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Education and Socio-Economic Development in Nigeria

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Abstract

Education either formal or informal is the process of training man to fulfill his targeted goal by exercising all the faculties to the fullest as a member of society. It is the process or art of imparting knowledge or skills on someone to enhance his/her productivity (Enemi, 2023). In other words, education helps to bring out the best in man. According to World Economic Forum (WEF 2016) as cited in Grant, C. (2017), education is the stock of skills, competencies, and other productivity-enhancing characteristics. Sanubi & Akpotu (2015) submitted that education is a bridge to the future, an agent for human capital formation, a man power industry that produces the knowledge and skills necessary for development. Hence, Plato opined that attainting knowledge was for the interest of the society and the individual. Interestingly, philosophers and scholars categorized education in four ways viz: as a spiritual pursuit, as development of innate human potentialities, as a social orientation of the human being and the contemporary aspect of education based on artificial or e-learning. Obodo et al (2007) added that science and technology education are very crucial to national development and that technology education even at the basic education level is a veritable tool to developing a stock of skilled manpower which a nation needs for development. In the contemporary era therefore, information and communication technology (ICT) is quintessential to enhancing socio-economic development considering its application in all facet of economy. This paper argues from existing literature that education is a vital tool for socio-economic development in Nigeria. The Socratic philosophy of education which centers on knowledge is used to give direction for analysis while views of scholars were also analyzed. In summation, education is process of training nation's manpower to harness and exploit vast natural resource endowments for socio-economic development.

Keywords: *Education, socio-economic and development, Information and Communication Technology (ICT)*

INTRODUCTION

Education (formal or informal) is the bedrock to development. Formal education consists of a school-based learning, subject orientation, uniform curriculum and highly structured teaching methods. It is a process of acquiring and or imparting knowledge or skills from one person to another. It involves learning as a process in which the learner(s) is or are empowered, and acquired needed skills or knowledge for individual or societal development. Without education, it would be impossible for any meaningful socio-economic development to thrive. Ofordum, M C. & Onyekwena, C.N. (2019) see education as a deliberate planned process through which an individual is helped to attain the development of his potentialities. Through this, an individual acquires the necessary knowledge and skills needed for lifelong sustainability and development of the society or nation. Informal education on the other hand, is a practical learning process or processes in which a trainer engages a trainee on practical skills development. It helps the trainees (apprentices)

to acquire special technical oriented skills or entrepreneurship in mechanics, electrical electronic, blacksmith, carpentry, tailors (fashion/design) and confectioneries/bakeries and a lot more. All these are embedded in educational curricula, be it in primary, secondary, tertiary or technical or vocational institutions to attain Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality education) which every child has the right irrespective of gender.

According to Ogoda, Nwaoku (2007) & Abullo and Ozochi (2007) as cited in Sanubi and Akpotu (2015) the quality of science and technology education even at the basic education level is a veritable tool to developing a stock of skilled manpower which a nation needs for development. Hence, a nation is expected to accelerate her human capital formation in science and technology or remains economically, socially and politically underdeveloped. Contextually therefore, Science and technology education remains the ultimate means for exploiting the vast natural resources endowment of a nation for development.

Goal of education

The goal of education is to develop physical, mental, emotional, social, moral and spiritual aspects of human life to maximally utilize creative potentials and skills for individual's self fulfilment and development of the society.

Concept clarification

Etymologically, the word "Education" is derived from the Latin words "educare" meaning "to bring up' or "to nourish", whereas the word 'educere" means "to bring forth" or "to draw out" or to bring from. This word is also derived from another Latin word "educatum" meaning the act of teaching or training. It has two components. "E" implies a movement from inward to outward and "duco" refers to lead, developing or progressing. This explicates the fact that education aims at providing a learner, a nourishing environment to bring out and develop the latent potentiality hidden in him/her. Hence, education can be seen and defined from different perspectives or points of view of reality, values and belief. To this end, great philosophers, thinkers and educationists have categorized education into four major trends.

- Education as a spiritual pursuit
- Education as development of innate human potentialities and
- Education as a social orientation of the human being.
- Education based on artificial learning.

i. Education as a Spiritual pursuit. This is basically an Indian concept. Right from the Vedic period, Indian spiritual thinkers have seen education as a means of achieving spiritual goals.

ii. Education as development of innate human potentialities. Some educators see human being as the embodiment of rich inherent potentialities and it is the task of educators to develop these potentialities for optimum utilization. These innate potentialities are to be tapped right from birth to maturity through his/her growth and development to adulthood. On the other hand, education enhances the ability of a person to think reasonably in pursuit of his dreams and aspiration in life for societal development.

iii. Education as a social orientation of the human being. This is a means or process to achieve larger societal goals as a sub-system of macro system. Hence, education of an individual emphasizes his orientation to achieve the social goals.

iv. Education based on artificial learning is the current trend that involves use of technology for learning outside the normal classroom learning, it includes e-learning among others.

Sanubi & Akpotu (2015) opined that education is a bridge to the future, an agent for human capital formation, a man power industry that produces the knowledge and skills necessary for development. It remains the bedrock of growth and development of any nation which liberates man and his society from ignorance and superstition and act as the key to unlock the development of individual for enhanced social, political and economic progress. Education plays a crucial role in developing human capital that contribute to economic growth because a well-educated population is more productive and innovative to drive economic growth and development. In addition, education reduces poverty and inequality as individuals acquired needed skills and knowledge to compete and participate in workforce to improve their economic opportunities. According to World Economic Forum (WEF 2016) as cited in *Grant, C.* (2017) Education can also be seen as the stock of skills, competencies, and other productivity-enhancing characteristics. She further stated that, education has the responsibility of inculcating in each generation those forms of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes which society needs in order to prosper. It advances human welfare that improves people's lives physically, psychologically, culturally, economically, socially and even politically.

Offem, Aniah, Agunwa, and Owan (2017) pointed out that the quality of human resources in any nation depends on their skills, creative abilities, training, and education. If a country's human resources are well-skilled and trained, the output would also be of high quality. Developmental investment theorists believe that development begins with the training of individuals, the human resources that act as catalysts to improve and sustain the overall development of a nation.

Based on the thoughts of scholars on education, "socio" refers to the study of how people behave and interact with each other or within their family structure, while "economic" refers to factors relating to the economy, such as income and finances. According to Grant. C (2017), socio-economic status is a combined measure of a person's work experience, economic position, and social standing in comparison to others based on income, education, and occupation. Therefore, socio-economic means the interaction between the social and economic behaviors of a group of people. Additionally, Gupta, P (2010) views socio-economic development as a process of improving social and economic factors in a society, which can be measured using indicators such as gross domestic product (GDP), life expectancy, literacy, and employment levels. It's important to note that social development is a process that leads to the improvement of social institutions, enhancing the society's ability to meet its aspirations. This involves qualitative changes in societal behavior and attitudes, adoption of more effective processes, and the advancement of technology. On the other hand, economic development is the process by which a nation enhances the economic, political, and social well-being of its people, aiming to improve the economic wealth of countries or regions for the benefit of their inhabitants.

According to Chrisman (1984), as cited in Tolu Lawal (2011), development is seen as a process of societal advancement, where the well-being of people improves through strong partnerships among all sectors, corporate bodies, and other groups in society. It's important to note that development isn't solely an economic exercise, but also involves socio-economic and political issues that affect all aspects of societal life. Naomi (1995), as cited in Ajamu (2018), suggests that development is commonly understood to involve not only economic growth, but also a notion of equitable distribution, the provision of healthcare, education, housing, and other essential services, all aimed at improving both individual and collective quality of life.

In a socio-economic context, development refers to improving people's standards of living through better education, higher incomes, skills development, and employment opportunities. It is a process of economic and social transformation influenced by cultural and environmental factors (Enemi, 2023). According to Singhal (1989), development is a widely participatory process of directed social change intended to bring about social and material advancement, including greater equality, freedom, and other valued qualities for the majority of people, by gaining greater control over their environment. From a social science perspective, Ngu (2014) sees development as a process or processes of growth or changes in the superstructure, sub-structures, systems, and subsystems, aiming to ameliorate societal values or interest. Ngu further submits that development is a positive process of comprehensive transformation of political, economic, and socio-cultural institutions toward uplifting social values.

Education is essential for socio-economic development. Promoting quality education without inequality helps to build self-confidence, reduce poverty, and enhance employment opportunities. To achieve this, concerted action is needed among policymakers. This includes developing human capital, critical infrastructure, regional competitiveness, health, safety, literacy, and other initiatives (Ukpong & George, 2012). It is the various authoritative efforts, initiatives, policies, and programs aimed at improving the quality of social life and economic well-being of the majority members of society that can result in socio-economic development. Major determinants of socio-economic development include the acquisition of needed skills, poverty alleviation programs, equality, quality education, access to information and communication technology (ICT), improved healthcare facilities, employment, security, regular water and electricity supply, good road networks, and provision of agricultural facilities, among others.

Theoretical Framework

This paper uses the Socratic philosophy of education as a guide for analysis. Socrates believes that, as self -learners, "we must first admit to our ignorance and realize that there is a world of knowledge ready to be accessed, but only once we can accept that we don't already know everything. We must also accept that, what we do 'know' might not be as correct as we think". Interestingly, the emphasis here is that 'there is a world of knowledge to be accessed, and this means that it is through education that one can have access to knowledge. That is why Plato stressed the need for an all-round education, physical, moral, intellectual and social which is for the interest of the individual and the society at large. Therefore, Knowledge and skills gained through education is a spring board to socio-economic development of a nation. In relative term, this implies that all round education (either formal or informal) is a pre-requisite to socio-economic development because if individual acquires the needed knowledge or skills, he/she is enlightened and empowered with self-confidence to innovatively and creatively transform the society developmentally. To this end, Ebuka (2019) submitted that education enriches people's understanding of themselves and the world. It improves the quality of lives and leads to broad social benefits to individuals and society and that through education political actors at all levels (sub-national, national and international) take active part in formulating trade and investment policies which attract business partners and investors to the country and that the roles Nigeria plays in economic decision making bodies such as Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), United Nations (UN) and African Union (AU) etc through her representatives which promotes bilateral trade relations between and among nations are products of all round education.

EDUCATION (FORMAL/INFORMAL) AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Science Education and Socio-Economic Development

The word "science" comes from the Latin word "scientia," which means "knowledge." It is a systematic enterprise that organizes knowledge in the form of testable explanations and predictions about the universe (Dhar, 2012). According to Lyndsay (2009) as cited in Ofordum & Onyekwena (2024), science involves the identification, observation, description, experimentation, investigation, and theoretical explanation of natural phenomena. Science education provides essential and integrated process skills, serves as a tool for acquiring functional skills, and contributes to job creation, as noted by Okafor (2012) cited in Ofordum & Onyekwena (2024). Science education is crucial for a nation's socio-economic growth and development, as it equips the active workforce with vocational and entrepreneurship skills that lead to productive engagement of youths or employment.

It is obvious that scientific researches bring about scientific discoveries. So, science education contributes tremendously in the areas of engineering, architecture, medicine and agriculture etc. The diagnostic activities of diagnosticians, activities of laboratory scientists, radiographers, anatomists, chemists, pharmacists, Biologists among others are products of science, they can set up their laboratory for diagnosing any form of diseases and be either self-employed or employers of labour. On the other hand, engineers, architect and technicians can equally set up their consulting outfits and be self-employed or employers of labour thereby contributing to socio-economic development. In essence, these help in reducing poverty and unemployment which significantly sustain economic growth and development. In the same vein, computer science education is one of the sciences that has facilitated and contributed to fast economic growth and development. Mehta & Subba,Rao (2017) have highlighted the usefulness of computer in the health sector to include hospital information system, data analysis in medicine, medical imaging laboratory computing, computer assisted medical decision making, care of critically ill patients and computer assisted therapy etc., all these help in e-health care services and management.

Education, Information and Communication Technology (ICT and Socio-Economic Development

Presently, it will not be an understatement to say that educational skills acquired through Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has contributed significantly in socio-economic development in Nigeria. The usefulness of ICT cut across all sectors of the economy. Is it in oil and gas industries, agriculture, banking, health, commerce, and transportation etc. ICT facilitates operations and management of every organization and makes internal or external communications very easy and possible including e-learning, virtual conferencing, meetings, e-banking, e-medication, sports and several others. Professionals in this field are gainfully employed in both public and private sectors and some self-employed. The skills and knowledge acquired in ICT facilitate and improve service delivery, efficient time management and poverty reduction. Ike, G &. Ike, D (2013) also opined that ICT has brought about global socio-cultural integration, people now live in an interdependent global society, where individuals can interact and communicate quickly and efficiently. News and information are now being transmitted quickly globally. The usefulness of ICT is not limited to promoting fast data processing, faster availability of data, storage and security of data. For instance, in banking sector, Information and communication technology (ICT) has facilitated the growth in internet-banking, ATM Network, electronic transfer of funds and quick information dissemination. These have improved job efficiency and effectiveness, time management and service delivery in the banking sector.

Scott, C et al (2010) noted that, ICT enables economic growth by broadening the reach of technologies such as high-speed internet, mobile broadband, and computing. Expanding these technologies by itself creates growth, and makes it easier for people to interact and make workers more productive

Technical education and socio-economic development

For the purposes of clarity, these two concepts need be separated. "Technical education includes general technical knowledge and prepares people for entry into recognized occupations at a higher level but usually lower than a first degree. Its main purpose is to train technicians. On the other hand, vocational education is designed to prepare individuals for employment in recognized occupations. It focuses on skill-based programs for acquiring specific skills at a lower level of education, with a focus on entry into defined workplaces (Okoro (1993) quoted in Agapu and Andural (2007) and Momoh, 2012). Technical and vocational education combine technical education and vocational education, integrating basic technical and scientific knowledge with skill-based vocational programs (Okoye & Arimonu, 2016). According to Uwaifo (2009), technical education involves training individuals to become facilitators, initiators, and implementers of technological development within a nation. It encompasses the acquisition of technical skills through creative and innovative talents, leading to the fabrication of tools, machines, and equipment used in various industrial sectors, such as construction, manufacturing, petrochemical, and agriculture. Technological literacy focuses on developing a broad knowledge of technology, encompassing both academic and practical components, along with the necessary attitudes, skills, and physical abilities to apply this knowledge and skills safely, appropriately, efficiently, and effectively. It is through technological literacy that individuals can become proficient in performing tasks using tools, machines, and materials and function effectively in a world filled with an array of hardware, software, and other technological devices (Umoren, 1996).

Objectively, the importance of science and technological education cannot be over-emphasized. They are quintessential with the aim of building human capacities for effective and efficient service delivery either in private or public sector of the economy and development of the society at large. As Obodo & Nwaoku (2007), Akubuilo & Ozochi (2007) pointed out, Science and technology education are very crucial to national development and that technology education even at the basic education level is a veritable tool to developing a stock of skilled manpower which a nation needs for development. Sanubi & Akpotu (2015) reiterated that, good quality science and technology education remain the ultimate means for exploiting the vast natural resource endowments of a Nation. It promotes invention of machines and tools used for improved agricultural production, better transportation, communication, housing and health care and enhances social, economic and political well-being of man. For instance, countries like China, Japan, United States of America, Russia, France and Britain have at least 50 percent functional literacy rate in science and technology that stimulate their economic advancement and industrial growth.

Agbiye et al (2014) similarly noted that, the economic attainment and development of any nation depends on the quality of science and technology education of that nation. According to them, real development involves creative capacity of people to transform natural resources of the environment into goods and services through imaginative and practical application of their creative talents. Lewanika (2005) submitted that advances in science and technology contribute to the social and economic development of nations and improved standard of living manifested through good health, food security, adequate housing and sustainable use of natural resources, environmental protection

and economic growth. In light of the foregoing, Ogunniyi (1986) had said that, any nation that refuses to give scientific literacy to her youth is doomed to obsolescence. He saw science and technological education as being prerequisite for economic development and also perceived science has having influence in nearly all facets of human endeavours. To this end, no nation can be considered great without science and technology.

CONTRIBUTIONS OF EDUCATION TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- Through education nation's manpower are trained and groomed in different disciplines to harness and exploit vast natural resource endowments of a nation for socio-economic development.
- Education aids individuals to contribute to economic growth and development through application of creative and innovative skills and knowledge that enhance productivity.
- Education reduces poverty and inequality as it provides people with needed skills and knowledge for better jobs placement and higher remuneration that exterminate poverty. In terms of reducing inequality, it allows or gives individuals opportunity to compete in the labour market and gain access to job on merit irrespective of sex.
- Technical education brings about the intrinsic potentials in person(s) sense of creativity or innovation in technological advancement and sharpens skills and talents of inventors for fabrication of machines and tools used in industries, health sector, agricultural sector, transportation, communication and housing etc.
- Science education promotes scientific enquiry or research that systematically and objectively give reliable knowledge or information through logical study of a subject. This helps in widening the horizon of knowledge to solve problems.
- The applications of science and technology in agriculture, industries, commercial, and health sectors give a better result and output.
- It promotes entrepreneurship and plays crucial roles in securing economic and social progress and improving income distribution.
- In the political arena, education sharpens intellectual capabilities of policy makers to formulate policies and make decisions for the interest of the nation either nationally or internationally.
- The educational skills acquired in Information and communication technology (ICT) help to facilitate socio-economic development in both public and private sectors eg. internet-banking, ATM operations, electronic transfer of funds, virtual meetings/conferencing, communications, e-health, e-learning and a lot more.
- Education inculcates in each generation those forms of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes which society needs.
- It is a very powerful weapon which is at the disposal of individual to use for the advancement of human welfare that improves people's lives physically, psychologically, culturally, economically, socially and even politically.
- Educational skills aids in efficient and effective management of businesses and resources for optimal economic growth and development.

CHALLENGES FACING EDUCATIONAL SECTOR IN NIGERIA

Despite numerous benefits of education to individual and society, educational sector is faced with many challenges or setback. Few of them are highlighted below**.**

i. Low budgetary allocation/poor funding: The Federal Government of Nigeria's budgetary allocation to education sector has always been below UNICEF threshold of 15-20 %. This has grossly affected the functionality of educational sector in Nigeria compare to other West African countries. According to a survey as reported by Osodeke, E (2024) the least budgetary allocation to education by some countries in West Africa is 15 per cent and the highest is 32 per cent but Nigeria struggles between 7percent and 8 percent.

Overview/analysis of Nigeria Budgetary allocation to Education (2010 -2024)

Year	Budget (#Trillion)	Educational allocation (#Billion)	Percentage of budget
2010	5.160	249.09	4.83
2011	4.972	306.30	6.16
2012	4.877	400.15	8.20
2013	4.987	426.53	8.55
2014	4.962	493.00	9.94
2015	5.068	392.20	7.74
2016	6.061	369.60	6.10
2017	7.444	550.00	7.38
2018	8.612	605.80	7.03
2019	8.830	620.50	7.03
TOTAL	60.973	4413.17	7.24

Ndujihe (2018) Vanguard Newspaper, Ameh & Aluko (2019) Punch Newspaper https://www.researchgate.net. *The mean of the above percentage 8.02% is far below 15-20 percent* prescribed by UNESCO

2020	10.33	671.07	6.7
2021	13.08	742.5	5.68
2022	16.39	1.29 tri	7.9
2023	10.78	1.08 tri	8.8
2024	27.5	1.54 tri	6.39

Ebuka & Ileyemi Premium Times 2021, October 7 Suleiman, Q, (2023), *www.premiumtimeng.com 2024 budget*

ii. Insensitivity of government: This implies government's unwillingness to prioritize educational sector as a key sector in economic development, considering low budgetary allocations with the mean of 8.2 percent from 2010 -2024 which is far below UNESCO benchmark of 15-20 percent. This insensitivity is visible in the high level of dilapidated educational infrastructures in public schools such as dilapidated classrooms/lecture halls, lack of writing desks, ill equip libraries, poor hostel facilities, poor health facilities on campuses and epileptic power supply among others. These cut across almost every educational institution in Nigeria from primary to tertiary institutions as shown below.

Some pupils and students sit under the trees or open pavilion for classes. Yet, none of President's, Senators', House of Rep members or Ministers sons or daughters can be found in such decayed classrooms in Nigeria, rather majority of them are studying abroad. However, these infrastructural decays have contributed to the declining state of educational standard in Nigeria as pupils or students do not have good learning facilities and conducive academic environment. The impacts of these resulted and contributed to low academic performance, low productivity and half-baked graduands. Other factors that are inimical to educational sector includes poor welfare packages or incentives to teachers or lecturers, low remuneration, delay or none payment of earned allowances, delay in payment of promotion arrears and poor funding among others. Absence of these, have contributed to brain drain in Nigeria's Institutions of learning to other African or Western countries. These scenarios have resulted in incessant strike actions by NLC and ASUU due to hardship in the face of the current economic reality. Unfortunately, the formulation and implementation of school's feeding programme by the immediate past government of President Buhari's was a clear example of government's insensitivity when majority of schools in Nigeria were without roofs on classroom blocks, no desks and few teachers in the midst of high enrolment of pupils and students in schools. Such schools' feeding policy or programme and its implementation was a misplaced priority and conduit pipe for corruption.

iii. Inadequate teachers/lecturers. There exist acute shortage of teachers/lecturers in some disciplines compare to the teeming population of pupils/students admitted yearly into government schools. This calls for both Federal and State governments to employ qualified teachers/lecturers to meet the number of student's enrolment and to ease the workload or stress on the existing teachers.

Recommendations

i. Funding of the educational sector should be government top priority
ii. Revamping of educational facilities require urgent attention to improve educational standard so as to meet global standard.
iii. There should be strong synergy between government and private sectors ie Public-Private – Partnership in educational development.
iv. Government should review lecturers' welfare packages regularly or at reasonable period of time, recognizing their pivotal roles in research, training and manpower development.
v. Science and technological education should be highly promoted and encouraged.
vi. Government should strengthen education system by providing the needed resources.

Conclusion

Education has greatly contributed significantly to socio-economic development in Nigeria in several ways. The training of needed manpower who gain knowledge and skills to harness and exploit vast natural resource endowments of a nation for socio-economic development. Development of innate potentials of youths in creative and innovative way in science and technological advancement, entrepreneurship and business development are beneficial to economic growth. Application of science and technological skills for self-employment cum employers of labour boost economic development. Usefulness of information and communication technology (ICT) in industrial sector, banks, transportation and commerce cannot be over emphasized as this aids in business transactions and partnership. It also enhances effective and efficient communication, virtual meetings/conferences, e-banking, e-learning e-health care services and management. The contributions of education to economic development are all round, it is a bridge to the future and bedrock that breaks the shackles of poverty, inequality and enhances income generation and a lot more. Therefore, it is expedient for government at all levels to make adequate budgetary allocation to educational sector in line with the UNESCO 15-20 percent. Hence, there is need for strong synergy through Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) in educational sector with the view to resolving educational challenges in Nigeria.

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