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Revamping and Sustaining Nigeria's Economy: Implications for Education

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Abstract

Revamping and sustaining Nigeria's economy is indicative of the appreciation of the fact that her economy is not on sound footing. It implies that many things have gone wrong and need to be put right. Nigeria's economy is growing at a very slow rate. Unemployment is escalating every day. Cost of living is mercilessly biting than expected as the days go by. Social vices are the order of the day and life is so unsure and dissatisfying. These and more are indices of a 'sick' economy. To revamp and sustain such a bastardized economy, there is dire need for the contributions of multi-faceted services, one of which is education. The researchers therefore sought for ways and means education can assist in not only revamping but also sustaining Nigeria's economy to engender development, creativity and appreciable standard of productivity in the area of goods and services. The following are some of the important recommendations made to enhance revamping and sustaining economic efforts in the society: (i) the government in power should develop and use wisely all its resources for the benefit of the citizenry; (ii) suppliers of labour should possess enough technical know-how, skills and materials to defend the integrity and security of the nation, (iii) government and all stake-holders in education should make it a continuing process from primary education throughout life; and (iv) the country should provide vocational education to produce skilled manpower to serve the ends of the economic systems and social utility.

Introduction

It is no use discussing the relationship between education and economy without explicitly linking the structure of the educational system to economic, social, scientific and technological character of Nigerian society. Educational systems, more often than not, reflect the essential characteristics of the society. If the society is not egalitarian in economic and social structure, the educational system will probably reflect that bias in terms of who is able to proceed through the system.

Education can influence the future and direction of society in a number of ways probably as a result of the society's pressure for both social and educational reforms. Thus, the relationship between education and economic development is a two-way process. By reflecting the socio-economic structures of the societies in which they function, educational systems tend to perpetuate, reinforce and reproduce that economic, social and scientific structure.

Education as an Economy Revamping Agent

According to Fafunwa in Nseno (2004:65) education is the total of all the processes through which an individual develops abilities, attitudes and other forms of behaviour of positive values in the society in which he lives. Danson, in Nseno (2004:55) defined education as "a systematic course of instruction, giving intellectual and moral training to persons, bringing up the young, helping the young to develop, bringing out the best in him, and to evolve an integral personality". To Bello, in Nseno (2004:70) education is "equipping individuals with greater power to appreciate their immediate environments. Education is for people to become well informed about issues affecting their life and to come up to a level that they can distinguish truth from falsehood in addition to possessing skills for the purpose of achieving self-reliance". Johnson, in Nseno (2004:58) looked at education as being well informed, having broad knowledge, understanding, good character training and sports. Education is to serve as a unique function through equipping individuals with the necessary skills and knowledge in order to understand their environment and also solve their problems. In the views of the researchers, education is all the process by which a child or young adult develops his abilities and other forms of behaviour which are of positive values to the society in which he lives. It is a process of transmitting culture in terms of continuity and growth, for imparting knowledge either to ensure control or to guarantee rational direction of the society. Education is also a process by which individuals acquire skills and knowledge in order to understand themselves and their environment and provide solutions to their problems.

Education is to build a united and self-reliant nation. It is to promote a dynamic economy and bring about an egalitarian society with equal opportunities for all. How successful are we in transforming our society today? How self-reliant are Nigerians today? Are Nigerians promoting a dynamic economy? At the present time is equity practicable in Nigeria? Objective answers to these questions will inform us on how far we have gone in destroying the economy which has now become imperative to revamp and sustain if Nigeria should still be proud of her sovereignty.

To revamp any economy through education can only be successfully carried out in the context of development. Development is a multi-dimensional process. According to Todaro (1999:81), development is a process involving the reorganization and reorientation of the entire economic and social systems. In

addition to improvement in incomes and output, it typically involves radical changes in institutional, social and administrative structures as well as popular attitudes, customs and beliefs.

Development means the process of improving the quality of all human lives and this can be done in three equally important approaches: (a) raising people's living levels i.e. their income and consumption levels of food, medical services and education through relevant economic growth process; (b) creating conditions conducive for the growth of people's self-esteem through the establishment of social, political and economic systems and institutions with human dignity and respect; and (c) increasing people's freedom to choose by enlarging the range of their choice variables. Development can be seen as a means of improving the total situation of man on earth, satisfying his spiritual and material needs and granting mastery of his environment, Tonny (2002:79). Development is a positive and life process. It is positive and remedial, expressive of man's confidence in his own natural power to create, generate, face continuously to overcome satisfactorily the fears, constraints, superstitions and bewilderment of ever-threatening environment. It encourages experience, experimentation and creativity. Development encourages self-reliance. This implies the right, the freedom, the capacity, willingness and the resolution of people to define, articulate and struggle to achieve their goals. Furthermore, it means achievement in the fields of economic, social, political, educational, scientific and technological advancement. Other inclusions are: health, equity, freedom, dedication to work, promotion of good behaviour, attitudes and values. Also, the ability to make use of human and material resources for human needs within the environment are aspects of development. In addition to these, the ability to control the environment, and eradicate poverty are aspects of development.

Objectives of Development

Development is a physical reality and a state of mind in which society through the combination of social, economic, scientific, technological and institutional processes secures the means for obtaining better life. Whatever the specifics of the better life, development in all societies have the following objectives:

- (a) to raise levels of living, including higher incomes, provision of jobs, better education and giving of more attention to cultural and humanistic values. These do not only enhance material well-being but also generate greater individual's self-esteem;
- (b) to increase the availability and widen the distribution of basic life-sustaining goods such as food, shelter, health and protection to all members of the society;
- (c) to expand the range of economic and social choice to individuals and nations by freeing them from servitude and dependence not only in relation

to other people and nations, but also the forces of ignorance and human misery.

Components of Economy and Development in Relation to Education in Nigeria

As stated earlier in this paper, every economy needs development and education is used as a tool for such development. With all the good philosophical thought, educational aims and objectives, how measurable is the development in Nigeria? How far have we gone in achieving good attitudes towards work, quality of life and the possibility of controlling our environment? In Nigeria today we still need things such as participation, community involvement beyond extended family and locality, objective judgment, observance of the rule and conduct in the workplace, equality, and time orientation towards the present and the future.

In analyzing the components of development in relation to education in Nigeria, we have the following economic growth, social amenities, inequality and poverty, women education, living standards, health, agriculture, rural development, brain-drain, unemployment, manpower need, and science and technology.

Education and Economic Growth

The proposition that educational expansion promotes or determines the rate of overall Gross National Product growth remains unchanged. Nigeria is deficient in the supply of high level skilled manpower such as engineers, doctors, pilots, leaders, economists, teachers, scientist etc. Without such manpower which is assumed could be created only through pragmatic educational system, development in both the public and private sectors will be lacking. In the absence of such leadership to plan, manage, participate and run the economy, economic growth could be retarded or totally curtailed.

Education, Poverty and Inequality

According to Coombs and Ahmed (2002:87), rather than being a 'general' for equality, educational systems of most developing countries including Nigeria aid in increasing instead of decreasing income inequalities. Equality of educational opportunity can have little meaning if financial assets and income-earning opportunities are highly unequally distributed. As a matter of fact, our national pride and instrument of egalitarianism can in reality merely provide a political cover for further widening of the gap between the rich and the poor. This circumstance leads to greater inequality and chronic existence of absolute poverty.

Education and Women

Educational attainment is thought to influence many forms of behaviour including women education. There is a direct relationship between a woman's educational attainment and her propensity to enter the labour force. There is also an inverse relationship between a woman's education and her fertility. For an

example, more educated women tend to have fewer children. Education increases the opportunity cost of women's time through a positive effect on her earning opportunities in the labour market.

Education and Living Standard

According to Robinson (2001:91) high standard of living ensures sufficient and well-balanced diet, good housing, security of employment, adequate social services such as education, health, water supply, electricity, good roads, sustainable pension scheme etc. A nation that is highly educated has all these. In terms of measurable development, the above listed variables are questionable in Nigeria.

Education and Unemployment

In Nigeria today, there is a growing social problem. A very large number of students are dropouts while a large number of school leavers and graduates are unable to secure any employment. Most parents nowadays cannot pay for their children's education because they cannot afford it due to poor economic situation. The resultant effect is an alarming increase in the number of dropouts from primary to tertiary levels of education.

Education and Brain-Drain

Brain-drain is the international development and transfer of physical and intellectual technology which tends to contribute to the widening income gap between developed and less developed nations. There is the problem of international migration of high-level educated manpower (the brain-drain) from poor to rich countries. In Nigeria, thousands of scientists, engineers, academics and doctors have been drained to richer countries for greener pasture.

Brain-drain has impacted a great deal on the educational and economic system of Nigeria. It has not only reduced the supply of vital professional people available within the country, but has also diverted the attention of indigenous scientists, doctors, engineers, architects, academics etc., away from important domestic problems of developing appropriate technology (Abba, 2000:76).

Education and Agriculture

Agricultural problems in Nigeria are many and complex. With the presence of education in Nigeria, changes in farming are rather too slow largely because farmers as a class tend to be conservative. The subsistence farming method is still being used by them. It is important therefore that innovations and methods of modern farming that are acquired through education should be geared towards local conditions for agricultural boost.

Education and Rural Development

If development is to become a reality in Nigeria, there is need to be a balance and integration between rural and urban development. There is also the need for the transformation of rural social and economic structures. There must be

a balanced economic and social development with emphasis on equitable distribution and rapid generation of the benefits of higher levels of living standard. There is still the need for the improvement of formal and non-formal education (adult education) and children that will have direct relevance to the needs and aspirations of the rural dwellers (Coombs and Ahmed, 2002:93).

In Nigeria today, education in the rural areas contributes very little to improving the levels of agricultural productivity or towards assisting students to function more effectively in their rural communities. To crown it all, for any development to succeed in rural areas, Coombs and Ahmed (2002:75) recommended the following remedial measures: (a) general or basic literacy; (b) family improvement education, (c) community improvement education; and (d) occupational education.

Education and Health

Health is a condition of physical, social and psychological well being of an individual. Education is to provide students with knowledge in various areas of ailments (Adamu, 2003:193-8). In addition to these education is also to produce manpower needed for health activities. This is in the form of doctors, nurses, laboratory attendants, pharmacists etc. All these are carried out in order to produce a healthy population for successful development.

In Nigeria today, if we are to examine the health sector, it is something of great concern. How many Nigerians can afford to settle their health bills? How many hospitals are properly equipped to take care of even the common ailments that take away the lives of many Nigerians on a daily basis? According to Abba (2000:68), in Nigeria today, the basic foundation of health i.e. nutrition is not only poor, but it is getting poorer for a large number of people. Without good nutrition, there can be no health, and without health, there can be no development.

Education and Science and Technology

Formal education provides students with the knowledge and skills of developing the capacity of their country. They are to master and locate within their environment the whole industrial production process. These are in the form of production of raw materials, fabrication of machines and the acquisition of skills to operate the machines, maintain and reconstruct them, manage factories and organize the production process. In fact, education is to provide the manpower needed in terms of science and technology for sustained development in the national economy.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Education, economy and development have many phenomena in common for successful national life. Though education is the bedrock, its effective contributions to development cannot be quite possible if the economic, social, scientific and technological structures do not synchronize their activities.

However, if Nigeria's economy is to be revamped, developed and sustained there is that dire need to orient her educational system towards the real requirements and aspirations of the citizenry. Moreso, it is wise to sincerely admit that Nigeria needs education for a living rather than preparation for life for her to be among the world's economic giants.

The following recommendations are made for revamping and sustaining the economy of Nigeria.

(a) the government in power should develop and use wisely all its resources for the benefit of the citizenry. To embark upon white elephant projects which could not be completed, and the abandonment of infant industries to die are indicative of wasted resources which should be vigorously safeguarded for the good of all in the country

(b) the suppliers of labour in all fields should possess enough technical know-how, the required skills and materials to defend the integrity and security of the nation for political and economic independence. Thus, economic well being of the masses could be highly improved and the multiple effect in the area of increased productivity assured.

(c) government and all stakeholders in education should make it a continuing process from primary education throughout life. Education should be provided as a social service at all levels. A situation whereby education is for selected few because of cost does not encourage growth and development.

(d) the country should provide vocational education to its people for the production of skilled manpower to serve the ends of economic systems and social utility. The type of education to be provided should gear towards the production of job creators as against job seekers.

(e) government should maintain a well-fed, healthy, well-informed and happy citizenry by providing adequate and suitable food, shelter, education, sanitary environment, basic social amenities and improved health care delivery for all citizens. These provisions could be gotten through technological self-reliance in the production of capital, manufacturing and consumer goods in the economy.

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