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PROFESSIONAL AND MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT ACHIEVEMENT: ISSUES AND PROSPECTS

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Abstract

The paper sets out to determine the roles of professional education in the attainment of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in Nigeria. Furthermore, it examined the concepts of professions, professionals, professionalism and higher education in relation to the achievement of the MDGs. The paper adopted a literature research approach involving extensive literature review. Lack of qualitative/quantitative education, extreme poverty, resource mobilization, good governance and most importantly the problem of massification in higher education and ever escalating cost of education were identified to be at the heart of the attainment of MDGs. There also exist a close relationship between education and the realization of the MDGs. The paper concluded by suggesting that the curriculum should be redesigned in the higher education to meet the 21st century global requirement among others.

INTRODUCTION

In the past few decades nearly half of a century, it has been observed that Nigeria and the emerging nations have been undergoing difficulties in terms of poverty. People wake up every day to face very different circumstances. Some have all the basic comforts of life ranging from having more than enough to eat and drink, well clothed, healthy and reasonable degree of financial security. As pointed by Todaro and Smith (2004), there are others and incidentally these people constitute more than three-fourths of the earth’s six billion people. Many of them do not have shelter, adequate food supply, good state of health; they often cannot read or write. They are often unemployed, and their prospect for a better life is uncertain.

Extreme poverty remains widespread in the developing countries and this led to the United Nations member states in recognizing the need to assist these impoverished nations more aggressively by adopting the millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

A critical look at the various changing conditions of education in Nigeria shows that reconstructed professionalism in higher education teaching might help to realize the MDGs through a collaborative and reflective professional dialogue regarding the ends and purpose of learning.

The paper examines the concepts of professions, professionals, professionalism and higher education. It takes a global look at the MDGs. Furthermore, the paper attempts to ascertain the effects of professionalism, professionalism and higher education to the achievement of the MDG.
While a professional is seen as someone who is able to deal with the challenges and tasks that are specific to the job he does, using skills, experience and expertise which are also specific to the job. As the challenge facing teachers have changed, so then has the meaning of professionalism in teaching (Mohamed, 2011). Professionalism on the other hand is the views and behavior of one who engages in activities to make his livelihood. It has to do with the expertise characteristic of a professional person. Mohamed (2011) defines professionalism in simple terms to refer to the nature of a specific occupation which entails for origination as well as continuance, preservation, individually and collectively, of certain standards in relation to knowledge, skills and behavior. Thus, professionalism is about the quality of the practice which includes character, commitment, subject knowledge and pedagogical knowledge.

Higher education is education that is provided by universities, vocational universities, community colleges, liberal arts colleges, technical colleges, and other collegial institutions that award academic degrees, such as career colleges. Post-secondary or tertiary education are also referred to as third-stage, third level education or higher education is the educational level that follows the completion of a secondary education such as secondary school. However higher education in Nigeria includes Universities, Polytechnics, colleges of education and monotechnics. They are collectively known as tertiary institutions and these tertiary institutions generally award certificates, diplomas, or academic degrees.

In most developed countries a high proportion of the population (up to 50%) goes to higher education. However in Nigeria only 1.5 million out of 5.8 million proceed to higher institutions. For instance out of 4,467,708 that applied for Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB) from 1999-2004, only 432,060 got admission, while 4,035,618 were rejected. Yet the importance of higher education to national development cannot be overemphasized both as a significant industry in its own right, and as a source of trained and educated personnel to the rest of the economy. As far back as 1950, Article 2 of the first protocol to the European Convention on Human Rights obliges all signatory parties to guarantee the right to education. Also the United Nations' International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of 1966, guarantees their right under its Article 13, which states that "higher education shall be made equally accessible to all, on the basis of capacity, by every appropriate mean, and in particular by the progressive introduction of free education". The extent to which this has been achieved remains unanswered.

Since professionals normally produced by institutions of higher education and majority of the people who are willing to go to higher institutions of learning do not have the access, the question of the achievement of the MDGs through professional education remains a mirage.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

"Extreme poverty remains widespread in the developing world. More than 1.2 million people live on less than $1 per day at purchasing power parity and more than 2.8 Billion- almost half the world's population live on less than $2 a day (Adekoya,2002). The impoverished people often suffer from under-nutrition, and poor health, have little political voice, and attempt to eke meager living on small and marginal farms or in dilapidated urban slums.

In 2000, recognizing the need to assist impoverished nations, at the United Nations Millennium Summit, world leaders placed development at the heart of the global agenda by adopting the MDGs: The MDGs are eight international development goals that 189 United Nations member states and at least 23 international organizations have agreed to achieve by the year 2015. The goals set clear targets for reducing poverty, hunger, illiteracy, disease, discrimination against women and environmental degradation. The eight goals include:

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger;
2. Achieve universal primary education;
3. Promote gender equality and empower women;
4. Reduce child mortality;
5. Improve maternal health;
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases;
7. Ensure environmental sustainability, and
8. Develop a global partnership for development.

The above eight-mentioned goals have more targets bringing the total to 21. The eight goals are ambitious agenda for reducing poverty and improving lives. The United Nations Secretary- general, Kofi Annan and UN Development Programme ( UNDP) Administrator, Mark Malloch Brown were in full support of the goals and being the chair of UN development Group have launched the strategies for achieving the goals: The Millennium Project from 2002 through 2005 worked to recommend a plan of implementation that would allow all developing countries to meet the goals and thereby improve to a large extent the human condition by 2015. The adoption of the MDGs drawn from UN Millennium declaration was a seminal event in the history of UN and it constituted an unprecedented promise by world leaders to address, as a single package, peace, security, development of human rights and fundamental
freedoms (Kofi Annan, 2005a). The MDGs have become globally accepted and it is a powerful driver towards development, security, and human rights.

As stated by Kofi Annan (2005c), "we will not be able to enjoy development without security, we will not be able to enjoy security without development, and we will both suffer either without respect for human rights. Unfortunately, these causes are advanced, none will succeed unless countries have pledged to increase foreign aid, despite the poor countries on their own part have pledged to improve their policies and institutions, to try to improve the MDGs, and together create and support partnerships to fight poverty and provide adequate advocacy and resources to empower the individual."

Although progress towards the MDGs has been made, it is not clear whether this can be held to be uneven because some countries have achieved many of the goals, while others are still on track to realize them. The goals were established with global targets, but they are delivered and measured (not always reliably), within individual countries. Some made certain observations unique which is the main question whether the goals are visceral to the allocation, so that countries give large funds, whereas the project, that might be used more effectively with poverty alleviation in mind. There is a problem with the individual targets are damagingly vague. The explanation is that "many" in the MDGs, chronically to the nearest third, is within a high income that although early progress might be highly inflationary, in terms of the use, striving for instance that the last few percent of children in full-time education could be taken "seriously", but not literally. It implies that if no region of the world is on "track" to achievement of all goals and some regions are off track on many of them.

However, despite the loopholes, achieving "goals" is feasible according to the "Millennium Development Goals Report (2008), but it will require greater financial commitment, including delivery by the developed countries of the increased foreign aid that they have promised in the past few years. The emphasis of the report is that while there has been progress on several counts, "important gaps remain in delivering on the global commitments in the areas of" aid, trade, debt relief, and access to new technologies and affordable essential medicines.

**The Achievements of MDGs through Education**

Professional education in this context is the process by which men and women prepare for exacting responsible service in the professional spirit. The term it appears to be restricted to preparation for fields requiring well-informed and disciplined insight and of a higher order. Professional education will assist to a larger extent, the professional men and women to devote their moral energies in intellectual...
responsibilities and that in developing countries, all principles and philosophy by which professional men/women should live and work, for instance, the engineers, lawyers, physicians, etc., have all helped to some extent, in national development, and the realization of the MDGs.

Appreciable progress has been made in the area of promoting gender equality and women empowerment. The availability of productive, competent skilled workforce (women) has accelerated the rate of development which reflect in some extent high Gross National Product (GNP) and women have been part of this progress.

Success, it is worth noting that in the federal government of Nigeria recent appointments of women who given about 35% in the cabinet and this exceeded the 30% affirmative action of United Nations. There are also many women in management positions in Nigeria presently and this is as a result of the success in promoting gender equality which was made possible through the education of women in the society. Here, are also women in politics in the country, some are national and state level and chairpersons of some committees of local government areas in Nigeria.

The introduction of primary health has drastically reduced child mortality and improved maternal health in Nigeria. However, improving the health and nutrition of mothers-to-be and providing reproductive services are pivotal in addressing many underlying causes of child mortality. It appears, child mortality in most countries including Nigeria has been decreasing in the past decades. However, health, neonatal and maternal mortality have not improved tremendously.

Improving maternal health is the 5th of the 8th United Nations Millennium Development Goal, and this targeted a reduction in the number of women dying during pregnancy and childbirth by three quarters. In 2015, 342,000 women died while pregnant or from childbirth worldwide. Although the number was high, there was a substantial drop from 2000, when 526,000 women died from the same causes (World Health Organisation 2011). This improvement was caused by lower pregnancy rates in some countries like Nigeria, higher income which improve nutrition and access to health care, and more education for women Establishment of health care centers in many rural areas which hitherto was not there before has helped to reduce the problems inherent with health.

There has been tremendous progress in the prevention, management and control of HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis, of which can be attributed to massive education in both the rural and urban areas.

The pace caused by environment by can be emphasized. The World Health Organisation (WHO 1999 and UNDP 2002) demonstrate that poor people are usually, the worst hit by environmental problems. Most of the killer diseases like cholera, diarrhea, malaria, etc, thrive in poor environments.

Successive governments have made concerted efforts in controlling hazardous effects of emission from industries and oil pipelines. It is commendable that efforts have been made in awareness creation on the importance of environment for healthy living.

The 8th Millennium Development Goal which is to develop a global partnership for development seems not to have witnessed impressive progress in the area of global and collaborative partnership for development. However, it is on record that in recent times, many developed countries are coming to Nigeria to invest and do business. This will help to reduce unemployment, which will minimize inbreedness and its attendant vices.

There are 7 new MDGs in the implementation of MDGs in Nigeria which is an attempt by the governments to achieve the goals. The MDGs have been triggered. Some countries have achieved many of the goals, while others are not planning to achieve any.

The G-8 Finance Ministers in order to accelerate progress towards the MDGs met in London in June 2005, and reached an agreement to provide enough funds to the World Bank, IMF and the African Development Bank (ADB) to cancel an additional $40-55 billion in debt by some nations. This, according to them, would allow impoverished countries to further channel the resources saved from the foreign debt to social programmes for improving health and education and for alleviating poverty. The richer countries were also asked to live up to provide resources to enable those strategies to succeed. However, the extent to which they fulfill that becomes a big question.
One of the major constraints hindering effective realization of the MDGs is education. A situation where majority of the populace are illiterates, it becomes questionable the extent to which 2015 is achievable. In a workshop organized by the Federal Ministry of Education (2006) it was noted that in Nigeria, for instance, only 22.3 million aware themselves of the Universal Basic Education, out of 33.9 million, 2.8 million got to tertiary institutions of education, 2006. Vast majority of Nigeria youths do not get further education. As indicated earlier, out of the 4,467,708 that applied for Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB) between 1999-2004, only 432,090 got admission and 4,035,618 were rejected. The big question here is where are the rejects? The tertiary educational model according to Ezekwesili, the Minister of Education, is riddled with what is archaically known as the funnel syndrome. The nation is assimilating and educating only a fraction of the rural mass of society-the youth—while neglecting a larger uneducated mass. According to her, by 2020 the nation may have a significant population of highly trained, skilled and motivated criminals.

There appears to be an mismatch existing between teaching in Nigerian institutions and the needs of the labour market. As a result there is a problem of outdated curriculum and inadequacy of resources. Linking the situation with private sector, leads to teaching unemployable curricula. Worse still is that the carrying capacity of the college is defined as the maximum number of students that an institution can sustain for qualitative education, based on available human and material resources, have been over shot severally. Of the 25 federal owned universities, 18 were found to have over enrolled and Obe (2009) reported that 13 out of the 36 State universities over enrolled while only one of the private universities over enrolled. It was also reported that of the top 10 over crowded universities, Federal Halls and State Halls are.

Tertiary institutions are currently enduring a thunderstorm of changes so fundamental that some argue that the very idea of tertiary education is being challenged. Higher education in Nigeria is in crisis and characterized by the decline in quality of teaching, research, decay in library, infrastructural facilities, equipment in arts and sciences laboratories and frustrated human resources. (Agagu 2008) all these would affect the realization of the MDGs.

One of the most important is the problem of implementation in higher education and the ever escalating cost of education. The provisions of the Universal Basic Education (Education for all) which launched in September, 1990, make for all school children to be in the Nigerian classrooms for nine years duration. It is however unfortunate that not much corresponding preparation and provision of resources is made of tertiary level as it is being done for the primary and secondary levels.

As a result of the many problems that higher education is being confronted with, the quality of graduates seem to be in question. One of the consequences is low demand from private sector for poorly trained graduates and this leads to increase in unemployment. The private sector is rather interested in highly skilled workers. The Nigeria labour market seems to be flooded with abundance of low quality unskilled and under-employed workers. It appears that there is serious shortage of skilled workers and technicians in all industrial and service sectors. It is rather shocking that over 60% of graduates are classified as unskilled and untrained and they are joining the women's participation in scientific and technical occupation is as low as 16%. Lack of technical skill is however impacting negatively on graduation process of the obst. implication. The resultant effect is the recruitment of graduates due to lack of usual skills. (Uzodin and Adibori, 2008).

The fourth, fifth and sixth MDGs have to do with health and they are aimed at alleviating infant mortality, improving maternal health and reducing the burden of AIDS, malaria and malnutrition. Among others according to the World Health Organization have been told in Implementing 'The New' Agenda is attributable to several factors among which is the weakness of health systems, unavailability of resources and gender inequity. Infant mortality is on the increase, rising from 74 to 106 deaths per 1,000 live births between 1990 and 2005; while the maternal mortality rate, currently estimated at 4,000 deaths for 1000,000 live births is higher than it was in 1987 (World Bank Organization, 2005).

Many countries are at the moment facing many challenges, notably those related to resource mobilization; health systems strengthening within the framework of integration of health service to strengthen the capacity to offer care; promoting good governance and the empowerment of women and girls, reducing food insecurity; and improving access to portable water and adequate sanitation.

Qiao Vadis (The Way forward)

For the Millennium Development Goals to be fully implemented, it would take focus, commitment, to halt extreme poverty and radically improve the lives of at least one (1) billion people by 2015 (Aman, 2006). However, while there seems to have been progress in several counts, important gaps remain in delivering on the global commitments in the area of education aid, trade, debt
relief, and access to new technologies and affordable essential medicines.

In the area of education, the researcher is of the view that the curriculum should be redesigned in the higher education to meet 21st century global requirements. It is believed that a properly designed curriculum when properly implemented would influence the amount of social vices by the students.

A conducive studying environment plays a major role in the academic performance of the students and their mental and emotional stability. In view of the above, it is recommended that the management of tertiary institutions provide the basic enabling environment in the area of welfare, provision of and renovation of classrooms and the establishment of a network for sharing facilities between institutions. This is in the bid to reduce cost. It has been observed that government has been laying more emphasis on primary education because huge sums of money were being spent on this level of education. There is however need to ensure that the development of education in Nigeria be a balanced venture. There is also need for government to restore the necessary balance between the massification of tertiary education and the pursuit of academic excellence.

There is need to seriously look into the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board bottleneck and this can be done by absorbing youths who have fallen through the cracks by providing credible and attractive alternatives to a higher education. The easing of opportunities for students to gain practical experience through: work study, internship and exchange programmes is very necessary. The need to equip every Nigerian citizen with the skills and job competencies for gainful employment cannot be over-emphasized. By government creating jobs, increase access to education and grow the economy through using its human capital, poverty would be greatly reduced.

CONCLUSION
It is obvious that professional education has a lot of roles to play in the realization of the MDG goals. The MDG goal represents a wide concept or a vision for the future and in other to track the progress in achieving them functional education should be emphasized on.

REFERENCE

Agagu (2008), Health care delivery in rural communities implication for education planners and policy analysts.


