

RESEARCH, HUMAN CAPITAL AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA: A DEVELOPMENTAL APPROACH

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Abstract

The paper x-rayed the challenges of research and human capital development in the socio-economic development of Nigeria. Research and human capital development are critical to the development of any nation. Research facilitates human capital development. Human capital planning is getting wider attention with increasing globalization and also the saturation of the job market due to the recent downturn in the various economies of the world. Developed and developing countries emphasize more on human capital development because it accelerates the economic growth by devoting necessary time and efforts. Thus human capital development is one of the fundamental indices to enter the international arena. A high rating in human capital development indices places a country among the leading countries of the world. The paper identified inadequate funding, lack of equipment, facilities and materials, lack of awareness, lack of implementation of research results, low rating in human capital indices, brain-drain, underemployment, etc, as challenges of research and human capital development in Nigeria. The paper concludes with some recommendations that will help meet these challenges.

Introduction

Research is the process of arriving at dependable solutions to problems through the planned and systematic collection, analysis and interpretation of data. It is also the systematic investigation into and study of materials and sources in order to establish facts and reach new conclusions. Research is oriented towards the discovering of the relationships that exist among the phenomena of the world in which we live (Osuala, 2001). To Ajoku (2006), research is the search for knowledge, truth, similarities and relationships, and the process of finding solutions to problems through the systematic collection, analysis and interpretation of data. Okeke (2004) stated that research is any activity that involves observation and description of the characteristic properties of objects or events for the purpose of discovering relationships between variables and developing generalization that may be used to predict future occurrences. Research involves identification of problems, gathering new data, finding solution to a problem through carefully designed procedures and logical analysis. Research therefore is an intensive and extensive search for solutions to problems in a society. The problem could be in education, business, politics, etc.

However, the essentiality of human capital in accelerating the growth and development of every sphere of a country's national life has received considerable attention by scholars and policy makers in both developed and developing economies. Thus the idea of human capital development has become a major concern of all countries of the world, regardless

of their levels of development achievements. Investment in human capital through quality education system has become widely recognized by states as one of the most potent strategies for concretizing both short-term and long-term development plans in the face of the prevailing global economic crisis.

Human capital, a component of development consisting of various ingredients including knowledge, talents, skills, abilities, experience, intelligence, training among others things, possessed by a country's human population has been dubbed the foundation upon which every other aspect of development-social, economic, technological, etc. of any nation rests. The UNESCO unequivocally states that developing countries ought to invest a minimum of 26% of their yearly budgetary allocation on education (Jaiyeoba, 2015). Of course, developing countries desire to speed-up the pace of socio-economic growth and development in order to catch-up with the West. Consequently, they have the most urgent need for high-grade human resources in order to enable them engender real and enduring transformation in their societies. Unfortunately, these countries are the most starved of this important element. Many developing countries have made pragmatic effort at improving the quality of education in a bid to ensure accumulation of valuable human capital in order to enhance the achievement of their development agenda, but the returns from these attempts have been unimpressive. Attempts at growing quality human capital in the developing nations have continued to be blighted by numerous societal complexities.

As the focal point of this present discourse, Nigeria as a developing country presents an ample example of a state where the formation of human capital has remained a mere dream rather a reality. Yet, the country is known for its abundance of human resources that could have been converted and transformed into huge socio-economic development fortunes for the nation. So long as the development of economically worthwhile pool of human resources remains a daunting task for Nigeria, the nation's development woes would continue to exacerbate.

Human capital compared to and contrasted with material capital such as machinery, land, minerals resources and other raw materials is intangible. It is intrinsic and cannot be directly measured. It is its manifestations, in terms of the prosperity of the nation, material and social well-being of citizens, efficiency of institutions and systems as well as the quality of human development indices that can be assessed. The human capital status of any nation will directly influence and positively correlate with economic and social indicators such as gross domestic product, income per capita, balance of trade, life expectancy, literacy rate, level of industrialization and the quality of infrastructural provisions. It can also have great impact on political stability, national peace and harmony as well as the prevailing ethos. The more a nation has knowledgeable, skilled and resourceful individuals contributing to national growth and development the higher the value of the human capital of that nation. The value of the human capital asset of a nation is a function of quantity, quality as well as the operating environment. A country of high population can only have a higher potential for human capital development and no more. Substantial input and efforts are

required to elevate that potential to active human capital to desired objectives. Among the inputs is a sound and dynamic education system, motivational operating environment and support services.

Nigeria is far more endowed in mineral resources and human population than Japan, Sweden

or Singapore; yet it comes nowhere near these countries in technological advancement and in economic and social development. What makes the difference is human capital, its development, effective engagement and utilization. Human capital development means building an appropriate balance and critical mass of human resource base and providing enabling environment for all individuals to be fully engaged and contribute to national development efforts. It involves providing opportunities to all citizens to develop to their fullest potentials through education, training and motivation as well as creating the enabling environment for everyone to participate fully in National development. Any effort to increase human knowledge, enhance skills and productivity and stimulate resourcefulness of citizens is an effort in human capital development, investment to entrench good governance, provide supporting infrastructure and develop the education, health and social systems are investments in human capital development.

These will include expenditures in educational and training institutions, health and skills acquisition programmes, information and communication technologies (ICT) as well as in research and development. Human capital development also refers to human capital formations or Human-Resource development. Human capital development according to Jhingan (2007, 387) "is the process of acquiring and increasing the number of persons who have the skills, education and experience which are critical for economic and political development of a country". Human capital development is associated with investment in man and his development as a creative and productive resource. Schultz as cited in Jhingan (2007) identified five ways of developing human resources: (i) health facilities and services, broadly conceived to include all expenditure that affect the life expectancy strength and stamina, and the vigor and vitality of the people, (ii) on-the spot training, including old type apprenticeships originated by firms; (iii) formally organized education at the elementary, secondary and higher levels, (iv) study programmes for adults that are not organized by firms, including extension programmes notably in agriculture, and (v) Migration of individuals and families to adjust to changing job opportunities. In wider sense, investment in human capital means expenditure on health education and social services in general; and in its narrowed sense, it implies expenditure on education and training. This paper, therefore, concerns itself with examining the major issues or factors hampering the development of human capital in Nigeria.

Conceptual Issues

Human Capital

Authors and scholars often use the notion or concept of human capital interchangeably with terms such as manpower and human resources, mostly because of their varying individual preferences and academic backgrounds. Whatever may be the preferences of particular scholars, the point to note is that the terms imply the same thing. There exist various definitions offered by scholars in a bid to explain the meaning of the concept 'human capital'. According to Aluko and Aluko (2012), human capital is the abilities and skills of human resources of a country. Barney (1995) opines that the term refers to all the experience, skills, judgments, abilities, knowledge, contacts, risk-taking and wisdom of individuals and associates within an organization. Similarly, Stiglitz and Boudway (1994) explain the concept to mean the stock of accumulated skills and experiences that make workers more productive. Harbison (1973) in his views also conceived of the term in a closely related manner as he defines it as the energies, skills, and knowledge of which are, or which potentially can or should be applied to the production of goods and services. In view of the foregoing definitions, therefore, the term 'human capital' simply implies the aggregate economically productive human population available in a country. In other words, it refers to the wealth of manpower or human resources with requisite skills, knowledge and training that can be transformed into factor of production for the purpose of accomplishing the goals of a nation in terms of meeting its steady demands for developmental goods and services. The concept of human capital hence connotes the actual right quality and quantity of human population available for economic productive activities in a country and not the magnitude of its labour force. Human capital is the product of accumulated investment in humans. Ojo (1997) corroborates this assertion when he argues that human capital represents the present value of past investments in the skills of people. In relations to humans, the concept of 'Capital' means deliberately investing in people with the aim of making them more productive factors of production (Samuelson, 1964). It becomes possible therefore to conclude that education is a decisive factor for human capital (Asaju, 2012), with sound health also being an important element.

Human Capital Development

Human capital accumulation is described as the most effective strategy for transforming the development dreams and aspirations of a nation into reality. Scholars and policy makers agree that investments in human beings through education and health produce immense benefits both to the individual and the society at large. On the definition of the concept, scholars can be said to be in almost perfect agreement as they emphasize the essentiality of investing in human capital as a sure means of achieving real and authentic development. Human capital development, according to African Development Bank Report (1998) is conceived as a critical means of sustained economic growth and poverty reduction and also an end in itself. Harbison (1962, 435) sees it as, "the process of acquiring and increasing the numbers of people who have the skills, education and experiences that are critical for socio-economic development of a country". Okojie (1995) says the term is associated with investment in man and his development as creative and productive resources. For Ojo (1997, 8), human capital development

encapsulates not only the expenditure on education and training, but also the development of attitudes towards productive activities. A salient point worthy of note about the above views is that they all emphasize the primacy of human development as a very critical factor in achieving holistic growth and development in any country. The most possible means of ensuring development and wellbeing of individuals are through purported investment in education and health as well as other social welfare services capable of improving the quality of human population. Healthy and well-informed (literate) workforce or population is a major determinant of the pace of social and economic growth and development in any nation. As Awe and Ajayi (2010, p. 2) argue, “a well educated population is an objective in itself as well as the conduct to accelerate social and economic development”. On the other hand, Yesufu (2010) avers that, “a good health policy is a means by which government can at once, ensure that manpower is generated in the right mixes, distributed in accordance with national priorities and ensure the highest level of labour productivity” (Awe & Ajayi, 2010). To this end, human capital development can therefore be rightly regarded as an end or objective of development (Aluko & Aluko, 2012). “Human capital development is also a means since it enhances the skills, knowledge, productivity and inventiveness of people through a process of human capital formation broadly conceived” (Aluko & Aluko, 2012, 166). The development successes recorded by the advance countries of Europe and America as well as the evolving industrialized nations of Asia can be attributed to long-term investment in human resources. These countries provide empirical evidences for justifying the imperative of deliberate investment in human beings as a road-map to national development.

Imperative of Human Capital formation for Socio-Economic Growth and Development

The nexus between human capital development, growth and development of any country has vehemently been emphasized and given adequate attention in the literature of development thinking. As a premise for this argument, Asaju (2010) brings to the fore the undeniable fact that, “the success story of many developed nations can be attributed to their investment in human capital development”. Moreover, “in recent years, the economic success of countries referred to as the Asian Tigers has been attributed to the priority given to human resource development” (Asaju, 2010). Central to human capital development are education and health (Aluko & Aluko, 2012). Education is concerned with the cultivation of “the whole person” including intellectual, character and psychomotor development. It is the human resources of any nation, rather than its physical capital and material resources, which ultimately determine the character and pace of its economic and social development (Aluko & Aluko, 2012, 166).

Benefits of Investment in Human Capital Development

Empirical and historical evidence has shown that nations that give priority to investment in human capital reap most of the benefits of human capital development benefits such as employment, wealth creation, improved standard of living, sustainable growth and development, etc. These are nations that devote a large sum of budgets to human capital development and insist on getting good returns for their investment. The countries in

question can hardly tolerate a day's strike in their educational sector. But in Nigeria, education is seen and treated as a residual issue. Human capital development helps in reducing budget deficit, good governance deficit, corruption and over-bloated government, etc. As the new economy is dependent on information and communication technology as a way of enhancing productivity and growth, human capital development is a sine qua non because it is the wheel that propels IT (Information Technology). It will enhance creativity and innovativeness. All countries that have attained the New Economy status are known to have promoted innovation aggressively. Through R and D (Research and Development) human capital development can assist quality manpower in providing increased output in the educational sector especially in the training of technicians as industrial workers who are put into intellectual manpower utilization in the service sector etc.

Challenges of Research in Nigeria

There is relationship between research and human capital development. Research is a tool for enhancing human capital development. Nigeria is greatly endowed with both human and mineral resources, but has low human capital development. The greatest investment any nation can make is in the development of her human capital. Research as the process of intensive and extensive search for solutions to problems in the society can be used to find out the extent to which professionals, skilled and semi-skilled workforce are available in the various sectors of national life. The more research efforts are encouraged, the more the country is better able to harness her human capital potentials (in education, politics, health, etc). The usefulness of research for the promotion of human capital development is faced with many challenges. These include:

a- Inadequate Founding: Research efforts in education and other sectors of the economy hardly attract adequate government funding. There is a general lack of commitment by government at all levels to the effect that researchers are not given adequate financial support. Researches carried out by professionals and associations are usually frustrated due to lack of funds. The annual government budget on education is not adequate, let alone provision of research grants to researchers and research institutes. This has negatively affected the development of the human capital in Nigeria.

b- Lack of Equipment, Facilities and Materials: In Nigeria, the necessary equipment, facilities and materials needed for a meaningful research are either lacking or grossly inadequate. This is particularly the case in sciences where teachers and lecturers complain seriously of lack of science equipments to carry out their experiments. This has contributed to low human capital development in the sciences which is the bedrock of any technological advancement of any country. Also current journals, periodicals and textbooks are difficult to get in the libraries.

c- Lack of Awareness: There is general ignorance with regard to the importance of research in a developing country like Nigeria. This lack of awareness has led to research workers not enjoy the desired maximum co-operation from their respondents during field study and data collection. Observation shows that certain personalities in high positions in public

and private sectors, hardly volunteer information to research workers. This situation no doubt impacts negatively on the research workers and research results as well as human capital development.

d- Poor Communication Network: The communication network is still far from being well developed. The research worker has to cover hundreds of kilometers in search of relevant research data. This problem is compounded by lack of effective and efficient transport systems.

e- Implementation of Research Results: The findings of research are hardly implemented.

The conservation outlook on the part of the executive and administrative set up in the country account for the inability to implement research results in Nigeria. Well-researched works are lying dormant at the University library shelves. This is not good for our country's development.

f- Lack Legal Provision: There is need for the provision of legal frame work in research. Dearth of legal provisions for personal and public considerations constitutes constraints on research in Nigeria. The staff/personnel in educational institutions, field workers and researchers need legal directions and protection.

g- Scarcity of Records: Nigeria like other developing countries lack adequate statistics due mainly to the very poor process of documentation. As a result of this many programmes in Nigeria have failed.

h- Unattractive Working Conditions for Research Workers: The pitiable conditions under which research workers operate is another problem that militates against research development in Nigeria. Research workers are not well paid and they lack incentives on the job. Both those who reside in official government quarters and those that live inside the town are faced with catalogue of problems ranging from shortage of water supply, epileptic power supply, poor transportation system to family problems. All these problems serve as potent sources of distractions to the best brains. Given these problems the research worker in Nigeria will not be able to perform as well as their counterparts in the developed countries where the conditions are very conducive to research work. Ukwuije (2003), and Amadi (2003) also identified illiteracy, attitude of government, individuals and significant others towards research findings, secrecy of information, scarcity of records, as problems of research in Nigeria.

Challenges of Human Capital Development in Nigeria

The challenge of human capital development for a developing country like Nigeria is enormous. This is in view of how far and ahead the rest of the world is and the amount of efforts and resources needed to catch up with them. Nigeria's high population, vast socio-cultural diversity, yet to mature political culture and the great hope reposed on her to emancipate the black-race makes the challenge even more critical for us. The following are

some of the challenges of human capital development in Nigeria:

1. **Low Rating in Human Development Indices:** Nigeria's socio-economic performance and rating in human development indices which is a reflection of its human capital status is low and undeserving of a country of huge natural endowments and human capital potentials. Nigeria's population is about 140

million, rich in biodiversity and fast arable land in addition to abundant natural and mineral resources including crude oil and natural gas. With all these endowments Nigeria should have a strong and vibrant economy and be among the rich countries of the world, have at least a medium quality life index and well above average of human development indices. Unfortunately, this is not the case as Nigeria is grouped among poor under-developed countries. United Nations Development Programme UNDP (2004) Human Development Report ranked Nigeria

151 among the 177 countries rated. Malaysia is ranked 59, Thailand 76, Tunisia 92, South Africa 119, India 127 and Ghana 131. By interpretation, Nigeria is only better off than 26 countries in the Measurable Human Development Indices (HDI) and by implication in the quality of life of citizens. The major indices considered in

the report include: Economic performance (Gross Domestic Product (GDP), Gross National product (GNP), and per capital income), life expectancy status, health risks and technology diffusion and use.

2. **Brain Drain:** UNDP (1996) Human Development Report estimated that more than 21,000 Nigerian doctors are participating in the United States whereas there is a dearth of medical practitioners in the nation's health care system. This situation repeats itself in many other disciplines and professions. The gap in the number of professionals trained and produced and the number engaged can be accounted for by "Brain Drain", low capacity utilization and unfavorable working environment. Our best brains have been lost to other countries due to unemployment and poor remunerations. The negative implications and effect of this in Nigeria's human capital development are devastating. This is a huge challenge to the country that works to be among the developed nations of the world in 2020.
3. **Underemployment:** One of the Nigeria's problems is poor human capital development and utilization policies encompassing balanced and progressive educational development and the creation of an enabling environment for the full and useful engagement of products of the education system. It should be noted that merely turning out large number of graduates is not enough. Graduates must be empowered and supported by enabling policies and operating environment, to be competent service providers, job and wealth creators. The products of our educational system are underemployed due to non availability jobs and in uncondusive environment for job creation and self employment. Underemployment includes both open and disguised unemployed. Open unemployed are those who are working less than the normal hours. Disguised unemployed are those whose contribution to output is less than what they can produce by working for normal hours of work per day (Jhingan, 2007). Again those who specialize in particular areas divert their skills to other areas where they did not have training or education. Some take to jobs less than the ones they are qualified for. All these are forms of underemployment.

Research Methodology

This study is basically a theoretical and qualitative research. The study relies mainly on secondary data derived through library research. This involves content analysis of relevant materials such as; books, journals, newspapers, periodicals, reports, governments' publications, as well as the internet, from where useful and valid data for the research were retrieved. The descriptive method of qualitative data analysis was employed to analyze the data in a bid to enable objective and insightful discussion.

Conclusion

Research and human capital development are related. Research is a tool for human capital development, while research is the process of arriving at dependable solutions to problems through planned and systematic collection, analysis and interpretation of data. Human capital development is the process of acquiring and increasing the number of persons who have the skills, education and experience which are critical for economic and political development of a country. Research and human capital development in Nigeria are faced with enormous challenges. These challenges include: inadequate funding; lack of equipments facilities and material, lack of awareness, lack of implementation of research results, low rating in human capital indices, Brain-drain, etc. To meet these challenges there is the need for a drastic and far researching reform in education policies and programmes of the country. This is because investment in education brings a greater increase in human capital or human-resource.

Recommendations

In order to meet up the challenges of research and human development identified in this paper, the following recommendations are made: There should be adequate financial provision, particularly by all arms of government for researchers. Government at all levels should provide research grants to researchers in institutions of higher learning where bulk of researches is carried out every year. There is need for adequate provision of special equipment, facilities and materials needed for meaningful research. Science equipments for experiments in the science should be provided. There is need for extensive programme and staff training for researchers. This can be done through frequent seminars, conferences and workshops.

There is need for effective public awareness on the benefit and contributions of research to national development.

There is need for legislation to back up policies on research development and efforts. Government should go beyond policy statements and come out with effective document that can promote implementations of research findings. There should be drastic and far reaching reforms in educational policies and programmes of the country to meet the human capital development of the 21st century and beyond. Government should put in place and faithfully implement policies and programmes to ensure that school curricula at all levels are functional, relevant, are matched to the resources and needs of the nations. Government should create employment opportunities for our teaming graduates. A

conducive environment should also be created by government for the products of our educational system to be engaged meaningfully.

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