment of the population (Babalola, 2003). Since spillovers appear more likely to stem from higher education workers than from those with less

education, much of the economic research on spillovers has focused on the extent of higher education among the population under study (Bronchi, 2003).

Social interaction is the primary way in which spillovers occur, whether by chance or by plan. This interaction is most likely to lead to productive spillovers if it occurs in a work context. This context can be provided in a metropolitan area with a high concentration of firms in the same industry, and it can also be provided in an area with a diversity of industries (Castronova, 2002). In the first case, employees from different firms in the same industry can exchange ideas about new products and production methods more readily because of the dense concentration of employees who work in the same industry. In the second case, the diversity of industries allows ideas developed in one industry to be more widely disseminated to other industries, where the new ideas, perhaps with some modifications, can also be productively applied. In both cases, exchanges of information about productivity-enhancing possibilities are more likely in areas with greater population size, density, and industrial variety.

Innovation, spillovers, and improved productivity are more likely in metropolitan areas with large concentrations of workers with higher education. Empirical research supports this insight, demonstrating that earnings, which are based on productivity, are greater in metropolitan areas that have greater concentrations of higher education graduates.

Yesufu (2000) argued that training of personnel enhances productivity. According to him, education and training are generally indicated as the most important direct means of upgrading the human intellect and skills for productive employment. Another advantage of staff training is that it improves job performance and therefore promotes management efficiency. Writing from a vendor's perspective, Hyman (2004) opines that without training, consumers may not be efficient in the use of new products. They may not therefore derive maximum benefits from the products. Ojiambo (1992) agrees that training programmes should be directed towards improving efficiency and job performance.

Other advantages of training include reduction in cost, reduced turnover, human resources reserve, faster decision, continuity of effort, improvement in employee morale, availability for future personnel needs of the organization, improvement in health and safety, reduced

supervision, personal growth and organizational stability (Appleton and Teal, 1998). The benefits of personnel development cannot therefore be over-emphasized.

Higher education contributes much to social, political and economic development of a nation and that is why every government is making efforts to budget a huge amount to that sector. In Nigeria, higher education faces a lot of problems that may not allow the system to make the expected contribution to social, political and economic development of the nation. Among the numerous problems confronting higher education in Nigeria is the perceived poor job performance of some academic staff.

In recent years, stakeholders in the education industry complained about the poor job performance of some academic staff. It has often been expressed by the public that academic staff are no longer dedicated and committed to the job. It appears that higher education graduates who are trained and expected to produce a host of cherished societal virtues such as honesty, humility, fairness, integrity, punctuality, dedication and patriotism are not dedicated and committed to their job.

The various factors responsible for the poor job performance by higher education graduates appear to be both internal and external to the system. Internal factors include strikes, lack of employees' motivation and weak accountability for educational performance and poor work environment. External factors comprise academic staff shortage, corruption and inadequate funding of education by government.

Afe (1995) pointed out that teaching task is done through conscious and deliberate effort. But for a teacher to carry out this conscious and deliberate effort, he needs a conducive environment devoid of strike, inadequate motivation, weak accountability for educational programmes, inadequate personnel, corruption, inconsistent funding by the government among others. It has been expressed that teachers lack conducive work environment devoid of required resources needed for their job performance. However good the programmes may be, if the necessary resources are not there, teachers cannot perform, no matter how much they are induced.

The concept of human capital formation refers to a conscious and continuous process of acquiring and increasing the number of people with requisite knowledge, education, skill and experience that

are crucial for the economic and political development of a country (Odusola, 1998: 529). Investing in education raises per capita GNI, reduces poverty and supports the expansion of knowledge. Education, it is argued, reduces inequality. Fishlow (1995), Persson and Tabellini (1994) and Alesina and Rodrik (1994) agree that inequality is negatively related to growth. Stiglitz (1998:11) states, "successful development entails not only closing the gap in physical or even human capital, but also closing the gap in knowledge."

Uwatt (2002) empirically examined the impact of human capital on economic growth, using five variants of the original Solow Model linking physical capital, labour and human capital proxied by total enrolment in educational system to real Gross Domestic Product. The result showed that physical capital exerted a positive and very significant statistical impact on economic growth. Its coefficient was statistically different from zero at 5% significant level. Labour force that entered all the models in log form had also positive but statistically insignificant effect on economic growth.

On human capital variable, it was human capital from primary school education that was statistically very significant on the growth of the Nigerian economy. In the case of tertiary education, the result failed to tally with a priori expectations. One of the reasons advanced by the author (Uwatt) was that Nigerian tertiary institutions produce more graduates in humanities than in Mathematics and Sciences.

Ndiyo (2002) on the "Paradox of education and Economic Growth in Nigeria" modeled for contribution of education growth. He considered real growth of the gross product (RGDP) as respondent variable and gross fixed capital formation (GFCT), aggregate labour force (LAF) and real budget allocation to education (REDUB) as explanatory variables. He estimated the models in both level form and in logarithmic form respectively. From the two sources, it was observed that the growth of real gross

Domestic product (RGDP) is positively affected by the amount of physical capital and labor inputs in all the specifications but in most cases they have insignificant effects.

Ndiyo observed that contrary to a priori expectations, the estimate for the impact of growth in educational capital on the growth of real Gross Domestic Product was consistently negative. However, Ndiyo

is not alone in this position. Kyriacou (1980), Lan et al. (1991) and Dasgupta and Weale (1992), seem to agree with this argument. In essence, the contribution of education to economic growth certainly depends on the quality of education.

As observed by Human Development Report (2001) "the quality and orientation of education at each level, and the link with the demand for skill, are critical for the growth of any nation". However, opinions converge that education requires adequate funding for improved quality results from appropriately equipping the schools, hiring quality teachers and commensurately remunerating them.

FRAMEWORK

The framework most responsible for the adoption of education and development policies has come to be known as human capital theory. Human capital theory rests on the assumption that formal education is highly instrumental and even necessary to improve the production capacity of a population (Altbach and Teferra, 2004). The human capital theorists argue that an educated population is a productive population. Human capital theory emphasizes how education increases the productivity and efficiency of workers by increasing the level of cognitive stock of economically productive human capability which is a product of innate abilities and investment in human beings.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study was carried out to determine the relationship between higher education and human capital development in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to: (1) determine the relationship between higher education and manpower requirements of industries in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria; (2) determine the relationship between higher education and industrial productivity in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

The correlational research design was adopted for the study. The population for the study consisted of human resource personnel of major oil companies and commercial banks operating in the Niger Delta region. This stood at 656 : 438 from oil companies and 218 from banks. The sample of the study stood at 460: 307 from oil companies and 153 from banks, representing 70% from each stratum. The stratified random sampling technique was used in drawing the sample.

A structured instrument, Higher Education and Human Capital Development (HEHCD), was developed and used in the study. The instrument consisted of 3 sections and 15 items, five in each section.

Table 1: Cronbach's alpha 21 reliability table

Instrument	K	ES _i ²	S _i ²	r - coe
HEHCD	15	0.29	0.76	0.73

With a reliability coefficient of 0.73 the instrument was considered significant, hence appropriate for the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data collected were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient.

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant relationship between higher education and manpower requirements of industries in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria.

Table 2: Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis of the relationship between higher education and manpower requirements of industries in the Niger Delta

Variables	Σx Σy	Σx^2 Σy^2	Σxy	r
Higher Education (x)	2934	22106		
			34218	0.069*
Manpower Requirements (y)	3878	24612		

* N = 460, Significant at 0.05 alpha level; df = 458; Critical r-value = 0.088

Table 2 presents the obtained r-value as 0.069. This value was tested for significance by comparing it with the critical r-value of 0.088 at 0.05 alpha level with 458 degrees of freedom. The obtained r-value of 0.069 was less than the critical r-value. Hence, the null hypothesis was retained. The result therefore means that there is no significant relationship between higher education and manpower requirements of industries in the Niger Delta.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant relationship between higher education and industrial productivity in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria.

Table 3: Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis of the relationship between higher education and industrial productivity in the Niger Delta region

Variables	Σx Σy	Σx^2 Σy^2	Σxy	r
Higher Education (x)	2934	22106		
			32412	0.057*
Industrial Productivity (y)	3862	24218		

* N = 460, Significant at 0.05 alpha level; df = 458; Critical r-value = 0.088

The table presents the obtained r-value as 0.057. This value was tested for significance by comparing it with the critical r-value (0.088) at 0.05 alpha level with 458 degrees of freedom. The obtained r-value (0.057) was less than the critical r-value (0.088). Hence, the result was not significant. The result therefore means that there is no significant relationship between higher education and industrial productivity in the Niger Delta.

In testing hypothesis one, no significant relationship was observed between higher education and manpower requirements of industries in the Niger Delta. The null hypothesis was retained as the calculated r-value was less than the r-critical. The finding is corroborated by Uwatt (2002). According to the finding of this scholar, human capital from tertiary education was statistically very insignificant on the growth of the Nigerian economy. One of the reasons advanced by the author was that Nigerian tertiary institutions produce more graduates in humanities than in mathematics and sciences. However, Altbach and Teferra (2004) observed that higher education is highly instrumental and even necessary to improve the production capacity of employees. Babalola (2003) pointed out that the rationality behind investment in human capital is based on the argument that people must be encouraged to develop entirely new ideas, products, processes and methods through creative approaches. Higher education exposes teachers to these creative approaches. As argued by Yesufu (2000), training of personnel enhances productivity. Education and training are generally indicated as the most important direct means of upgrading the human intellect and skills for improved productivity.

Data analysis in hypothesis two indicated no significant relationship between higher education and industrial productivity in the Niger Delta. This led to the retention of the null hypothesis. The finding conforms with Ndiyo (2002) who observed from his study that the growth of real gross domestic product was positively affected by the amount of physical capital and labour inputs in the specifications but in most cases they had insignificant effects. On the contrary, Hyman (2004) observed that higher education improves worker's job performance and promotes management efficiency. Higher education and training should be directed towards improving efficiency and job performance.

CONCLUSION

Based on the data analysis and findings of the study, it was concluded that higher education in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria through its human capital development, fails to meet the manpower requirements of industries in the region. Besides, it does not contribute significantly to industrial productivity in the region.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were made based on the results of the findings.

1. Universities in the Niger Delta region should concentrate more on courses that have direct bearings with the manpower requirements of industries in the region.
2. The universities should collaborate with industries operating in the region for necessary inputs towards the production of graduates that will easily fit into the industries on graduation.
3. Memoranda of Understanding should be entered into between the universities and industries operating in Niger Delta region for the training of the manpower requirements of the industries.

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