
RENEWING THE STRENGTH OF EDUCATION FOR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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Introduction

Education is the most important instrument of effecting both social and economic change of societies. Ogunu (2011) had earlier reported that the social and economic pattern of people in any community or country is always reflected in educational systems. It is within this framework that the current Nigeria's educational system is based. Some of the areas focused by the National Policy on Education (NPE) include; the development of the individual into a sound and effective citizen; the full integration of the individual into the community and provision of equal access to educational opportunities for all citizens (FRN, 2014). The NPE is government statement on clear terms on the philosophy and objectives of its investment in education. The policy clearly spelt out the Country's educational goals in terms of relevance to the needs of an individual and the society. This is in tandem with the realities of contemporary environment. In a larger sense, the NPE provides a guide at attempting to fulfill the nation's intention and objectives towards ensuring the citizen becomes productive and self-reliant. This is because education has been recognized as a powerful agent of making positive change. Through its curriculum offerings, programs and activities, it helps to fulfill the needs and aspiration of individual member of a given society and promote both social and economic changes of a nation.

It is also imperative to categorically state that education assist in propagating ideas that promote both social and economic changes in all fields of life. This is with a view to ensuring social and economic efficiency, promoting the capacity of an individual citizen to function effectively, enhancing the knowledge and understanding of social and economic changes and evaluate social and economic changes among others. Hence, the purpose of this address is to discuss the key areas to consider in renewing the strength of education in promoting socio-economic development in Nigeria.

How the Strength of Education Could be Renewed to Influence Social Development

Education and society are intimately connected. As earlier pointed out, education is an instrument per excellence for meeting the needs and solving the problems of society. According to Victor (2017), Individual citizen and the entire society are directly affected by the changes that are constantly made in education. Educational system often and closely reflect the social patterns prevailing in a particular country. As such, the education system is usually seen as a social factor which must reflect the ethos of the people that it serves. In a larger sense, it is the prime aim of education to ensure cultural continuity through fostering the growth and development of national characteristics that often act as stabilizing forces. Lawal (2008) noted that an individual citizen social and cultural orientations are best nurtured and developed through educational system. This is because it strengthens nationalism and love for fellow citizens. In order to make the country strong and prosperous, the spirit of nationalism must be nurtured through the provision of programmes in our national curriculum. This makes it necessary to inculcate love for the country's culture especially through the adoption of a national system of education. This would go a long way in renewing the strength of education for social development, national integration and affection for each other. In a nutshell, the following are some of the ways educational system could contribute to social

development rapidly:

Promoting Social Efficiency: Promoting Social efficiency is one of the functions of education in every society. This is because education helps individuals to acquire experiences, knowledge, ideas and skills. This is with a view to helping them understand and manipulate their environment to their own advantage. In doing so, new approaches or ways of solving problems associated with social development are easily found. In this way, education tends to contribute positively to social development of every society.

Removing Obstacles to Social Development: Removing obstacles to social changes is another crucial role of education in the society. This is due to the fact that education plays an important role in bringing about the desired transformation in the society. In this condition, existing practices and attitudes which constitute obstacles to social reformation are eliminated through the school day-to-day activities. This is important because bringing about social change is more successful with children who are still in their formative stage. In this regard, our schools should carry out different activities and programmes that would eliminate unprogressive behaviors.

Promoting the Capacity of Individual: Promoting the capacity of individual citizen remains one of the main focuses of education system. In these circumstances, education prepares the mentality of people to easily and gladly welcome and adopt desirable social changes. This calls for renewed concerted efforts by all stakeholders in education sector to create conducive environment for achieving desirable social changes in Nigerian society.

Promoting National Unity and Integration: Promoting national unity is one of the tools of achieving meaningful progress in a country. Education tries to promote unity in diversity. The

educational system in Nigeria has sacred duty to educate people to rise above petty tribal rivalries, communal feuds and regional conflicts. This is also calling the entire Nigerians to cherish the ideals of national integration so as to achieve unity of purpose.

Transmitting the cultural Heritage: Transmitting the cultural heritage is one of the most important functions of education in every society. Through this process, education transmit societies culture from one generation to the other. In this case, education lends stability and continuity to the communities and people. For us to renew the strength of our educational system, we must make the system to prepare Nigerian society to adopt needed and desirable changes. To achieve this, our educational system must create, generate and direct all social changes. This would go a long way in fostering national consciousness and integration.

How the Strength of Education Could be Renewed to Influence Rapid Economic Development

Economic growth is a sustained increase over a significant period in the quantity of materials, goods and services produced. Babalola (2003) noted that one of the important measures of economic growth is change in the per capital income of a nation. Similarly, Mohammed (2018) reported that education is one of the many elements that influence economic growth. Some of these elements that could influence rapid economic development are as follows:

Improving the literacy Level of Labor Force: Improving the literacy level of all citizens is one of the areas of focus of every educational system. Recent study by Marafa and Hamman (2023) stated that a better educated person is likely to do better job than less educated one. This is because additional experience and skills are expected to make an individual become more aware of better ways of doing things. The preceeding statement shows that acquired literacy would help an individual to have liberal mind,

positive orientation towards life, accept and appreciate changes, improve his health habit and generate ideas and information which may attract others to improve their performance. In a larger sense, education helps to link the development of the working individual with the general development of the community to which he belongs. In order to renew the strength of our education for greater productivity, there is the need to initiate more modern educational programs aimed at raising the literacy level of the populace. This initiative would further provide the needed literacy level of labor force through education and training activities that could make huge contributions towards achieving rapid economic development.

Education as a Source for Acquiring Relevant Skills and Expertise: Education plays a major role in the acquisition of skills and expertise. These skills could be economic, social, and political among others which are essentially taught and developed in educational institutions. According to Iheanacho (2014), the educated individual has a better mastery of the tools and techniques required for accomplishing a given task. The implication is that there would be higher job productivity as well as higher job efficiency which are necessary conditions for an effective economic growth. In the same vein, Nwachiani (2000) noted that there are concrete evidences that show countries with better skilled labor have better economic growth. For instance, in this country, the incessant public outcry about the poor job performances of university graduates could be attributed to inadequate knowledge of job skills in our national curriculum. Many experts attributed the under developed status of the country to these factors. Hence, there is the need to refocus the national curriculum towards skills acquisition at all levels of education. This would go a long way in providing the needed skills and expertise in individual citizen. It would also assist in making the country attain self-reliance status within short period.

Developing Measures to Achieve National Objectives:

Most national objectives as specified in the National Policy on Education are basically economic objectives. In this regard, Nigerian Government had since decided to use education as a tool for achieving these objectives. Within this context, different measures existed for enhancing the contributions of education to national objectives. These measures include; rating education high in national development plan; rating education to overall community need; using modern education techniques to encourage acquisition of relevant knowledge and skill; structuring education to maximize self-reliance and self-development (Adebayo, 2017; Marafa, 2020). Conversely, for us to renew the strength of our education there is the need to revisit these measures and refocus on acquisition of relevant skills in areas such as mechanized farming, sports, music, film production, ICT and mining among others. These would go a long way in boosting the economy of the country as there are numerous and conspicuous evidences that shows the country abundant potentials and talents in these areas.

Checking Unemployment in the Country: Unemployment is a serious drain on the economy of a nation. However, through the various policies and manpower techniques as well as activities of ministries of education, labour and productivity and national planning, incidents of unemployment are reduced. This definitely assists in the process of nation building for desired development. In this regard, the educational system in Nigeria should always focus on creating more slots for employment to our teeming youths. This is the way to go as the rate of unemployment is rising every day.

Judicious Utilization of Available Resources: Judicious utilization of available resources ensures that these resources go round to various sectors of the economy. In education, efficiency criteria demands that resources are invested in the most cost-effective manner. This means that education has number of in built

techniques such as cost benefit analysis and management by objectives among others which ensures that educational objectives are achieved with minimum cost. In this situation, money would be made available for other aspects of national development. To this end, for us to achieve meaningful development, there is the need to inculcate the “I can do” spirit of ensuring that resources are judiciously utilized. This could only be realized if we integrate how resources should be distributed and utilized in our educational policies.

Conclusion

The social and economic factors are some of the determinants of the contents and methods of education system. In the light of this, it is important to note that behind every system of education, there are factors that shape the system for enhanced performance. Every society consist of human beings and in whatever state they find themselves, they always have some kind of educational system. This form of education of the particular society would always strive to perpetuate and protect its traditions and aspirations. As such, a close study and analysis of the influence of each educational system would always reveal the social and economic concept and pattern of the community in question. Having examined how education contributes to social and economic development, intrinsic in the discussions are ways in which how the strength of education could be renewed for enhanced social and economic development of the country. Hence, discussions made during this address are expected to stimulate our curiosity as stakeholders in education to ensure the needed changes are integrated and actualized in our educational system. This is with a view to ensuring that the strength of our education is renewed towards achieving the needed and desirable social and economic development in Nigerian society.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Federal Ministry of Education should call for national curriculum conference to discuss issues regarding the

performance and otherwise of the current curriculum in place. Federal and State Ministries of Education should ensure the implementation of programs in schools that would remove obstacle to social development and foster national unity and integration. Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) should spearhead the process of curriculum review and modification that would focus on integration of skills and expertise for human capital development. Federal and State Ministries of Education and Education Resource Centers should introduce new Mass Literacy Programme for teaming illiterate citizens.

Federal Ministry of Education in collaboration with Federal Ministry of Information should introduce measures and training that would assist in achieving national objectives. Federal Ministry of Education, Finance and Economic Planning should develop mechanisms for ensuring judicious utilization of available resources. Educational institutions such as universities, polytechnics and colleges of education should collaborate with industries in the areas of research, production and human capital development. Federal Ministry of Education should make subject such as Social Studies, Civic Education, National Value and History compulsory to all Basic Senior School Students across the country. Federal and State Ministries of Education should develop mechanism to regulate the activities of private schools. Federal and State Ministries of Education should ensure the proper implementation of national curriculum by ensuring that qualified teachers are employed deployed appropriately especially in rural areas. Federal and State Ministries of Education should ensure that all schools engage actively in sporting and social activities.

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