

QUALITY EDUCATION: A POTENT TOOL FOR SOCIO- ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The paper examined how quality education can facilitate socio-economic development in Nigeria. The study is necessitated by the present economic hardships and recession orchestrated by short falls in economic activities and low returns on investments which are plaguing Nigeria lately. To achieve this objective, the study raised four basic research questions and one hypothesis. The cross-sectional survey design was adopted for the study. The population for the study was all the 3104 confirmed lecturers in the five (5) tertiary institutions in Plateau State. The sample was made up of 500 lecturers who were purposively and conveniently drawn from the five institutions. Data for the study were elicited by means of a structured four-point- scale questionnaire which was designed by the researchers and was content validated by three (3) experts from the University of Jos. The questionnaire was tagged "Education and Socio- Economic Development Questionnaire" (ESEDQ). The test-retest reliability coefficient of the ESEDQ was 0.78 indicative of high reliability which equally lends credence to its validity. Personal contact method was used for data collection while the percentage and Chi-square test were the statistical procedures adopted for data analysis. Results revealed that quality education helps citizens identify and utilize the available social and economic opportunities in their environments. Also, factors that influence quality education in Nigeria include; poor funding of schools, poor quality teachers among others. The study concludes therefore that quality education is an indispensable tool for enhancing socio-economic development in Nigeria. The study recommends that there is need for improvement in the amount of funds allocated to education sector and also

there is need to recruitment more trained teachers into the teaching force in the various schools in Nigeria to effect quality education.

Keywords: Education, Quality, Quality Education, Socio-Economic Development.

Introduction

Globally, education is considered as a human right that should be accorded to all human beings. This was the reason why a lot of international human right bodies consider education as a fundamental human right. Education is the process of providing information to an individual in order to help him or her develop physically, mentally, socially, economically, spiritually, politically, and emotionally (Nnaka, 2002). Similarly, education is an instrument per excellence for achieving national objectives (Federal Government of Nigeria FGN, 2013).

Education is a vital tool for man's emancipation; this is because it is a means where by individuals are helped to acquire relevant skills, competencies, abilities necessary for meaningful living and positive contribution to nation building. Education is very important in the lives of every citizen of Nigeria. It is due to the undeniable importance of education to national development and meaningful existence that made education to be one of the human rights of any citizen of Nigeria. To buttress the importance of education to all and sundry (irrespective of gender), Education for All (EFA) was launched in an international world conference held in Jomtein Thailand in 1990 where education was made and declared to be one of the basic rights of any individual irrespective of ethnic racial, geographical, or economic limitations (Maduabum, 2004). In support of this declaration, Obanya (2002) reported that all the participating nations in the conference (including Nigeria) translated the proceedings of the conference in their local dialect to enable its citizens understand them. Furthermore, the importance of education is seen when one considers the national educational goals which are derived from the philosophy of Nigerian education as contained in section 1 paragraph 7 of the National Policy on education (FGN,2013),which include:

- a. The inculcation of national consciousness and national unity.
- b. The inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigeria Society.
- c. The training of the mind in the understanding of the world around, and
- d. The acquisition of appropriate skills and the development of mental, physical and social abilities and competencies as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of his society.

Based on this premises, it is clear that education is meant for advancement of the nation. In pursuance of these laudable educational goals, there have been many concerted efforts both at the international and local scene to ensure provision of education for all citizens. Some of these efforts include broad coalition of national governments, civil society groups and development agencies such as the United Nations Education and Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and the World

Bank (Obanya, 2000). This is because education has some cogent roles to play in the development of any nation. No wonder Ogundele (2012) stated that any nation that toys with the education of its citizens will not be ranked high among the committee of nations. However, for education to be able to achieve its objectives it has to be of quality. What then is quality education?

Quality means effectiveness (Zwalchir, 2009). This means that quality education is an effective education which is a veritable tool that can be skillfully used to accomplish national objectives (Mbah, 2015). One of the objectives of education in Nigeria is to ensure the acquisition of the appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy manipulative, communicative and life skills needed for laying a solid foundation for life-long learning. Such type of education is referred to as qualitative. In the view of Onocha (2002) quality is the level of excellence in performance on the strength of quality of the context, inputs, process/transaction and output. Therefore, quality education connotes functional and working education. According to Webster (1996), quality can be defined as degree of excellence, peculiar and essential characters of a thing or the degree of conformity to standard. This means that quality education is one that conforms to stated objectives or standards.

Quality education according to Offorma (2009) is the type of education in which learners are healthy, well- nourished and ready to participate and learn, and supported in learning by their families and communities. This definition focuses wholly on the learners. However, Bernard (1999), saw quality education as that in which focus is on learning which strengthens the capacities of children to act progressively on their own behalf through the acquisition of relevant knowledge, useful skills and appropriate attitudes, and which creates for children and help them create for themselves and others places of safety, security and healthy interaction. In the view of Ocho (2005), quality education means outcomes that encompass knowledge, skills and attitudes and are linked to national goals for education and positive participation in society. From the various definitions above, quality education means that schools are capable of producing graduates who can fend for themselves, contribute meaningfully to national development. Adams (1993) posited that terms like efficiency, effectiveness, and equity are used often interchangeably with quality. In essence, quality education can be said to be functional or working type of education.

Quality can then be seen as the good characteristics or traits of a thing that promote excellence or superiority. This being the case, quality education can be said to be the type of education that conforms to set standard based on national objectives. The question that readily comes to mind is, of what importance is quality education? In answer to this question, Mbah (2015) advanced three reasons why education must be qualitative. The reasons are; that the nation is in dire need of quality graduates to man the different sectors of the economy; also there is need for a change of the age long status quo of depending on other nations for economic survival and moreover, Nigeria

is blessed with both human and natural resources but lack the technical know-how and skilled manpower to harness her huge and rich resources for social and economic advancement. This situation has made Nigeria to be poor both in social and economic development. A lot of Nigerian youths are unemployed; many families are poor and are not able to fend for their children despite our huge natural resources.

One of the major reasons is that schools have failed to raise competent and skilled manpower (graduates) due to poor quality education (Ezekwesili, 2016). Many graduates are ill- baked and as such cannot deliver. This has made the nation poor as most youths are waiting for white collar jobs due to their blindness to the various opportunities that abound in their environment. Based on the identified problems caused by poor quality education, there is need for qualitative education that will help produce graduates with the relevant knowledge, skills and competences that will enable them live meaningful lives, become self-reliant, be useful to themselves and contribute immensely to national development. One reason posited for this failure is poor funding of education in Nigeria (Nnaka, 2002). Funding is critical to quality education because it is needed for provision of educational facilities among other things. It is against this backdrop that the present study is being undertaken to examine how quality education could be of help in the socio-economic development of Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

The present social and economic down trend in Nigeria has caused great havoc to the economy of the nation. The Nigerian government is heavily indebted to other countries. Many state governments are not able to pay salaries as at when due while some cannot pay except they take loans. This condition ought not to be when one considers the fact that Nigeria is blessed with many human and natural resources which could be effectively harnessed to make social and economic gains. The reason for the observed poor state of the nation is traced to poor quality of education in Nigeria. The education system is expected to produce competent graduates who are well- equipped (in terms of skills, traits, knowledge, capabilities and competences) which they will use to make great economic impact in Nigeria.

However, contrary to expectations, many Nigerian schools are of poor quality leading to poor quality education. A lot of schools lack good teachers, there are no chairs and tables in some schools; again, many schools lack qualified teachers and classroom blocks as such learners are forced to learn under trees and shades. These ugly scenarios do not make for quality education. As a result of these lapses in education delivery in Nigeria, school graduates are half –baked and lack the necessary skills and competences due to poor training. Many school graduates are not employable due to lack of the required skills. It is even more worrisome when one considers the fact that some of the employed graduates are incompetent (mediocre). This situation has caused a lot of economic and social setbacks to the nation as most intelligent students are fleeing to other countries to be trained. At present, some Nigerian graduates do not

possess the necessary skills that will make them employable by others or to be self-employed due to poor quality education. The poor quality education has blinded many youths to see many opportunities that abound in the nation which could be tapped to make them great. This condition orchestrated by poor quality education has made Nigeria to be dependent on other nations for most of her needs. Now the problem of this study is embedded in this broad question “how could quality education help foster socio-economic advancement in Nigeria”?

Purpose of the Study

The study is designed to:

1. Identify the advantages of quality education to the socio-economic development of Nigeria
2. Unravel factors that militate against quality education in Nigeria.
3. Find out the effects of poor quality education on socio-economic development of Nigeria.
4. Proffer measures that could be used to ensure quality education in Nigeria for a better socio-economic development.

Research Questions

1. What are the advantages of quality education to socio-economic development of Nigeria?
2. What factors militate against quality education in Nigeria?
3. What are the effects of poor quality education to the socio-economic development of Nigeria?
4. What measures could be used to enhance quality education in Nigeria for better socio-economic development?

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant influence of quality education on socio-economic development of Nigeria.

Methodology

The descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The population for the study consists of all 3,104 lecturers from five (5) tertiary institutions in Plateau State whose appointments have been confirmed based on data obtained from the registrar's offices of the five higher institutions in the study area. The sample was made up of 250 male and 250 female lecturers (totaling 500) who were purposively and conveniently drawn from the five institutions. Data for the study were elicited through a structured four-point- scale questionnaire which was designed by the researchers and was validated by three (3) experts from the Faculty of Education, University of Jos. Two of the experts were from Educational Administration and Planning while the third was

from Tests and Measurement Unit of the Faculty of Education, University of Jos. The questionnaire was titled "Education and Socio-Economic Development Questionnaire" (ESEDQ). The test-retest reliability coefficient of the ESEDQ was 0.78 indicative of high reliability which equally lends credence to its validity. Personal contact method was used for data collection while the percentage and the Chi-Square test were the statistical procedures adopted for data analysis for the research questions and hypothesis.

Results

Research Question 1: What are the advantages of quality education to socio-economic development of Nigeria?

Table 1: Advantages of Quality Education on Socio-Economic Development of Nigeria

S/NO	STATEMENT	AGREED	%	DISAGREED	%
1.	Quality education helps recipients to acquire traits and competences for better job productivity.	490	98	10	2
2.	Quality education helps citizens to become aware of opportunities in their environment and to utilize them maximally.	495	99	05	1
3.	Education enlightens the mind of recipients to think positively for better life.	485	97	15	03
4.	Quality education provides training for youths which equips them for real world of work.	472	94.4	28	5.6
5.	Education is a means of empowering youths to reduced poverty and economic hardship.	492	98.4	08	1.6
6.	Acquisition of quality education helps one to be better disposed to utilize his acquired skills and competences to solve life challenges.	487	97.4	13	2.6
7.	Quality education helps citizens to discover their innate potentials and capabilities	497	99.4	03	06

which could be harnessed for economic and social benefits.

Results in Table 1 reveals that among the benefits of quality education are to help citizens discover their innate potentials and capabilities for economic and social benefits (99.4%) and making citizens to become aware of opportunities in their environment and to utilize them (99%) among others. The least benefits based on table 2 is that quality education provides training for youths which empowers them for real world of work (94.4%)

Research Question 2: What factors influence quality education in Nigeria?

Table 2: Factors Influencing Quality Education In Nigeria

S/NO	FACTORS	AGREED	%	DISAGREED	%
1.	Inadequate funding of education by the government.	490	98	10	2
2.	Lack of stability of teaching staff	350	70	150	3
3.	Politicization of education	485	97	15	3
4.	Recruitment of poor quality or unqualified teachers	480	96	20	4
5.	Indiscipline and corruption in education system inform of examination malpractice	493	98.6	06	1.4
6.	Poor parenting / guidance.	380	76	120	24
7.	Inadequate or lack of facilities to help achieve instructional objectives.	460	92	40	8
8.	Poor or irregular supervision and monitoring of educational activities in Nigeria.	455	91	45	09

Result in Table 2 shows that inadequate funding (98%) and indiscipline and corruption in education system (98.6%) are lead factors that influence quality education in Nigeria. The least observed factors according to Table 2, is that of poor parenting and guidance (70%).

Research Question 3: How does poor quality education hinder socio-economic development in Nigeria?

Table 3: Effects of Poor Quality Education on Socio-Economic Development in Nigeria

S/NO	STATEMENT	AGREED	%	DISAGREED	%
1.	Many graduates are half- baked and as such are not employable.	486	97.2	14	2.8
2.	There is outright poor job productivity by some workers due to poor training	490	98	10	2
3.	There is great mediocrity in job performance of graduates in all sectors of the economy.	450	90	50	10
4.	There are death of competent and skilled manpower to man some key positions in the Nigerian economic sector	480	96	20	4
5.	Nigeria loses a lot of money and economic opportunities due to incompetent workforce.	492	98.4	08	1.6
6.	There is brain drain in the country as intelligent students are taken overseas for further studies.	495	99	105	1
7.	There is discrimination against Nigerian graduates among committee of nations.	480	96	20	4

Data in Table 3 reveals that poor quality education causes brain drain (99%) and makes Nigeria to lose a lot of money and economic opportunities due to incompetent work force (98.4%).

Research Question 4: What measures could be taken to enhance quality education in Nigeria for better socio-economic development?

Table 4: Measures To Enhance Quality Education

S/NO	STATEMENT	AGREED	%	DISAGREED	%
1.	Quality assurance in education delivery should be maintained	490	99	10	2
2.	Increase in funds allocated to education sector	498	99.6	02	0.4
3.	Recruitment of high quality teaching staff for all subjects	485	97	15	3
4.	Proper teacher training before certification.	480	96	20	4
5.	De-politicization of educational employment in Nigeria.	470	94	30	6
6.	Review of educational curriculum to incorporate socio-economic development courses like entrepreneurship	486	97.2	14	2.8

In order to enforce quality education, it was suggested that funds allocated to education sector be increased (99.6%) and quality assurance in education delivery to be maintained (90%). The measure observed is that politicization of educational employment should be de-emphasized (94%).

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant influence of quality education on the socio-economic advancement of Nigeria.

Table 5: Chi – Square Summary of the Influence of Quality Education on Socio-Economic Development In Nigeria

Variables	Fo	Fe	$\frac{(Fo-fe)^2}{Fe}$	Df	X ² cal	X ² table	Remark
Quality Education	295	250	6.864				
				0.05	1	13.728	3.84
Socio-Economic Development	205	250	6.864				Reject Ho

Data in Table 5 revealed that the calculated Chi-square value (13.728) is greater than the table value of 3.84 at a degree of freedom of 1 at 0.05 level of significance, hence there is sufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis. The study concludes therefore that there is a significant influence of quality education on socio-economic development in Nigeria

Discussion

The study was on the role of quality education in the socio-economic development of Nigeria. The study discovered that quality education is beneficial to socio-economic development because it helps citizens to discover their potentials. Quality education also enables citizens to be aware of the opportunities available in their country which they could tap for useful living and meaningful contribution to nation building. These findings are in tandem with the submission of Ocho (2005) who stated that education illuminates the mind and chases away obscurity so that recipients can see possibilities in their environments. In the same manner, these findings are supported by Mbah (2015) who asserted that quality education is the need of the hour in Nigeria. Nigeria needs quality education that will equip her citizens with the relevant skills consequential to the advancement of the nation. Poor education is detrimental to nation growth as recipients will be ill-equipped to take responsibility.

Poor funding and poor quality teachers were found to be among the major threats to quality education in Nigeria. Regarding funding of education UNESCO (2005) directed that all nations should allocate 26% of its national budget to education. However, in Nigeria the federal government expenditure on education is very low, less than 10% of the overall expenditure (Nnaka, 2002). This below ten percentage allocation to education is not adequate to promote quality education considering the fact that education is a capital intensive project. Huge sum of money is needed for teachers' salaries, provision of learning materials and school infrastructure among others. If these are not put in place via adequate funding, there is no how quality education could be effected. A substantial amount of fund needs to be allocated to education if quality must be attained in the sector. On the quality of teachers as a determinant factor in quality education, Ezekwesili (2016) notes that teacher quality determines as much as 70 per cent of the learning outcomes that students will achieve. Continuing, Ezekwesili observed that the reason why Finland excels globally is precisely because of the quality of teachers in their classrooms. A teacher cannot be in the school system in Finland without a minimum of a masters' degree. Teachers are the implementers of the curriculum, when they are poorly trained, they cannot promote quality education in any way.

Among the effects of poor quality education is the problem of incompetent workforce and brain drain. Quality education is required if citizens must possess the required knowledge, skills and competences that will enable them to be fit for real world of work. At present, many graduates lack the necessary knowledge. There seems

to be a discrepancy between their qualification and their job capability. As such many teachers seem to have only paper qualification. This is the reason why Mbah (2015) advocated that in job placement, competence not paper- based assessment should be conducted in a bid to select the right people with the right capability for any job. The view by Mbah was earlier corroborated by Obanya (2002) when he averred that universal basic education objectives may not be achieved in Nigeria if the issue of teacher training and preparation for the job are not addressed succinctly.

Regarding improving quality of education in Nigeria, it was suggested that adequate funding and proper teacher training are paramount. No nation can rise above the quality of her teachers (Obanya, 2002); as such the issue of teacher training cannot be toyed with. Teachers determine the pace of development in any nation and they are the bane of all other sectors. When teachers are of high quality, the educator sector will be well-positioned to produce quality manpower that will take care of the various sectors of the economy well and with integrity. In support of improving the quality of education as a prerequisite for national growth and development, Ezekwesili (2016) contended that until teachers are of high quality through training, retraining and adequate orientation about teaching, Nigeria may not be among the top ranking nations in the near future.

Conclusion

The study examined quality education as a tool for socio-economic development in Nigeria. It was discovered that quality education is beneficial to the nation as it helps citizens discover their innate potentials and capabilities and how to discover economic opportunities in their environments as well as teaches them how to utilize them. Several factors influence quality education. Some of them are poor funding, corruption and indiscipline in education among others. The effect or danger of poor quality education to socio-economic development is that it leads to brain drain and loss of money and other economic opportunities due to incompetent workforce among others. The study concludes therefore that quality education will help foster socio-economic development in Nigeria.

Recommendations

Sequel to the findings of the study, the following are recommended:

1. Quality education was found to have many advantages to all and sundry hence philanthropists as well as non- governmental organizations should assist the government through donations and other supports to help education accessible to all citizens for socio-economic growth of the nation.
2. Poor funding is one of the cardinal hindrance for quality education hence there is need for the federal government to stick to UNESCO directive of 26% of national budget to education in order to effect quality education.

3. It was gathered from the study that many graduates are not employable as a result of poor quality education hence there is need for a restructuring of the Nigerian education curriculum to include work place skills and entrepreneurial skills that will help make graduates employable and self reliant.
4. The government needs to devise means of monitoring education delivery in Nigeria to enhance quality assurance. Also trusted managers should be put in charge of educational funds to help quality assurance in the aspect of educational funds management.

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