



**HIGHER EDUCATION AND HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA:
IMPLICATIONS FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

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Abstract

This paper examined effect of higher education and human capital development on National Development in Nigeria. It highlighted the fact that a nation develops in relation to its achievement in education. This explains why contemporary world attention has focused on education as an instrument for launching nations into the world of science and technology resulting in human advancement, in terms of living conditions and development of the environment. This paper adopted a survey research design and the targeted population was two hundred and eighty five (285) academic staff of Nigerian Defence Academy, Kaduna. A sample size of two hundred (200) academic staff of the academy consists of fifty (50) respondents each from four faculties; while purposive sampling technique was adopted in obtaining the sample size. The implication of the paper is that education is the life wire of a nation that leads to great growth and development, as no nation rises above its standard of education. Therefore, Nigeria needs to appraise its present educational system and introduce innovations that would ensure it competes favorably with global standards. This paper concludes that higher education is indispensable for the development of human capital that has the capability to transform an economy significantly and assists the country compete with others emerging economies. Among others this paper recommends that the Nigerian government must bridge the gap that exists between the crisis saturated university system and the students' who will become the national developers, change exponents and development crusaders.

Key words: Human Capital, Development, Education, National Development, Policy

Introduction

In a contemporary society, higher education is a locomotive for growth and vital for the advancement of the society. High quality education is prerequisite for a significant contribution to economic growth and development. There is a paradigm shift towards advancement of knowledge as a priority especially in the 21st century. Education is of great importance to every



nation as it is quite obvious that the functionality of an individual in any nation is largely dependent on the quality of education that is imparted on that individual (Njoku & Onyegbula, 2017). It is by and large acknowledged that higher education principally is a great leap towards achieving strong human capital development for an economy that seeks competitive advantage in globalizing emerging system. The implication is that national development is arguably influenced by the human capital required to ensuring progressive transformation in the economy. To buttress the aforementioned view, Van Den-Berg (2001) asserted that there cannot be productive human capital without a functional education. This assertion is almost certainly borne out of the scrutiny that the rationale of quality education is to create critical thinking that foster the development of new technologies and new methods of production in line with the needs of the new era. Educated people possessed more skills and are able to perform their jobs effectively. They are also better suited to more complex jobs, which are often associated with high rates of pay and greater economic benefits.

Higher education is seen an economic good owing that it cannot be easily obtainable and therefore requires apportion. Economists consider education as both a consumer and capital good, because it offers utility (satisfaction) to a consumer and also serves as an input to develop the human resources necessary for economic and social transformation. The focus on education as a capital good related to the concept of human capital, which emphasizes that the development of skills is an important factor in production activities. It is widely accepted that education creates improved citizens and helps to upgrade the general standard of living in a society. Higher education is a tool that avails people with knowledge, skill, technique and information which empowers them to know their rights and duties toward the family, society, and the nation. Education has helped in no small measure to improve the quality of life in any society (Ogbonnaya, 2020). This is evident in attributes exhibited via education which include reducing poverty, safety and security against crime, prevention of wars and terrorism as well as commerce and trade. One of the most important benefits of education in a society is that it improves the standard of living and assist individuals to contribute to the development of the nation (Adam, 2016).

In developing countries such as Nigeria, it is believed that expanding educational opportunities promotes economic growth and fosters national development. This belief has necessitated investment in education in order to achieve desired goals.



Nevertheless, Nigerian economy has been staggered by various ills in the society such as covid-19 pandemic which invariably triggered economic and social challenges in the society. The education sector was adversely affected by the wave of the pandemic; and caused the implementation of diverse policies in order to assist curb the effect. On the other hand, there has not been adequate attention on education in Nigeria by the government. Evidently, there has been poor budget allocation towards the advancement of education in the country; inadequate training and skill acquisition; poor infrastructural facilities in existing higher institutions, Brain drain syndrome, poor motivation of the work force, and dearth of quality research. For several decades, United Nations has placed great emphasis on primary and, consequently, tertiary education (Odeleye, 2012). The implication remains that it is pathetic for a country endowed with enormous human and material resources, yet the rate of literacy level is very poor because the educational sector in Nigeria is bedeviled with bottlenecks. It is stunning and truly sad to know that the adult illiteracy rate is still at 74% (Dauda, 2010) and the gross enrollment rate is also low. These enumerated problems represent the foundation for this study which aims at analyzing the effect of higher education and human capital development on national development in Nigeria. Two hypotheses are formulated and tested in this paper in order to ascertain the relationship between higher education and national development; and relationship between higher education and human capital development.

Conceptual Review

Education

Haralambos & Heald (2006) described education as the process of acquiring knowledge, skills, attitudes, interest, abilities, competence and the cultural norms of a society by people and to transmit this life to the coming generations so as to enhance perpetual development of the society. According to Webster dictionary education is defined as the process of educating or teaching. Furthermore, it explained that, to educate means, to develop knowledge, skill, or character of the person. Therefore, education was defined as the means to develop the knowledge, skill, or character of a student. It is also described as the formal process by society to deliberately transmit its accumulated knowledge, skills, habits, customs and values from one generation to the next.

With the above views, quality education entails the promotion of equitable lifelong learning opportunities to see that major progress is made for education access. It is pivotal to note that,



access to education does not necessarily denote quality of education. According to UNICEF (2016), a quality education is defined by five elements, the learner's outside experiences, learning environment, content of education; learning processes, and education outcomes. Learners must be healthy, well-nourished and supported by their families and communities. The learning environment must be safe, healthy and stimulating. Appropriate education content is relevant to the learner and presented in a well-managed classroom.

Quality education is one that provides all learners with capacities they require to become economically productive, develop sustainable livelihoods, contribute to peaceful and democratic societies and enhance individual well-being (Sydney & UNICEF, 2012). The learning outcomes that are required vary according to context but at the end of the basic education cycle must include threshold levels of literacy and numeracy, basic scientific knowledge and life skills including awareness and prevention of disease. Capacity development to improve the quality of teachers and other education stakeholders is of crucial importance in the process. Education possesses the tendency for empowerment; and is a process of strengthening individuals as well as communities so that they gain control over their situations and environments. Quality education is an imperative factor in combating poverty and inequality in society (Obanga, 2009).

Six dimensions to quality education according to Obanga (2009) are:

- Equity – This refers to non-discrimination and equity. Equity in education means that personal and social circumstances such as gender, ethnic origin or family background are not obstacles to achieving educational potential and that all individuals reach at least a basic minimum level of skills.
- Contextualization and Relevance – Quality education cannot be based on a blue print that is applicable in all situations. Solutions and adaptations of education systems must be based on the real needs of a country and /or community.
- Child Friendly Teaching & Learning – Quality education puts the child in the centre and helps him or her to reach his or her full potential. Quality education requires children's active participation.
- Sustainability – Educational change processes often need time to be realized.
- Balanced Approach – Quality education aims at developing a balanced set of capacities of children which they require to become economically productive, develop sustainable



livelihoods, contribute to peaceful and democratic societies and enhance individual well-being.

- Learning Outcomes – After completing a certain level of education, children must have developed a minimum standard of skills. Quality education requires a result oriented approach.

Human Capital Development

According to Son (2010) “human capital refers to the ability and efficiency of people to transform raw materials and capital into goods and services, and the consensus is that these skills can be learned through educational system”. Furthermore, human capital development is seen as a process of increasing human knowledge, enhance skills in vocational and technical education for increased output and encourage creativity of trainees through systematic, sustainable and strategic way (Enyekit, Amaehule & Teerah, 2011).

Human capital development means increasing requisite skills, capacities and capabilities through strategic and systematic ways for the development of the individual and onward transmission to the society. Human capital development corresponds to the development of any stock of knowledge or characteristics the worker has (either innate or acquired) that contributes to his or her productivity. The focal point in human capital and human resources is that people are involved and people are the life-blood of all organizations. Without them, according to Okojie (2014), there is no need for computer systems, compensation plans, mission statements, programmes, or procedures. It is no gainsaying the fact that human capital needs are dynamic and not static. The increasing rate of change that the average worker will need may be at least three new sets of skills during a working life. This points to the rationale for the huge investment in human capital hence, Babalola in Olaniyan and Okemakinde (2008) advanced reasons for the need for human capital development as:

- ❖ The new generation must be given the appropriate parts of knowledge which has already been accumulated by previous generation.
- ❖ New generations need to be taught new existing knowledge which should be used to the development of skills, to introduce new processes and production methods and social services and



- ❖ People must be encouraged to develop entirely new ideas, products, processes and methods through creative approaches and these will go a long way in sustaining the improved education sector.

National Development

The term national development is extremely wide-ranging. It is holistic in approach including all aspects of the life of an individual and the nation. Ogbonnaya (2020) opined that National development is a process of reconstruction and development in various dimensions of a nation and the development of individuals. It includes full-growth and expansion of our industries, agriculture, and education, social, religious, and cultural institutions. Moreover, national development implies the development of a nation as a whole. Bhawna (2016) defined National development as the all-round and balanced development of different aspects and facets of the nation viz. political, economic, social, cultural, scientific, and material.

United Nations Decade Report (2018-2027) has defined “National development as growth plus change. Change in turn is social and cultural, economic, qualitative and quantitative” Broadly, development of the nation encapsulates such parameters as: (i) Development through a planned national economy, (ii) Increase in agricultural production through application of modern technical know-how, (iii) harnessing industrial production, (iv) Development of human resource, (v) Application of science and technology in the production sector, (vi) Provision of mass education and (vi) Provision of various facilities to meet the needs and aspirations of disadvantaged, deprived and poorest of the poor segments of the population (Lawal, and Abe, 2011).

The above assertions on the concept of national development are supported by Todaro, and Smith, (2006) who opined from the modernization paradigm that development is a multidimensional process that involves the sustained elevation of the entire society and social system towards a better or humane life. They identified three basic components for understanding development namely; sustenance, self-esteem, and freedom. In the context of the paper, national development can be described as the overall development or a collective socio-economic, political as well as religious advancement of a country or nation. This is best achieved through development planning, which can be described as the country’s collection of strategies mapped out by the government through a blueprint known as a national development plan.



Nigeria like any sovereign state has had several development plans whose objective is national development.

Development is associated with modernization, material advancement, industrialization scientific and technological progress, the emergence of nuclear energy, electronic and biological revolution, new knowledge about man and the universe. It means urbanization, socio-cultural transformation, mass literacy, vertical and horizontal mobility, employment opportunities and the emergence of specialized and independent occupational roles (Umuru, 2002). A nation is a large community of people sharing common language, common culture, common history and having a common constitution and government. Nigeria is a nation and the national share common characteristics of a nation such as binding principles and policies. The ultimate aim of national development must be to bring about sustained improvement in the well being of the individual and bestow benefits to all self-reliance and mobilization of domestic resources, the transformation of the structure of rural production, the development of small-scale industries and the acquisition of technological and scientific skills.

Impact of Educational Policy on National Development

In Nigeria, the importance of education is reminiscent in its role as a means of understanding, controlling, altering and redesigning of human environment (CBN, 2010). Furthermore, education improves health, productivity and access to paid employment (Okolocha & Ile, 2005) and it has a relationship with economic development. As asserted by Okoroma (2002), “If you see any economy that is not doing well, find out what is spent on education”. Increase in national income and per capita income is a function of education and that differences among nations can better be explained by differences in the endowments of human, rather than physical capital (Onipede, 2003; Salami, 1992). According to Ibrahim (2006) education in Nigeria is more of a public enterprise that has witnessed government complete and dynamic intervention and active participation. It is the perspective of the formulated education policy in Nigeria to exploit education as a mechanism in attaining national development. Education being an instrument of transformation, in Nigeria education policy has been a product of evolution through series of historical developments.

In 1977, the first National Policy on Education in Nigeria was launched. The point of reference of the policy is geared towards self-realization, individual and national efficiency, national unity etc. aimed at achieving social, cultural, economic, political, scientific and technological



development. As at 1985, the objectives of the policy were widened to embrace free primary education. As pointed out by Kusamotu (2007), the policy has witnessed various reviews at different times. An analysis into the fiscal operations and developments of Nigeria revealed that federal government expenditure on education is categorized under the social and community services sector. The implication is that education is an impure public good (Omovo, 2006).

In most third-world countries, improving the widening access to education particularly basic education is a principal objective of their governments. Ubokobong (1993) asserted that education is seen as a right and responsibility to be guaranteed to all generations. However, in Nigeria, there are elements of uncertainty which have beclouded the sector in nominal and actual terms. The higher institutions are over-crowded, poor management structure, and poor infrastructural development. Other obvious features are presence of abandoned capital projects, inadequate funding, and poor conditions of service, among others. The attendant and composite effects are poor quality of teaching and poor quality of products.

As a vital component of human capital development, education is recognized as being vital in increasing the productive capacity of people. Education, in particular at the higher level, contributes directly to economic growth by making human resources more productive and leading to the creation of knowledge, ideas, and technological innovation. The effect of education on technological innovation is direct following the Romer/Solow growth theory framework (Odeleye, 2012).

An investment in education is beneficial to the society, both at micro and macro levels and affects the system both directly and indirectly effect. Education is basic to development and is also regarded as an instrument through which the society can be transformed. As a salient factor in transition programme, education equips human resources with the needed knowledge, skills and competencies, which would make them functional, and contribute to the all-round development of the nation. It does not only help to supply the essential human capital which is a necessary condition for sustainable economic growth but it is also a key to poverty reduction and a major vehicle for promoting equity, fairness and social justice (Todaro, 2007).

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the Human capital theory which rests on the assumption that formal education is highly instrumental and necessary to improve the productive capacity of a population. Emphatically, human capital theorists argue that an educated population is a



productive population. Human capital theory therefore emphasizes on how education increases the productivity and efficiency of workers by increasing the level of cognitive stock of economically productive human capability, which is a product of innate abilities and investment in human beings. Woodhall (1997) asserted that the provision of formal education is seen as an investment in human capital, which proponents of the theory have considered as equally or even more worthwhile than that of physical capital. Human Capital Theory posits that investment in human capital will lead to greater economic outputs however the validity of the theory is sometimes hard to prove and contradictory. In the past, economic strength was largely dependent on tangible physical assets such as land, factories and equipment. Labor was a necessary component, but increases in the value of the business came from investment in capital equipment. Modern economists seem to concur that education and health care are the key to improving human capital and ultimately increasing the economic outputs of the nation (Becker 1993).

In an emerging economy, hard tangible assets may not be as important as investing in human capital. Thomas Friedman, in his wildly successful book, *The World is Flat* 2007, wrote extensively about the importance of education in the new global knowledge economy. Friedman, not to be confused with the famous economist Milton Friedman, is a journalist. His popular book has exposed millions of people to human capital theory. The term itself is not introduced, but evidence as to why people and education (human capital) are vital to a nation's economic success, is a common reoccurring theme in the book.

Human Capital Theory stresses the significance of education and training as the key to participation in the new global economy. In one of its recent reports, the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), for example, claims that the radical changes to the public and private sectors of the economy introduced over recent years in response to globalization will be severe and disturbing to many established values and procedures. In another report it explains internationalism in higher education as a component of globalization. The OECD believes that internationalism should be seen as an imperative in 21st Century capitalism. This form of capitalism is based on investment in financial markets rather than in manufacturing of commodities, thus requiring dependence on electronic technology. The OECD also boldly asserts that internationalism is a means to improve the quality of education. In keeping with human capital theory, it has been argued that the overall economic performance of the OECD



countries is increasingly more directly based upon their knowledge stock and their learning capabilities. Clearly, the OECD is attempting to produce a new role for education in terms of human capital subject required in globalized institutions.

The success of any nation in terms of human development is largely dependent upon the physical and human capital stock. Thus, recent social research focuses on the behavioral sciences of humanity in relation to economic productivity. Generally, human capital represents the assets each individual develops to enhance economic productivity. Further, human capital is concerned with the wholesome adoption of the policies of education and development. In short, the human capital theorists argue that an educated population is a productive population. Human capital theory emphasizes how education increases the productivity and efficiency of workers by increasing the level of cognitive stock of economically productive human capability, which is a product of innate abilities and investment in human beings. The provision of formal education is seen as a productive investment in human capital, which the proponents of the theory have considered as equally or even more equally worthwhile than that of physical capital.

Fagerlind & Saha (1997) posit that human capital theory provides a basic justification for large public expenditure on education both in developing and developed nations. The theory is consistent with the ideologies of democracy and liberal progression found in most western societies. Its appeal was based upon the presumed economic return of investment in education at both the macro and micro levels. Efforts to promote investment in human capital were seen to result in rapid economic growth for society. For individuals, such investment was seen to provide returns in the form of individual economic success and achievement. Most economists agree that it is human resources of nation, not its capital nor its material resources, which ultimately determine the character and pace of its economic and social development. Human resources constitute the ultimate basis of the wealth of nations. Capital and natural resources are passive factors of production, human beings are the active agencies who accumulate capital, exploit natural resources, build social, economic, and political organizations, and carry forward national development.

Applying Human Capital Theory to Educational System in order to enhance human development in the society, it is necessary by such means, productivity is enhanced and sustained based on an increased and diversified labor force. Babalola (2003) asserts that the contribution of education to economic growth and development occurs through its ability to increase the productivity of an



existing labor force in various ways. Education plays a great and significant role in the economy of a nation; thus, educational expenditures are found to constitute a form of investment. This augments individuals' human capital and leads to greater output for society and enhanced earnings for the individual worker. It increases their chances of employment in the labor market, and allows them to reap pecuniary and non-pecuniary returns and gives them opportunities for job mobility. Education is a source of economic growth and development only if it is anti-traditional to the extent that it liberates, stimulates, and informs the individual and teaches him how and why to make demands.

Methodology

This study adopted a survey research design and the targeted population was two hundred and eighty five (285) academic staff of Nigerian Defence Academy, Kaduna. A sample size of two hundred (200) academic staff of the academy consists of fifty (50) respondents each from four faculties namely Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Faculty of Sciences, Faculty of Military Science; and Faculty of Management Science. Purposive sampling technique was adopted in obtaining the sample size. Out of the 200 questionnaires administered 180 (representing 90% return rate) were returned and valid for the study.

Data Analysis and Discussion of Findings

The study tested two hypotheses using Pearson product moment correlation coefficient at 0.05 level of significance and the results are presented below.

Test of Hypothesis One: There is no relationship between Higher Education and National Development.

Correlations

		Higher Education	National Development
Higher Education	Pearson Correlation	1	.632**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	180	180
National Development	Pearson Correlation	.632**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	180	180

** Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).



The result of test of hypothesis one indicates that there is a positive relationship between higher education and national development. That is ($r = .632, n = 180, p .000 < .0005$); the implication is that higher education has a positive and significant relationship with national development. We can therefore reject the null hypothesis.

The result of this finding is supported with the study of Bloom, Canning & Chan (2006) who found out that expanding tertiary education aids technological catch-up and help maximize economic output which positively affects national development. This assume that technological expansion that helps boost production capacities of a country is being aided by the level of the skilled human capital a country possess.

Test of Hypothesis Two: There is no relationship between higher education and human capital development in Nigeria.

Correlations

		Higher Education	National Development
Higher Education	Pearson Correlation	1	.844**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	180	180
Human Capital Development	Pearson Correlation	.844**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	180	180

** Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

In Hypothesis two, the result indicates that there is a positive relationship between higher education and human capital development. That is ($r = .844, n = 180, p .000 < .005$); the implication is that higher education has a positive, robust relationship with human capital development. We can therefore, reject the null hypothesis.

The finding of this study is supported by the findings of Eigbiremolen & Anaduaka (2014) they found that human capital development is requisite in the achievement of viable economic growth in Nigeria. They further posited that, government and policy makers should make concerted and sincere efforts in building and developing human capacity through adequate educational funding across all levels. Additionally, tertiary education is very significant for developing human resources of any nation (Fapohunda, 2012; Darwish, 2014). It is important to understand that a country that wants to achieve sustainable development must develop her human capital who is her greatest asset must boost its funding for the educational sector.



Conclusion

Conclusively, this study posits that higher education is indispensable for the development of human capital that has the capability to transform an economy significantly and assists the country compete with others emerging economies. The study further noted that higher education is useful in shaping the intensity of human capital development in Nigeria. There is a perceptible correlation between higher education and national development of a country vis-à-vis human capital development. In addition, apt and well articulated government policies particularly on education help reposition the national and human capital development. When factors that enhance higher education are ensured, it is beneficial to the humans and leads to increased productivity in the economy.

Recommendations

In line with the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made: firstly, in the area of higher education and national development; the Nigerian government must bridge the gap that exists between the crisis saturated university system and the students' who will become the national developers, change exponents and development crusaders. Government needs to allocate more resources to the capital intensive subdivision of education such as; building of classrooms and laboratories, purchase of teaching aids etc. as these will help in enhancing knowledge, increased productivity and by implication promoting national growth. Secondly, in the area of higher education and human capital development, it is important for the Nigerian government at large to concentrate on how to develop and utilize maximally the capacities and capabilities of its valuable assets which are its human resource. Higher education must be adequately funded and equipped with the latest learning technologies so the students' can compete in the globalizing world. Human capital makes things happen effectively and efficiently in the society, so their development must not be taken with levity.

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