

**R**E-THINKING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA THROUGH EDUCATION REVOLUTION: NIGERIA AS A CASE STUDY. A REVIEW.

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**ABSTRACT**

*This article entitled “Re-Thinking sustainable development in Africa through education revolution, Nigeria as a case study” was based on review of related literature. The study identified economic growth, development of civil society, state building and liberal democratic political institutions, including both the rule of law and electoral democracy as development strategies. The study was able to identify development programmes in Nigeria from 1972-2007 and also education policies in Nigeria. The study reveals that there are major challenges militating against education revolution as a tool for sustainable development. Such factors include; curriculum content, intermittent strike action, quality of students admitted and paucity of funds. The paper therefore recommends that if education revolution would serve as a tool for sustainable development, the government must*

**Introduction:**

Africa today ranks among the continents with the highest rate of unemployment, poor infrastructural development, low public institution and high mortality rate as a result of lack of adequate resources to achieve sustainable development. According to Thomas (2004), the concept of development has undergone a series of changes both in theoretical and practical term in attempts to coin a universally acceptable definition. These changes in defining development manifest in the deep contest among scholars and practitioners over what exactly should constitute the

*ensure that there is improvement in funding, curriculum content and quality of students.*

**Keywords:** *Sustainable Development, Education Revolution, curriculum content, quality of student. Paucity of funds.*

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definition of the term. Despite this contest, some definitions are worth considering. Todaro and Smith (2009) define development as the process of improving the quality of all human lives, which focuses on three important aspects: raising people's level of living, creating conditions conducive to the growth of people's self-esteem, and increasing people's freedom. Bellu (2011, p.2) defines development as "the improvement, either in the general situation of the system, or in some of its constituent elements, which may occur due to some deliberate action carried out by single agents or by some authority pre-ordered to achieve improvement, to favorable circumstances or both."

### **Concept of development communication and Development strategies**

The term "development" has various meanings to different people and can be explained in different contexts. For example, the development needs of a starving population must be different from those where there is sufficient nutrition (Matowanyka, 1991). Development has often been confused with "economic growth as measured solely in terms of annual increases in per-capita income or gross national product, regardless of its distribution and the degree of people's participation in effective growth" (Mahmoud, 1991). Seers (1972) asserted that "development means the conditions for realisation of the human personality. Its evaluation must therefore take into account three linked criteria: where there has been a reduction in (1) poverty, (2) unemployment, (3) inequality". According to Pearson (1992), development involves "An improvement qualitative, quantitative or both - in the use of available resources". He also asserts that development does not refer to one particular perspective on social, political and economic betterment. Instead, it is a hybrid term for a myriad of strategies adopted

for socioeconomic and environment transformation from current states to desired ones. This strategies includes;

**Economic growth.** This is an increasing per capita GDP. Much of the field of development economics has centered

on strategies for promoting growth, and there have been numerous approaches, fads and orthodoxies in this area over the years. Some growth strategies result in a more egalitarian income distribution than others – a variation that, as will become evident, can be relevant for the longer-term sustainability of a country’s development path.

**Development of Civil Society.** There is a large body of social thought detailing the social changes that take place as a society shifts from one that is primarily agricultural to one that is industrial. In the former, social relationships are often ascriptive rather than voluntary, based on kinship, ethnicity, social class, and gender. Social hierarchies are often inherited, with little opportunities for individuals to change the status into which they were born. In addition, the division of labor is limited by the small size of the market economy and non-agricultural sector. A modern civil society emerges when social groups between the family and the state are able to freely organize on the basis of shared passions and interests. Developed societies remain hierarchical, but hierarchies ideally are more fluid and accessible; social mobility and representation increases.

**State-building.** State-building is itself a multi-dimensional phenomenon that is the precursor of and necessary condition for either liberal rule of law or democracy. We will make use here of Max Weber’s famous definition of the state: a legitimate monopoly of force over a defined territory. State-building begins with a concentration of coercive power in the hands of the state, through the disarming or destruction of private militias and the creation of a national army and police.

**Liberal Democratic Political Institutions.** While state-building involves the concentration of power in the state’s hands, establishment of modern political institutions limits that power by reducing the state’s discretionary use of force. The “liberal” part of liberal democracy is rule of law. Rule of law is the basis for property rights and the adjudication of commercial

claims, and thus is key to sustained economic development. Rule of law is also the basis for the protection of a private sphere and individual human rights. Legal rights do not have to be universal; in some societies, they are enjoyed only by elites who benefit from the full privileges of citizenship. Universalization of the rule of law permits larger markets, greater competition, and in the long run, more economic growth.

### **Sustainable Development**

Although many definitions abound, the most often used definition of sustainable development is that proposed by the Brundtland Commission (Cerin, 2006; Dernbach J. C., 1998; Dernbach J. C., 2003; Stoddart, 2011). This broad definition, which will be used in this paper, does not limit the scope of sustainability. The explanation does, however, touch on the importance of intergenerational equity. This concept of conserving resources for future generations is one of the major features that distinguish sustainable development policy from traditional environmental policy, which also seeks to internalize the externalities of environmental degradation. The overall goal of sustainable development (SD) is the long-term stability of the economy and environment; this is only achievable through the integration and acknowledgement of economic, environmental, and social concerns throughout the decision making process.

In the application of this definition of sustainable development, one issue concerns the substitutability of capital. There are several types of capital: social, natural, and man-made. The definition of weak sustainable development explains that only the aggregate level of capital matters: man-made, or manufactured, capital is an adequate alternative to natural capital. Strong sustainability, on the other hand, recognizes the unique features of natural resources that cannot be replaced by manufactured capital. Most ecologists and environmentalists are proponents of the strong sustainability definition (Stoddart, 2011) . In addition to substitutability, this definition of sustainability is also founded on several other important principles. Contained within the common definition of

sustainable development, intergenerational equity recognizes the long-term scale of sustainability in order to address the needs of future generations (Dernbach J. C., 1998; Stoddart, 2011). Also, the polluter pays principle states that “governments should require polluting entities to bear the costs of their pollution rather than impose those costs on others or on the environment” (Dernbach J. C., 1998, p. 58). Thus, government policy should ensure that environmental costs are internalized wherever possible; this also serves to minimize externalities.

### **Method of study**

For the purpose of this paper, qualitative research method is used. Within the scope of the paper, attempt is made to analyze Nigerian experience as spelt out in policies, actions, funding and other incidentals that are put in place by government such that education in the country can be an effective vehicle for national development. The preoccupation of the paper is appraisal of these actions of government and how they have helped or not helped education to achieve its full potential of contributing to national development.

### **Development Programmes In Nigeria**

According to Sam (2014:6), there have been attempts by successive regimes in Nigeria at poverty reduction and rural development; the approaches have usually been determined by the interpretation given to rural development by the different regimes or interventionists. Prominent among these programmes as he noted are:

- 1972-National Accelerated Food Production Programme and the Nigeria Agricultural and Cooperative Bank,
- 1976-Operation Feed the Nation: to teach the rural farmers how to use modern farming tools,
- 1979-Green Revolution Programme: to reduce food importation and increase local food production,
- 1986-Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFFRI),

- 1987-National Directorate of Employment (NDE),
- 1993-Family Support Programme and the Family Economic Advancement Programme,
- 2001-National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) to replace the previously failed Poverty Alleviation Programme.
- 2004-National Economic Empowerments and Development Strategy. (NEEDS): Meant to achieve poverty reduction through wealth creation, employment generation and value re-orientation.

In the same way, there have been numerous programmes at the Federal, State and Local

Governments' levels. These include:

- Accelerated Poverty Alleviation Programme,
- School to Land Programmes,
- Peoples Bank of Nigeria (PBN), 1987
- Community Bank (CB), 1990
- National Agricultural and Land Development Authority (NALDA), 1991
- Better Life Programme for Rural Women (BLP), 1987
- National Directorate of Employment (NDE), 1986
- The National Youth Employment and Vocational Skills Development Programme
- Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP)
- The National Economic Reconstruction Fund (NERFUND), 1989
- The 7 point Agenda, 2007
- Integrated Community Development Project,
- State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (SEEDs),
- Local Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (LEEDs), and
- The Transformation Agenda, etc.

### **Education And National Development**

Prominent among the points to be considered here is that education supplies the needed manpower for national development. Afolabi and Loto (2012:330) support this argument by stating that a developed or educated polity is the one that has enough manpower and each person occupies his or her rightful position to enhance the growth of the society. To support

this, Ajayi and Afolabi (2009:34-36) have also remarked that education is largely perceived in Nigeria as an indispensable tool which will not only assist in meeting the nation's social, political, moral, cultural and economic aspirations but will also inculcate in the individual knowledge, skills, dexterity, character and desirable values that will foster national development and self-actualization. From the definition of education given above, it is clear that education trains an individual to be useful in the society and to meet up the need of the society for national development. Therefore, it should be clear that without education, a nation cannot get the needed manpower for material advancement and enlightenment of the citizenry. The trained engineers, teachers, medical doctors, inter alia are all the products of education. This explains why it is argued also that the quality of a nation's education determines the level of its national development. In addition, education promotes social and group relationships (Armstrong, D.G. et al 1981:142). In this regard, Obasanjo (2012:3) states that education trains individuals to relate to and interact meaningfully with others in the society and to appreciate the importance of effective organization for human progress. Here, the school system within the educational system fosters this development. The school brings people of different cultural backgrounds together for a common purpose. This promotes mutual co-existence among the different students. Learners who strongly identify with their school are thought to have a more positive attitude towards teachers, other learners and the entire educational enterprise (Armstrong, D.G. et al 1981:143). Again, in the school system, there are official clubs and organizations in existence. Learners who participate in these organizations and clubs gain experience in working with others outside the individual organizations and to some extent in working and competing with outside groups with minimum friction and this goes a long way to promote national unity and peaceful coexistence which will lead to national development.

### **Education Policies In Nigeria**

Prior to 1977 Nigeria operated an educational policy inherited from Britain at independence. The inability of this policy to satisfy the national aspirations of the country rendered it unpopular. In 1969 a National Curriculum Conference was organised which reviewed the inherited curriculum and identified new national goals for Nigeria's education. A

National Seminar was organised by the National Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) in 1973 under the Chairmanship of Chief S. O. Adebayo. This gave rise to the National Policy on Education in 1977 (Akangbayo 1985; Bello 1986; Okoroma 2000). The National Policy on Education is anchored on Nigeria's philosophy on education as enunciated through the nation's objectives. Nigeria has five main national objectives as provided by the Second National Development Plan and accepted as the necessary foundation for the National Policy on Education. They are the building of:

- a free and democratic society
- a just and egalitarian society
- a united strong and self-reliant nation
- a great and dynamic economy
- a land of bright and full opportunities for all citizens (FRN, 1998).

### **Goals Of Technical Education In Nigeria**

The National Policy on Education (2004) defines vocational education as "that form of education which is obtainable at the technical colleges. This is equivalent to the senior secondary education but designed to prepare individuals to acquire practical skills, basic scientific knowledge and attitude required as craftsmen and technicians at sub-professional level." The Policy also enumerated the objectives of vocational and technical education in Nigeria as follows:-

- a. To provide trained manpower in applied science, technology and commerce particularly at sub-professional grades;
- b. To provide the technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, industrial, commerce and economic development;
- c. To provide people who can apply specific knowledge to the improvement and solution of environmental problems for the use and convenience of man;
- d. To give an introduction of professional studies in engineering and other technologies;



- e. To give training and impart the skill leading to the production of craftsmen, technicians and other skilled personnel who will be enterprising and self-reliant and
- f. To enable our young men and women to have an intelligent understanding of the increasing complexity of technology. The above goals are intended to make vocational and technical education more practical, functional and job oriented. If all these goals were to be properly implemented, they could bring about the desired technological development.

### **Challenges Facing Education In Nigeria**

A lot of challenges are faced in Nigerian Educational system which makes it difficult to achieve its stated objectives as contained in the Federal Republic of Nigeria, National Policy on Education, especially in Science Education (NPE, 2004:23). These include:

Problem with curriculum content. A gap skill exists in the implementation of course content. Most of the content of departmental courses at all levels that are designed to develop students are not delivered. Majority of students rely on notes of teachers and lecturers, more so they are not deeply taken through the practical aspects of the course in many cases due to population explosion and in adequate laboratories. As a result of this deficiency or identified gap in the implementation of course contents, educational revolution as envisaged by the Nigerian government in order to enhance sustainable national development is not being achieved as envisaged.

Yet another problem inhibiting education serving as a means of sustainable development in Nigeria is the problem of incessant strike action by various unions in our educational sector. For instance, the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) just suspended a nine month old strike that kept the gates of our universities shut to students. Furthermore, the quality of students admitted into our educational institution do not in most case merit such admission. Invariably, if their academic foundation is faulty, it poses as a militating factor against sustainable development. Paucity of

fund is another factor that can mar education as a means of achieving sustainable development in Nigeria. Adegbesan. (2012:275) asserts that by the of the 1990s, university expenditure per student in Nigeria had fallen to \$360. In response, the government announced its decision in July 2000 to increase funding to \$970 per student and to encourage universities to generate an additional 100% of their recurrent budget from income producing activities. A major issue that stands in the way of education playing expected role as enhancer of sustainable development in Nigeria is the paucity of fund.

### Conclusion

Even though the concept of development has been evolutionary, it is generally agreed among scholars that its involves step taker to add value to a nation's resources such that there is improvement in those resourses qualitatively and quantitatively. The ultimate objective is to bring about all round improvement in the quality of life of the people. A major vehicle for doing this is education. In the specific case of Nigeria, as identified in this paper, paucity of fund, inadequate practicals and poor content development are hinderancs to education enhancing sustainable development.

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