

Education and Employment as Catalyst for Nigeria's Future Leadership

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Abstract

Over the years, leadership problem in Nigeria has assumed a gruesome dimension. Corruption has been on the increase whilst insensitivity of government to the plight of the common man has almost become habitual. Different leaders have emerged who tried their hands on the problem of the country without any success. Is it the system of government that is faulty or the people carrying out the governance that have problem? These challenges recently prompted the Federal Government to set up a National Conference with the mandate to find solution to some of these issues. In all these, lack of education for the populace together with unemployment are the twin problems currently bedeviling this country as a nation and they both portend danger for the future of our country. Despite constitutional provisions that the government shall provide free, compulsory, universal primary education, as well as free university education, and ensure that all citizens have the opportunity for securing means of livelihood, as well as adequate opportunity to secure suitable employment, both education and employment are still unattainable mirage. This paper, therefore, investigates the government modality for providing education and employment for the people especially given the provisions made for them under Chapter 2 of the 1999 Constitution. Methodology is derived from interview conducted for lecturers, lawyers, traditional/religious leaders and extant literature. Efforts to arrest the inept and corrupt leadership in the country would require a robust approach to governance concerning education and employment.

Introduction

Generally, the constitution of a country identifies some of the basic questions confronting the country. The issues become clearer if the country adopts a written constitution, in which case matters affecting its critical sectors are written down in black and white for everyone to see. Having

identified the problems, the measures and styles of tackling them become the headache of the country's leadership. Two major issues that are easily overlooked and ignored now stand out as potential danger for the future of Nigerian leadership and, if not properly handled, they are likely to cause the country many untold hardships in the near future.

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These are education of the millions of the youths of the country and provision of employment for this hapless group. These two important factors are like time bomb merely waiting for the right time to explode unless prompt and adequate measures are taken to address the situation now. Writing about the importance of education (Eso, 2008:115) submits that education does not end with going through primary, secondary or even tertiary learning and neither does it end with occupying the post of presidency of the nation, governorship, top legislative offices nor even top judicial offices in the nation. He further states that education does not end with being in the Ivory Tower *or primus in situ*, in any situation, economic, educational, social or political. To him, education consists of knowing the importance of knowing one's worth, the potentiality of one and the constraints preventing the smooth operation of one's educational knowledge. This is where the problem of the Nigerian youths comes in. One may ask the question: what are those constraints preventing the smooth operation of the educational knowledge of these teeming youths? The answer to this question is not difficult to find at all. The major constraint is unemployment. It is the inability of these youths to be gainfully employed after their education that prevents them from putting to use that which they have acquired over the years. According to Calvocoressi (2009:759), a strong economy is the prime element in political power and in the public mood while economic weakness and inequality promote disorder. What else can better constitute a stronger economy than one that is booming and in which the market forces are interacting

smoothly and the youths of a nation are gainfully employed. Otherwise, the inequality which such economy will breed will bring about poverty, violence and general instability in the polity.

Getting the Youth Educated

Traditionally, the youth are considered to be of little importance in the scheme of things in the Nigerian society; even, in matters that concern them. It is often assumed that their parents are in a position to take decisions for them and so they have very little to contribute even where their own future is concerned. According to Dodo (2012:183), societies the world-over seem to overlook the fact that these ignored youth also have concerns and interest that affect their tomorrow and determine the kind of adults they can be before they show their leadership styles. Educating the youth is, therefore, an arduous task for the parents on the one hand and the Government on the other.

According to UNICEF, Nigeria currently has the highest number of children without education in the world (Akinloye, 2014:3). Going by UNICEF assessment, almost one of every three primary-school aged and one in four secondary-school age children is not enrolled, while in many states, girls are twice as likely to be out of school as boys. Therefore, the organisation's programmes in Nigeria focus on the problems of violence and abuse against children in schools and work to address the issue of girls' education and out-of-school children. The case of two hundred and thirty-four secondary school girls abducted and whisked away by Boko Haram at Chibok in April 2014, aside from being a

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blatant derogation from their human rights, has totally disorganised whatever future arrangements that have been made concerning their education. Though the issue is causing a lot of protest all over the country presently (Olokor, Oluwole, Makinde and Nwogu, 2014:42), the future of these youth is at stake and Nigeria as a country should take the appropriate steps to find the girls and ensure their future education.

Making a historical survey of the educational training of Nigerian youths by the Government, one will discover that way back in the 1950s the Western Regional Government educational policy was aimed at providing free primary education for the children. This, coupled with the introduction of other infrastructural facilities, was seen as a revolutionary move that aided the rapid development and social transformation of Western region. After this came the scholarship scheme introduced by the Federal Government between 1958 and 1962. It was meant for all Nigerian youths and it certainly changed the educational horizon of the students' population of our country. The military interregnum that followed changed the face of educational policy of the country as there was a half-hearted effort to follow up existing policy of the federal government. The second Republic ushered in the free primary and secondary education programme offered by the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) as its policy and it covered the five States in the Western parts of Nigeria (Lagos, Ogun, Bendel, Ondo and Oyo (LOBOO) States). It further created a wide gap of social and economic advancement between the LOBOO States and the remaining States of the

Federation. The Babangida administration that came up between 1985 and 1993 introduced the 6-3-3-4 educational system which made formal and vocational education compulsory for Nigerian children. Eventually, the Obasanjo administration that ruled the country from 1976 to 1978 came up with the Universal Basic Education for the first nine years through primary and junior secondary school for Nigerian children.

The result of all this is the unbalanced nature of educational development of different zones of the country which could be observed in what Pearse (2014:69) categorised as the uneven development of the regions:

In 1952, Western region had 10.7 per cent holders of Standard Two to Standard Four. Eastern region had 10.2 per cent while Northern region recorded 4.7 per cent. The south had 3,473 primary schools while there were 2,080 of such schools in the North; the South had about 176 secondary schools as against a paltry 18 secondary schools in the North.

Uwasomba (2014:69), however, feels that the disclosure of UNICEF that over 10 million Nigerian Students are out of school shows the irresponsible leadership the country is presently saddled with. He laments the situation, stating that the scenario once again brings to the fore the question of leadership in Nigeria:

Every now and then, the Academic Staff Union of Universities and other unions in the education sector embark on one form of strike or the other to compel government to pay attention to education. It is not surprising that UNICEF is reminding us that over 10 million of our children are out of school. It is also a reflection of the insurgency that the

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country is experiencing. The scenario once again bring to the fore the question of leadership in Nigeria.

Thus, it is the basic responsibility of the leadership of the country to give the youth sufficient educational training which will equip them for the task ahead; the task of assuming the mantle of new leadership of the country after the exit of the present set of leaders. Once this responsibility is abandoned and the youths are left uncared for, the nation should be ready to face the consequence as the youths will turn out to become thugs, robbers and miscreants who disturb the peace and comfort of the people. The effect of this on the security situation of the country cannot be over emphasised and this was what Maxwell (2014) thought when he explained:

We need to find a lasting solution to the problem so that the government will come to the aid of students who are out of school. Government needs to provide free education. The major problem most of the students are facing is as a result of financial distress. Many of the parents are not financially buoyant enough to send them to school. This particular set-back will have a lot of implication on the security issue of the country. And in Nigeria today, the major problem we are facing is security. An idle hand is the devil's workshop. These children must be engaged so that they won't engage in criminal activity. They need to be educated so that they will become useful members of the society. Likewise, the issue of leadership has a lot of implications because children are leaders of tomorrow. I once read a book which said that independence was not handed over to the illiterates, rather, it was handed over to the literates and if the children are going to be the leaders of tomorrow they need to be educated; they need to be informed so that they won't be deformed. They need to

be enlightened on how the future of the country can be secured.

Fakeye (2014) also shared the same sentiment as he believed that the current crops of Nigerian leaders would not have anybody to hand over the mantle of leadership to. He believed that the normal saying that 'the children are the leaders of tomorrow' would not materialise. He further stated that there should be clamour for movement away from theoretical education to more practical oriented education. According to him, that was why our curriculum kept changing from the old 6-5-4 system which mainly comprised theoretical subjects to the 6-3-3-4 and now to the current 9-3-4. In order to bridge the gap so that there will be less clamour for white-collar jobs among our school leavers, he finally concluded, the curriculum was reduced to a few vocational subjects from primary to secondary school level. While the curriculum was alright, he lamented, the implementation was the problem.

Nigerian Youth Unemployment and Idleness

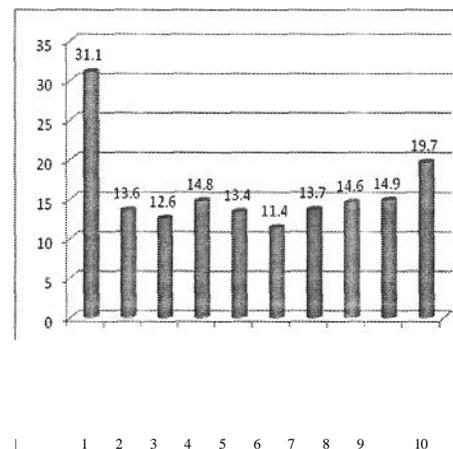
According to International Labour Organisation (ILO), the unemployed are the number of economically active population who are without work but are available for and seeking work, including people who have lost their jobs and those who have voluntarily left work (World Bank, 1998:63). Adebayo (1999) further submits that unemployment exists when members of the labour force wish to work but cannot get jobs. Youth unemployment could, therefore, be defined as the totality of youth in a country, given their various educational backgrounds, who

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are available for work but could not get work. Given the lack of sufficient employment opportunities in the formal sector, young people may be compelled to engage in casual and other unorthodox sources of livelihood, thus leading to underemployment (Echebiri, 2005; Gibb and Gorge, 1990; Onah, 2001). The unemployed are the individuals with no work, but are looking for work at a given time. Unemployment is a global trend, but it occurs mostly in developing countries of the world, with attendant social, economic, political, and psychological consequences. Thus, massive youth unemployment in any country is an indication of far more complex problem (Okafor, 2001:363). In absolute terms, it is estimated that there are about 122 million youths on the African continent (Echebiri, 2005; Chigunta, 2002). A vast percentage of these youths, however, are unemployed and population growth projections into the 21st century indicated that the proportion of youths, in relation to the overall population, will continue to grow.

Coming down to Nigeria, it is not easy to accurately estimate the unemployment rate in the country. According to Oyebade (2003), however, unemployment in Nigeria can be grouped into two categories. The first set is the older unemployed who lost their jobs through retrenchment, redundancy, or bankruptcy; while the second group is the younger unemployed, most of whom have never been employed. Moreover, Awogbenle and Iwuamadi (2010) indicated that statistics from the Manpower Board and the Federal Bureau of Statistics showed that Nigeria has a youth population of 80 million, which represents 60 percent of the total population

of the country. They added that 64 million or 80 percent of them are unemployed, while 1.6 million or 2 percent are under-employed. Figures from the National Bureau of Statistics (2009:238; 2010:2) show that the national unemployment rate for Nigeria between 2000 and 2009 was high. Between these periods, the unemployed youths in the country constituted 31.1 percent in 2000; 13.6 percent in 2001; 12.6 percent in 2002; 14.8 percent in 2003; 13.4 percent in 2004; 11.4 percent in 2005; 13.7 percent in 2006; 14.6 percent in 2007; 14.9 percent in 2008; and 19.7 percent in 2009.



(1-10 represent Years 2000-2009)

Source: National Bureau of Statistics 2009.

Even, as the Central Bank of Nigeria made us to understand, in Nigeria, there was the issue of youth and unemployment, 70 percent of the 80 million youths in Nigeria were either unemployed or underemployed. We were all witnesses to what happened recently during the immigration recruitment exercise and this was simply because 80 per cent of the Nigerian youth were unemployed (Nnodim, 2014:32). Again, the age group, education group and sex data as provided by the National

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Bureau of Statistics (2010:3) revealed that as at March, 2009 in Nigeria, for person between the ages of 15 and 24 years, 41.6 percent were unemployed. For those between 25 and 44 years, 17 percent were unemployed. Youths with primary education that were unemployed were 14.8 percent while for those with secondary education that were unemployed, the figure was 23.8 percent. Further, those with post secondary school education that were unemployed amounted to 21.3 percent. Those who never attended school and those with less than primary school education recorded 21.0 percent and 22.3 percent unemployment rate, respectively. The sex distribution showed that the male constituted 17.0 percent while female constituted 23.3 percent. The main aim of the above data is to show that the age range of the unemployed is constituted by the most vibrant population of the country otherwise known as youths. This, of course, has serious implications for the future leadership of the country in that these vibrant youths may direct their God-given talents to unjust causes that would produce bad future leaders for the country.

Theoretical Context and the Responsibility to Provide Education and Employment in Nigeria

As worrisome as the problem of lack of education and employment for our youths is, the question of who is responsible for this, that is, who should be held responsible for the failure of Nigerian youths to get proper education and eventual employment remains unresolved. First, it is the duty of the parents to train their children, but in the event of the inability of the parents to do so due to ill-

health, unemployment and the like, then the duty falls on the state to take over the burden. This is because the welfare of the citizens is of paramount importance to the state, and this is supported by the theory of the Welfare State which this paper is adopting as a guide. The theory argues that a welfare state is one that provides a wide range of social amenities for its citizens. T. W. Kent who propounds this theory goes on to say that the primary purpose of a state is to give the citizenry security but the welfare state undertakes to help him if he loses his ordinary source of income. According to Hobman, the welfare state is a compromise between communism on the one hand and unbridled individualism on the other. He believes that in spite of all its imperfections, the welfare state sets a pattern for any humane and progressive society. Aggregating his views, the welfare state guarantees a minimum standard of subsistence without removing incentives to private enterprise, and it brings about a limited redistribution of income by means of graduated high taxation. Yet it does not pretend to establish economic equality among its citizen. All are assured of adequate help in case of need, whether the need is due to illness, old age, unemployment or any other cause (Asirvatham and Mishra, 2009:161).

This theory is further fortified by the Frustration-Aggression theory developed by John Dollard and his research associates in 1939 as expanded and modified by other scholars like Leonard Berkowitz in 1962. The main explanation provided by this theory is that aggression is not just undertaken as a natural reaction or an instinct as biological theorists assume, but that it is the outcome

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or frustration. A situation where the legitimate desires of an individual or by the indirect consequence of the way the society treats such a person, this may lead the individual to express his anger through violence that will be directed at those he holds responsible or the people who are directly or indirectly related to them.

It is on this account that the Nigerian state appears to have failed its citizens for its inability to provide education for the teeming population of the youths whose parents suffer the inability to provide education for their wards and employment for the few who have struggled to get themselves educated. Going by the provision of Section 17 (3) of the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria, the State is enjoined to direct its policy towards ensuring that:

- (a) All citizens, without discrimination on any group whatsoever, have the opportunity for securing adequate means of livelihood as well as adequate opportunity to secure suitable employment.

Similarly, Section 18 (1) of the same Constitution states that the Government shall direct its policy towards ensuring that there are adequate educational opportunities at all levels. The same section goes on to say in subsection (3) that Government shall strive to eradicate illiteracy; and to this end Government shall as and when practicable provide:

- (a) Free, compulsory and universal primary education;
- (b) Free university education; and
- (c) Free adult literacy programme.

These sacred duties are directly put on the shoulder of the Government, but it has obviously been ignoring the responsibility. The phrase "as and when practicable" suggests the non-readiness of the government to assume the responsibility of educating the youths. These provisions of the Constitution are however, not justiceable. In ordinary parlance, it means that the provisions cannot be enforced in the law court. Barrister Kajopaiye, an Ibadan-based legal practitioner, laments the provision which states that the law cannot be enforced in the Court of Law and likens it to an ouster clause contained in a legislative enactment. Should we then cross our fingers and watch as the system deteriorates further? No, this is an abuse of the human rights of the citizenry which should be curbed without undue delay.

Suggested Remedy For the Situation

Though the municipal court would seem to be incapacitated as its powers and jurisdiction have been circumscribed by the Constitutional provision of "non-justiciability", this cannot be said of some international instruments to which Nigeria is signatory. Therefore, a peep at the African Charter of Human and Peoples' Rights will, probably, beam a ray of hope on the issue, as Nigeria is certainly a signatory to it. Thus, Articles 15 and 17 of the African Charter provide that:

Article 15

Every individual shall have the right to work under equitable and satisfactory conditions, and shall receive equal pay for equal work.

Article 17

Every individual shall have the right to education.

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Now, it is noteworthy that the Court of Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has held in the recent case of *SERAP v. Federal Republic of Nigeria* that the sources of Law that the Court takes into consideration in performing its mandate of protecting Human Rights are not the Constitutions of Member States, but rather the international instruments to which these States voluntarily bound themselves at the international level, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. The Court went further to state that as held by the jurisprudence of that Court, in its Ruling of October 27, 2009 *SERAP v. Federal Republic of Nigeria and Universal Basic Education Commission*, once the concerned right for which the protection is sought before the Court is enshrined in an international instrument that is binding on Member State, the domestic legislation of that State cannot prevail on the treaty or covenant, even if it is its own Constitution. Consequently, any citizen of Nigeria can approach the Court of Economic Community of West African States or the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights to enforce his rights under Articles 15 and 17 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights in order to drive home the point.

Conclusion

By and large, the question of enforcement of the fundamental rights to education and employment of the citizens is so crucial to

the socio-economic development of the country that the nation has to consider its implementation. Even, the security implication of Government's failure to implement it clearly touches on the future leadership of the country as the breeding of stark illiterates as replacement for the present crops of leaders in the country is a time-bomb which can explode unexpectedly. The students who fail to go to school today may, probably, become the drug barons, armed robbers, prostitutes, kidnappers and insurgents tomorrow. Where then is the future of the country? Of importance again, is the question of succession plan for the present crop of leaders in government. To whom do they hand over the mantle of leadership? It is high time we started having a rethink. A stitch in time saves nine.

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