

EDUCATION AS A CATALYST FOR THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF NIGERIA: IMPLICATION ON COMMUNITIES

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Abstract

This theoretical paper examined the role of education as a catalyst for the socio-economic development of Nigeria and its implication on communities. Since communities are seen as a group of people living in the same place or having a particular characteristic in common, it was discovered that education plays a role in ensuring the socio-economic development of a country with varying implications on communities in the areas of enhancement of job opportunities, reduction of inequalities and reduction of poverty among others. It was further discovered that the socio-economic development of a community can be enhanced through education because education is an investment, education pays and communities can compete and succeed through education. Lack of political will, poor budgetary provision and lack of infrastructure were identified as some of the problems inhibiting education from serving its role. It was recommended that the government should employ qualified teachers to teach in educational institutions, community leaders should motivate students and assist in infrastructural and human capital development of educational institutions in their communities.

Keywords: *Communities, Development, Education, Socio-Economic*

Introduction

Education is generally seen as the driving force of any economy. Education in a broad sense is a process by which an individual acquires the many physical and social

capabilities demanded by the society in which he/she is born into to function. In an ideal sense, education is an ultimate value and hence, through the provision of social service, it is an agent of development. It is to a nation what the mind is to the body. Therefore, the single most significant complex of social-control tool for national development is found in the educational system of a country. Education which is regarded as the key to national development is the aggregate of all the processes in which a person develops his or her abilities, attitudes, and other forms of behaviour of positive value in the society where he or she lives. This means that without the correct form of education, there will be no development in such a community.

Education can be formal, non-formal and informal. Formal education takes place within the school system. It is organized, planned, and systematically structured. Non-formal education on the other hand, occurs outside the formal school system, although less structured, it is more skill-oriented, flexible and learner-centered. Informal education is impromptu and non pre-meditated. The Nigerian educational system is a close articulation of the formal, non-formal and informal education approaches aimed at the all-round development of the country. According to the National Policy on Education, education is the most important instrument of change in any society, and that any fundamental change in the intellectual and social outlook of any society has to be preceded by an educational revolution (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2008).

Development on the other hand, is a progressive unfolding of the potentialities of a given reality. As it applies to humans, it is the integration of the natural and physical being of people towards the productivity of their country or community. The essence of education whether formal, non-formal or informal, is to produce a person who will be a useful member of a society. It must engender in the individual disposition of personal autonomy, responsibility and relevant forms of life by thought and action to contribute to the socio-economic development of a community.

Socio-economic development is a compound word with three different important words. These include; society, economy and development. According to Babalola and Aliyu (2014), socio-economic development is the process of identifying both the social and economic needs within a community and seeks to create strategies that will address various issues and needs in ways that would affect the society over a long time. Socio-economic development tries to emphasize that leaders should concentrate on providing sustainable benefits for their citizens within their ambits.

Socio-economic development refers to economic growth accompanied by the social transformation of human beings and society. It is a growth in the economy which leads to the satisfaction of human needs for improved human well-being. This implies efficient and effective application of economic benefits of any growth to establish structures and institutions that enable human beings to use education to acquire knowledge, attitudes and skills required to boost their self-confidence, creativity and

readiness to participate in all issues involving their personal development and that of their society

Education has been rightly viewed by Yusuf, Afolabi, & Oyetayo, (2014) as an engine of national development. This could be seen from how education has successfully increased productivity in Brazil, Korea, Malaysia, Thailand and South East Asia. Initially, these nations were among the poorest nations in the world, but today education has changed their history for good. For instance, Nigerian citizens are presently on the run to Malaysia for individual educational development and this among others are boosting their national economy. The United States of America, United Kingdom among others which are currently referred to as the front line nations technologically were also able to climb this mantle of universally recognized socio-economic development due to the advancement of their educational systems (Babalola, 2015). It is on this basis that this theoretical paper considered the place of education as a catalyst for the socio-economic development of Nigeria with particular emphasis on how it affects communities in Nigeria.

Literature Review

Education generally plays an important role in the socio-economic development of any country. Ozturk (2001) revealed in a paper on the role of education in the economic development of Nigeria that education in every sense is one of the fundamental factors of development. That, no country can achieve sustainable economic development without substantial investment in human capital. Ozturk further disclosed that education enriches people's understanding of themselves and the world. It improves the quality of their lives and leads to broad social benefits to individuals and society. That education raises people's productivity and creativity and promotes entrepreneurship and technological advances. In addition it plays a very crucial role in securing economic and social progress and improving income distribution. The paper concentrated only on economic development. It did not discuss how education affects the socio-economic development of a country.

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In a study on Adult education for meaningful socio-economic development in Nigeria by Onyeka and Adekola (2015), it was established that adult education is an indispensable tool for the achievement of meaningful socio-economic development of any nation. Different dimensions of development as well as various phenomena and

their resultant effects which constitute a bane to successful socio-economic development in Nigeria were identified. It proposed that adult education programmes were relevant for the development of a literate, informed, skilled and healthy adult population that drives successful socio-economic development activities. It concluded that adult education programmes are veritable tools designed to equip adults who are economically productive and active citizens with the required knowledge, attitudes, skills and commitment needed for meaningful socio-economic development. The paper was only limited to how Adult education affects the socio-economic development of Nigeria.

Similarly, Asaju and Sunday (2014) carried out a study on functional education in Nigeria as a catalyst for effective poverty alleviation and found out that no nation can develop beyond its educational standard or level. Thus, education is seen as a catalyst for the socio-economic and political development of a nation. The success of many nations in tackling major development problems such as poverty, unemployment, inequality among others can be traced to their educational systems. There is a significant relationship between the level of educational system and the high rate of poverty in Nigeria. Even though the paper linked functional education as a panacea to poverty reduction in Nigeria, it did not link it to communities.

Babalola (2015) examined the Basic Education for Nigerian Socio-economic Development, using the Philippines' Barrio School Approach (PBSA) and found out that Nigeria's Basic Education is threading on the part of failure, because its implementation stage is suffering bankrupt School Administrators and under-funding. The bankrupt school administrators' part of the bargain provokes mismanagement of human, material and financial resources, while the under-funding aspects results to poor infrastructural facilities, shortage of teachers, inadequate instructional materials, and lack of staff training and re-training among others, which has a negative effect on the socio-economic development of Nigeria. The paper concentrated only on Basic education.

All the literature reviewed established the fact that education has a positive effect on the socio-economic development of a country, the studies also revealed that no country can develop without a functional educational system, which can be achieved through adequate funding. None of the studies however linked the role of education on the socio-economic development of Nigeria to communities, and how these communities can benefit from a functional educational system, thus making this paper apt.

Implications on Communities

Human beings need to have a specific set of skills to survive in this competitive world. This set of skills can be referred to as Education. Patrinos (2016) revealed that for any community to grow, it is important for its citizens to be adequately educated.

Here are the implications of education as a catalyst for the socio-economic development of Nigeria on communities:

1. **Education helps people become better citizens:** Educated people are aware of the socio-economic scenario of the community and can help in the progress of the community. Whether it is a simple thing like using water sparingly or taking a bus to work instead of using the bike or car to save fuel, the educated mass knows how to contribute towards the community's well-being. Babalola (2015) revealed that one of the reasons for their awareness is because they have been taught these values in schools, colleges and work places. People who are not educated do not have clues about these facts as they have not been in a learning environment.
2. **Education Shows The Importance Of Voting:** Education informs voters. It helps to decide whom to vote for, to make a difference in the community positively. Being educated helps in deciding why to vote for a particular party over the other. Uneducated people are unaware of the importance of choosing the right people to vote for. Hence, being educated shows us the importance of voting.
3. **Education helps in Getting Jobs:** It goes without saying that unless a person is educated, he or she cannot get a worthwhile job. Graduates of tertiary institutions are paid much more than those with lesser qualifications and continue to support the community financially and morally. Unemployment is an obstacle in the development and progress of a community's socio-economic status, thus posing a hindrance to the growth of such a community (Patrinos, 2016). The socio-economic status of so many communities is in a bad shape, due to the presence of uneducated people who do not possess adequate skills and thus are unemployed. Education therefore, helps in uplifting the socio-economic status of any community.
4. **Education helps Single Mothers:** Single mothers who are not educated cannot get decent jobs to support their children, which is a necessity in their situations. Tiruneh (2014) disclosed that being educated can help a single mother find a better job as well as make her aware of various types of help such as child support benefits and other agencies that can help her children. This can help single mothers bring up their children and help them become responsible citizens of the community.
5. **Education Helps Reduce Poverty:** People who live in extreme poverty are not in an ideal situation to contribute to a community's progress. Often, they do not even have basic reading and writing skills. James (2008) asserted that education is the cure for extreme poverty and the higher the level of education, the more a community can progress.

6. **Education Equalizes Inequality:** Education is one of the best equalizers. If a country wants to ensure that there are equal opportunities for everyone regardless of gender or social class, equal access to education is necessary (Tiruneh, 2014). Education provides more access to better jobs as well as improves options for youths in the community.
7. **Education Helps Economic Growth:** Communities with high literacy rates have citizens with high per capita income while those with high illiteracy rates have citizens with low per capita income (Barry, 2005). Educated members of any community contribute more in the socio-economic development of their communities as a result of their high income.
8. **Education Reduces Gender Based Violence:** In many communities, gender-based violence hinders a girl's right to education (James, 2008). When girls live in fear, it deters them from going to school, so education of the population helps change people's mindset, which will discourage violence.
9. **Education Reduces Maternal Death Rates:** In communities that are more highly educated, maternal death rates are reduced. Barry, (2005) disclosed that mothers can live longer, attend school and help raise themselves and their children out of poverty, thus increasing a community's progress.

Role of education in the Socio-Economic development of a community

Education plays the following role in the socio-economic development of a community:

1. **Education is an investment:** Investing in education has a payoff in terms of higher wages. Learning can continue into advanced ages. The relative costs and benefits to investments in older persons compared to younger persons differ. Investments in more able workers at any age generate higher returns than investments in less able workers and ability is formed at early age. Communities that invest more in education are more advanced than communities that neglect education. This is because apart from personal benefits, their families and the community benefit from them.
2. **Education pays:** Most countries spend a minimum of 5 percent of their Gross Domestic Product (GDP) on education or 20 percent of their national budget. Education employs about five percent of a country's labour force. Moreover, private returns to schooling have been increasing. Returns are increasing by more than 20 percent in Nigeria. The big change has been that the returns to tertiary education are highest. This implies that overtime, you earn much more than what you spend on education. This has a positive effect on the economic activities of the community.

3. **Skills demanded by the labour market are changing:** One of the reasons for the change in the returns pattern is the race between technology and education, as labour markets adjust to automation. Yusuf and Adigun (2010) revealed that in this new world, the ability of workers to compete is handicapped by the poor performance of educational systems in most communities. Technological change and global competition demand the mastery of competencies and the acquisition of new skills. Educational systems are now technology-driven through entrepreneurship education, this will aid people of the community to acquire skills such as tailoring, metal work, wood work and so on. With such skills, they will be self employed and may not need to depend on anybody for employment. Hence they will be able to meaningfully contribute to the socio- economic development of their communities.
4. **Communities can compete and succeed:** To promote success in the labour market, communities need to invest early in education, and then invest in the relevant skills. Above all, communities need to invest smartly. They need to pay attention to what is relevant in their community, appoint competent and trustworthy people to run the affairs of their educational institutions, and above all monitor the progress of the educational system in the community (Aggarwal, 2007). They also need to pay attention to teachers, early childhood development and culture by filling the gap on the level of education that is needed in the community: is it primary, secondary or tertiary education?

Problems Inhibiting Education from Serving its Role

Education encounters a lot of problems that hamper it from assuming its position as an effective tool for socio-economic development. Among these problems are:

1. **Lack of political will:** Institutional frameworks for the implementation of educational programmes have been provided (Onyeka, & Adekola, 2015). But the will to match the declarations in the frameworks with actions is lacking. This may be because political leaders lack understanding of the relevance of education to socio-economic development or they tactically do not want a vast majority of people to be educated in order not to be empowered to start asking questions about how the nation's affairs are run.
2. **Poor budgetary provision:** Education generally is poorly budgeted for in Nigeria's annual budgets. This invariably affects the sector at all levels. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) recommend that 26 percent of every nation's annual budget should be dedicated to education (Ozturk, 2001). But Nigeria's budgetary allocation to its education sector over the years is averagely between 7 to 10 percent. UNESCO's recommendations have not been met for education

3. **Lack of infrastructure:** Infrastructure to implement educational programmes is lacking due to the paucity of funds (Babalola & Aliyu, 2014). This hampers progress in the achievement of the objectives of educational programmes.
4. **Lack of trained personnel:** There is a paucity of trained personnel for the implementation of educational programmes in Nigeria. Asaju and Sunday (2014) disclosed that many people teaching in schools are not trained in the principles, theories and practices of education and thereby may not help to realize the objectives of education in enhancing socio-economic development.
5. **Socio-cultural factors:** Traditional social structures that exist in a given society may lead to either acceptance or rejection of any education programmes that are planned to be introduced in that community. The fear that the programmes may lead to disruption of social relations, loss of traditional knowledge, norms, values, and customs will result in the rejection of the programmes (Akbari, 2016). Whereas the hope of positive change and development that will accompany the programmes will result in the acceptance of the programmes.

Conclusion

Education develops communities by helping people become better citizens. It is portrayed in this theoretical paper as a veritable tool for socio-economic development. This is owed to the fact that education is the bedrock of any society. Educational programmes are designed to equip people with relevant knowledge, attitudes, skills and commitment required to drive meaningful socio-economic development. It is on this background that educational programmes are designed to identify and forestall problems that form a cog in the wheel of development by developing a literate, informed, skilled and healthy population which is a pre-requisite for meaningful socio-economic development of any community.

Therefore, functional education is a catalyst for enhancing socio-economic development. Although, the educational system in most communities in Nigeria is still inefficient due to many factors, its functionality will bring about accelerated growth in the economy. When graduates of educational institutions in Nigeria can independently practice what they learned in school without waiting for office or government jobs, more jobs will be created and income enhanced. The technological revivals that will follow will also positively lead to industrial revolution which will lead to more job opportunities and hence enhance socio-economic development in communities.

Education is indeed indispensable to the socio-economic development of any community. No socio-economic development is possible without good education. A balanced education system promotes not only socio-economic development, but productivity, and generates individual income per capita. Its influence is noticeable at the micro-level of an individual family and the entire community.

Recommendations

Based on the issues raised, for education to serve as a catalyst for socio-economic development in communities, the following were recommended:

1. Curriculum planners should include more vocational subjects which are practical and rural oriented bias into the School Curriculum to enable students to make choices among alternatives. Entrepreneurship education is highly recommended as a panacea for socio-economic development. This will go a long way to promote self-reliance among the graduates.
2. The government should employ qualified teachers and also train existing teachers to teach in primary and secondary schools. The community can also partner with the government by employing some teachers needed to teach certain subjects who are lacking teachers.
3. Community leaders should enlighten parents into helping their educational institutions with funds or projects that will assist in developing the educational system.
4. School Administrators and community leaders should strive to adapt Educational Curriculum to be rurally oriented bias and to the needs of the society and local industry around. This will help to reduce the menace of unemployment, incessant rural-urban migration, urban congestion, armed robbery, vandalism of Social amenities and government property, youth crime and juvenile delinquency, as well as insecurity challenges within the community.
5. Community leaders should motivate School Administrators, teachers and outstanding parents that have been contributing immensely towards school development with award of honours. This will motivate them to contribute more in the educational sector for socio-economic development.
6. Community leaders and well-spirited leaders should motivate outstanding Students from the community with gifts, promotions and scholarships as the case may be. A scholarship scheme can be constituted to assist less privileged students from the communities.

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