

## **Restructuring Educational Goals for National and Economic Development in Nigeria**

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**Abstract:** *Successful development strategy entails more than just formulating economic policies, investing in physical capital, or closing the gap in capital, but also involves designing educational curriculum that has economic relevance, having the ability to bridge the gap in economic need. This is where Nigeria and most developing countries tend to be lacking in policy relevance. Educational policies do not seem to correlate with economic needs, thus, with the much emphasis on compulsory education, increase in school enrolment at all levels and the proliferation of universities in the country, national productivity and economic development remain stiffened. Given this concern, there is need to develop knowledge-based educational curriculum in core economic areas that requires building a strong link between universities and industry for research, development and entrepreneurship. This will involve creating opportunities in collaboration at institutional level, capturing the labour market and private sector needs, and capturing needs in capacity building in quality assurance, research and leadership development in higher education. This is informed by a policy front in Education for the attainment of Economic Objective, established by this paper.*

**Keywords:** *Education, Curriculum, Manpower, National Productivity, Restructuring.*

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### **I. Introduction**

The central role of education in economic development and general increase in national productivity need not be overemphasized. The developed as well as the under-developed countries all over the world seemed to agree on the tremendous and compelling argument to make education the basis of national development. In no small measure, education provides a foundation for development, the groundwork on which economic and social well being is built. Ebong (1996) defines it as a powerful instrument for the development of man and the society. It is the key to increasing economic efficiency and social consistency. By increasing the value and efficiency of their labor, it helps to raise the poor from poverty. It increases the overall productivity and intellectual flexibility of the labor force; ensures that a country is competitive in world markets now characterized by changing technologies and production methods. As such, no country can achieve sustainable economic development without substantial investment in human capital. It 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.

Ayara (2007) added that education creates improved citizens and helps to upgrade the general standard of living in a society. Therefore, positive social change is likely to be associated with the production of qualitative citizenry. It would seem to follow naturally that if more individuals are educated, the wealth of nation would rise, since more education attracts higher wages and aggregatively higher national income. And if there are positive externalities of education, national income should increase by even more than the sum of the individual benefits. This increasing faith in education as an agent of change in many developing countries including Nigeria has led to a heavy investment in it, and thus the delegation of manpower development to the schools. The pressure for higher education and even school education in many developing countries has undoubtedly been helped by public perception of financial reward from pursuing such education. Generally, this goes with the belief that expanding education promotes economic growth.

But however, the paradox accompanying this belief is that, despite the huge investment in education, there exist no strong evidence of growth-promoting externalities of education in Nigeria, but rather, education expansion further deepens social inequality and inculcate negative social changes such as cultism, rent seeking, sexual harassment, sorting, result racketeering, industrial disputes, brain drain among other social vices in the Nigerian school system and the society at large (Ayara, 2007). The situation is worsening with the increasing trend of unemployment, resulting from poor and incompetent labour force, even among the so called graduates. The emphasis on university certificate has led to the turn out of unbaked and half baked graduates who cannot meet job requirement even when they find opportunity. They, few who make their way into the public sector, remain there and slow the workforce. This contributes to poor performance in the Nigeria public sector.

The problem, Ajibola (2007) believes is a curriculum one. Analysis of the Nigerian education sector reveals the challenges of incoherence in policy formulation and implementation. The selection and organization of curriculum content, curriculum implementation and evaluation, the development, distribution and use of

teaching materials, and the relevance of the curriculum to the needs of society are defined. Therefore, the need for transformation in curriculum for all the educational levels becomes necessary. Sometimes it appears as if solutions are on the way, at other times one feels that the education system is back in the doldrums. Unless, the educational curriculum especially at the tertiary level is reviewed to meet manpower need, the quest for national productivity may remain elusive. One possible way of achieving this is to redefine or restructure the curriculum, if not in all areas, core areas that have direct effects on labour. A policy framework that informs this measure establishes the framework of this paper. The paper reviews the Nigerian educational sector, assessing aspects of curriculum process such as policy, analysis, objectives, content, evaluation, methodology and implementation. The paper submits recommendation on further strategies that will help in the restructuring of the existing curriculum to meet economic needs. It concludes that to achieve improved national productivity, the educational curriculum must form the framework of satisfying job need.

### **Restructuring Education in Nigeria in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

There is increasing level of unemployment in the country. Our educational system as conceived in the past was while collar job oriented. Our educational curriculum does not balance theoretical training with skill acquisition for self reliant. Educators and policy formulators must ensure that the general course contents and curriculum especially at all the levels of education are structured to meet our needs as a developing nation. Thus, all levels of education in the context of current social and economic reforms should provide learners with functional knowledge and skills for productive life and for contributing to societal development (Ogakwu, 2011).

Nigeria has shown promises of beginning the process of re-structuring its educational system and it is important to note that the stakeholders have contributed significantly in the reform process. Especially important to note is the report by the Federal Ministry of Education at the International Conference of Education (FME, 2008) in Geneva where member of the writing team outlined in the Executive report the restructuring process going in the education system. In reviewing the process of reform outline in this report and comparing it to other developed and developing nations, it is critical to point to the need for a clear starting point, one that takes into consideration that education reform take many paths and must reflect an understanding of what our graduating students will be able to do upon leaning each curricula level – elementary, secondary and tertiary. In addition, we must also ask ourselves, how these expectations aligned to the need of the 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce. Are there skills that foster entrepreneurial qualities reflected in our content or discipline, curriculum design and development? How globally aware are our Federal, State and Local policy leaders in selecting and allocating funding for curriculum support and training model? In line with these questions posed, one would suggest that change in the educational process in Nigeria, or any other school system for that matter can take multiple paths. Research points out that it can take the form of new curriculum inclusion, new assessment methods, change in leadership, teacher training, language policy, co-curricular emphasis or even matters of administration (Koh, 2004 in Ogakwu, 2011:21).

### **The Nigerian Educational Sector**

So much importance has been attached to education in Nigeria between 1950's and 90's, to the extent that education was seen in some quarters as an end in itself. This is because education is viewed as a means of understanding, controlling, altering and redesigning human environment with a view to achieving and sustaining a better quality of life (CBN, 2000:98). The huge capital outlay and heavy recurrent expenditure requirement on education is often justified as an investment for the future. It was widely accepted that the key to socio-economic and political transformation which the Nigerian public desired lies in education. It is the greatest instrument for the achievement of freedom for all and life more abundant (Taiwo, 1996:120). This implies freedom from disease, freedom from poverty and freedom from oppression. Thus, Nigeria looks forward to an educated electorate and citizenry to realize her objectives of freedom and prosperity (Ayara, 2007).

With the concern, prior to and after independence, a lot of efforts have been made by the government to promote education in the country (at the federal, state and local level). One of such giant strides in the Nigeria education policy thrust was public take over of grant-in-aids schools in states and the launching of the national scheme for Universal Primary Education (UPE), hut was not sustained due to frequent change in the socioeconomic and political conditions in the nation. However, the recent civilian government led by the Peoples Democratic Party has also made an effort to revive the policy of universal education enshrined in the 1976 education policy with a different nomenclature - Universal Basic Education (UBE). However, it is pertinent to note that UBE resulted to increased enrollment but the commitment of the government could not sustain the policy drive because of the re-introduction of school fees.

The Federal Ministry of Education (2003) agreed that the 1978-1999 period was an ill period for educational system in Nigeria due to resurgence of instability and financial inadequacies in the management, and was affected by the general economic down turn of the 1980s. Consequently, expansion in primary school

education after 1986 was forestalled followed by the ills of regular occurrence of unpaid teachers' salaries, the degeneration of educational facilities and infrastructure at all levels and the attendant common place strikes across all tiers of Nigeria education system till date. The root cause of the problems of education sector in Nigeria can be traced to poor financial investment. This was confirmed in the work of Central Bank of Nigeria (2000), which posited that inadequate funding has been the bane of educational system to the extent that budgeting allocations had been very low compared with others. Furthermore, that the Federal Government allocation to education ranged between 0.6 and 9.0 percent for recurrent and 1.0 to 2.8 percent for capital expenditure of the federal government budget for the period of 1992-1996. The government of Nigeria in the National Economic Empowerment Development Strategies (NEEDS) Programme recognize that one of the main challenges facing the educational institutions in the country was inadequate funding, and as such the issue of educational expenditures is quite obvious.

Under-funding of education is another factor that has militated against the educational programmes of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. According to United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), education should consume about 26% of country's annual budget. This is because education is the hub on which every development revolves. The highest education was in 2008 when it was given 8% of the National Budget. Fund is required to pay staff, provide and maintain equipments or facilities. The best brains the country has produced are constantly lost to the advanced countries of the world where education is properly funded (Ogakwu, 2011).

Beyond the problem of inadequate funding which has always been there and may continue, there is an area of concern, though often sidelined, forms a core determinant of the output on investment in education. This is the school curriculum.

Simple defined, the curriculum is a brief written account of one's past history e.g. of education and many other aspects of life endeavour, Innovations reported under this category are in the area of curriculum and programme development; new approaches to teaching and learning, often combined with the introduction of new educational technologies; and quality assurance. Innovations therefore overlap with the relevance category. Innovations in curriculum have also increasingly taken the form of introducing new programmes as indicated above. The process of constructing the curriculum is unique to each national setting. It is a complex outcome of the opinions and solutions that key stakeholders propose for society's requirements and needs. There are no 'successful' international models to copy. Many innovations with the curriculum include an emphasis on a particular field and the use of the core knowledge curriculum where basic factual information is presented before any abstract concepts, leading to a focus on the mastery of basics (Ajibola, 2008).

The problems related to curricula became noticeable soon after Nigeria's independence from colonial rule in 1960. By the mid-1960s, educators and educational planners were rethinking Nigeria's education system and in particular, the curriculum being taught in the schools. The question is has Nigeria educational policy been capable of providing the needed manpower development to stir the nation's socio-economic exigencies left by the colonial masters? The non-directional policy issue has been the main bane of the educational system particular with reference to the curriculum structure. So far, we have had more than three different systems borne out of incessant changes in policies. It has become a tradition to abandon policy in mid-stream. The effect of this policy somersault cannot be over-stressed.

Science Teachers' Association of Nigeria (STAN) are bodies that have worked hard to translate national and educational objectives into curricula and teaching objectives through the development of curricula designed to help individuals attain cognition, acquire process skills and develop scientific attitudes which will enable them to think critically, manage and use available resources, to effectively adapt to their environment, assume responsibilities and fulfill domestic, economic, social, and political roles. STAN has continued to give a critical appraisal of the science education curriculum with a view to identifying defects and devising original solutions. To this effect, STAN has devoted its efforts to science curriculum innovation and renewal particularly at the primary and secondary education levels (Ajibola, 2008). With societal changes, there have been a lot of innovations in the Nigerian educational philosophy and policies to meet changing needs. The provision for a core curriculum (or core subjects) and optional curriculum (or elective subjects) is also a significant change. The aims of these changes are to guarantee an all-round education for learners, and to bring some degree of diversity into curriculum development. In this, the tertiary institutions seem to share.

### **The Nigerian Educational Sector and Manpower Need: Theoretical Perspective**

Prior to the nineteenth century, systematic investment in human capital was not considered especially important in any country. Expenditures on schooling, on-the-job training, and other similar forms of investment were quite small. This began to change radically during this century with the application of science to the development of new goals and more efficient methods of production, first in Great Britain, and then gradually in other countries.

During the twentieth century, education, skills, and the acquisition of knowledge have become crucial determinants of a person's and a nation's productivity. One can even call the twentieth century the "Age of

Human Capital” in the sense that the primary determinant of a country’s standard of living is how well it succeeds in developing and utilizing the skills and knowledge, and furthering the health and educating the majority of its population. The past decades have seen extraordinary expansions in access to basic education throughout the Middle East. Many countries are now on the brink of a further increase in access to secondary and higher education and in effecting spectacular improvements in the quality of education offered at all levels. As increasing numbers of students complete their basic education, their demand for education at higher levels is similarly increasing. Educating girls and women is probably the single most effective investment a developing country can make, whether or not women work outside the home. It creates a multitude of positive remunerations for families including better family health and nutrition, improved birth spacing, lower infant and child mortality, and enhanced educational attainment of children. Countries in the Middle East are increasingly integrated in world markets for manufactured goods. Their ability to compete in these markets and in globalizing service markets will depend on the excellence of human capital they bring to the competition. Ensuring that all citizens are educated and numerate, that many possess a wide range of problem solving skills beyond the basic level, and that some have world class professional skills will necessitate new curricula, improved teacher programs, and academic methods that encourage higher order cognitive skills.

No country has achieved constant economic development without considerable investment in human capital. Previous studies have shown handsome returns to various forms of human capital accumulation: basic education, research, training, learning-by-doing and aptitude building. The distribution of education matters. Unequal education tends to have a negative impact on per capita income in most countries. Moreover, controlling for human capital distribution and the use of appropriate functional form specifications consistent with the asset allocation model make a difference for the effects of average education on per capita income, while failure to do so leads to insignificant and even negative effects of average education. Investment in human capital can have little impact on growth unless people can use education in competitive and open markets. The larger and more competitive these markets are, the greater are the prospects for using education and skills.

Clearly then, the educational provisions within any given country represent one of the main determinants of the composition and growth of that country’s output and exports and constitute an important ingredient in a system’s capacity to borrow foreign technology effectively. For example: health and nutrition, and primary and secondary education all raise the productivity of workers, rural and urban; secondary education, including vocational, facilitates the acquisition of skills and managerial capacity; tertiary education supports the development of basic science, the appropriate selection of technology imports and the domestic adaptation and development of technologies; secondary and tertiary education also represent critical elements in the development of key institutions, of government, the law, and the financial system, among others, all essential for economic growth. Empirical evidence at both micro and macro levels further illuminates these relationships. At a micro level, numerous studies indicate that increases in earnings are additional years of education, with rate of return varying with high level of education. The returns to primary schooling tend to be greater than returns to secondary and tertiary education.

In agriculture, evidence suggests positive effects of education on productivity among farmers using modern technologies, but less impact, as might be expected, among those using traditional methods. In Thailand, farmers with four or more years of schooling were three times more likely to adopt fertilizer and other modern inputs than less educated farmers (Birdsall, 1993: 75-79). Similarly, in Nepal, the completion of at least seven years of schooling increased productivity in wheat by over a quarter, and in rice by 13% (Jamison and Moock, 1994:13).

Education is also an important contributor to technological capability and technical change in industry. Statistical analysis of the clothing and engineering industries in Sri Lanka, to cite just one example, showed that the skill and education levels of workers and entrepreneurs were positively related to the rate of technical change of the firm (Deraniyagala, 1995). Education alone, of course cannot transform an economy. The quantity and quality of investment, domestic and foreign, together with the overall policy environment, form the other important determinants of economic performance. Yet the level of human development has a bearing on these factors too. The quality of policy making and of investment decisions is bound to be influenced by the education of both policy makers and managers; moreover, the volume of both domestic and foreign investment is likely to be larger when a system’s human capital supply is more plentiful.

It has been argued that even ‘unskilled’ workers in a modern factory normally need the literacy, numeracy, and discipline, which are acquired in primary and lower secondary school (Wood, 1994).

Nigeria and most developing nations have an impressive number of colleges and university graduates, many with post-graduate degrees. Unfortunately, the academic skills passed on through local colleges and universities do not appropriately match the practical skills demanded by the private sector. These disconnect between skills taught and skills needed by the private sector has led to a growing population of underemployed, frustrated youth.

Delays in restructuring education systems to keep pace with economic structures are most apparent in the transition economies of the Nigerian labour force. Undermining this can hinder growth; conversely, timely reform can pay off in terms of improving productivity both in the public and private sector and economic growth. Within this share concern, Ajibola (2007) had earlier recommended that there is an urgent need for curriculum renovation that is realistic and child-centered, that is quick in rejuvenating and revitalizing hope and passion for acquisition of broad-based knowledge that is worthwhile in a learner should be the focus of the structure. Methodology that will aid self discovery and problem-solving ability which allows learners the opportunity for creativity should be entrenched in the curriculum. Quality and relevance are the two features that curriculum development in Nigeria now needs.

Equally, changes and innovations of a school system of our globalized environment must involve the emergence of elastic curricula models and educational policies which emphasize interdisciplinary courses, open-ended systems, inter-generational and inter-professional relationships, multi-culturalism and sustainability. The need for a paradigm shift from theoretical and paper certification to a practical application of knowledge necessary for future employment and skills development for self employment should be the cardinal objectives of Nigerian education. Curriculum developers should also adopt the interdisciplinary approach to curriculum especially at the primary and junior secondary school levels. Emphasis should be on the changing needs of the society through reliance on the understanding and application of new technologies. Finally, to teach a new curriculum at all levels of education, the teachers or instructors currently employed by the Government have to receive further training in teaching the new body of knowledge. In addition, new experts have to be trained locally or abroad while some experts have to be recruited from abroad in such disciplines where no qualified Nigerians are yet available. Particularly, on manpower, power need and economic development, the paper presents a policy thrust below.

### **Education for the attainment Economic Objective**

Education, as the key to increasing human capital and economic efficiency, may not achieve objective if; there is no correlating relevance between the school curriculum, especially at the tertiary level and labour need. It will be difficult for a country to achieve improved productivity through education, if a high percentage of the school graduates do not have required skills that meet job needs. The major role of education is manpower development; the manpower developed must be able to help solve major issues our country faces. As a result education must be relevant in courses and content. This is applicable to all academic discipline. A policy framework designed to achieve is founded on the need to institute a one year **ATTACHMENT SCHEME** to every university degree awarding programme.

Majority of our youths with university degrees are unemployed. Some employed once are underemployed, due to inadequate technical skill on the job. There is lack of vertical or horizontal job mobility for many persons, city and rural depressed areas and the lack of relevance of much education in terms of a work role. The policy is informed by the need to develop practical skills in educational disciplines before graduating to face the labour market. The policy framework is further strengthened by the four cardinal objectives,

1. It will help the young graduate acquire specific training and to develop a healthy attitude towards honest labour, especially within the discipline of choice.
2. To understand, appreciate and promote organizational objective. The process is strategic to the extent that organizational goals are well defined goals and targets whose attainments are time-bound. It is dynamic, responsive and result oriented; continually evolving to address emerging challenges as well as proactive. It is further an effective monitoring system to that necessary improvements in the process. in it all, the objective of capacity building is achieved in the mind of the young school graduate to be.
3. From, the above objective, a sense of self reliance, competence and the ability to become self employed is developed. Instead of hang out for employment opportunities were there are none, within this skill developed, an individual can get on something and become self employed.
4. Finally, to help create an appropriate balance and critical mass of human resource base and providing an enabling environment for all individuals to be fully engaged and contribute, to national development efforts. It involves providing opportunities for all citizens to develop to their fullest potentials through education, training and motivation as well as creating the enabling environment for everyone to participate fully in rational development.

### **Recommendations**

In order to restructure Nigeria's 21<sup>st</sup> century system of education to meet the needs of Nigeria as a knowledge based economy, the following recommendations were made:

- Develop and provide funding for standard aligned professional development process that will train and retain the students strategically meeting the teaching and learning needs for a knowledge-based economy.

- Provide resources and technological infrastructure for research and creation of centres of excellence that encourage interdisciplinary research for best practices.
- Promote access to information management systems – hardware and software for meeting the learning needs of the student generation.
- Provide funding and human resources for regional research and development centers focusing on entrepreneurial education strategies and curriculum integration at all levels.
- UNICEF recommendation of 26% of annual budget to be devoted to education should be strictly adhered to.
- Funds are required to purchase the needed facilities that will encourage mastery and competence in entrepreneurial skills.
- Funding of education should be the joint responsibility of government and private individuals.
- Incorporation of entrepreneurial education to the programme of National Universities Commission (NUC) should ensure that the Universities do not admit more than their carrying capacities. The students' enrolment should march the existing facilities to ensure standard.

## **II. Conclusion**

In a speech, made by the former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan that: The University must become a primary tool for Africa's development in the new century. Universities can help develop African expertise; they can enhance the analysis of African problems; strengthen domestic institutions; serve as a model environment for the practice of good governance, conflict resolution and respect for human rights, and enable African academics to play an active part in the global community of scholars. This is true and we can achieve through an effective educational system; one that promotes highly-knowledgeable, well skilled and resourceful graduate.

Quality education is indispensable to economic development. No economic development is possible without good education. A balanced education system promotes not only economic development, but productivity, and generates individual income per capita. Its influence is noticeable at the micro level of an individual family. Much as Nigeria and other developing nations depend upon education to provide solutions to her problems, especially economic problems, a good educational framework with functional curriculum must be developed in other for this goal to be achieved.

In restructuring education to meet with the 21<sup>st</sup> century demand, one will start looking specifically at higher education. The Nigerian government through its various education stakeholders must be involved in the process of increasing the demand for higher education in terms of attracting the best in the field of research and teaching, internationalizing Nigeria's education. The involvement of the private sector in restructuring will also increase competition, collaboration and mentoring opportunities that will lead to innovation similar to emerging economies of the world.

Currently, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century these days, there is great increase in student's enrolment in our educational institutions without corresponding increase in facilities to march the population. Most of the educational institutions are admitting far beyond their carrying capacities. This Pluto pressure on the existing human and material resources. It is against this background that the author feels that Nigeria educational system needs to be restructured in order to face the challenges of the new millennium.

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