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**Building Human Capacity for Nigeria's Industrial Development  
as an Emerging Economy in the 21st Century: The Singaporean  
Experience**

By

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**Abstract**

*Nigeria is an emerging economy hurrying to join developed economies in 2020 less than ten years from now. Available indices show that Nigeria is plagued with human capacity building among other areas to join the league. That Nigeria's problems are self-inflicting because of her attitude to priorities her needs. The paper compares Nigeria with Singapore, a small island state with the same colonial experience as Nigeria. In terms of natural resources and population Nigeria is far ahead of Singapore. Singapore with a population of about 5 million utilizes knowledge economy and catapults herself among developed countries through her human capacity building especially in education and health care. Education and health are the two leading indices for economic development. Today knowledge economy makes nations stand tall among comity of nations - industrialization, science and technology. The major preoccupation of this paper is not to undermine Nigeria's progress but that Nigeria needs to look inwards and improve education and health care through adequate funding, training and high degree of motivation through adequate wages and salaries. Indeed, emphasis should be on holistic development, improve human and environmental security to attract Nigerians in the Diaspora to return home and those within to stay put and assist in development. That, it is hoped, would make Nigeria a place of attention in the international system.*

**Introduction**

Nigeria is fast becoming a nation that cannot be ignored among comity of nations. She is blessed with a good weather and arable land for agricultural development, abundant mineral resources in both liquid and solid, fish and other sea foods, and hydro-power potentials. She is strategically positioned on the Gulf of Guinea. She possesses large and productive population-translated to mean a viable market for consumer

goods. But in the area of human capacity, she is near average and much to be done in this direction. Indeed, today, transnational corporations and other organizations are feverish for a share in Nigeria's rich resources. The corporations that had a firm hold of Nigeria's resources since the colonial and post colonial times are repatriating billions of Naira home to develop their economies. Besides, the macroeconomic indicators for Nigeria is impressive compared to what was experienced in the 1980s and 1990s. For instance in January 2011, the World Bank raised its growth forecast for Sub-Saharan Africa which Nigeria is part to 5.3 percent. In spite of this performance, the standard of living is still very low. Nigeria is a country, to a large extent, is still firmly stuck in a chronic state of underdevelopment, poverty, and socioeconomic inequality. Despite the predicted economic growth more than 60 percent of Nigerians live on \$1 per day or less. This situation translates other problems, such as hunger, and its attendant vices (Offei-Ansah, 2011). According to the UN Food and Agricultural Organization (FAD), 150 million people living in Nigeria, 60 percent are chronically undernourished.

Indeed, the Nigerian problem is that most of the sectors of the economy are dominated by foreigners who rack home billions of dollars yearly. For instance, the major economic areas are dominated by foreigners; these include oil and gas which forms the corner stone of Nigerian development, information and communication technology, construction-seaports, airports, railway, roads and bridges. It implies that if Nigerians do not have sufficient manpower in these fields, thus repatriated funds could have been utilized locally, or at most reduced considerably, and this would shore up growth in the economy and the standard of living of most Nigerians enhanced. This is not to say that foreign remittances should not play a part in international economy. It is known that Nigeria receives millions yearly from remittances abroad. However, remittances flowing into Nigeria cannot be equal to that millions leaving Nigeria. Besides, money laundering and other illegal means of transferring money from Nigeria hindered development because if such money is ploughed back would have meant much in transforming our economy. Corruption and money laundering undermine development. Billions of dollars of Nigeria's money are taken away and dumped in Europe and America, thus continue to build the economic that are already ahead of us. Transparency international world corruption index places Nigeria as one of the most corrupt country in the world. Indeed, Nigeria occupies 134 positions out of the 178 countries used for the study. In the corresponding period, Singapore occupies a third position in the corruption perception index (CPI) Showcasing her as a less corrupt nation than Nigeria.

Another prominent Nigerian, Bartholomew Nnaji, is rated as the world's foremost authority in automatic robot and machine programming. He developed technologies which are applied in aircraft manufacturing, medical imaging, computer design and chassis centre (Ekoriko, 2001). The chorus answer usually given for reasons Nigeria professionals are not found in Nigeria is that the environment is not conducive for them to practice their trade. In '1980s when Nigeria's economy became prostrate because of the twin evils of poor standard of living and poor leadership, many professionals and non professionals began to migrate to the developed countries especially U.S.A, Canada, and Britain etc. In addition, the successive repressive military regimes forced many to leave Nigeria. In other words, individuals seek peace and security for selves and families, better pay, good conditions of service, job satisfaction and a higher standard of living. The above conditions are parallel to patriotism. However, the presidential committee set up by the Babangida administration to find the root cause of intellectual flight in 1988 argued: ... "We realized that the major problem is the economy, particularly the devaluation of the naira and inflation". This explains the unreasonably low wages paid to workers and professionals could not level the corresponding living conditions, thus throwing a large number of people into the poverty pool.

Indeed, about twelve years ago, the USA devised a new method of wooing people from developing economies to assist develop her economy, named American Visa Lottery. The Lottery provides the winners with American citizenship and automatic settlement in USA. With Nigerian environment crippled by poverty, insecurity, human rights violations, many have become pawns in the hands of these phenomena. Hence, both professionals and non professionals alike, 'baggage' themselves to USA, Canada, Britain etc. Building human capacity is a problem, but there is a 'corridor' problem to it, that is training of the personnel who later migrate to serve their skills in another man's land.

#### **Nigerian professionals in the Diaspora**

Nigerians are found in almost all countries of the world practising their skills. They are particularly found in Europe, the Americas, the Gulf States - Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Kuwait, Canada, Australia, etc. Current estimates put the Population of Nigerians in the USA alone at approximately 1.1 million; and probably another one million in other countries put together. Many of these Nigerians are professionals with specialization in such critical fields as medicine, education, information technology, engineering, space technology, aeronautics etc. It is estimated that between 21,000 and 25,000 Nigerian doctors are practicing in the United States alone. Those practicing

in Saudi Arabia and other Gulf States, Europe, Australia and other African countries puts in the figure close to 30, 000 (Uya, 2005; Anekwe, 2009; Todaro and Smith, 2009). It is worthy to note that there are 185, 000 Information Technology Nigerian Professionals. Nigeria also parades about 59 million teachers world-wide. This number alone can change the poor state of education in Nigeria if pooled together.

Nigerians are also found in various European, American and Asian States in the entertainment industry. The most spectacular field of entertainment is sports - football. In the early 1980s, Stephen Keshi, who played for the defunct African Continental Bank Football Club of Lagos, emerged and changed the fortunes of many Nigerians footballers. Between 1982 and now there are over three hundred Nigerians playing professionals football in Europe, the Americas and Asia. Usually, these footballers are trained locally (Nigeria) only to seek greener pastures elsewhere. Equally, others are in athletics, basketball, etc. (Bilewomo, 2009). The argument is usually that these people have been making remittances back home and that these remittances run into millions of dollars yearly. The Singaporean professionals make remittances as well, but the most important aspect or point of departure is that they (Singaporeans) attract home foreign Transnational companies in nearly all sector of their economy. This it is believed, has assisted to place the economy for higher than remitting hard-currencies only. Foreign investment has positive linkage effect in the building and expansion of economies especially in emerging economies such as Nigeria.

#### **Nigeria and Singapore using two indices - Education and Health**

Historically, Nigeria and Singapore share common historical link. Both countries were colonized by Britain. But Singapore had her independence five years after Nigeria had had. In population Singapore is about 5 million people about a population of Akwa Ibom and Cross River States. By size, Singapore has the size of Ogoniland, Rivers State. However, as earlier said the two indices for comparisons are education and health.

#### **Education**

One of the most important and constructive ways for human capacity building for an economy is through the formal education-training. For this training to have meaning begins from the primary level through the tertiary level of education. Of recent the Federal law makers frowned at the rate of failures in WAEC and NECO examinations of 2009 and 2010 respectively, and heaped the blame on different groups-teachers and administrative mechanisms. In 2008, the Times Higher Education ranked the universities in the world. No Nigeria University made the list of the top 500 universities