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Human Resource Development and Educational Standard in Nigeria

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Abstract - Human Resource Development strategy constitutes a major component of educational system of a nation. In many countries of the world including Nigeria, this has been accorded an important place in their efforts at achieving developmental goal. However, Human Resource Development is greatly determined by the standard of education in a country. This paper is aimed at examining the effects low standard of education in Nigeria on its Human Resource Development. Using only secondary data, it was discovered that both the National Policy on Education and the Nigerian Constitution emphasis the importance of investing in human resource through education for accelerated economic, political and social development. However, finding shows that, the present rate of underdevelopment and poverty among other social ills experience in Nigeria is a consequence of the decline in the quality and functional education in the country. The paper thus suggests that, for a reversal of the trend, there is the need for proper educational planning strategy, monitoring and evaluation, better learning environment and adequate funding. Corruption and indiscipline in the educational sector should also be tackled headlong.

Keywords : *development, education, educational standard, human resource, policy.*

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Human Resource Development and Educational Standard in Nigeria

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I. Introduction

The importance of qualitative human resource in the economic, social and political development of any nation cannot be overemphasized. No nation is known to have achieved great economic height or technological advancement without having a qualitative human resource. Even in the technological advanced and industrial nations of the world, qualitative human resources is still very essential to keep them abreast to changes. Thus, qualitative human resource is fundamental in deciding how much a nation can accomplish in its developmental objectives. The most effective developing countries have not only had a high rate of physical capital formation, they have also given priority to human capital formation (ILO 1995:89. Thus investment in human capital can enjoy rates of return that are at least as high as the returns of conventional investments. (Ojo, 1997)

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Countries like China, Japan, Korea, Israel, have experienced high level of development, despite the absence of any natural endow resource because of their investment in Human Resource or Capital. As Kuznet (1950) rightly asserts:

The major capital stock of an industrially advanced country is not its physical equipment. It is the body of knowledge amassed from tested findings and discoveries of empirical studies and the capacity and training of its population to use this knowledge.

No wonder, the developed countries have continued to be in the fore front of global technology breakthrough including the unfolding electronic, computer and internet revolution and due principally to the availability of various categories of qualified skilled manpower and technical experts. Therefore, the nature and quality of Human Resource Development programmes of a nation has a symbiotic relationship with its level of economic, social and political development. The Human Resource Development programmes of a nation are inculcated in its educational system. Thus, the quality of the educational system of a nation determines the caliber and quality of its human resource.

Apart from the numerous primary and secondary schools scattered across the country, Nigeria had in recent times witness proliferation of many Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education. As at 2007, Nigeria had over 100 Universities (the Federal, State and Private), 90 Polytechnics and 70 Colleges of Education. Apart from these tertiary institutions, there are other specialists and professional Institutions established to train effective human resources for the nation. However, despite the large number of these educational institutions, and couple with the large turnout of graduates annually, the country is still lacking in terms of qualitative and skilled manpower. This is an indication that there is a problem with the educational system in the country. The paper therefore examines the important place of qualitative education in Human Resource Development in Nigeria and its effects on national development.

The paper derives its data solely from secondary sources and the method of analysis was the content analysis.

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II. Conceptual Issue

a) Meaning of Education

There is no acceptable definition of Education and this is because it connotes different things to different people, culture and society. Ukeje (1979) sees Education as a process, a product and a discipline. As a process, Education is a set of activities which entails handling down the ideas, values and norms of the society across generation. As a product, Education is measured by the qualities and traits displayed by the educated person. Here, the educated person is traditionally conceived of as a "knowledgeable "and "cultured" person. While as a discipline, Education is defined in terms of the benefits of organized knowledge to which students are exposed to. Fafunwa (1974) defines Education as the aggregate of all the processes through which a child develops abilities and other forms of behaviour which are of positive value to society.

Thus, we can see from the above definitions that Education does not end at the acquisition of knowledge. It is the ability to apply it for enhancing individual and societal progress. But the technological gap between the developing countries including Nigeria and the developed nation has continued to widen as these developing countries are still finding it difficult to provide her citizens with the basic necessity of life (i.e. food, cloth and shelter etc). In other words, these countries are still battling with the problems of poverty, hunger, and other vices of underdevelopment despite the availability of abundant human and natural resources.

b) Aims of Education

Although the aims of Education differs, it has been realized that the building of a modern nation rests on the development of individual personalities to strengthen a series of social and national solidarities; prepare men and women for the better services of their fellows; raise the general level of knowledge, technology, wealth, and the standard of living within the society (Ezewu and Tahir; 1997; 85)

The aims of Education in Nigeria as stated in the Nigerian National Policy on Education (2004) include "the desire that Nigeria should be a free, just and democratic society; a land full of opportunities for all citizens; able to generate a great and dynamic economy; and growing into a united strong and self-reliant nation". Furthermore, there is a consensus of opinion too that if Nigeria educational system is made functional, positive changes which can accelerate National development in the country will emerge. Thus, ensuring and maintaining a high educational standard is paramount in achieving the above educational objectives.

c) Standard of Education in Nigeria

While there is a convergence of opinion that the standard of education has been on a steady decline in the last two decades, (Ojo, 1997:160, Olaofe, 2005, Ezewu and Tahir 1997), the same convergence is difficult to attain in trying to identify the reasons for this decline. According to Ojo (1997: 161), the problems which beset the Nigerian educational system have been the causes of the marked fall in the country's educational standard. These include shortages of qualified teachers, inadequate financial and infrastructural facilities, deterioration of norms and values in society including the schools and government misplaced priorities and monopolistic control of the educational systems.

Olaofe (2005) pointed out that the major reason for the declining standard of education in Nigeria is the learning environment. He describes the situation thus:

e*ducational community demands, adequate educational facilities and conducive education environment- education with a ratio of one textbook to twelve students, dilapidated school classrooms and lecture halls, education without the basic teaching, learning facilities, and teachers who themselves are not better than the children they teach, is a complete mockery of sound education system.*

Thus, to solve the problem of declining standard of education, the major problems associated with the learning environment has to be resolved. This was supported by Akpan (2000) when he opined that with a physical environment conducive, teaching and learning will be accelerated. Adagba, et al. (2006) subsumed the factors responsible for the declining standard of education in Nigeria under the following headings; teachers/lecturers; learner/students; learning environment; school management; government policy; and societal factor. The effects of these factors on the standard of education are all-compassing and intertwine.

d) Human Resource Development

Human Resource Management (HRM) is a strategic and coherent approach to the management of an organization's most valuable asset… the people working there who individually and collectively contributes to the achievement of its objectives (Armstrong, 2004: 30). From the above definition, Human Resource Management implies the effective manipulation of people to get the best out of them towards achieving organizational goals or objectives.

According to Frank (1974) Human Resource Management is a series of activities in which the Job, the individual and the organisation all interact as each develops and changes. He further identified two major activities within the human resource area. The first is concerned with recruitment, selection, placement, compensation, and human resource appraisal. These

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groups of function are usually referred to as personnel or human resource utilization. The other groups of function are those directed at working with the existing human resource in order to improve their efficiency and effectiveness. These activities are designed to enable the existing members of the organization to assume new roles and functions. These activities according to Frank (1974) are concerned with Human Resource Development.

Human Resource Development (HRM) according to Ojo (1997:155) is the process of increasing the knowledge, skills and capabilities of people. He further identified the following five major means of developing human resources, formal education, training, extension services, health services and migration. He however, singled out formal education as constituting a strategic component of Human Resource Development. Thus, Education is synonymous with Human Resource Development. Human Resources Development is concerned with the provision of opportunity to increase one's skill and knowledge through training. Development of qualitative human resource is imperative considering the dynamic nature of the world, globalization, couple with the constant changes in science and technology and various socio- economic and political challenges in Nigeria.

Thus, it could be said that any nation, which refuses to develop her human resource would go into extinction. This also suggests that qualitative education is a prerequisite for the existence of a nation. No wonder, Onah, (2003) argued that any organisation or nation who refuses to develop her human resource will experience paralysis. A country which fails to achieve a proper balance in Human Resource Development will produce the wrong kind of high-level of manpower; allow the perpetuation of the wrong kind of incentives and emphasis the wrong kind of training (Harbison and Myers: 1975). The above statement is better appreciated when one looks at the issue of declining standard of education in Nigeria.

Despite, the numerous primary, secondary and tertiary institutions in the country, couple with the various educational reforms in place, the belief is that the standard of educational is falling. Also, the low level of science and technological breakthrough in the country can be attributed to the falling standard of education.

III. The Role of Education in Human Resource Development

Education is inevitable for human survival and it implies the development of valuable knowledge and skills in a society. Hence, O'Connor (1957:7) sees the educational system of any society as an elaborate social mechanism designed to bring about in the persons submitted to it certain skills and attitudes that are adjudged to be useful and desirable in the society. Education is expected to generate new knowledge in various fields of learning, accelerate economic growth, equalize income distribution, forge national unity and integration, and enhance cultural and social advancement (Umo, 1978).

In view of the importance of education, there is that general believe that he who ceases to learn ceases to exist even when he is still alive and to exist is more than to live Frieze (1970:34). Thus, one who exists has attributes of transcending, discerning, communicating and participating with others who are in existence. Whereas, one who is merely living does not possess these critical attributes. Therefore, one whose development of knowledge ceases has also stopped to exist, he is merely living (Osugu, 2004).

Education is also a supplier of trained manpower. The educational system of a nation determines the type, nature and caliber of manpower to be supplied to the various sectors in the nation. In recent times, the caliber of manpower graduated from the tertiary educational institutions in Nigeria is an indicator that the educational system is ineffective. This is so, because the knowledge acquired make them readily unfit for the labour market. This simply means that there is a mismatched between the skills acquired and labour market requirements.

Education is also an employer of the same trained Manpower. Tobias (1969) had a long time ago observed that education is the biggest user of high-level manpower whether in the developed or developing countries. Indeed, it is the biggest industry in terms of employment payroll and investment in plant. In Nigeria, since the early days of Nigeria independence, the Ashby Commission (1960:50) noted in its report that the most critical factors in Nigeria's development were capital and high level manpower. These two were emphasized by the Commission. However, the Commission concluded that of all the resources required for economic development, high-level manpower required the consistence lead time for creation.

To Obaji (2005), the responsibility of producing highly quality manpower and specialist is that of the nation's tertiary educational institutions. According to her, in the time past, thousand of well trained manpower turned out in the tertiary institutions across the country was highly sought after both at home and abroad. The exploits of Nigerian experts abroad is a clear affirmation of the quality of training impacted on them by the Institutions. However, that is not the same situation now as most Nigerian graduates are no longer employable. The quality of teachers constitutes a major determinant of the quality of education, because no educational system can rise above the quality of its teaching staff. The quality of teaching staff in the nation's educational institutions, whether primary, secondary or tertiary is a cause for concern. Their ability to deliver would be impaired by the ineffective training received.

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Human Resource Development through Education also constitutes a source of investment which is expected to yield economic returns. The National Policy on Education (1998:5) understands the strategic role of Education when it observed that "not only is Education the greatest force that can be used to bring about redress, it is also the greatest investment that a nation can make for the quick development of its economy, politics, sociological and human resource". The justification to invest in the labour force must have emanated from the treaties of Human-Capital Economists that the most valuable of factors of production is Human Capital translated into investment in human beings through formal and informal education, on- the- Job training and migration (Nwankwo 1981:57-58). Thus, investment in Human Capital can enjoy rates of return that are as high as the returns to conventional investments.

The Asian Tiger countries and other developed and highly successful economies are so because of the priority given to Human Capital formation. The emphasis on human resource investment through education in some of these countries had not only led to economic growth but has also resulted to rapid growth in employment. The growth in employment pattern has also resulted to an exceptionally fast increase in the real wages of workers and a drastic decline in poverty.

In Nigeria, this intensive investment in human capital is missing. Apart from lack of political will and commitment on the part of the government to invest in human resource development, the rate of government funding of education is very low. This has impacted negatively, on the standard of education from 1990-1997 as the real value of government allocation for higher education declined by 27% even as enrolments grew by 79%. Statistics also shows that the budgeted allocation for education in the country is still low as compared to the international standard. The UNICEF standard is that every country should invest 26% of its total annual budget on education. This has not been the case in Nigeria as revealed in the table below.

Table 1 : Federal Government Budgetary Allocation to Education from 1999 – 2001

Year	Allocation
7.2	
1995	12.32
1996	17.59
1997	10.27
1998	11.12
1999	8.36
2000	7.00
2001	7.9

Source: Dike (2000).

As revealed in the table above, the low funding of Education has its own implications on the standard of education in Nigeria.

Education also constitutes a major factor in occupational mobility and it is a leveler of opportunities. However, the caliber of staff employed, especially as teachers into the educational institutions, constitutes a major barrier to maintaining high educational standard in Nigeria. Employment which is expected to be based on merit had been jeopardized by sentiments and other primordial factors. As Olaofe (2006) rightly observed "the appointment of teachers who themselves are not better than the children they teach, among other factors is a complete mockery of a sound educational system". In some of the government educational institutions, appointment of staff (both academic and non-academic) is hinged on ethnocentrism and other sentiments instead of merit. Interview and other forms of selection processes are done to officially and legally formalize these irregularities. Added to this, posting of staff on schedule of duty is done without regard for the person's area of specialization. With this, unqualified and mediocrities were introduced into the educational system and they tend to serve the interest of those who brought them into the system rather than serving the interest of the institution. As Onah (2003:122) has rightly said, "an untrained staff is a liability to a dynamic organization as he not only applies the wrong skills, but also impacts the wrong knowledge to others coming after him and those he happens to be supervising". This is the situation in most of our educational institutions in Nigeria today.

Human development through education has a symbolic relationship with a nation's development efforts. Manpower is the basic resource and it is the indispensable means of converting other resources to mankind's use and benefit. Therefore, how well we develop and employ human skills is fundamental in deciding how much we will accomplish as a nation. The manner in which we do so will moreover, profoundly determine the kind of nation we become" (U.S Dept of Labour). The assertion that qualitative human resource is a key to development cannot be contested. The availability of skills manpower is a sine- qua- non for modernization in general and economic growth in particular (Ojo, 1985)

Making reference to Korea and other newly industrialized countries In Asia, Park (1992:30) believes that when there are fairly well developed human resources, lack of abundant supplies of other factors such as (physical) capital and technology does not pose an insurmountable barrier to sustained growth. Harbison, (1973:7) also asserted that:

Human resources- not capital or income, not material resources constitute the ultimate basis for wealth of nations. Capital and natural resources are passive factors of production. Human beings are the

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active agents who accumulate capital, exploit natural resources, build social, economic and political organisation and carry forward national development. Clearly, a country which is unable to develop their skills and knowledge, the national economy will be unable to develop anything else.

It is in view of this that the International Labour Organisation (ILO, 1995:89) concluded that the most successful developed countries have not only a high rate of physical capital formation, they have also given priority to human capital formation. Thus, the developed countries have continue to be in the fore front of global technological breakthrough including the unfolding electronic and computer revolution due principally to the availability of various categories of skilled manpower and technical expertise. Due to the same reason, the technological gap between the developed and developing countries is widening as many of the latter are finding it increasingly difficult to meet basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter. In Nigeria, 70% of the population are till wallowing in abject poverty and the development of other sectors, i.e., transport, power, education, health among others are still at rudimental stages.

Olaofe attributed the lack of development to low quality of education in Nigeria. According to him, the resultant effect of the low quality of education has often been witnessed in the lack of modernization across levels of the Nigerian life. Education has placed Nigeria far behind in the modernization role and the defect has been the mother and father of all evil that follows, poverty, debt burden, violent, conflicts, corruption, abuses of human right, abuses of power, killer disease, epileptic democratic government and so on. The statistical figure backing up these ends are disheartening and depressing. Nigeria is at the bottom of a list of 21 African nations in terms of learning achievement.

Human resource development through education remains the only solution to solving the problem of poverty, unemployment and other development problems experience in Nigeria and other developing countries. With effective human capital through sound educational system, the wealth of the nation would be equitably distributed, especially in favour of the poor thereby improving their wellbeing. As Jones (1975) rightly asserts, "education sector in any country particularly in a developing country is very strategic as a proportion of government budget of the same manpower, and as the main sector through which national identity and national goals and aspiration are given meaning and reality among the people." Thus, human resource development through education is the means and the end of all developmental efforts.

IV. Conclusion/Recommendations

There is a consensus of opinion that if Nigerian educational system is made functional, positive changes which can accelerate national development in the country will emerge. The importance of Human Resource development through sound and effective education cannot therefore be over emphasized. The fact remains that the quality of human resources of a nation determines the rate at which a nation overcomes some of its developmental problems and challenges and as well achieve its development goals. Therefore, a qualitative and functional education is a sine- qua- non to qualitative human resources development in Nigeria.

- Thus, for Nigeria to develop, and overcome the various evils of underdevelopment, its educational system has to be made functional. The right type of education needed for accelerated development should be emphasized. That is, more emphasis should be on Science and Technology related courses, rather than other Arts and Social Science courses where a larger percentage of Nigerian graduates were been turnout.
- Similarly, technical, vocational and entrepreneurial education should be emphasized rather than theoretical knowledge as obtained in the system. Thus, the school curricular needs to be reviewed to make them relevant and practice oriented.
- Added to this, only qualified qualitative teachers and lecturers should be allowed to take up teaching appointments in our educational institutions. Teaching appointment should not be made for the Jobless or those who are looking for a place to earn income for a living. It should be for those with the ability, aptitude and knowledge. Merit should be the watch word in terms of appointment of teachers and lecturers.
- Also, an environment conducive for teaching and learning (i.e. quantitative and qualitative instructional and infrastructural facilities, funding, motivation etc) should be provided.
- Effective structures for the supervision and monitoring of educational policies and programmes as well as the activities of the educational institutions should be put in place.
- Corruption which has been the bane of our developmental efforts should be checked in the educational sector. Finally, government political- will is needed to make the educational sector more effective.

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