

# **SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION: A BOOK OF READINGS**

**VOLUME I**

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## THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EDUCATION AND ECONOMY

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Education has been viewed differently by different people. Some people view education as a means of transfer of worthwhile knowledge and values to the next generation and others as a means of social mobility. Whatever the view people hold, education is seen as a valuable asset. This, may be, explains why most government budgets allocate quite huge amounts of money year after year for education. In this discussion, we shall look at the definition of education and economy, the influence education has on economy and the relationship between the economy of any particular society and the educational practices of the society. All discussions shall be based on the Nigerian society.

### The Meaning of Education

The word "education" is an umbrella word which covers quite a wide range of meanings. The different meanings all point towards the systematic training and instruction especially of the young in school, college or any other institution. They go further to embrace knowledge and abilities, the development of character and mental powers resulting from such training. This definition covers both formal and informal trainings since formal training like the one received in a school and informal training like the one offered in the home both result in character development and mental abilities.

Education is built around some general and specific objectives which give guidance to its general conduct, content and practice. In general, education aims at equipping an individual with knowledge and abilities which would enable him to be useful to himself and the society in which he lives. In the Nigerian context, education is geared towards making an

individual self-reliant. It also aims at equipping him with the ability which would enable him contribute to the nation's socio-political and economic development.

As a process of socialization, education is seen to transmit values, norms and beliefs of the people from one generation to another. This is so done that the young, systematically comes to know about what his father believed in, accepts his people's way of life, appreciates their custom, and wants to protect and transmit even to the younger generation these same beliefs and values. In this process, education is seen as a deliberate and a conscious attempt by a society through a medium – a school or an institution – to familiarise the young with the values and beliefs of the particular society. The content of educational system of this society, in the same connection, would be determined by the said beliefs, norms and values of the society in question.

Education is also seen as a source of innovations and social change in a society. By exposing the young to other traditions and in comparison to his own, the advantages of a certain system over the one practised by his people emerge. The preference and the actual adoption of this new way of life brings about innovation. The traditional Nigerian way of farming is with hoes, matchets and other single-man-use implements; with the exposure of Nigerians to modern methods of farming, many have come to appreciate and actually make efforts towards the use of tractors, diggers and other farming machines. In this way, innovation has been brought about through education.

### The Meaning and Components of Economy

Economy as defined by Hornby (1974) denotes quite a range of meanings. Firstly, it means the avoidance of waste of money, strength or anything else of value. Secondly, it means the control and management of the money, goods and other resources of a community, society or household. And thirdly, economy denotes a system for the management and use of resources. In all these definitions, some key concepts stand out. These concepts include resources, management and value. Economy in this discussion would be taken to mean the management of valuable resources so as to enable the upliftment in the status of provision offered by the valued resources. These provision may be measurable as when it comes in the amount of money realised in a particular year on a particular project or the size of a budget; or unmeasurable

as, when it involves a change in behaviour. For instance, people may change their hygienic attitudes thereby saving cost on drug purchase and improving upon health.

One cannot talk about economy without mentioning economic development. Economic development refers to growth and fluctuations of economy and the influences exerted by such fluctuations on the improvement of human life. These fluctuations manifest themselves in different sectors of the economy. These include health, education, industries, transport, agriculture, external and internal human relations, etc. Economic development has always been of great concern to government. It is partly because every other development hangs on it and partly because it affects the living conditions of the people directly.

### **The Influence of Education on Economy**

Every nation owes its economy to the educational practice of the nation for the following reasons:

1. **Education provides the necessary manpower needs:** The broad aims and objectives of any educational system reflects the needs of the particular society. Education in institutions is diversified into various departments and faculties. Each of these departments is geared towards training out people with a particular type of expertise. In this type of arrangement, the educational set up provides the society with people in possession of various skills – engineers, doctors, nurses, teachers, agriculturists, etc. These people have been trained specially for their jobs in special educational departments and if need be in special educational institutions. When they qualify, they get into society to offer their services either in the government or in the private sector thereby contributing to the economy of the nation.

In the above illustration, a case has been made for formal education. Even in the indigenous type of education, the child learns by apprenticeship the trade of his immediate environment. Some people go farther by getting their children to learn the trade of another community depending on the need of the society at the particular time. Some specialised skills are also learnt but all these skills are learnt through apprenticeship scheme. These ensure the provision of manpower needs of the society.

2. **Education is a source of innovation:** As highlighted earlier in this discussion, education acquaints the people objectively with the manner

and tradition of his people. The child, in this process, learns about the practices of his people, the strong points in these practices and the weak points. He becomes objective in the assessment of the traditional practices and offers innovations. These innovations could be by a modification of an already existing practice or by an imitation of what happens elsewhere in such situations. For instance, in the Nigerian primary and secondary school system before 1973, the commencement of the school year had always been in January, to tally with the commencement of the calendar year. This was critically examined and assessed as an economic waste in terms of time. Reasons for the need for a change were advanced and a change was effected. Reasons advanced included, a waste of time especially as the graduates of the secondary school had to wait for months before starting their university education in October. A second reason was the fact that the months of July and August witness the heaviest rainfall. Because of this, children often get beaten, soaked and consequently sick. Economically speaking, there is a waste in terms of health, energy and finance as money would be required to provide drugs.

These necessitated a change in the school year from January – December arrangement to September – July.

Moreover, any social change which must succeed must be introduced into the educational system. This is because education brings about a change in attitude. Therefore, any attitude of the people which constitutes an obstacle to economic development is changed by the process of education. Little wonder then, if Nigeria decides to change the attitude of her people towards civil rule by the establishment of the Mass Mobilisation Directorate (MAMSER). It must be noted that a change in attitude through education is easier carried out with children rather than adults. This is why innovations or social change hoped to be effected in the society is first introduced into schools. If the effect of female circumcision, as an example is taught in schools, the attitude of children who themselves may have been circumcised would be changed towards the practice. They will grow up to be parents who do not circumcise their daughters. This type of change contributes to economy through a reduction in health hazards and facilitates a happy existence.

3. **Education promotes patriotism:** The love of one's country provokes in the individual the need to protect the country from disin-

tegration and bankruptcy. The understanding that the country belongs to everybody and it is the duty of all to contribute to its survival is the reason behind sacrifices made individually and collectively towards the improvement of conditions in the country. In the present day Nigeria, the high rate of illiteracy and uninformed people contribute immensely to the depreciation of the Naira (Nigeria's currency). This stems out of the preference of foreign goods over the locally produced ones thereby exhausting foreign reserves which could have been better used. Education for Nigerians today is trying to de-emphasize these attitudes of preference for foreign goods. Fashion, for instance, is researching into designing locally produced materials.

By preferring locally produced materials, the use of these materials would be increased. More researches would also be done in order to improve upon these materials. Interest of others would thereby be drawn towards these goods. In this way, the patriotic moves initiated by education improves upon the standard of living and enhances the country's market economy.

#### 4. **Education equips individuals with skills necessary in the society:**

The sustenance of any society and the individuals present in the society is only through the acquisition of skills. Education through its numerous agencies equips individuals with the necessary skills in the society. Nigeria of the past needed administrators. This was the reason behind the establishment of grammar schools. Mental skills of rhetorics, arithmetics, essay composition and the like were emphasized. This was good enough because the post-colonial Nigeria needed replacements for the essential duties in administration when the colonial masters leave. Today, the emphasis has changed. White collared jobs in clerical sectors are no more very easy to come by while technical and vocational sectors still have openings. This creates the necessity for people to retrain in technical and vocational areas. Emphasis also has been shifted from grammar subjects to technical as well as vocational subjects as witnessed by the 6-3-3-4 system of education (NPE, 1981). All these make for the provision of skills to individuals in order for them to be gainfully employed either individually or collectively after the acquisition of the said skills. By being employed gainfully, they contribute to economic development in that, apart from the gainful living they experience and their physical contributions, there is a reduction in social vices like stealing, prostitution and drug addiction

which are possible results of unemployment and laziness.

5. **Education increases productivity:** As already illustrated above, lack of education can cause a great loss to a country. This loss comes in terms of energy, time and material. For instance, the middle belt region of Nigeria produces quite a sizeable amount of tomatoes, fruits and vegetables during a certain period of the year. At other times, there is acute scarcity of these products. This occurrence calls for a study on how to preserve the freshness of these products. The lack of this facility for preservation discourages farmers from producing these commodities in large quantities because these products are wasted during the peak season. Education in this wise, provides knowledge by combining different physical and chemical principles on how to solve these problems. The preservation by either canning, refrigerating or otherwise provides for seasons of need. When this is practised and more people are educated towards the use of these preserved products, farmers would be encouraged to produce more as the excesses would be stored for the period of scarcity.

Education also furnishes people with the knowledge of how to grow these products so as to provide for the season of scarcity. Considering the irrigation process in Nigeria today, one sees a clear case where education strives to bring about increased productivity.

#### **The Relationship Between Economy and Education**

From the proceeding discussions, we have looked at how education can influence the economy of any nation. Economy and education are two sides of the same coin. Such that as education exerts its influence on economy, economy also determines to a great extent the provision of education in the nation. Here are some of the links between the economy and the educational provision of any country.

1. **Economy affects curriculum development and implementation:** A laudable curriculum can be developed for a country but without the accompanying equipment and the necessary manpower, it may not be implemented. The case of the 6-3-3-4 system of education in Nigeria provides a suitable example. This shall be discussed in detail in a subsequent sub-head.

This apart, the curriculum of any nation's educational system is geared towards reinforcing the economic development of the country. A country which needs to develop militarily, might incorporate military exercises into the curriculum of its educational system. As Nigeria is aspiring towards self-reliance in several areas and an advancement in technology, a curriculum which introduces technology into schools and promotes technical skills has been put to use. This is another way of saying that, the type of education practised in a country reflects the needs of the country's economy.

It is only when this is done that the products of the educational institutions can be gainfully employed. When the educational practices and the economic needs of any nation are at variance, unemployment ensues. This is because the skills provided for the school leavers do not relate to the necessity of the people at the particular time. In the early 1970s, there was a high demand for teachers to cope with increased enrolment in schools. In the late 80s, teachers were produced to face unemployment. This necessitated the closure of some teacher training institutions established in the 70s. The need for higher qualification for teachers then arose. Programmes like the Sandwich courses for the award of NCE and Degrees sprang up in Universities and Colleges of Education. Part-time courses are also undertaken. These are done in an attempt to keep education within the dictates of the economic needs of the society.

**2. Economy provides funding to education:** The amount of equipment provided for educational dispensation depends partly upon the economic level of the country and partly on the importance attached to education in the particular country. Every nation has observed the importance of an adequately planned education to national development. Therefore, almost all nations devote a sizeable percentage of their annual budget to education.

The amount of money to be spent on education for a particular period determines the programmes run, the qualification and the number of personnel employed, the infrastructure and the in-take. In the Nigerian system of education, the 6-3-3-4 system of education had to be delayed in almost all the States except four due to funds. In States where it was started, the necessary equipment were not acquired in time. All these were as a result of the economic state of the country. In fact, a very practicable recom-

mendation could be made to the government but owing to funds its implementation would either be completely neglected or delayed.

**3. Economy offers absorption for the products of education:** Many educational sectors come out with innovations and suggestions for change as a result of a research carried out in the area. Recommendations are often made to the government in the form of a communique or a proposal. In areas of great need also, the government can commission a research department to carry out a study in the area. When reports are submitted, the usual practice is for the government to try out the result got by the establishment of a special experimental project. From the observations obtained, an implementation committee is set up to enforce the worthwhile practice. In this way, ideas and knowledge; a product of education, is absorbed by economy.

Moreover, education provides people with skills – mental, vocational and technical. These skills are employed through the engagement of the individuals in the economic sectors for the enhancement of economic development. This provides the basis for the employment of school leavers and graduates to work in various capacities for where they are best suited. Even if the individual with any of the skills decides to be self-employed. In as far as he does so for the betterment of his financial status, health and to facilitate better living conditions, he is contributing through his education towards economic development. In this process, economy absorbs what he practices which results from his education.

For a bouyant economy, the situation described above is applicable. But, the economy could be bad such that school leavers find it difficult to be employed into the different sectors of the economy nor get self-employed. Demand for services or products produced depend highly upon the state of the economy. When people have money, they would decide to employ hands and make jobs lighter but when there is no money, the tendency is for a reduction of employment and maximum use of those employed. If need be, those already employed would be retrenched as was the case in the rationalisation exercise in Nigeria (1984 – 88). Even when individuals decide to be self-employed, products of this activity may not be patronised.

Taking the case of the UPE – Free Primary Education, when the statistics of the requirements for the scheme was worked out, the realities of the situation became clear and the recommendation got accepted as what

would be the desirable. But because of economic realities, the recommendations are not uniformly practiced. In such a case, steps are taken towards implementing the recommendations even if in part depending on the economic logistics. Like in the case of the above recommendation, most primary schools in many States do not pay fees. In a few States, books are provided. In just a few others, uniforms are provided. But these may not be all what constitutes Free Primary Education. This analysis examines how the economy can absorb educational outcome depending on the state of the economy at the particular time.

### **Conclusion**

Education has been described as an asset. This explains why most governments budget huge amounts of money, year after year, for it. In specific terms, it refers to the systematic training of people in order to achieve a particular nationally determined objective. Economy has also been looked at as the management of the valuable resources so as to enable the upliftment in the standard of life. Both economy and education are seen to interact such that one contributes towards the other's development. Looking at education and its contribution towards economy, it is seen that, in the first place, education provides manpower needed in various sectors for economic enhancement. Secondly, innovations in the society come about as a result of the education provided in the country. Furthermore, education instills in the citizens the worth of and love for one's nation as well as the skills with which individuals can provide for themselves and contribute individually towards economic development. In these various ways, education is seen to enhance productivity.

While education contributes in the various ways highlighted above towards economy, the latter dictates the content of the curriculum by making known its areas of need. It also funds and offers absorption for the products of education. In these various ways, education and economy are seen as complementary.

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