

Influence of Education towards Achieving Sustainable Economic Growth and Development in Nigeria : Considerations, Challenges and the Way Forward

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ABSTRACT

Education is one of the essential leading factors influencing the sustainable economic growth and development programs in first class countries, this is because they give it the needed priority and required attention. No country is said to be ready for economic growth, progress, development and sustainability without focusing on substantial investment in human capital. Economy of Nigeria will surely become more productive if the proportion of educated citizens increases and most importantly if government is ready to offer them proper attention. Essentially, government should be aware that education sector needs to be standardized and education at all levels must be accessible and affordable by all individual citizens regardless of their socio-economic status. Considerably, government should be aware that economic growth and development will be achieved through education (technical and vocational skills) based on standardized and acceptable social, economic and environmental dimensions. All the stakeholders in Nigeria must actively play their roles towards achieving this purpose. Hence, the need for government's practical determination, accountability, transparency, equitability and integrity as well as discipline towards proper monitoring of resources and the budget allocated for the education sector.

Keywords : Influence of Education, Sustainable Economic Growth and Development, Considerations, Challenges, The Way Forward, Nigeria.

I. INTRODUCTION

To individual citizens and for the needs of their country, education is not just to read and write. It is about using education for their own advantages and to utilize the knowledge for their growth and development. Also educated people can lead their own life without depending on others. The value of education is not only about making people literate, literacy is entirely different from education. Literacy is the ability to read and write, whereas education is

finding out the reason behind everything and using the reading and writing skills to improve people's lives. It helps the countries to grow economically and cherish with prosperity. To live flawless life, education is very important for every individual citizen and the country in general[1].

Education has long been acknowledged as one of the essential/linchpins to improve the lives of the very poor.[2]; [3]; [4]. It is the deliberate and systematic influence extended by a mature person upon the

immature through instructions, discipline and harmonious development of the physical, intellectual, aesthetic, social and spiritual powers of human beings according to their essential hierarchy and for the individual and social uses and directed towards the union of the educated with the creator as the final end"[5].

Furthermore, the positive effects of education are intergenerational [6]. According to [5], of all the various and numerous definitions given by various scholars, one that most people relate well with is the one that defines Education as a process which draws out the best in human beings with the aim of providing them with well balanced personalities, thus: culturally refined, emotionally stable, ethically sound, mentally alert, morally upright, vocationally self-sufficient, and internationally liberal. This definition is all encompassing in nature, as it described education as a total overhauling of individuals with a view of instilling in them the appropriate values and bringing out the best in them, taking into cognizance that the total make up of a man is in need of growth and development, ascertaining that man is naturally endowed and education is responsible for bringing about the development of these innate abilities that will enable him make original contribution to human life to the best of his abilities [5].

[7] reported that; newer evidence documents that in poor countries, as the quality of education rises, the returns on going to school also rise. For example, many studies show a strong relationship between educational quality and wages. According to a study conducted in South Africa as reported by [7], a standard deviation increased in test scores accounted for 35.5 percent higher wages, even in other countries with less-developed economies, wages were between 10 and 22 percent higher for each standard deviation increase in test results. When accompanied by other reforms, education can be the primary tool for improving students' abilities to be productive

members of society, which in turn gives individuals the tools they need to lift themselves out of poverty. As many African countries are working to end extreme poverty and have the youngest population structures in the world, these societies (including Nigerian Society) must deliver quality education for all children for the country to flourish [7].

It is unfortunate that children in some countries (Nigeria inclusive) have been facing many barriers to accessing education. Some are obvious-like not having a school to go to or parents are financially unstable to send their children to school while others are non-obvious in nature, like the teacher at the school not having had the training needed to effectively help children to learn, also, children are deprived from accessing educational opportunities as a result of government nature of negligence and indiscipline [8]. Despite the fact that education is a universal human right, being denied access to school is common for the world's 93 million children with disabilities. In some of the world's poorest countries, up to 95% of children with disabilities are out of school. A combination of discrimination, lack of training in inclusive teaching methods among teachers, and a straightforward lack of disabled accessible schools leave this group uniquely vulnerable to being denied their right to education [8].

Nigerian government recently acknowledged for the first time that the country has the highest number of children out of school in the world. The report maintained that there were 10.5 million children not being educated. Education officials have blamed cultural factors, nomadic communities and the Boko Haram insurgency; but critics point to a lack of funding [9]. Although, the country's education ministry says it is committed to providing an "inclusive and functional education system" [9].

Children with disabilities are one of the Global Partnership for Education's priorities. With a successful replenishment, the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) will be able to work with its more than 60 developing country partners to promote inclusive education [8]; [16]. [10] suggested that, it is the duty of the government to define the aspirations of the nation, and educational policies should focus on these aspirations, the Nigerian government is yet to do this [10]. Despite the rapid economic and technological changes, Nigeria has not made any major changes to its failing educational policies. The 6-3-3-4 educational system which was introduced in 1985 was designed to help students without sound academic abilities, learn technical and vocational skills after three years in junior secondary. However, this education scheme was poorly implemented and Nigerians never realised its benefits. A visiting professor of the Department of Political Science and Public Administration, Igbinedion University, Adeolu Akande, while delivering a public lecture on the "Role of education in national development", maintained that the high rate of unemployment in the country can largely be attributed to the government's failure to integrate the technical and vocational components of the 6-3-3-4 education system [10].

II. CONSIDERATIONS FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

Considerably, education is not meant to learn new things alone, but applying what had been learned to our daily activities for survival. [1] suggested that, education is nothing but studying different kinds of subjects to gain knowledge and understanding and trying to apply it in daily life. It was further explained that, education is not only the book of knowledge but also learning something practically. However, it is much more than to just go schools and colleges daily and attend exams, thus, it meant for gathering knowledge and relating it to our lives [1].

Consequently, education is not about intensive study, but to understand how to create the world around us and how to sustain it for future generations and how to develop relations for existence. The role of education is meant for developing something new rather than relying on the old innovations. It is the only way to win the world. One should be able to think deeply about something till its roots and understand the intention behind it through education [1].

[11] maintained that, education is a leading determinant of economic growth, employment, and earnings. Ignoring the economic dimension of education would endanger the prosperity of future generations, with widespread repercussions for poverty, social exclusion, and unsustainability of social security systems [11]. For every US\$1 spent on education, as much as US\$10 to US\$15 can be generated in economic growth [12]. If 75% more 15-year-olds in forty-six of the world's poorest countries were to reach the lowest OECD benchmark for mathematics, economic growth could improve by 2.1% from its baseline and 104 million people could be lifted out of extreme poverty [12].

Additionally, health and survival rates, fertility levels and even the quality of a country's governance and institutions can plausibly be assumed to be linked to a country's levels of educational attainment [13]. While completion of a basic education is associated with higher quality health indicators, progress on the other MDGs were influenced even more by the completion of a secondary education, and especially by women, for example in sub-Saharan Africa, an estimated 1.8 million children's lives could have been saved in 2008 if their mothers had at least secondary education- a 41% reduction [12]. Women with a secondary education seek out antenatal care and better medical treatment in general, take more measures to improve their children's health and they are more likely to send their children to school, and

have greater economic opportunities that will alleviate poverty and hunger [14].

Investment in secondary education provides a clear boost to economic development, much more than can be achieved by universal primary education alone. Hence, the focus of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals on universal primary education was important but insufficient. Universal primary education must be complemented with the goal of ensuring broad sections of the population have at least completed junior secondary education [13]. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) also have education targets including that 'by 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes. This shows more of an awareness of the importance of secondary education [15].

The Global Partnership for Education (GPE), [16] a global collaboration between more than 60 developing countries, is on the front lines of working to increase access to education in these places. On Feb. 1, 2018, GPE leaders convened in Dakar, Senegal for the third GPE replenishment, which aimed at raising \$3.1 billion in new investment for the fund. This money will go toward providing critical tools for students and teachers in developing countries around the world, often in states that are fragile and crisis-affected [8]. This is an indication that the world is concerned with development of education which is a tool for sustainable growth and development globally.

III. CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH GLOBAL EDUCATION

Increasing access to education can improve the overall health and longevity of a society, grow economies, and even combat climate change. Yet in many developing countries (Nigeria inclusive), children's access to education can be limited by

numerous factors [8]. Progress has been made to ensure all children can go to school and learn, but many challenges remain obvious toward achieving this purpose. [16] analyzed some of these educational challenges, thus:

- A. 262 million children and youth were out of school for the school year ending in 2017;
- B. Only 2.7% of humanitarian aid was invested in education in 2016;
- C. 75 million children aged between 3 to 18 live in countries facing war and violence and need educational support;
- D. US\$39 billion annual financing gap to achieve quality pre-primary, primary and secondary education for all in low and lower middle-income countries by 2030;
- E. 131 Million young and adolescents' girls worldwide are out of school in the year (2015);
- F. Refugees are five times less likely to attend school than other children;
- G. 69 million school teachers are required to provide every child with primary and secondary education by 2030;
- H. 4 out of 10 out-of-school children will never enter a classroom;
- I. 274 million primary school children worldwide are not learning basic foundational skills necessary to lead productive and healthy lives;
- J. In low and lower-middle income countries, around 40% of children with disabilities are out of school at primary level and 55% at lower secondary level;
- K. 1 in 4 young people in low and lower-middle income countries is illiterate and
- L. 54% of out-of-school children of primary school age live in sub-Saharan Africa

Source: [16]

IV. EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGES IN NIGERIA

According to Wikipedia, Education is the process of facilitating learning, or the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, beliefs, and habits. It is the act or process of imparting or acquiring general knowledge, developing the powers of reasoning and judgment, and generally of preparing oneself or others intellectually for mature life. According to [17], the education sector should be paid lots of attention because it gives room for the country's development. Unfortunately, the quality and standard of education in Nigeria is poor because it has not been paid adequate attention.

Nigeria runs a federation system, so the Nigerian education system is overseen by the Ministry of Education. The education system at the federal level is managed by the Ministry of Education. This includes management of federal universities and schools. State public schools and tertiary institutions are controlled regionally by the Ministry at the state level.

[17] highlighted the leading causes for poor state and quality of education in the country (Nigeria) and possible ways out.

1. Poor Funding

The first and possibly one of the greatest challenges facing education in Nigeria is inadequate funding by the federal, state and local governments. In the year 2017, Nigeria's education sector was again allocated much lower than the 26 percent of national budget recommended by the United Nations.

The global organization recommended the budgetary benchmark to enable nations adequately cater for rising education demands. But, in the proposal presented to the National Assembly, the present government allocated only 7.04% of the 8.6 trillion 2018 budget to the education. The total sum allocated to the sector is N605.8 billion, with N435.1 billion for recurrent expenditure, N61.73 billion for capital

expenditure and N109.06 billion for the Universal Basic Education Commission.

2. Poor Governance

Poor governance and mismanagement have crippled most sectors in the country not leaving behind the education sector. Government's attitude towards crucial problems of education, especially its quality, is uninterested. Governments at all levels are more concerned about issues that are not as important as education and this is crippling the sector.

3. Corruption

Corruption is one of the major problems in the country and the educational sector is not an exception. There are stories of lecturers collecting bribes from students in exchange for good grades, university administrators demanding money from students to have their exam results compiled and submitted to the National Youth Service Corps, admission seekers paying money to get admission into universities and so on. Also, school funds that are meant for salaries, maintenance and so on are being mismanaged and being diverted for personal use. This cuts across all the level of the education sector; universities, private and public secondary schools.

4. Lack of Responsibility and Control

This is a problem not only affecting Nigeria but most countries on who exactly controls the educational sector. Is it federal, state or local government, for example, the control of primary education is neither fully in the hand of federal government, nor state or local governments, this is a great barrier for effective educational development at the basic level. Works needed to be done are being passed around and it is unfortunate that no tier of government wants to actually take any responsibility.

5. Politicization of Education

Talking about politicization in the education sector, the desire to compete with others, governments at all levels, especially at the state level, attempt to run many institutions even when they are least prepared to do so. This cause the general fall in the standard of the initially existing ones and the available budget cannot cater for all their needs. In addition, state governments give accreditation to private schools that they know are not well equipped for teaching, all in a bid to generate more revenue for themselves.

6. Lack of Infrastructure

In past years, schools and other vocational institutions have collapsed due to abject neglect by governments. Our tertiary institutions having to fall into dilapidation and products of such schools are not given adequate training to compete with other products of another country. Many schools lack basic equipment for conducive learning, most especially for science practical classes, and those that claim to have, are just managing the old ones. Hence, the students only learn the theoretical steps rather than carrying out the practical aspect. Also, the libraries in schools are lacking the needed books, journals and magazines.

7. Indiscipline

This is manifested in examination malpractices, secret cult menace, corruption etc. The investigation revealed that some examination centers exist in this nation, where parents are paying money for qualifying their wards to pass SSCE–WAEC/NECO/JAMB. Indiscipline is so endemic in the sector that we hear of cult’s killings almost every day in the media, students are no longer concerned about academic excellence.

8. Poor Parenting and Guidance

Parents are meant to provide the basic necessities needed to meet the challenges of life, but many parents do not even show enough care or support. All they want is for their wards to excel irrespective of the means. This lack of proper guidance towards their

wards leads to encouragement for their children to engage in exam malpractices and some parents pay for special centers (neglected centers) for their wards to pass exam. We have also heard stories of parents following their wards to schools to fight or harass teachers all because their wards were cautioned or disciplined.

9. Lack of Teaching Aids

Teaching aids are objects or devices used by a teacher to enhance or enliven classroom instruction. There is a wide range of teaching aids which can be audio, video, books, DVDs, Projectors, computers etc. these are not adequately provided for teachers thereby making teaching-learning situation difficult.

10. Unstable Curriculum and Subject

An effective curriculum provides teachers, students, administrators with a measurable plan and structure for delivering quality education. It acts as a roadmap for teachers and students to follow the path to academic success. There is no stable curriculum in the sector, because of changing policy, most schools cannot keep up and you see most schools using the British curriculum.

11. Unwillingness to Study Education in Schools

Unlike other academic disciplines that are highly competitive, there are scanty applications into faculties of education and colleges of education. According to research, in 2015 as reported by [17], of the more than 1,700,000 applications for university admissions, less than five percent applied for courses in education. These data point to the lack of interest of candidates for a career in the teaching profession. Most graduate teachers are not professionals and are inadequately exposed to teaching practice while many of them cannot communicate effectively in English (as medium of instructions) of which directly affect the education sector.

12. Unstable Staffing

Unstable condition of teaching has made most professionals search for alternatives and because of the meager/inferior salaries they earn, some of them have other alternative and they pay more attention to these alternatives, this surely affect their effectiveness and dedication with in turn affect teaching-learning situations.

13. Lack of Good Teachers' Welfare

There is poor teachers' welfare in the educational sector, teachers are poorly paid and lack basic welfare packages. In addition to the poor salary, they are not paid on time which is why we hear of strikes often. Once the teachers go on strikes, the students are asked to go home which often resulted in them spending long years studying for a course, there are cases of students spending five to six years studying for a four-year course.

14. Unaffordable Education

The current minimum wage in Nigeria is eighteen thousand naira (NGN 18,000) and the proposed thirty thousand (NGN 30,000) as minimum wage is not yet approved by the government and most homes survive on this (NGN 18,000) which is the price of a bag of rice. It will be hard for such homes to send their children to school because of the high rate of school fees, books and so on. Most people cannot further their education because of the high rate of acquiring a university education.

15. Scarcity and Prohibitive Cost of Books at all Levels of Education

The necessary textbooks needed for easier learning are either scarce or ridiculously expensive, making it hard for students or teachers to buy or use them.

- A. Most of the problems are as a result of lack of funding, inadequate and proper budgetary allocation. To solve this problem, government should provide adequate funds for acquiring quality training facilities, for renovating schools and also getting good infrastructure to ensure there is a conducive environment for teaching and learning. Furthermore, the funds should be maintained and properly monitored to avoid mismanagement and embezzlement.
- B. Governments at all levels need to be committed to delivering a competitive and high quality and standard of education across the country.
- C. Examination regulatory bodies need to work tirelessly to curb examination malpractices.
- D. Teachers' salaries need to be improved, this will serve as a motivation for them to be more effective and dedicated.
- E. Curriculum needs to be revised and improved upon. It needs to be more practical and researched based rather than just theoretical and the inclusion of extracurricular activities.
- F. Measures need to be taken to ensure stability in the teaching profession. Qualified and professional teachers should be employed.
- G. Teachers, lecturers need to be given periodic training to ensure what they are giving out is good quality.
- H. Teachers should be provided with quality and up to date materials, also quality teaching aids will help to improve the education sector.
- I. Students should be admitted based on merit rather than their social class.
- J. Penalties should be laid out for unlawful collection of money from students for any reason.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

The out listed problems crippled the education sector in Nigeria. Thus, [17] recommended possible ways forward/solutions to the problems, these are:

VI. CONCLUSION

Education is an instrument for economic growth and development for individual, community and society at large. However, education sector needs to be given

proper attention and monitoring. Hence, the out listed recommendations above need to be taken into consideration for the country to move forward, because education is one of the essential leading factors influencing economic growth, development, progress and sustainability. Therefore, it is important to focus on substantial investment in human capital. Economy of Nigeria will surely become more productive if the proportion of educated citizens increases and most importantly if government is ready to offer them (educated citizens) proper attention. Essentially, government should be aware that education sector needs to be prioritized and all levels of education must be standard whereby it (education) can easily be accessible, affordable by all individual citizens regardless of their socio-economic status. Considerably, government should be aware that economic growth and development will be achieved through education (technical and vocational skills) based on standardized and acceptable social, economic and environmental dimensions. All the stakeholders in the sector must actively play their roles towards achieving this purpose. Thus, the need for practical determination, integrity, accountability, transparency and equitability as well as discipline towards proper monitoring of resources and the budget allocated for the education sector.

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