**THE RACE FOR THE ACHIEVEMENT OF EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA: A REALITY OR MIRAGE?**

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**ABSTRACT**

*Education is conceived as the bedrock, clue and ingredient for attaining national development of any given society. Since independence, Nigeria has been working towards achieving its set educational objectives hoped to take the country to a greater height. The paper reviewed educational objectives, and glanced at some contemporary challenges and developments in education, economy and politics in comparison with other developing and developed countries as indicators of development and underdevelopment. It is obvious from the discourse, that Nigeria is still far from the achievement of its educational goals as the expected national developments are still a mirage not reality. It is recommended among others that education should be given much concern and priority by the Nigerian governments and other stakeholders as to facilitate the realization of the national development sooner.*

**Keywords**: Educational objectives, Corruption Index, GDP, national development, unemployment

**Introduction**

National development has been the central target of every nation of the world from time immemorial. Developments in all spheres of life are discovered to be achievable by tremendous investments in education. It is when citizens are literate with varied knowledge and skills that per capita income will be highly realized which consequently underscores great boast in national development. Thus, education in the past and present has been considered as the bedrock and ingredient for scientific, technological, economic, social and political developments without which such development are not realizable.

Nigeria as a great nation has been struggling with all efforts to enhance its national development right from the independence in 1960. As a victim of colonization, it took steps to realize the drawbacks of imperial education system given to Nigerians for centuries which were investigated by several commissions, most prominent of them was the commission of inquiry called Ashby Commission in 1959. From the reports of the commission, several steps where carried out in restructuring the national objectives to suit the need of Nigerians which included redesign of the curriculum, massive enrollment of Nigerians in tertiary education such as University of Nsukka in 1960, University of Ife, Ile Ife in 1962, and National Manpower Board (NMB) among others (The Elites, 2017). The transformation was evident and productive despite the political disrupt masterminded by the military intervention for some decades which contributed in the slow pace of national development of the country. Between 1974 to 1977, National Policy on Education was enacted and spelt out the main educational objective capable of leading the country to the target national development.

**Is Nigeria on the right Track to achieve the Set Educational Objectives?**

As a developing nation, Nigeria set to achieve five main educational objectives that will enhance the attainment of national development. The drafting of the set objectives was an aftermath of some activities which include the recommendations of some commissions like Ashby Commission in 1959 and the enactment of National Policy on Education (NPE) in 1977. According to the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014), the objectives were as follow:

1. Free and democratic society,
2. Just and egalitarian society
3. United, strong and self-reliant nation,
4. Great and dynamic economy and
5. Land full of bright and equal opportunities for all citizens.

Summarily, Shuaibu and Shaibu (2020) explained the objective in a simplified manner. The authors explained the first objective, free and democratic society as the one in which human rights and the rule of law are highly emphasized and implemented. For example, civil rights, which encompasses freedom to participate in politics; political rights denoting freedom of speech, movement; and lastly social rights denoting having access to the security and welfare for better living. Second, just and egalitarian society means a society in which people are expected to enjoy justice and equity in their daily life without any discrimination based on social or economic status. The third objective was make Nigeria a united, strong and self-reliant nation. Simply, put it entails a nation which has several source of income, human and natural capable of making it economically strong without depending on any economic support in terms of loans or grants from the other countries of the world.

The forth objective was to make Nigeria a great country with dynamic economy, which means a country with various or diverse wealth capable of taking care of its citizens. Not the type of a country that relies on a single or very few resources to generate income. Lastly, Nigeria was targeted to become a country of bright and equal opportunities for all citizens regardless of their religious, tribal, regional, social and economic status. That is nation where everyone gets access to the wealth, education, employment, health facilities and others without any prejudice.

Despite the time and efforts vested on the realization of these objectives, can one assert that Nigeria fully on the track in the achievement of these objectives, especially taking cognizance of some of the developments and challenges it experience? In order to have a picture of the status of the level of the achievement of these objectives, we deemed it necessary to explore some of the reported developments and challenges recorded so far about Nigeria.

**Table 1: World Global Peace Ranking of Nigeria**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| SN | SAFEST COUNRIES IN AFRICA | World Rank | Other countries | World Rank |
| 1 | Mauritius | 28th | Iceland | 1st |
| 2 | Ghana | 40th | New Zealand | 2nd |
| 3 | Gambia | 45th | Ireland | 3rd |
| 4 | Sierra Leone | 50th | Denmark | 4th |
| 5 | Equatorial Guinea | 59th | Austria | 5th |
| 6 | Malawi | 65th | Portugal | 6th |
| 7 | Senegal | 70th | Slovenia | 7th |
| 8 | Morocco | 74th | Czechia | 8th |
| 9 | Rwanda | 72th | Singapore | 9th |
| 10 | **Nigeria** | **143th** | Japan | 10th |

Source: Punch.com, 2023

In Africa, it only South Sudan that is lower than Nigeria ranking the 159th in the world. Some indicators used in the Global Peace Ranking are level of perceived criminality in society, number of internal security officers and police per 100,000 people.; number of homicides per 100,000 people; the number of jailed population per 100,000, ease of access to small arms and light weapons; level or organized conflicts and terrorism among other. Just checking one indicator, which is the security ratio, the United Nations recommends one police to 450 citizens in a country, in Nigeria we have close to 200,000,000 citizens with 300,000 police capacity, indicating that we have 1:666 ratio in the presence of shortage of ammunition. Each policeman is expected to protect 666 persons in Nigeria provided all security gadgets are available.

**Table 2: Employment Rate of Nigeria**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **YEAR** | **UNEMPLOYMENT RATE (%)** |
| 2022 | 32.5 |
| 2021 | 9.79 |
| 2020 | 9.71 |
| 2019 | 8.53 |
| 2018 | 8.45 |
| 2017 | 8.39 |
| 2016 | 7.06 |

Source: macrotrends.com

From the table above, it revealed that from ten years ago, Nigeria experienced constant increase in the unemployment rate until in 2022 when it skyrocketed to 32.5 percent. In fact, this is an alarming condition which unveils the fact that Nigeria is nowhere to be found in terms of industrialization that gives hydra-headed employment opportunities to the population. Many Nigerians rely on civil service as a job which is over-stretched due to the pressure of the population and the absence or shortage of industries and manufactories that renders massive employment in any given nation

**Challenges in Nigeria Education Sector**

Nigeria for almost a century experiences a manifold of educational challenges that hinders the targeted growth and development. Researchers reported several challenges eroding the education sector in Nigeria over the time. The challenges ranges from poor funding, shortage of teachers, poor welfare, decay in infrastructure, complex curricula among others (Boyi,, 2014).The most bedeviling of all challenges is the poor funding which leads to several setbacks in the sector. Nigerian government have been inattentive to the implementation of UNESCO recommendation of 15-20% allocation to education sector of member countries. The analysis of Nigeria budget allocation is highlighted below:

**Table 3: Nigeria Allocation to Education from 2016-2023**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **YEAR** | **AMOUNT IN NAIRA** | **PERCENT** |
| 2023 | 108 Trillion | 8.8 |
| 2022 | 923.79 Billion | 5c.4 |
| 2021 | 742.52 Billion | 5.6 |
| 2020 | 686.82 Billion | 6.5 |
| 2019 | 745.53 Billion | 8.4 |
| 2018 | 651.53 Billion | 7.1 |
| 2017 | 448.44 Billion | 6.1 |
| 2016 | 480.28 Billion | 7.9 |

Source: dataphyte.com (2023)

Table 3 presents the consistent increase in the government annual subventive to education sector in the past ten years. It was 480.28 Billion in 2016, and it appreciated to 108 Trillion in 2023, which is great and tremendous achievement. Nonetheless, still the percentage is 8.8 percent of the annual budget which is still behind the UNESCO recommendation.

Poor budget allocation is the cause of almost all evils in education sector. As result of poor allocation, there was poor teachers and lecturers’ salaries and allowance, inadequate learning institutions, decay in infrastructure, shortage of teaching and learning resources which commutative effects affect the quality education, and consequently undermines the achievement of national development in Nigeria. For example, the constant strike of the Academic Staff Union of Nigeria (ASUU) in Nigeria was in part characterized by the poor government attitude towards education and teachers for decades in Nigeria which has been causing great setbacks to education.

Another devastating challenge in education sector of Nigeria is corruption. Nigeria has been suffering from the effects of corrupt practices that engulf the entire system for several decades. Nigeria’s current 154 ranking out of 180 countries in the 2021 Corruption Perceptions Index is a drop of 149 in the 2020 index. Some unscrupulous individuals divert funds to their personal gains leaving the public education poorly funded. Many contracts are reportedly mismanaged or poorly done which tremendously contributed to the decay in infrastructure and shortage of facilities.

**Poverty Rate in Nigeria as a Strong Economy Country**

Nigeria as giant of Africa with a very high Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of 44.54 Billion in 2021 as reported by Statista (2021), ironically experiences terrible poverty amongst its citizens. The survey sampled over 56,000 households across the 36 states of Nigeria and the FCT According to the highlights of the 2022 Multidimensional Poverty Index survey of National Bureau of Statistics (2023), 63% of persons living within Nigeria (133 million people) are multidimensional (that is from different angles) poor. The National MPI is 0.257, indicating that poor people in Nigeria experience just over one-quarter of all possible deprivations. Furthermore, according to the reports, 65% of the poor (roughly 86 million people) live in the Northern Nigeria, while 35% (nearly 47 million) live in the Southern Nigeria. Poverty levels across States vary significantly, with the incidence of multidimensional poverty ranging from a low of 27% in Ondo to a high of 91% in Sokoto. Devastatingly, in the six geo-political zones, child MPI revealed a higher poverty in the North-East and North-West with 90% of children poor, and lower poverty in the South-East (74% poor children) and 65.1% poor children in the South-West. In the tail end of the report, it was prescribed that the incidence of Child MPI is above 50% in all States and greater than 95% in Bayelsa, Gombe, Kebbi and Sokoto states of Nigeria.

**Our Position**

From the facts and figures analyzed in this paper, we stand to assert that Nigeria is parallel to the attainment of its educational objectives capable of leading the country to the national development expected of every nation. The dwindling, slow-pace and unsatisfactory developments in Nigeria signify that we are not even close to fifty percent of the

achievement of the long awaiting educational objectives. We are not yet in free and democratic society just and egalitarian society, united, strong and self-reliant nation, country with great and dynamic economy and not yet in land full of bright and equal opportunities for all citizens. More efforts needed.

**Conclusion**

It is evident from the previous analysis that Nigeria is still lagging behind as far as national development is concerned, considering the long period of time taken and the resources invested for the achievement of educational objectives. With all the indices analyzed, scientific, technological, economic, social and political developments are still far from the position of Nigeria provided the situation remains as it is.

**Recommendations**

Based on this discourse, the researchers recommend the following:

1. The Nigeria Federal Government should as a matter of importance increase and substantiate budget allocation to education as recommended by UNESCO
2. More drastic indiscriminate measure be taken on corrupt practices in education
3. Strict monitoring of policies and budget implementation and as well, projects execution is highly recommended
4. Teachers and lecturers be given high priority in terms of welfare in civil service in order to motivate them improve quality teaching in learning institutions
5. Nigeria should emulate other developed countries in realizing its national development
6. More strategic programmes should be put in place as to alleviate poverty and improve the standard of living in the country
7. Government should put more effort to resuscitate industrialization in Nigeria which is a lost glory.

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