

Quality education for national development: The Nigerian experience

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ABSTRACT

The situation of Nigerian educational system and quality is becoming worrisome as her policy is more focused on the quantitative than qualitative aspect of institutional development. Government has recently increased the quantity of higher institutions in the country without giving attention to the carrying capacity, learning conditions and the budget allocated to existing higher institutions. Educationist and elites are becoming more troubled as no single University in Nigeria is among the top fifty (50) Universities in Africa, and none is ranked among the top three thousand (3,000) universities in the world. The UNESCO recommendation of using twenty six percent (26%) of her national budget to finance the education of third world countries is a far dream from realization in Nigeria. Nigeria is still devoting less than three percent of her budget to her educational sector. These negative indices have contributed to the huge capital flight out of Nigeria due to Nigerians trooping abroad to acquire quality education. This paper shall conceptualize quality education and national development, note indices of quality education, factors militating against quality education in Nigeria, draw a nexus between quality education and national development, and seek for ways of enhancing the quality of education in Nigeria. The paper is aimed at improving the quality of education in Nigeria and reducing capital flight resulting from Nigerians studying abroad.

Keywords: Quality education, national development, formal education.

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INTRODUCTION

Education is an accepted veritable instrument for national development. Education produces different kinds of manpower such as: engineers, teachers, lawyers, medical doctors, architects, soldiers, scientist, etc (and so on) needed for national development. Hence the saying that, "no society can develop beyond its educational system". It is the product of education that transforms the society. The quality of education will therefore determine the quality of manpower and their products; it will reduce the rate of unemployment, since graduates and technicians can become self-employed after graduation. It will equally impact on the moral rectitude of the society and quality of lives. This is because education is aimed at changing the character of the learner and impacting positively on his behavior. Poor quality of education is characterized by misplacement of values and educational

goals. The insecurity we face is a reflection of human behavior, in a society that values money more than integrity, a rich trader may be more recognized than a Professor; this cannot happen in the developed countries where their educational standard is very high (Iwundu and Inko-Tariah, 2015).

Statement of problem

Quality education is very expedient for national development in Nigeria. Obasi (2010) noted that "all nations of the world, owe their level of development to the level of their educational system". Education is the veritable instrument for generating all genre and levels of manpower in any nation. It is a common view that the

standard of education in Nigeria is falling drastically. Uzorka et al. (2011) noted that, it is understandable that education has not been accorded a place of pride in Nigeria. They further stated that, Nigeria as a society places high premium on paper qualification and that explains the crazy desire to have good result without working for it. Consequently, they asserted that Nigeria has lost her direction as far as education is concerned and, by extension, a clear direction to the country's future. It was corroborated by Zidexman in Uzorka et al. (2011) that education in Nigeria is going through so many setbacks, from inadequate funding through lack of qualified personnel, to poor laws and regulation, wrong curriculum, inadequate infrastructure.

Education in Nigeria started with traditional education where the people were taught informally by their parents on how to preserve their cultural heritage, equip children with the required knowledge and skills to subsist when they grow up and inculcate discipline, mould the character and conduct of the growing youths to be modest, obedient and respectful. It was succeeded by western education which uses formal means of teaching and learning to educate the people on Christian doctrine and evangelism. The challenges of nation building, civil war and incessant military incursion into governance deteriorated the quality of education in Nigeria. According to Obasi (2010:7):

The military took over reins of power, and since they are not trained in civil governance, they wittingly or unwittingly plunged the country into a protracted dark era, characterized by economic squander mania, political confusion, social discontent and psychic militarization of the people. The education sector was the worst for it, because the military, understandably, has never had respect for knowledge and, by implication, for education.

Objective of study

This paper is aimed at examining how the quality of education can enhance national development in Nigeria. It will examine the concept of quality education, national development, indices of quality education, factors militating against quality education in Nigeria, the nexus between quality education and national development and how to enthrone quality education in Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptualizing quality education

It is not too easy to define or give a universal description of the term "quality education", since every country prides

herself of operating quality education. But the case of Nigeria is very interesting because, it transited from informal (traditional education) semi formal to a formal colonial education down to a home grown education though influenced by the British colonial and common wealth master. The home grown education has lasted for about fifty four years of independence, how grown and qualitative is the quality of education in Nigeria as conceived by the term "quality education"? In his description, Pigozzi (2008:4) noted that:

Quality education understands the past, is relevant to the present, and has a view to the future. Quality education relates to knowledge building and the skillful application of all forms of knowledge by unique individuals who function both independently and in relation to others. A quality education reflects the dynamic nature of culture and languages, the value of the individual in relation to the larger context, and the importance of living in a way that promotes equality in the present and fosters a sustainable future.

National development

National development according to Obasi (2010) is the social process by which a nation harnesses and mobilizes all resources (human and material) available to it for the purpose of positively transforming its environment and ultimately improving the quality of the social, economic and political life of its citizenry. It is a holistic process involving the collective will and efforts of the people. Mezieobi (2013) conceptualized national development as:

A process of systematic transformation of the overall social, economic, political, scientific and technological life of a nation via effective, coherent, co-ordinate management system, result-oriented social mobilization strategy in which the citizens actually participate and exhibit positive attitudinal commitment in the overall reconstruction process for the improved human conditions of the people.

In this study, national development operationally refers to the ability of a country to mobilize resources to improve the social welfare of the people, by providing social amenities like education, potable water, transportation, infrastructure, medical care etc.

INDICES OF QUALITY EDUCATION

Quality education is a dynamic concept whose indices

may vary according to the need of the country. Pigozzi (2008:6) wrote that a quality education is one that welcomes the learner and can adapt to meet learning needs, it is inclusive. A quality education strives to ensure that all learners, regardless of sex, age, language, religion and ethnicity, for example, are reached – that they have the possibility of participating in and learning from organized learning activities. However, for a common understanding, this paper has noted the following as indices of quality education:

- i) Proper funding
- ii) Effective quality control (to enforce standard)
- iii) Conducive and appropriate teaching and learning environment.
- iv) Sufficient staff quarters and classrooms in schools
- v) Adequate and proper equipment and staffing.
- vi) Good quality and well motivated staff truly committed to undiluted scholarship.

According to Obasi (2010) the indicators of quality and functional education are:

- i) Effective and efficient performance of graduates in society, industries and other work places.
- ii) Employability (self, national and international) of products/graduates (Entrepreneurship level)/ Graduate employment statistics.
- iii) National and International mobility of generated manpower.
- iv) Market value or demand level of research products and other services provided by the institutions.
- v) Level of discipline and patriotism of graduates.
- vi) International transferability/admissibility of graduates/ students for higher studies without remedial conditions.
- vii) High rating of an institution and its products nationally and internationally.
- viii) High absorptive capacity at all levels.

Quality education according to UNICEF (2000) is characterized by:

- i) Learners who are healthy, well-nourished and ready to participate and learn, and supported in by their families and communities;
- ii) Environments that are healthy, safe, protective and gender-sensitive, and provide adequate resources and facilities;
- iii) Content that is reflected in relevant curricula and materials for the acquisition of basic skills, especially in the areas of literacy, numeracy and skills for life, and knowledge in such areas as gender, health, nutrition, HIV/AIDS prevention and peace;
- iv) Processes through which trained teachers use child-centered teaching approaches in well-managed classrooms and schools and skilful assessment to facilitate learning and reduce disparities;

v) Outcomes that encompass knowledge, skills and attitudes, and are linked to national goals for education and positive participation in society.

Pigozzi (2008) further used Tables 1 and 2 to describe the indices of quality education. Table 1 examines the level of the learner, while Table 2 focuses on the level of the system.

FACTORS MILITATING AGAINST QUALITY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

Nigerian scholars have written widely on the factors militating against quality education in Nigeria. Etesike (2011) identified and enumerated some of the factors as: inadequate funding, inadequate infrastructural facilities, lack of qualified teachers, problem of poor policy implementation incessant strikes, and examination malpractice. Iwundu and Thom-Otuya (2014) observed the followings as challenges to the Nigerian education sector: incessant strike action, inadequate funding, politicization and abuse of the education sector, bribery and corruption, unemployment and lack of emphasis on entrepreneurship education. A politician in Edo state, Hon. Aiyamenkhue Edokpolo enumerated challenges facing the Nigeria educational system as: underfunding, poor infrastructure, inadequate classrooms, and teaching aids (projectors, computers, libraries, laboratories etc), paucity of quality teachers, poor or polluted learning environment, social vices like examination malpractices, cultism, and infant hooliganism.

Iwundu and Inko-Tariah (2015) added intellectual dishonesty among teachers, pull it down syndrome, justice ability in the right to education as factors militating against quality education in Nigeria.

Writing on the educational challenges in Africa, Achuonye (2004) indicated that in Africa, efforts to achieve quantity and quality education have been constantly dashed as a result of several issues related to poverty, underdevelopment, and the prevailing political situation which manifest in form of: debt burden, population rate, general instability, low skilled manpower, and keeping pace with global trends.

Obasi (2010) enumerated more detailed factors responsible for lack of quality education in Nigeria as follows:

Socio-cultural factors

- i) Moral degeneration in society
- ii) Inverted value system
- iii) Poor reading culture
- iv) Poor family socialization
- v) Low status of knowledge/education and teachers
- vi) Militarization of society
- vii) Generation gaps between teachers and students

Table 1. Level of the learner.

Dimension	Indicators	Measures
Seeks out learners	Education available without discrimination	NER disaggregated by sex, location, language, etc
	Inclusive education	Special efforts to be gender-responsive
	Reaches out	Affirmative action in place for the hard to reach those with special needs
What the learner brings	Varied backgrounds	Learning activities that take advantage of different learner/teacher strengths
	Varied skill sets	Selected lessons that start from learner experience
Processes	Appropriate pedagogy	Application of teacher education principles
	Equitable	Classroom interaction
	Respectful	Open and respectful argumentation All able to express views
Content	Knowledge	Foundational skills (literacy, numeracy, oral communication)
		Subject area knowledge
	Skills	Critical thinking taught and tested
		Conflict resolution skills
		ICT skills
Environment	Attitudes	Cross-cultural communication
		Team work
	Behavior	Responsibility for actions
Environment	Physical environment	Building standards
		Sanitation standards
		Furniture standards
Environment	Psycho-social environment	Equipment standards
		No bullying or other forms of violence
		No evidence of coercion
Environment	Psycho-social environment	No corporal punishment
		Teachers treated with respect

parents and children, etc

viii) Truncation of academic calendar due to incessant strikes and students' demonstration

ix) Gender inequality

Institutional factors

i) Mismanagement of resources

ii) Examination malpractices

iii) Cultism

iv) Commercialization/monetization of grades, admissions, teaching materials

v) Inadequate/poor quality staffing

vi) Obsolete/inadequate facilities, workshops, laboratories,

classrooms, hostels, etc.

vii) Poor welfare system

viii) Irrelevant curriculum

ix) Inadequate/weak institutional quality assurance (QA) system

x) Inadequate/weak linkages, etc

xi) Poor services

Techno-economic factors

i) Poor funding

ii) Inadequate/unreliable infrastructural/social amenities

iii) Low ICT knowledge/content

iv) Poor incentive system

Table 2. Level of the system.

Dimension	Indicators	Measures
Management and administrative structures and processes	Institutions and their bureaucracies are learner-centered	Flexible timetables to accommodate weather and other cycles
	Systems of checks and balances in place	Clear rules and procedures Transparent promotions Active participation of parents and communities
	School policies that promote health and safety	Education institutions that meet health and safety standards
Implementation of good policies	Education institutions as workplaces policies	Education staff know and employ rules and practices that support them and their professional development
	Policy on promoting equity	Student enrolment and achievement data are consistent with population distribution data
	State is responsible for assuring provision of quality education	Adequate places exist Quality standards are in place and being met Participation in basic education is affordable to all
Appropriate legislative framework	Labor laws are consistent with education laws	Children who should be in school are not able to work in ways that negatively affect learning
	Compensatory action to ensure educational opportunities for those negatively affected by discrimination	Bursary or scholarship system in place and operational Support systems for orphans and vulnerable children
	Human resources	Sufficient, qualified teachers at each level and subject Systems in place for development of education professionals
Resource	Time resources	Length of school year Teacher time allocated for preparation Time on task for teaching
	Financial resources	Appropriate % of GDP on different levels of education Unit costs Equitable allocation of resources across income levels and geographic spread
	Knowledge	Essential cognitive achievements in: Literacy Numeracy Core subjects
Measuring learning outcomes	Values	Gender equality Tolerance Respect for human rights
	Skills	Problem solving Team work Ability to learn
	Behaviors	Evidence of putting what has been learned into practice

v) Inadequate/weak quality control system

Political factors

- i) Politicization of education and educational institutions especially at the state level (e.g. politicization of appointment of Chief Executives and funding.
- ii) Poor/non-implementation of policies.
- iii) Weak anachronistic legal framework.

Students' factors

- i) Lack of interest
- ii) Get rich quick syndrome
- iii) Exaggerated life style
- iv) Poor mindset
- v) Lack of commitment

QUALITY EDUCATION AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT: THE NIGERIA EXPERIENCE

There is great nexus between quality education and national development. Quality education is a veritable tool for scientific discoveries, national development and transformation of a greater society to a greater height. Quality education transforms human capital to be creative, and to be an agent that can precipitate radical changes in the society. National development, according to Obasi (2010), is the social process by which a nation harnesses, and mobilizes all resources (human and material) available to it for the purpose of positively transforming its environment and ultimately improving the quality of the social, economic and political life of its citizenry. It is a holistic process involving the collective will and efforts of the people.

Inyamah (2010) observed that for any nation to be termed developed, a high percentage of her citizenry must be educated. Krishna (1997) in an earlier write up mentioned that there will not be a fundamental transformation in a society unless the individual is transformed and this comes from education. It is pertinent to note that, national development is driven by human beings. Human capital must be qualified and developed before it can impact positively on the society. Therefore, a nation's development and its sustainability depend on the quality of its education.

One can notice that, the poor quality of Nigeria's education is instrumental to her importation of every essential item needed for the survival of her people and society. If twenty six percent (26%) of her budget is spent on promoting quality education, the human capital would have been so enhanced to produce commodities for the daily need and use of her people. Quality education will give room for result research that can propel technological

innovations.

Nigerian government has made several efforts to ensure quality education for all citizens. It started with the Chief Obafemi Awolowo's Action Group party who introduced a free universal and compulsory primary education popularly known as the Universal Primary Education (UPE) for the western region in 1955. This scheme was launched in the east in 1957 and at the federal level in 1976. The UPE policy increased the number of enrollee at the primary level and grade two teachers training colleges. The UPE scheme later ran into problems such as political instability, inconsistency in policy formulation and ability to sustain policies, insincerity among major actors, lack of political will, dearth of reliable base line data, inadequate and lop sided planning and lack of popular will, teachers were neglected, the system was flooded with half-baked teachers to mention a few (Ehinder and Onaonya in Achuonye, 2004).

The failure of the UPE scheme gave rise to the launching of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) scheme by Chief Olusegun Obasanjo in Sokoto on the 29th of September 1999. The UBE bill was passed by the Senate in July 2002. The philosophy of the UBE is to provide free and compulsory education to every Nigerian child from the primary to the junior secondary school level as well as to provide every Nigerian citizen with basic literacy. Achuonye (2004: 74) noted that, the program was in fact intended as a national movement to be engineered by all tiers of government, to be embraced by all sectors of society, to be fully supported and promoted by local communities and individual families.

There is therefore a great need for Nigerians and all stake holders in education to sustain the vision of the UBE programme and not to sabotage its implementation. If Nigeria can conform with allocation of her twenty-six percent (26%) of her national budget to education sector without any wrong diversion, education will propel our national development to a greater height. According to Okolo (1993), education banishes ignorance and liberally criticizes people's values, life options and redirects societal goals and pursuits. Socrates in Amaele et al. (2011) noted that education assists man to develop the virtues of thinking and morality and the understanding of the universe. All these traits are ingredients for national development, therefore without quality education, the thoughts and actions of man will be very inimical for national development.

The importance of quality educational development is numerous. Quality education begets quality and accelerated national development. Quality education prepares young people for their active participation in the maintenance and development of their society. It improves an individual's economic status and enables people to improve their performance and production levels at a lower cost. It promotes national patriotism and good attitude for national issues.

ENHANCING QUALITY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The quality of education in Nigeria can be enhanced for national development if there can be a synergy of all stake holders in education. Our history of education informs us that, the colonial masters bequeathed quality education to Nigerians, but the civil war and incessant military incursion into governance, impeded/relegated the quality of education and consequently brought the sector to its present deteriorated level. Scholars have suggested the following as strategies to improve quality education in Nigeria: instructional supervision, monitoring and evaluation of the quality of delivery of the programme, adequate planning to cover the expected enrollment, required teachers, infrastructure needs and equipment, funding, regular training of teachers among others.

Etesike (2011) recommended the followings for advancing the quality of education in Nigeria. They include:

1. There should be a massive campaign and public awareness as well as value re-orientation as regards what we want education to be and do for Nigerian.
2. Government should pay adequate attention to the sector so that there should be sustainability and improvement in the state of our education.
3. There should be adequate funding of the sector and infrastructure rehabilitation of the entire education system in line with what obtains in the technological world. Funding of education must be based on the 26% of the national budget as recommended by UNESCO.
4. To ensure quality of the teaching and learning activities, there should be training and re-training of serving teachers in order to boost their knowledge base on contents as well as keep abreast with new knowledge and methods of curriculum delivery. Teachers should be exposed to computer and ICT education because it is the in thing in modern education.
5. Education personnel must be well remunerated to enhance commitment and job satisfaction.

CONCLUSION

Quality education is a very essential ingredient that can propel national development in Nigeria. Lack of quality education has constrained Nigeria to import almost all the essential commodities needed for her daily survival. Most interestingly, Nigeria had experienced quality education before the Nigeria civil war and incessant military incursion into governance; at then, Nigerian graduates as of then fitted into job demands or labour market. Products of the Universities compared favourably with those of any university in the world, production of locally and internationally relevant manpower especially at the tertiary level, easy overseas admission for undergraduate and post graduate studies. Common collaborative links

and exchanges with foreign universities in terms of staff, research, manpower development and inclusion of Nigerian universities among the highly rated in the world at the time. Those glorious days can be reclaimed more especially now that we have democratic governance. There should be proper funding of our educational sector, this will go a long way to rebuild our value system and improve the quality of our graduates and their acceptability all over the world. This stability will reduce our security challenges thereby, saving huge amount of wasted money going into the security sector.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the foregoing, the authors hereby make the following recommendations as essential points for enhancing quality education in Nigeria:

1. Adequate funding of the education sector. Nigerian leaders should embrace the UNESCO recommendation for funding education. Adequate funding is required and necessary to maintain both the human and material resources of the education sector. Funding will improve the maintenance of the physical facilities that have become a hazard to both the learning and living conditions of students.
2. Effective monitoring of the management of funds allocated to the education sector. The prevalence of pervasive corruption in Nigeria creates room for diversion of funds meant for the development of educational institutions by the management team.
3. Adequate remuneration and motivation of the teaching staff. The teaching staffs represent the agents of change and facilitators of knowledge; they actualize and give impetus to education policies. They need to be committed to their duties without embracing a simultaneous business activity or other trades in order to enhance their salary, by motivating them through incentives that will endear their emotion and attention to their duties.
4. Creation of conducive learning and teaching environment by the provision of appropriate, well equipped and adequate laboratories, workshops, classrooms, libraries, staff offices, as well as good and adequate hostel and classroom accommodation, teaching and learning techniques, etc.
5. School curriculum/programs need to be relevant to the changing trends, and be able to meet the needs of industries, society and the international community.
6. Effective and consistent supervision and monitoring of the school system to confirm their level of compliance to quality assurance and to identify and eliminate poor qualities or misfits. There are lots of the teaching and non-teaching staff that are not committed to duties, and not complying to the operational standard.
7. The entry point of all University staff and students must undergo a meritocratic process. The teachers should be properly interviewed, while the non-academic staff should

be qualifying for the position he is seeking, while students should pass the external JAMB and internal aptitude test before admission.

8. Provision of quality teaching and learning aids and office stationeries and equipments.

9. Ensure periodic supervision, accreditation and re-accreditation of the school system. This will enhance the sustainability of the infrastructures and standard of education.

10. Synergy between higher education provider and employers of labour. This will help graduates to acquire employable skills.

11. Policies should be made based on research findings instead of individual interests.

12. Healthy labour markets to absorb graduates being turned out from institutions of higher learning. This will make students to be more committed to learn.

We remember that the last time National Universities Commission (NUC) accreditation team visited our institution, the university environment changed overnight. Libraries were equipped, buildings were painted, and toilets were provided, with a whole lot of facilities being enhanced; in order to scale through the accreditation process.

Government agencies and private organizations should fund and encourage university research. It is through research that new technologies and discoveries will be made, which will ease and improve human living on earth. Research grants should be conceded to university lecturers by government and private organizations. Government agencies and private organizations should go into the universities to recruit research consultants that will advance into discoveries and solve problems.

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