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BUILDING VALUABLE HUMAN ASSETS TOWARDS NATIONAL INTEGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT THROUGH EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

The paper basically examines the invaluable roles of education in building human assets towards national integration and development. Education is seen as a potent arsenal for all round national development. The human resources who use their skills and intellect in bringing about positive changes in every sector of the national economy are made to do as a result of training received through education. Therefore there is a need for every hand to be on deck in ensuring quality in our educational system.

INTRODUCTION

The centrality of education in nation-building is predicated on the author's belief that "education is a fulcrum on which all other spheres of development pivot. Investment in education means investment in manpower development, political sanity and survival, health and healthy living, economic progress, socio-cultural development and industrialization (Denga, 1991:1). It is for this reason that no type of government, whether military, civilian or mixed, can slow down the rate of educational development or attempt to halt it without provoking a national crisis.

Paradoxically, not many people are aware of the power of a nation's education system in facilitating the nation-building process. Education is defined by Denga (1993:1) broadly as "an on-going process that facilitates the process of learning and acquisition of theoretical and practical skills that equip mankind to utilize the environment effectively for personal development and national

development.” The word development here could be substituted with nation-building since it subsumes all spheres of nation-building.

The Nigerian education system is couched in a coded abbreviated numerical expression known as the 6-3-3-4 system. This means that the primary tier of education lasts for 6 years while the secondary tier is of a 6-year duration, with 3 years of junior and 3 years of senior secondary education. The last 4 years are normally spent in the university but can be spent in a College of Education, Polytechnic or College of Agriculture among others. The system provides for regular university-bound student, technically-oriented students and those in commercial areas. The system is indeed an insurance policy, providing employable skills for those who might drop out of school for one reason or another, to use the skills to survive. In summary, the system means “education of the Hand, the Head and the Heart.”

The major thrust of this paper is therefore, is to analyse the power of education as a veritable instrument for building valuable Human Assets towards holistic national development and integration.

Definition of variables

The major variable or terms in this discussion (Human Assets, National Integration, and National Development) are defined as follows:

Human Assets

Human Assets or Human Resources as it could also be called, is used to describe the employees of an organisation. It also refers to the activity of managing the workforce of an organisation. In labour economics, Human Resources refer to the population of whole nation. The latest definition of human resources in vogue in recent years considers employees as human assets.

National Integration

National Integration is synonymous with national unity. National integration is a psychological and educational process that promotes mutual trust in the spirit of unity and love for one's country.

National Development

It is the ability of a country or countries to improve the social welfare or quality of life of the people e.g. by providing social amenities like quality education, potable water, infrastructures, medical care etc.

Building Human Assets towards National Integration and Development through Education

In order to facilitate an easy appreciation of the relevance of the Nigerian education system, specific sectors of national development (nation-building) are fully discussed here.

Education and Economic Development

One of the tenets enunciated in the Nigerian philosophy of education is economic reliance. In order to achieve economic sufficiency and build a virile nation, education is aimed at developing an adequate manpower with skills in maximum exploitation of economic resources for national development.

It is thus axiomatic for governments to seek to provide sound administration, maintain law and order, and build up infrastructure of communications, power supplies and other services which could provide the necessary framework for economic development to take place. To achieve the necessary manpower that will realize this dream, there is need to invest hugely in education. (Sule, 2009).

The system of education in practice known as the 6-3-3-4 system is vocationally oriented to furnish skills that can provide what Denga (1986) calls employable insurance for those likely to further their education but also for those who might drop out of formal schooling for one reason or another. The vocational skills acquired will provide a means of living for graduates at various levels of the education system, whether in the private or public sectors. Citizens could even establish themselves as viable self-employed people once the skills have been acquired.

Educational systems produce accountants, bank managers, farmers and other types of entrepreneurs to manage the nation's economy for national development. The amount and kinds of education provided showed a strong

relationship during the rapid economic development in the United States of America, the Soviet Union, Denmark and Japan. It is clear therefore, to assert that investment in education is most likely to reflect economic growth in more ways than the nations may anticipate.

Education and Political Development

Legislation and political action have become well entrenched in the Nigerian education system today. Even when direct and apparent political influence on education appears to be camouflaged, one can still find some political undergrowth in almost all educational decisions taken by government. Denga (1993) has copiously commented on the symbiotic interface between education and politics. While educational institutions train political manpower, teach political ideologies, legislation and other aspects of political education, government on the other hand makes decision on the establishment, distribution, quality and control of education generally. Nobody can take politics out of education and vice-versa.

Even though we make conscious efforts to prevent politicians from using our schools as pawns in the pursuit of electoral advantage or subjecting education to frequent changes according to the party in power, there is certainly an insidious influence of the party in power on the affairs of schools.

Education has been used to achieve political unity to some degree (the establishment of Unity schools was well-meaning at least in design) through the establishment of unity schools. Each of these Federal Government Colleges is a miniature nation with a format to encourage children to live in harmony with people from other ethnic groups. Unity in diversity is thus promoted.

Schools have and can still foster political socialization of youths towards positive goals. The French and the British accomplished this type of socialization during the colonial era. Schools may help the youths to transmit political values such as national unity, national integration, political ideologies, solidarity, good citizenship, religious tolerance, honesty and others. The teaching of major languages in school (which is a political decision) can promote unity. Swahili in Tanzania has been used successfully to this effect. Education in

Kenya is basically tilted towards social equality. Nyerere in Tanzania achieved a great measure of "democratic society" through his political ideology which was taught in schools.

Political leadership must be trained to shun corruption, tribalism, dishonesty, particularism and ethnocentrism right from childhood. In this way our political leaders of tomorrow may be better leaders than those we have today. Good education is the answer to breeding a crop of political leadership that can promote peace, unity and nation-building that we cherish.

Education and Social Development

A nation with socially-deranged values may find it difficult to move forward. For example, crime rate, social delinquency, moral decadence and other forms of social pollution are retrogressive trends. Education is expected to serve as a social transmission vehicle (especially for healthy and constructive values) and an agent of social change. While no attempt is being made here to imply a holocultural or global culture even for a single nation like Nigeria, there is a subtle claim that there are some common socio-cultural characteristics within a nation that could be changed in the desired direction. Respect for elders and constituted authority, healthy moral values, justice, democracy, hard work, fair play, love for one another, peace and unity are among universal values.

Education, through literature stores and transmits socio-cultural artefacts that have for long stood the test of time. Normative change thus advocated here with limited urbanization, industrialization and institutions of government to foster social change, the school system remains the most potent agent to disseminate change.

The family must be cited in this regard as a repository and foundation of social development. The family is still meant to be a place of peace, love, care and security. The family, working in partnership with the school and other agents of socialization like the society, peer group, and the church can produce citizens who are socially balanced or congruent to work towards national integration and development.

Furthermore, effective child-parenting which subsumes the teaching of

healthy social values which lead to orderly behaviour and good citizenship; this will lead to nation-building. Schools must produce manageable, reliable and upright people. Such people could in turn create a nation which can see clearly, and agree on what it sees when it looks in certain directions.

While harmful change must be resisted in all educational establishments in Nigeria, retrogressive conservatism which borders on beliefs in witchcraft and totemism must also be disdained. "Social models" that can lead us to development and nation-building should be emulated.

Education and Moral Development

A nation that is morally and spiritually bankrupt cannot build itself effectively. Nigeria as a nation has evidenced a visible decline in moral standards, Domestic and public indiscipline characterized by frequent breaches of trust and confidence, wife-beating, husband-beating, child abuse, feminine revolts, laxity in sexual morality and other moral problems have inundated the nation.

There has been an insidious phenomenal increase in phonographic material coupled with aversion for religious and spiritual instructions. The use of power oppressively for selfish ends has become too commonplace. The political air is filled with unjustifiable political discrimination. If we must move forward, the nation must first experience growth in morality.

The role of education in moral development is imperative and significant. As teachers we must ensure that what we teach is by no means chiefly in the words we speak. It is part in what we are and what we do. The secret curriculum is in our own lived-values.

Teachers are not the only ones to develop moral behaviours. Parents, the church, the society and individual citizens all must make their contributions. In building a sound character in the youths, by so doing, we building a nation full of hope for a healthy development.

Indices of National Development

According to Obanya (2011), the indices of National Development Agenda is put as showed in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Indices of National Development

1. Politics and governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A workable constitution; consensus on the nation's federal arrangements; a governance system that really governs; elimination of inequalities in all its ramifications; a sense of belongings to different groups in the federation; credible elections; reign of rule of law, an enabling bureaucracy; addressing the national ethos challenge; bye to corruption, etc.
2. The Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A strong economic base; diversification of national revenue sources, strong national currency; drastic reduction of external debts; sound economic management; strong financial system; drastic reduction of the incidence of poverty; improved government budgeting and reduction in wasteful spending.
3. Human Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality, accessible education for all – in all phases of life; respect for knowledge; building a knowledge society in support of a knowledge economy; increased investment in research and innovation; planned development of education, etc.
4. Health and wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priority to maternal and child care, as well as affordable preventive and curative health care for all; combating infectious, childhood and non-communicable diseases; increased investment in manpower development and research; development of local capacity for research and production of drugs, etc.
5. Science and Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced ICT penetration in society; popularisation of science and technology in all forms and levels of education; enhanced investments in scientific research and technological adaptation.
6. Industrial Productivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closer ties between research and industries production; adding values to the country's agricultural, mineral and natural resources through industrial transformation; re-awakening of dead industries; capitalising on oil and gas for the development of a strong

	petro-chemical industry base, etc.
7. Agriculture and Food Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modernisation of agriculture in all its forms; land use reforms to favour large scale agricultural production; addressing the post-harvest challenge; rural development to provide enabling environment for agriculture; revival of agriculture loans and credit programmes; special incentive to small farm holder, etc.
8. Power and Energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Radical transformation of the sector and extensive upgrading of its services; encouragement of private sector participation, etc.
9. Physical infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Execution of a master plan for road development and maintenance by all tiers of government; encouragement of private sector and community participation; development of a national maintenance culture for roads and buildings, etc.
10. Water Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Execution of all pipeline projects for harnessing and managing the country's water resources for industrial, domestic and agricultural use as well for environmental preservation; ensuring synergy with agricultural infrastructure and industrial development.
11. Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All forms – air, inland water ways, sea and air – to facilitate human movement and the transport goods and services and to open up the country for investment opportunities and tourism-related businesses, etc.
12. Internal Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A national defence strategy; complete re-skilling and re-tooling of security agencies; harmonisation of disparate security services; security education for the populace, etc.
13. Environmental Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enforcement of environment and town-country planning laws; massive beautification of cities and towns; a national strategy to address the challenges of climate change, etc.
14. Cultural development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encouragement of cultural creativity in all its forms; promotion of Nigerian languages in education and society; turning multi cultural industries, etc
15. External Image	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The sum total of transforming the country;

	good country for its good people; respected and admired by its neighbours and the entire outside world.
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RECOMMENDATIONS

In order for education to achieve the objective of building valuable human assets who act as vehicles or catalysts to National development and integration, the following suggestions are proffered in the educational system.

- Holistic attitudinal rebranding of teachers and school administrators. All forms of social vices among the school teachers and administrators at all levels of the educational system must be discouraged. Teachers and school administrations should see themselves as character moulders, moralists, models and nation builders. Teachers should be more committed to their job, not minding the environmental or societal negative influences.
- Government on her own part should be sensitive to the plight of teachers, as no meaningful development can take place in any society under a haphazardly trained or brought up manpower, due to what can best be described as retaliatory inefficiencies of the teachers in our educational system.
- Monitoring and supervision: The appropriate agencies statutorily saddled with this responsibility must be alive to their responsibilities. When supervision is effective in our school system, all hands will be on deck for the achievement of the educational goals and objectives. Therefore, the NUC, NBTE, FMOE, SMOE, SSEB, STEB, NPEC, SUBEB, LBEB etc should take note.
- Provision of infrastructures and instructional facilities: Government, corporate organisation, non-governmental organisation public spirited individuals etc must ensure that necessary facilities are provided in the school system to enhance teaching –learning activity. Government must

adhere to the minimum recommended UNESCO budgetary allocation to the education sector.

- Professional development of teachers and capacity building: Teachers should be continuously encouraged to grow professionally by the government and other private employers of teachers. By so doing, they tend to be more effective and efficient.
- Effective Administration: Administrators at the various levels of our educational system must learn to be effective in their administration. All acts of maladministration must be shunned. Any form of politics that may be detrimental to educational development must be avoided.

CONCLUSION

The Thesis of this discourse is that if invaluable human asset must be built, to facilitate national integration and development as desired by every good minded citizen of Nigeria, there is an urgent need to rebrand our educational system which is the sole panacea or potent arsenal for building an invaluable human asset. Human asset that is devoid of corruption, lethargy, indolence, and lukewarm. Human assets that symbolise hard work, honesty, good interpersonal relationships, discipline, etc. The paper concludes that certain religious provision with educational values should be tapped with a view to enhancing moral probity in man without which the educated man stands the risk of abnormal behaviour (Bidmos, 2011).

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