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A REVIEW OF NIGERIAN TERTIARY EDUCATION TOWARDS OVERCOMING SECURITY CHALLENGES AND THE QUAGMIRE OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Introduction

Education could be seen as the major agency for both personal and national socio-economic development. Investments in human capital development plays a critical role in long-term productivity growth at both micro and macro levels. The state of education in Nigeria continues to dominate our national discourse at all levels. The implication of the declining education quality at all levels has far-reaching implications on our moral, civic, cultural, and economic sustainability. It is therefore, imperative for education at various levels to prepare future leaders and develop the high level technical capacities needed for economic growth and development (Osokoya, 2008). The utmost importance attached to education

Abstract

This paper examines the nexus within tertiary education, security challenges and sustainable development in Nigeria. It is not doubtable that the tertiary education could be engaged and integrated in the issues of security challenges and the quagmire of sustainable development in Nigeria. The paper posits that tertiary education is central to shaping attitudes and social interaction and both are critical to addressing insecurity challenges and sustainable development. It could be affirmed that government alone cannot provide sustainable development. The paper emphasizes developed economies where tertiary education is an engine for development in which individuals, religious groups, communities, and businesses must contribute in important ways to provide education that leverages development.

To this end, the paper submits that tertiary education could be a functional tool in curbing social vices and ensuring development that is sustainable in Nigeria provided the curriculum is properly implemented and monitored towards blending and interfacing local wisdom with global knowledge, values and skills, which will develop the students to become citizens of Nigeria as well as citizens of the global village.

Keywords: *Tertiary education, security, Nigerian education, economic development, sustainable development.*

In Nigeria was clearly underscored in the National Policy on Education. The Federal Republic of Nigeria in this policy adopted education as an instrument “par excellence” for effecting national development (FRN, 2013).

Tertiary education, higher or continuing education plays a necessary and an increasingly important role in human, social, and economic development (Escrigas, 2008). The role of Tertiary Education Institutes (TEIs) in development is not only vital, but it is also complex, fluid and dynamic. TEIs exhibit numerous capabilities and scope, and can affect processes of development both directly and indirectly through teaching, research and service. Furthermore, TEIs operate within different contexts in which they can play different roles towards societal development. In this context, tertiary education institutes include a wide variety of universities, vocational and technical colleges, amongst other formal, non-formal, and informal institutions.

However, there are challenges to our national development in which security has been identified as the major one. Since Nigeria has returned to democratic system of government, the security situation in the country deteriorated drastically. Arguably, considerable progress has been achieved in the areas of freedom of speech and liberty, but series of resource based conflict (e.g., Niger Delta militant, ethno-religious crisis and communal conflicts in Jos, Nassarawa, Benue, and Taraba States) persisted. The climax of these security threats is the insurgence of a group called Boko Haram sect that ravaged the entire North-eastern states of Nigeria. Thus, a considerable effort to end the violence and build a sustainable peace to steer the economy to sustainability seems far from realization. The basic questions are: why development has

continued to elude Nigeria in spite of numerous amounts of human and material resources? To what extent does security crisis impact or contribute to development crisis in Nigeria? Is Boko Haram really a threat to development in Nigeria? These pertinent but complex questions needed urgent attention especially now that Nigeria is struggling to be among twentieth world developed countries in the year 2020.

It is important to note that the concept of development is used openly as well as in mainstream literature and development projects. That is, development is not confined to macroeconomic forces of growth, in one hand, it focuses on the improvement of the individual and collective human condition, increasing choices and participation, equality, standard of living and wellbeing, the environment and sustainability, and on the other hand development as a human and ways of being.

Perhaps, this explains why Obanya (2002) and UNESCO (2015) conceived development not a stage to be attained or a goal to aim for. Rather, it is a constant process of improvement in which education, research, and service play prominent roles in creating positive change in the self, the people around us, our communities, and the institutions and structures that support us. At this juncture, development and tertiary education in this context aimed at empowerment and raising the quality of life where people can continue to develop their knowledge and skills. It is about learning to know, learning to do, learning to be, and learning to live together (Faure, 1972). Learning, research and service at TEIs are often at the forefront of knowledge generation and dissemination and are thus important contributors to forces of social change.

In addendum, from its earliest days, the tertiary education in Nigeria had a clear mandate to contribute to national development by being attentive to Nigerian problems. The relationship between tertiary education and solving national problems was very clear. According to Olaitan (2010),

“The immediate problem that confronts Nigeria today is that of relating her educational system to her own environment. No education outside Nigeria can help accomplish this; it must be done by a tertiary institution located within Nigeria and not tied to the apron strings of a foreign institution”.

Methodology

This is a qualitative study which requires gathering relevant information from articles and books to discuss, analyze and synthesize tertiary education and security challenges with sustainable development in Nigerian context.

Tertiary Education: Nigerian Perspective

In Nigeria, the benefits of education for development and social change have long been contemplated while the contemporary study of the role of higher education in developing countries emerged alongside post-colonial discourses and modernisation theories on how best to modernise societies. In most parts of the developing world, education in general and tertiary education in particular was seen as playing an indispensable role in national economic development and cultivating the necessary civic values for societal and political participation. The object of analysis usually concentrated on the way in which governments utilize national tertiary education system to train people in the skills necessary for economic growth (Chapman, 2012).

Since 1980s, tertiary education was gradually considered less important in the quest for economic growth and social change. This decline was due to three trends. First, TEIs failed to produce the results that were expected of them in Nigeria as a developing world. Second, many TEIs were not concerned with local, regional, or national issues and problems. The content and style of education was often divorced from the reality that surrounded them and sometimes exacerbated inequalities. Lastly, due to a highly economic view of development and the resulting methods of measuring the impact of TEIs, tertiary education was considered to have a “low rate of return” and funding and attention were allocated to primary and secondary education (Chapman 2012). This low point in the focus on the role of tertiary education in development facilitated the degradation of TEIs in many parts of the developing world countries, Nigeria inclusive.

More recently, the social and economic role of TEIs in national development has regained prominence in the development agenda. Additionally, the analysis of this connection has expanded to incorporate new elements. For instance, the UN views tertiary education as integral to all aspects of development such as environmental awareness and sustainability, post-conflict resolution, poverty alleviation, cultivating values such as human rights, health care issues, and cultural preservation or change.

It is against this background the Nigerian government contends that TEIs cultivate certain values and understanding of issues that facilitate both economic and social development. Furthermore, the scope of the effects of TEIs is being reconsidered. Society and TEIs are widely discussed as being mutually constitutive, that society and TEIs co-evolve (Zaghlul & Juma, 2016). TEIs therefore are considered to be the progenitors of social change through the generation and dissemination of knowledge and new ideas especially in the context of globalization (Taylor, 2008).

Contemporary Challenges: Insecurity and Development

The concept of security is not alien and has been central even in the primitive societies. The need for security necessitated the social contract in which people willingly surrendered their rights to an organ (government) who oversees the survival of all. For decades, issues relating to security tend to occupy the centre stage in the development discourse. With the end of the cold war, there have been attempts to shift conceptualization of security from a state-centric perspective to a broader view that places premium on individuals, in which human security that embodies elements of national security, human rights and national development remain major barometer for explaining the concept. At the heart of this debate there have been attempts to deepen and widen the concept of security from the level of the states to societies and individuals, and from military to non-military issues (Krahmann, 2013).

Thus, some scholars seem to place emphasis on absence of threat to acquire values or tendencies that would undermine national cohesion and peace as criteria for determining what security connotes (David, 2006). Whereas Igbuzor (2011) viewed security as the condition or feeling of safety from harm or danger, the defence, protection and the absence of threats to acquire values. This explains why Wolfers (1962) construed security in an objective sense as the absence of threats to acquire values; and in subjective sense, the absence of fear that such values will be attacked.

In spite of its conceptual complexities, the understanding of the term shows that security is vital for national cohesion, peace and sustainable development. Thus, security has to do with freedom from danger or with threats to a nation's ability to protect and develop itself, promote its cherished values and legitimate interests and enhance the well-being of its

people. For instance, Nigeria has been facing internal insecurity which is said to be the absence of those tendencies which could undermine internal cohesion and the cooperative existence of the nation and its ability to maintain its vital institutions for the promotion of its core values and socio-political and economic objectives, as well as meet the legitimate aspirations of the people.

Hence, internal security implies freedom from danger to life and prosperity (Imobighe cited in Oche 2011). It could also mean the search to avoid, prevent, reduce, or resolve violent conflict- whether the threat originates from other states, non-state actors, or structural socio-economic conditions (Stan, 2014). It is apparent from the foregoing that national security is a desideratum, *sine qua non* for economic growth and development of any country (Oladeji & Folorunso, 2017). Hence, security is an indispensable condition in attracting and propelling development of any nation.

Little wonder, Ake (2010) argues that the ideology of development itself became a problem for development because of the conflict between its manifest and latent functions. At the time when development seems to be conceived as the outcome of economic growth, many theorists as Rostow (1952), and Harrod & Domar (1957), among others proposed models of development, generally identifying structural changes, savings and investments as the source of economic development and growth (Otto & Ukpere, 2012). The assumption was that economic growth would generate fund for investment and infrastructural development that would guarantee better living condition of people. Thus, at the tail end of 1970s it appears that economic growth in most developing and underdeveloped societies especially in the Latin America and Africa do not provide corresponding social goods. Evidently, economic growth could not sufficiently address the spate of unemployment, poverty, disease, hunger, illiteracy and ever increasing crimes and wars. Hence, post development thought has called for a return to the stress on people as both the measures and determinants of development (Rapley, 2017).

Again, the analysis above seems to have necessitated the new thinking and redefinition of development from economic growth centred perspective to human centred approach. Development is now seen as a transformation of the society, a move from the old ways of thinking, and old form of social and economic organization to new ones (Stiglitz cited in Afeikhena 2014). As

Chandler (2007) rightly observed that development has been redefined, taking the emphasis away from traditional economic indicators of GDP and trade and broadening out the concept to take in psychological and material factors related to the measurement of human well-being. Specifically, Rodney (1972), Nnoli (1981), Ake (2010) have argued that development is multifaceted and indeed centered on man. For Nnoli (1981) development could be seen as a dialectical phenomenon in which the individual and the society interact with their physical, biological and inter human environments transforming them for own betterment and that of humanity at large and being transformed in the process. This view or conception of development according to Okolie (2009) improves man's potentials and capacities and subsequently eliminates and/or reduces poverty, penury, inequality, unemployment and generally enhances the condition for human existence and self-reproduction. Development therefore, could be construed as the process of empowering people to maximise their potentials and the ability to exploit nature to meet daily human needs. It can also be seen as a process by which quality of human lives and capacity to surmount daily needs are considerably improved.

Since the end of the Cold War, security and development concerns have been increasingly interlinked (Chandler, 2007). In fact, no sustainable development can be achieved in the atmosphere of conflicts, crisis and war and Nigeria is not an exception. Understandably, security and development are two different concepts but tend to affect each other, making both concepts inseparable. This relationship has recently triggered debates on security – development nexus (Chandler, 2007; Stan, 2014).

Theoretical Framework

This study is predicated on the theory of Human Development Paradigm (HDP) which emphasized the view that each human being is born with a potential and has the right to develop it. The HDP also proposes that the concept of development should be analyzed as the process of broadening the scope of people's freedom so they can develop their potentials and, thus, be able to make choices (UNESCO 2015). It could be said that the theory of Human Development Paradigm (HDP) and Personal and Social Development (PSD) are interconnected because they both appreciate commitment to the

empowerment and self-realization of individuals and their participatory role in development.

It is on this basis, this study elaborates on how tertiary education, through numerous programmes, teaching, research and service can serve as a base for community change. Taylor and Fransman (2004) argue that participatory educational approaches benefit development objectives. Stating further that a critical systemic discourse achieved in part by establishing the bridge between theory and practice through a process of critical reflection and action, is a challenge for tertiary education, but by providing space and an enabling environment in which teaching and research become integral and valued through participatory processes, and perceiving participation itself as a desirable outcome in order to challenge established power relations, tertiary institutions have the real potential to become key actors in promoting not only transformative learning at an individual level, but also wider social, institutional and discursive change.

In this sense, the one-size-fits-all approach to tertiary education is not effective. Tertiary institutions need to be more adaptive and responsive to their local communities and students, and provide practical educational programmes aimed at human, social and economic development. According to Zaglul and Juma (2016), and Sherrard, (2017), tertiary institution success in its development objectives depends mostly on institutional design, management and curriculum reform. As such, tertiary education for development needs to be open and transparent as to what it teaches and how it should be shaped by local requirements or desires and malleable to surrounding pressures, and should be a transformative service to the people it teaches and represents.

Considering the central focus of HDP theory, tertiary education should be a proactive organisation in the development of individual capacities as well as a locus for regional or national human, social and economic development. Bawden (2008) opined that identification of the role that an institution has in development is crucial in enhancing its performance as an agent for development, and that many tertiary institutions are curiously reluctant to promote development. Development-oriented institutions and programmes intentionally play a *proactive* role. Not only do they acknowledge the academic and social dedication to the intellectual growth and capacity development of their students, but also link this to local and national

development goals through its mission, educational content, research and service. This may seem self-evident, but many tertiary institutions in Nigeria are not driven by such objectives.

Synergy between Sustainable Development and Tertiary Education

Sustainability Education (ES), Education for Sustainability (EfS), and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) are interchangeable terms describing the practice of teaching for sustainability. ESD as a term identified education as an essential tool for achieving sustainable development and highlighted areas of action for education (Huckle & Sterling, 2016). Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Sustainable development is about a global responsibility and solidarity between generations, between women and men and between different cultures and countries. It is about safeguarding and efficient use of existing natural resources. Investment in management of human, social and physiological resources is also crucial parts of sustainable development.

Since education is directly targeted at human development, then education is critical for promoting sustainable development and improving the capacity of the people to address environment among other developmental issues. Both formal and non-formal forms of education are indispensable to changing people's attitudes so that they have the capacity to assess and address their sustainable development concerns. It is also critical for achieving environmental and ethical awareness, values and attitudes, skills and behaviour consistent with sustainable development and for effective public participation in decision making. Olaitan (2007) identified four pillars of the tertiary education curriculum that central to sustainable development as entrepreneurship, environmental and social consciousness, ethical values, and scientific and technical knowledge.

There are many types of institutions and different ways in which tertiary institutions can play a role in development. While some conduct important research at an international level in technology and sciences, which can have beneficial impacts for the poor and for national economic growth, others operate at a more community level focused directly on learning and participation for sustainable livelihoods and poverty alleviation through continued education and training/institutes while others can be universities

that specialise in specific areas of research and instruction. At this juncture, it could be affirmed that tertiary education can aim at promoting development on different levels (e.g. national, local or individual) as well as different types of development (e.g. economic, social, political, environmental, agricultural or rural, sustainable, human/individual development) amongst other possibilities.

One fact remains that a tertiary institution should have innovative programmes designed specifically to promote or encourage individual development, increase participation in processes of development and social change so as to create economic growth, and to improve livelihoods. This will significantly and positively impact on students' empowerment whilst simultaneously impacting local communities through implementation of service, action and community-based research and involvement in development projects. These programmes link the tertiary institutions to communities and provide participatory methods of learning that not only represent effective ways of learning, but also help direct research and implement university service projects (Taylor & Fransman, 2014).

It is therefore imperative for a tertiary institution to include creativity, critical enquiry and entrepreneurship as important aspects of education for which alternative and experiential learning should play a central role (Taylor & Fransman, 2014). There is a very clear call for a more general education to "learn how to learn" and use knowledge effectively in various situations. International education is an important aspect in learning about the world and how to function in it, promoting global citizenship (Llanes-Ortiz 2007). Thus, internationalisation of tertiary education is perceived as an inevitable consequence of open policies.

Perhaps, Taylor and Fransman (2014) were right to have averred that while some tertiary institutions have a clear role in building the capacity of individuals and organisations to undertake key development initiatives and to practice participation, they are often restricted by internal and external constraints. Perceptions of tertiary institutions as experiencing hierarchical power systems, structural rigidities, traditional elitism, and research which is disassociated from local realities imply that a paradigm shift in the learning and research approaches of tertiary education is greatly needed.

Having said that, the synergy between tertiary education and national development could be viewed in many ways either in the qualities or issues

in the provision of education or teaching, research and its application, and engagement in civil society that should be considered when examining the role that a tertiary institution or its graduates can play in development. Tertiary institutions have a concerted effort in building leaner towards maintaining peace and sustaining development in Nigeria in many ways such as;

- Maintaining academic values (the respect and quest for truth);
- Incorporating indigenous and alternative knowledge and ways of being. Such as the concept of the “Multiversity” (Tandon, 2008);
- Getting the right people the right education, to help fulfil individual potentials;
- Relevance of education, research and service to students and local communities and around the world;
- Innovation and exploring new forms of teaching, new avenues of research and possible methods or tools for development and social change;
- Promoting access, empowerment of women, indigenous and marginalised and poorer people;

The above-mentioned points are necessary for social cohesion, national unity and sustainable development in the developing countries like Nigeria.

Recommendations

- a) This paper recommends a functional tertiary education which trains the learners for better appreciation of their cultural traditions whilst at the same time equipping them with the ability to absorb new ideas, new information and new data for resolving the constantly changing problems of their environment. This will promote understanding of cultural diversity and multi-ethnicity that permeates Nigeria as a nation.
- b) A tertiary education that trains the individual to relate to and interact meaningfully with other individuals in the society and to appreciate the importance of effective organization for human progress. This gives meaning to indivisibility of our social entity as a nation.
- c) A functional tertiary education should develop the creative ability of individuals especially in the cultural and technological realms. This is the required skill for 21st century environment.

- d) A functional tertiary education must foster in the individual those values which make for good citizenship (such as; honesty, selflessness, tolerance, dedication, hard work and personal integrity) all of which provide the rich soil from which good leadership is spawned. This calls for attitudinal change among citizens and subsequently addresses corruption syndrome in our land.
- e) A functional tertiary education ought to promote the culture of productivity by enabling every individual to discover the creative genius in him and apply it to the improvement of the existing skill and technique of performing specific tasks thereby increasing the efficiency of his personal societal efforts. By so doing, every Nigerian graduate will contribute in large quantity to the development of our nation.

Conclusion

The history of Nigeria runs parallel to the history of Nigerian education, because of the realization by the early nationalists that the country could not develop without a proper grounding in a national education system that can guarantee the production of the desired high quality workforce without which national development is impossible. Perhaps this explains why tertiary education is increasingly recognised as it plays a central role in human, social and economic development. Moreover, in contemporary 'knowledge societies' and in the face of pressures and changes from globalisation, this role is increasingly important, yet ever more complex. It could be said that tertiary institutions serve as agents in development in multiple ways depending on their capabilities, objectives and the contexts in which they operate.

Therefore tertiary institutions have an institutional commitment to development, in one hand- as part of their missions in teaching, research and service. On the other hand, the educational programmes and curricular, action research and university outreach projects reflect this commitment and incorporate methods designed to improve the impact of the institution and its graduates on larger processes of development and social change.

Finally, this paper has underscored the critical role of interactive and participatory pedagogical method in fostering the appropriate skills and values in students so as to make graduates productive and interactive members of society. Simply put, participatory approach could strengthen students' capacity to act as agents of change, which redirects their sense of

conflict resolution changing societal power relations, amongst many other possibilities.

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