

THE PLACE OF EDUCATION IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF NIGERIAN COMMUNITIES

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Abstract

There are many programmes that will revitalize rural areas, improve their socio-economic well-being and slow the trend of rural-urban migration. One of such programmes is a qualitative and effective education (including adult education programme). Education brings up the need for capacity building of the Nigerian citizenry as human beings have critical role to play in the society. Therefore, the development of Nigeria depends mainly on the workforce needed for keeping farms and industries running, providing jobs, fostering efficiency and entrepreneurship, and propelling economic progress for the benefit of the of the citizenry. Education as an agent of change, is a vehicle for societal transformation and empowerment. The paper focused on the concept of education in relation to development, efforts of various Nigerian Governments towards development, the need to invest in education, and the complementary nature of education in national development. It further focused on the challenges facing education in the development of Nigerian communities, with a view to suggesting ways of redeeming the situation including the strategies for boosting educational provisions in remote areas.

Keywords: education; development; rural communities; national development; Nigerian Governments

1. Introduction

Nigeria is one of the developing countries of the world that has a few metropolitan areas, the most of which are the consequence of colonial rule. Only a few additional metropolitan settlements were founded by indigenous governments. Modern infrastructure facilities, such as bore-holes, a decent road network, information and communication networks, electricity, and modern health-care services, are available to metropolitan populations. However, it's worth noting that the majority of Nigerians live in rural areas with limited access to basic amenities. More than two-thirds of Nigerians reside in rural areas (Obetta & Okide, 2011). The rural communities are characterized by high poverty trap, low income and investment, under-utilized natural resources, rapidly increasing population, disguised employment, low productivity, use of traditional technology, and limited enterprise or entrepreneurship. Lele and Adu-Nyako (1991) noted that other characteristics of rural areas include a high rate of illiteracy, ignorance, illness, and hunger, a lack of social and physical infrastructure (such as all-season roads, drinkable water, electricity, decent schools, and health centers), political impotence, and vulnerability. From the fore-going, it is clear that many Nigerian communities are under-developed.

2. Development and Efforts of Nigerian Government

Development is aimed at improving the human well-being by lowering the global poverty rate. Thus, the fight against poverty has become an urgent task for every nation, particularly the developing ones. It is on record that two-thirds of the world's population (of over 6 billion people) live below poverty line of less than one dollar per day (Ugwu & Ohia, 2008). This further shows that there are more than 1.2 billion people around the world living in extreme poverty, on less than \$1.25 a day (Lam, 2014). In Nigeria, about 112 million people

(representing 67.1% of the country's total population) live below poverty line (National Bureau of Statistics, 2016 cited in Orokpo, Haruna, Asmau, & Mutong, 2018). Poverty is a condition in which individuals and households cannot meet or satisfy the basic necessities of life (such as food, clothing and shelter and other basic social services and privileges) that will make them to live a decent and fulfilled life.

Poverty is a state of deprivation characterized by low incomes and the inability to obtain the basic goods and services required for a dignified existence, as well as poor health and education, limited access to clean water and sanitation, insufficient physical security, a lack of voice, and a lack of capacity and opportunity to improve one's life (World Bank, 2004). Thus, underdevelopment is associated with poverty. Ochim (2018) affirms that a developed country is a country that has reduced the poverty level of its citizenry to the barest minimum level. According to Obeta and Okide (2011), development is the process of raising people's quality of life. As such, it is measured by education, food production and nutrition, housing, health, recreation and security.

Development incorporates a society into the national economy from its traditional isolation. Poverty entails economic, social, political, and cultural deprivations; thus, development cannot be done without removing poverty. The conditions that created the poverty situation in Nigeria over the years include the lack of capacity of the poor to influence social processes, public policy choices and resource allocations; low capacities through poor provision of education, vocational skills, and entrepreneurial abilities, poor health and poor quality of life, among others (Addae-Korankye, 2014). Eradicating poverty in Nigeria has been one of the country's primary difficulties. The rural people are the worst hit by poverty in Nigeria as they lack adequate level of education.

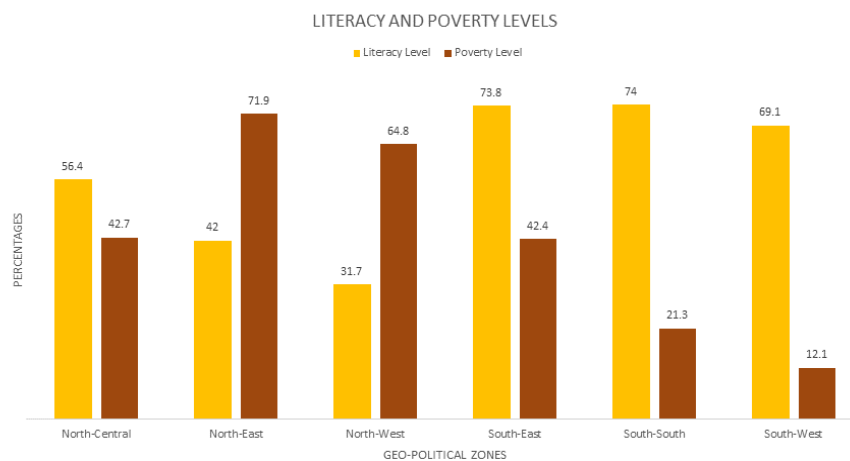
To redress the situation of poverty and development in Nigeria, the Nigeria's federal government has devised a number of programmes targeted at improving people's living situations. Since the 1970s, some of the programmes have included General Olusegun Obasanjo's Operation Feed the Nation and Alhaji Shehu Shagari's Green Revolution (Obeta, 2014). People's Bank, Community Banks (which later became Micro-Finance Banks), Structural Adjustment Programme, National Directorate of Employment, and Directorate for Food, Roads, and Rural Infrastructure of General Ibrahim Babangida; Better Life Programme for Rural Women of Chief (Mrs.) Mariam Babangida, and Family Support Programme of Mrs. Mariam Abacha are among the other programmes. Also, The National Poverty Eradication Programme, the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy, and Universal Basic Education were all launched by Chief Olusegun Obasanjo. Despite the many development programs launched by succeeding administrations, as well as the significant budgetary outlays associated with them, the rural population has remained impoverished. Lack of essential social amenities, hunger, illness, and illiteracy are some of the characteristics of poverty. The low success recorded had consciously been contributing factors to the poor economic state and poor living conditions of Nigerians especially at the grassroots level (Olaleye & Adekola, 2006). As a result, it is necessary to develop programmes that would revitalize rural areas, improve their socio-economic well-being, and minimize the trend of rural-urban migration. One of such programmes brings up the need for capacity building of the Nigerian citizenry through a qualitative and effective education (including adult education programme). Education needs to be organized in an integrated manner to change rural life for better. There is a saying that an educated country does not mean a developed country. However, no country can develop without

the education of its citizenries. Therefore, in Nigeria, effective education investments are critical to overcoming poverty, combating climate change, and attaining sustainable development.

3. Why Investing in Education?

Education has an important role to play in human life. Nevin (2008) affirms that education promotes knowledge and skills development, understanding, and values. Education ensures adequate environmental protection and conservation, promotes social equity and encourages economic sustainability. Nigerian children should be able to attend school and get the necessary information and skills to be healthy and productive, maintain themselves and their families, and become self-sufficient citizens. This is because, the development of Nigeria depends mainly on the workforce with the required competences and skills to work on the farms and factories, thereby creating employment, fueling innovation and competitiveness, and improving the economy for the benefit of all. Education is as an agent of change. It propels societal transformation and empowerment. It is an essential tool for poverty eradication. From Haladu's (2018) report, it is disheartening to note that 38% of Nigerian population are illiterates, showing that 11 million children are out-of-school, while 60 million youth and adults did not attend school at all. This indicates that a total about 71 million citizens of Nigeria cannot read

Fig. 1: Literacy and Poverty Levels in the Geo-Political Zones of Nigeria



Source: National Bureau of Statistics (2010).

and write or who lack basic skills for modern living. Figure 1 below showed that there is relationship between education (literacy level) and poverty. Southern Nigeria with high literacy rate has low poverty racket. For instance, South-South Zone has a high literacy level of 74.0% and a low poverty level of 21.3%. On the other hand, three zones in the Northern Nigeria with low literacy rate experience high level of poverty. Specifically, North-West with the lowest literacy level (31.7%) has a high poverty level of 64.84%.

It therefore shows that educational investments are crucial for the sustained economic growth of any country without which long-term poverty reduction is impossible (Hanushek & Kimko, 2000). For instance, the Ministry of Education of Ethiopia provides technical and vocational education and training (TVET) to those who have completed grade 10, while Community Skills Training Centres provide literacy and basic skills training to young people and adults over the age of 15 who have not completed grade 10 or have no education at all

(Sandhaas, 2005). However, over the previous few decades, the Nigerian government has only minimally funded the educational sub-sector (Adewale, 2006). Following the Dakar Forum on education for All (EFA) and the creation of a new poverty reduction strategy, education, both primary and secondary, has garnered increased political backing as a way of reducing poverty and illiteracy (Orji, 2005).

In order to reduce illiteracy in Nigeria, the government used both formal and non-formal methods. According to Fasokun and Pwol (2008), illiteracy is caused by problems in primary education (low enrolment rates, high dropout rates, inadequate facilities, poor teaching/learning materials, irrelevant curriculum); poor enrolment rates in adult literacy programmes; high dropout rates linked both to economic problems which force learners to abandon classes in favour of income-generating activities, funding issues and low morale among teachers, and teachers not properly trained in teaching and learning skills among others. The formal education approach to eradicating illiteracy focused on children of school age (who are enrolled in schools). The non-formal education approach (second-chance education) focused on children, youth, and adults who have either dropped out of school before achieving permanent literacy or have never attended school due to a variety of factors (Adewale, 2009). A strong educational system broadens access to opportunities, improves health, and bolsters the resilience of communities. Also, education provides people with the required skills to thrive in a sustainable economy, working in areas such as renewable energy, agriculture, forest rehabilitation, the design of resource-efficient cities, and sound management of healthy ecosystems (World Economic Forum, 2015). Therefore, there is the need to examine the place of education in the development agenda of Nigeria.

- i. *Education enables people in paid formal employment to earn higher wages.* Highly educated people in wage employment are paid more to reward them for their higher productivity. Returns to schooling are high in Nigeria, showing the need to invest in education in the country. Education helps to protect working people from exploitation by increasing their opportunities to obtain secured contracts.
- ii. *Education offers better livelihoods for people in the non-formal sector.* Many poor people work as daily labourers or engage in micro-enterprises, whereas the more educated ones are more likely to start a profitable business. In Uganda, owners of household enterprises who had completed primary education earned 36% more than those with no education, and those who had completed lower secondary education earned 56% more (World Economic Forum, 2015).
- iii. *Farmers' revenue is enhanced through education.* The majority of Nigerians rely on agriculture. As a result, educated farmers are better able to comprehend and respond to new agricultural information, such as fertilizer usage, soil conservation and erosion control methods, cash crop production, and the introduction of new seed types, among other things.
- iv. *Education is a critical component of overcoming persistent poverty.* Raising educational standards has made an impact. Between 1994 and 2009, rural families with a head of family with a high school were not likely to be impoverished (World Economic Forum, 2015). As a result, finishing junior secondary school has a major influence in a number of situations.
- v. *Education helps to prevent inter-generational poverty.* In Guatemala, mothers with greater levels of education and cognitive skills spent more time in school with their children. As a result, each grade completed increased these children's salaries by 10% as adults. The children's income also increased by 35% resulting from the comprehension reading improvement with the test mean score from 14 to 36. Children in Senegal with educated parents were more likely to find work outside farming and therefore avoid poverty (World Economic Forum, 2015).

vi. *Educated parents apply appropriate health and hygiene practices.* Even after accounting for other factors linked to better nutrition, such as mother's height, breastfeeding practices, water and sanitation, World Economic Forum (2015) finds that in Asian Countries, children that their mothers had junior secondary certificates were 48 % less likely to be stunted than those whose mothers had no education.

vii. *Education aids in the provision of a diverse diet rich in essential micro-nutrients.* In Bangladesh, family food variety was 10% higher when both parents had a secondary education. It was far better than when neither parent had any. Only 51% of homes in Indonesia with no educated women used salt that is iodized, when compared to families with mothers (95%) who had completed junior secondary school. Also, few families with mothers (41%) without a high school certificate gave their children vitamin A supplements in the previous six months, compared to 61% of homes with mothers who had completed a junior school certificate.

viii. *Education helps to reduce obesity.* Education helps people lose weight, according to research from United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and the Republic of Korea. With highly educated people, receiving guidance on healthy diet and weight control is more effective.

ix. *Millions of children's lives have been spared due to mothers' education.* To eradicate avoidable child deaths by 2030, immediate action is required, with education playing a key role. If women in developing countries have secondary school certificates, the death rate of children under the age of five would reduce by 49%, saving 3 million lives per year (World Economic Forum, 2015). Educated mothers are more likely to give birth with the help of a midwife or other skilled birth attendants. Educated mothers are also likely to ensure that their children are vaccinated. Maternal education reduces the risk of pneumonia death, by improving on the administration of measles vaccination, and avoiding the use of traditional cooking stoves that generate harmful smoke and fine particles. Also, maternal educated can reduce incidence of diarrhoea, which kills 0.8 million children each year, accounting for 11% of all child deaths. Women who have had an education are more inclined to maintain cleanliness and respond to signs like bleeding or high blood pressure with easy and low-cost measures.

x. *Education is crucial in order to limit illness.* Improved access to education is critical in supplementing the need for investments in medicines and insecticide-treated bed nets, which are some of the strategies for malaria prevention. Those with more education avoided the risky behaviour of contracting HIV/AIDS epidemic because they had a greater understanding of the implications, and women had their sexual relations under their control. Extraordinary rapid reduction in HIV infection rates in Zimbabwe can be attributed to education (Global Burden of Disease, 2010 cited in UNESCO, 2015).

xi. *When learning starts in infancy, achievement and attainment are greater in primary school and beyond.* Education stimulates cognitive development of children. Early childhood care and education makes sound investment on children from disadvantaged groups. An initiative organized by local non-governmental groups in rural Bangladesh built approximately 1,800 pre-schools and upgraded their resources (World Economic Forum, 2015). By elementary school's second grade, children that attended kindergarten scored better in speaking, reading, writing, and arithmetic than those who did not.

4. Complementarity of Education and National Development

Education and national development are like the two sides of a coin; they look opposing yet together constitute the coin's entire form. A close analysis of both reveals that their primary goal or aim is to effect change. In terms of education and national development, the subject of social commitment is important, with an emphasis on the development of human skills and the

cultivation of social, moral, and intellectual responsibility in connection to local, national, and global citizenship. Education's complementary function in national development is to influence social change by bringing the two processes together to address social concerns. More importantly, for a specific community to attain any fit in the growth process, the problem of leadership is so central to the two disciplines. Remarking on the mobilizing function of education and national development, there should be purposeful leadership endowed with the necessary characteristics and eager to acquire valuable information. Their complementarity provides a variety of development instruments, as their shared goal is to mobilize people for change. Similar intervention approaches are now acknowledged in both education and national development. The intervention focuses on reduction of poverty, recognition of the potentialities of indigenous knowledge, involvement of community members, promotion of participatory approach utilization, coping with liberalization policies, and taking a comprehensive approach to the development of rural areas (Obetta, 2019). Other intervention principles are preparing rural people for off-farm employment by building knowledge and skills capacity; understanding the complementarities of urban/rural linkages; developing partnerships with NGOs and the civil society; focusing on gender issues; and focusing on HIV/AIDS issues.

5. Challenges Facing Education in the Development of Nigerian Communities

There are a lot of problems that make good quality education very difficult in Nigeria. Most of the problems are responsible for under-development in Nigeria. Such problems include:

i. *Inadequate funding.* Poor financing from the federal, state, and municipal governments has led to the poor status of many urban and rural schools' plants. Between 1997 and 2000, federal government education spending was less than 10% of total spending, according to statistics (Igbuzor, 2006). The national education budget falls well short of the UNESCO guideline of 26% of national budgets.

ii. *Inconsistency in government policies.* Education continues to be an instrument of bait for either the government or the politicians. Attempt at the democratization of education dates back to 1957 when the constitution introduced a federal system of education under the regional governments. Between 1955 and 1957, the Western and Eastern Regions, and Lagos Colony introduced Universal Primary Education Scheme. The scheme in these areas was not sustained because of the heavy strain on the revenue of the regional governments. Shortly after independence in 1960, the country was caught in a period of severe strife of a civil war that ended in 1970 (Obetta, 2016). During that period, government's priority was shifted from education to defense. Although, the Second National Development Plan of 1970 – 74 gave priority to education, it was truncated by the programmes of Rehabilitation, Reconstruction and Reconciliation (the 3Rs). The Third National Development Plan of 1976 – 80 once again re-asserted the Federal Government's total commitment to the provision of equal opportunities for all Nigerians, including equal educational opportunity. This led to the launching of another Universal Primary Education Scheme in 1976 by Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo's administration. The scheme also failed as a result of hasty implementation, lack of support services and staff among others (Obetta, 2008). In all these, the youth could not find any substantial reason for attending or remaining in schools that have no steady policy. So, many decided to look for alternative means of livelihood. Other areas where government policies were inconsistent include frequent change of school calendar, and changing of curriculum programmes among others. Formerly, the curriculum emphasis was on grammar. This was later shifted to science. Presently, it is technology. The system also changed from 6:5:4 system to 6:3:3:4 system which the goals and

aims have not been realized. Presently, the educational system was modified to 9 years of basic education instead of 6 years (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013).

iii. *Unemployment.* Although, education is geared towards self-reliance, lack of employment opportunities dampened the urge to get educated, and even discouraged the teachers. While girls may hide in schools waiting for husbands to come, males escape early to look for more profitable things to do. Previously, education was the key to economic emancipation. Then, an educated person had options in the choice of jobs; but presently, a graduate hardly provides himself with the basic needs of life because of unemployment syndrome in the country (Obi, 2006). Consequently, the youth, especially, the boys shun education as it could not lead to gainful employment; instead, they resort to other means of livelihood. Their ideology stems from the fact that the time wasted in acquiring formal education can be utilized effectively in business venture.

iv. *Quest for quick wealth.* Some children shun education because of apparent attraction of wealth, pleasures, and leisure which life outside school presents, at the formative years of their lives. The instant riches observed in them motivated many to join the bandwagon of businessmen. This is common with the male gender (Obi, 2006). This is made manifest in the societal worship of wealth and wealthy youth (irrespective of their character or sources of wealth) by showering them with diverse honours like chieftaincy titles and knighthoods; appointing them as chairmen in occasions, and guests of honour at outing ceremonies or dances, giving them prominence in other august occasions, and singing their fame among others. Since some of these highly respected people are not highly educated, young ones who want to be like them will shun school.

v. *Problem of access to school.* Many factors have been discovered in studies as to why people do not attend school. According to ActionAid (2003), some of the issues include schooling expenses, opportunity costs, disease and hunger, limited economic costs of education, and inadequate quality of education. Books, stationery, and basic equipment, admissions, uniforms, registration, and examination fees, contributions to the building and maintenance fund, mid-day meals, transportation, parents/teachers' association fees, sports fees, library fees, construction fees and extra-tuition fees are all included in the costs of schooling (Igbuzor, 2006). The opportunity cost for parents who send their children to school is the time that the youngsters could have spent earning money or supporting the household's functioning. Children's illness and hunger, whether caused by the children or family members, might prohibit them from attending school. People are discouraged from going to school since the economic rewards are limited, and those who have completed school have no employment. Furthermore, poor education quality, particularly in terms of staff motivation, resource utilization, curriculum content, teaching techniques, and the school's and teachers' relationships with the wider community, can have a detrimental influence on kids' desire to attend school.

vi. *Infrastructure problems and scarcity of teaching and learning resources.* Many elementary and secondary school structures and amenities are decrepit and unwelcoming to students. Many classrooms are without useable black or chalk boards, maps, and charts. Textbooks, exercise books, readers, chalk, writing slates, pencils, and pens are all frequently lacking. It's possible that neither the teachers nor the students have access to any course materials or resources (Atchoarena & Gasperini, 2003). Teaching and learning take place in an unfavorable setting. Parents and guardians are hesitant to send their children and wards to schools with poor facilities. (Igbuzor, 2006). Many schools and other learning institutions lack access to clean drinking water, gender-separated restrooms, and electricity. Learning opportunities are also scarce on the playground and school garden.

6. Strategies for Improving Access to Education in Rural Communities

In less developed nations, about 100 million primary school-aged children are not enrolled in schools (UNESCO, 2000). The majority of the youngsters come from impoverished rural households. Unfortunately, many of the youngsters that enroll in schools do not complete their education. Even students who have finished the primary school cycle require further learning options, which are limited. In rural areas, only a tiny fraction of adolescents and adults have access to any type of education in a formal setting. According to Lakin and Gasperini (2003), efforts to expand and improve education need the following:

- Increase on the number of primary schools and classrooms in rural regions.
- Making basic education a requirement for attaining EFA.
- Increase on the school enrolment of girls.
- Introduction of school-feeding programmes.
- Encouragement of working children.
- Reduction on the rate of illiterate adults through adult education programmes.
- Empowerment of the remote rural populations economically and politically.
- Care for the nomadic people through provision of nomadic education.
- Care for refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs).
- Care for children and adults with disabilities.

From the fore-going, it is important to note that improving the quality of education is a complex project and its primary responsibility rests with government. Both Federal and State Governments should be responsible for capacity building of local leaders so as to implement changes that are necessary for education of excellent quality. Malhoit (2005) cited in UNESCO (2015) noted that to lay the groundwork for education of excellent quality, all the learners, irrespective of where they live, their color, handicap, or economic status, should be able to study and achieve at greater levels if provided with adequate educational resources. Also, learners should have right to education of excellent quality located near their homes.

7. Conclusion

Despite enormous increases in worldwide revenues and unmatched advances in global living standards in recent years, mankind has failed to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, and Nigeria is no exception. Most of the efforts made towards national development and poverty reduction did not yield much fruits because education is left out. The disparities in education fuel criminality and delinquency, which are symptoms of frustration for the less privileged people. In confronting national inequalities, terrorism frequently dominates our daily news. One of the major issues plaguing our society is unequal access to high-quality education, which is important for socio-economic growth. Poverty reduction and educational provisions are at the heart of the new development assistance rhetoric. Therefore, urbanization will not solve the problem. What will solve the problem is provision of quality education. This is because; majority of Nigerian communities are plagued by illiteracy, as well as other types of hardship including hunger, infant mortality, and a lack of access to clean water. Education has the potential to hasten progress towards achieving sustainable development. Education as a vital tool for development enables people to live and aspire to healthy, meaningful, creative and resilient lives. It strengthens their voices in community, national and global affairs. Education opens up new work opportunities and sources of social mobility. The political and financial commitments to education by federal and state governments need to be secured and renewed.

The fundamental point of this article is that continuing with “business as usual” will not address our educational issues. The task at hand is to figure out how to handle education’s

demand and supply problems. As a result, education programmes must be linked to larger poverty reduction and national development initiatives.

Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest as it is a text of paper presented at the 2021 Symposium Organized by National Association of Philosophy Students, Isi-Enu (NAPSI), at Spiritan School of Philosophy, Isi-Enu, Nsukka, Enugu State, Nigeria on May 8, 2021.

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