

Adolescents' Educational Well-Being as a Prerequisite for National Development in Nigeria

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Abstract

The paper emphasized adolescents' educational well-being as a prerequisite for national development in Nigeria. When the Nigerian civil war ended in January 1970, the federal government articulated the five main national development goals of building a free and democratic society: - a just and egalitarian society; a united, strong and self-reliant nation; a great and dynamic economy; and a land full of bright opportunities for all citizens, as contained in the Second National Development Plan (1970-1974) and endorsed in 1973 as the necessary foundation for the National Policy on Education, which was first published in 1977. After 41 years, this dream is far from being realized. There is injustice and insecurity, with lots of human right abuses and extra judicial killings, banditry, herders attack, high crime rates, the grave menace of cultism, ritual murder, child abuse, religious riots, unemployment, corruption, and other vices inimical to the national development. The paper stressed the importance of adolescents' educational well-being as a strategy for achieving national development in Nigeria. Therefore, it was recommended that the federal government provide quality educational opportunities that will reduce youths' illiteracy for the well-being of the adolescents, enhancing Nigeria's national development.

Keywords: National Development, Adolescents, Education, Well-Being, Nigeria

Introduction

Nigeria is facing a great challenge in education, population growth, unemployment, political, social, security, corruption, bad leadership, economic, religious, ethnicity, and environmental sectors. These challenges are inimical to her development. According to the United Nations Department of Economics and Social Affairs: Population Division (2022), Nigeria's population estimate is 216.1 million while 42.54% of the population falls on the 0-14 years age structure and 19.61% falls on 15-24 years. Also, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) (2021) reported that the number of unemployed Nigerians rose to 23.19 million in the fourth quarter (Q4) of 2020 on the back of job losses occasioned by the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic and its stifling impact on businesses during the period. The Q4 unemployment rate report released the

National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) (2021) shows that the number is 6.5 percent higher compared to 21.77 million recorded by NBS as unemployed in the second quarters of 2020. Eweniyi (2018) reported that India has 5 times the population of Nigeria and that if care is not taken, Nigeria will soon overtake India as the country that has the largest number of citizens living in extreme poverty.

In 2015, the UN set up the Sustainable Development Goals with the mandate to eradicate extreme poverty globally by 2030 as the first item on their agenda. To achieve this, 57 people have to leave poverty every minute in Africa, and 12 people to leave per minute in Nigeria. Complicating the problems of poverty are the issues of Boko Haram, banditry and herders. According to Olatunji (2018), Nigeria Spent \$2.6 billion on Boko Haram in 2016; and \$1 billion in

security funds for arms procurement in 2018, yet 170 Chibok and 6 Dapchi girls have not been released. Recently, kidnapping has become a profitable venture in Nigeria.

These synopses portend great danger and hindrances to national development. Nigeria leaders had devised different strategies to overcome these problems, yet the problem persists and future seems to be uncertain and appears no one can predict. However, the leadership and stakeholders in Nigeria hardly look into the direction of adolescents' education well-being as a means to solve the nation's problems; nor have plans for them (adolescents) in terms of policy and engagement. Adolescence is a period of challenge due to physiological and social change experienced by every individual of that stage. Therefore, parents and locus parentis should strive to build on the development of adolescence's education, as this will assist adolescents overcoming variables that can hinder their growth for the fulfillment of their potentials as co-builders of our nation, Nigeria. Against this background, this paper stressed the importance of adolescents' educational well-being as a strategy for achieving national development in Nigeria.

The Imperative of Investing in Adolescence Education

The criteria for investing in adolescence education are majorly four-folds.

1. The universal Rights of the Child made it compulsory to invest in the education of adolescents.
2. When a nation invested on quality education of her adolescents, there would be reduction or eradication of poverty, cultism, poverty, inequity, insecurity, gender discrimination, and other social vices.
3. Almost half of the world's adolescents' population does not attend secondary school (UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), 2016). The implication is that poverty and inequity are passed on to the next generation.
4. Finally, the way adolescents are portrayed in the society.

Conceptual Clarification

This paper attempts to clarify the following concepts show their relationship with the discussed variables.

Development

The term "development" is a concept with several meanings, therefore, lending itself to contextual definitions. This implies that researchers defined the term in the actual context in which they use it. For instance, Nwanegbo and Odigbo (2013) assert that development could be seen as the process of empowering people to maximize their potentials and the ability to exploit nature to meet daily human needs. Ohagwu (2010) stated that development is not the same thing as change, growth or modernization, but the nature, content and course of a society, it is the choice about goals for achieving the realization of human potential. This statement agrees with Oye (2014) stressed that the term development is the transformation of community into socially, economically, politically, educationally, orderly, and materially desirable conditions, aiming to improve the people's quality of life.

National Development

According to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, national development refers to an expansion involving the entire country. It can also be described as the collective socio-economic, political as well as religious improvement of a country. Obasi (2010) defined national development as the transformation of masses' social, economic and political life.

In this study, national development operationally refers to the capacity of a country to mobilize resources for the improvement of the people's socio-economic welfare in terms of providing security, education, potable water, electricity, transportation, infrastructure, medical care, advanced technology (ICT) and education.

Adolescence

Adolescence is a transition period between childhood and adulthood in terms of biological, cognitive, and socio-emotional changes. Alexa (2015) stated that the future of every nation lies on effective preparation of her adolescents. Broadly, adolescence covers three stages: the early adolescence (11-14 years), the middle adolescence (14-17 years), and the late adolescence (17-20 years). Both American Academy of Pediatrics, (2015) and World Health Organization (2016),

claimed that developmental experts define adolescence as beginning with the first sign of puberty, at around age 10 or 11, and lasting for about a decade.

Adolescence is the most vulnerable stage for development; therefore, a child entering this stage requires intensive readjustment to social and family life. If a child is not well adjusted, such adolescent would experience anxiety, and unpleasant or strange feelings. Hence, giving them quality education would impact their well-being and national development.

Well-being

Well-being is a term commonly used in the study of child development (Pollard & Lee, 2003). Well-being is used to describe a completed quality of life. Generally, well-being refers to as the state of being happy, healthy, or successful. Statham and Chaise (2010) viewed well-being as the general quality of human lives, and a state for human beings to fulfill their personal and social goals. In life, physical, psychological, cognitive, social, and economic domains have been accepted as the distinct domains of a child well-being. Therefore well-being in this context is the state of happiness resulting from quality of life as dictates by the environment.

National Development Plans in Nigeria

Nigeria in its sixty-one years of independence has suffered from every aspect of development. Based on this flux, Uche (2019) stated that Nigeria appears as the only country where all models of development have been experimented but without positive results. The first policy of National Development Plan was formulated between 1962 and 1968 with the objectives of development opportunities in education, health, and employment failed because 50% of resources needed to finance the plan came from external sources (Ogwumike, 1995). The second national development plan was launched after the Civil War of 1967-1970 with main focus on agriculture, industry, transport, manpower, defence, electricity, communication and water supply and provision of social services which according to Ogwumike (1995) also failed. The third and the fourth plan that placed more emphasis on quality health delivery and general improvement in the living conditions of the people also failed.

During these periods, profit derived from the oil sector was not invested wisely. Other various policies for

development such as the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) of (1986-1993), Vision 2010, National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) of (2003-2007), Vision 20:2020 (2009-2017), and Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (2017- 2020) have not yielded much dividend. Currently, the Economic Transformation National Development Plan (2021-2025) of the present administration has been without any clear methodological approach towards achieving them. It is obvious that the current results so far are not what development connotes.

The Problems of National Development in Nigeria

In spite of the various developmental approaches put in place by the Nigerian successive government, all these attempts proved abortive. The question is what went wrong? Many factors combined together to hamper the nation's development.

Some of the developmental plans failed because the general public was not carried along in the plan (Obinna, (2020). Obinna, (2020) further claimed that the idea of conceiving development planning as a big push strategy which attempts to do everything in one plan hampers development efforts as resources are overstretched and little or nothing is achieved in the process.

Bad leadership is another factor militating against the national development plan in Nigeria (Mohammed, 2020). According to Mohammed (2020), Nigeria is bedeviled with a history of bad leadership and has experienced succession and transitional leadership from military to democratic rule. In support of Oba-Adenuga, Oba-Adenuga and Williams-Oladapo (2015), Mohammed (2020) stated that the present state of leadership in Nigeria is full of deceit, corruption, injustices, greed, to mention a few. Many of these so-called leaders and politicians are unpatriotic and self-centered. They have bastardized all sectors of the nation from electricity to health, education and economy; this indeed they have plundered Nigerian society (Oba-Adenuga, Oba-Adenuga & Williams-Oladapo, 2015). Bad leadership promotes poverty, violence and insecurity which impede national development.

The mono-economic base of the country is another crucial factor. The country over depended on crude oil

for her survival thereby neglected other economic sectors. For instance, agriculture, which constitutes the mainstay of the Nigerian economy in the 1950s and 1960s, has been neglected over the years (Udeh, Onuoha, & Nwokerobia, 2021).

Obinna (2020) also stated that high level of corruption and indiscipline are other barriers to development. Nigeria state is corrupt; rather than her leaders to use their wealth of experiences to project the interest of the citizens, they are using it for personal interest (Obinna, 2020). Corruption and development negate each other, and the two cannot cohabit, so the other suffers where one is present. In her quest to curb corruption, the present administration has been accused of selective justice, nepotism and persecution of the perceived enemies. Therefore, much has not been achieved in this area.

Parameters for National Development

There are many different parameters used to assess the national development gap, in this paper, we shall look at the following as some of the most common parameters for development.

Good Family Upbringing: Family is the first contact of every adolescent. However, Nigerian society has long eroded family values and other engagements. This is affecting the growth and well-being of adolescents. This view was supported by Muhammed, and Aremu (2021) who confirmed that home and school environments can help speedy up adolescents to the needed change to adulthood.

According to Oba-Adenuga, Oba-Adenuga, and Williams-Oladapo (2015) parenting is the core aspect of family upbringing. Oba-Adenuga et.al. (2015) affirmed that good parenting promotes and supports the physical, emotional, socio-intellectual development of a child from infancy to adulthood. Hence, Kendra (2022) refers parenting as the aspects of raising a child aside from the biological relationship. Parents are children's primary socializing agents, meaning they greatly contribute to their child's behaviour. When children come from different family structures, it is essential to understand how that type of family affects their behaviour in the society. Generally, studies have shown that delinquency and other crime related behaviour that constitute insecurity

in the nation are usually attributed to broken homes and economically sub-standard homes where there is lack of effective discipline (Adenuga, 2009); Kendra, (2022); Li, (2022). From the foregoing, the effect of family instability is a gross contributing factor to the nation insecurity.

Nowadays, there is a breakdown of the family system in Nigeria. Some parents are not taking responsibility for their children; the rich pursue wealth, leaving their children at the mercy of house helps and home lesson teachers. Also, marriages are prone to divorce, leaving children to single parents (Oba-Adenuga, Oba-Adenuga, & Williams-Oladapo, 2015). All these challenges are inimical to adolescents' upbringing and social adjustment, thereby making adolescents prone to maladaptive behaviour such as truancy, bullying, cultism, stealing, fighting, armed robbery and the likes.

Access to Quality Education: Formal education is the principal institution for developing human skills and knowledge in every society; the more education imparted to an individual, the more rapid the societal development (Leiber, 2022). Hence, Grant (2017) stated that formal education is to enable individuals to function as economic change agents in their societies. Grant (2017) stated further that formal education in every country also goes further to impart values, ideas, attitudes, and aspirations. Every country commits to universal education goals in the shortest possible time. However, the high rates of school drop-out among adolescents on the ground of economic purposes are alarming; the affected adolescents end-up on the streets and high ways hawking different items for survival (Oba-Adenuga, Oba-Adenuga, & Williams-Oladapo, 2015).

Citizen Participation: Adolescents' participation can thus be regarded as the process of guiding and designing micro and macro-society by and with young persons (UNICEF/Commonwealth Youth Programme Participation Toolkits, 2006). This participation involves recognizing and nurturing young people's strengths, interests, and abilities by providing real opportunities for adolescents to become involved in decision-making in society. The UN General Assembly (UNDESA, 2004) structured youth participation in to four components: economic participation, adolescents' socio-political

participation, international decision-making processes, and cultural participation. The law on newly not-too-young to rule accentuated by the President of Nigeria is a step to actualize adolescents' well-being. If the law and other strategies are implemented, national development will be achieved speedily.

Information and Communication Technology

(ICT): Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is a new form of adolescents' involvement in national development. This involves participation in cross-boundary web sites, tele-and video-conferencing, e-learning etc. This mode of participation is providing young people with creative, open and non-hierarchical channels of participation (World Youth Report, 2005). Nikolopoulou (2018) opined that, Cyber participation also promotes e-democracy as it enhances participation in democratic deliberation and decision making processes. However, Suleiman (2021) stated that despite the high cyber-crime, there are problems of lack of functional electricity and high cost of internet services that impede the adolescents to take full advantage of ICT.

Constraints on Adolescents as Agents for National Development

Adolescents are the products of their society; its systems and socialization processes (UNICEF For Every Child, 2020). To that extent, societal norms and mores play a critical role in either constraining or unleashing their potentials. For instance, there are societal practices which informally constrict the space for creativity and self-expression of adolescents which also, limit their potential as agents for national development. Some of these practices according to (UNICEF For Every Child, 2020) are:

- False consciousness:- conscription of youth into primitive political systems which promotes adolescents' violence that usually fueled by hard drugs and material reward.
- Longstanding societal apathy which can be referred to as a defeatist attitude:- this is the belief that change is not possible or is too costly to attain. This usually leads to decline in public morality and overall societal standards.
- The prevalence of bad leadership:- this breeds scarcity of good role models and/or preference for dubious/flawed heroes (Nwodo, 2021).

- Get-rich-quick mentality and culture of impunity that breeds nepotism, favouritism, and miscarriage of justice (Nwodo, 2021).
- Poor reward or lack of motivation for excellence that promotes mediocrity in the society.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper discussed adolescents' educational well-being as a viable strategy needed to stimulate Nigeria's national development. This paper believes that, if this option is faithfully pursued and imbibed, Nigeria will be well positioned in the national and global development by the year 2030.

From the foregoing, this paper recommended that:

1. Federal government should provide free access to qualitative educational opportunities that will reduce adolescents' illiteracy for the well-being of the adolescents and Nigeria national development.
2. Nigeria's federal government should fund education based on 26% of the national budget as recommended by UNESCO as this will enhance functional and quality education of adolescents.
3. Government should develop and strengthen opportunities for every adolescent to learn their rights and responsibilities early in life. This will promote their full contribution to the society at large.
4. The federal government of Nigeria should set-up structures and pursue policies that will make 2030 national development based on adolescents' participation in society growth a reality.

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