

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION AND HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT: IMPLICATIONS FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

This paper examined university education and human resources development: university roles and implications for development. It looked at the concept of human capital theory, human resources and human resource development. This paper further highlighted the roles of the university in human resources development. Some of the roles as identified in the study are: a major source in the provision of human capital through quality training and helping in increasing the productive capacity of an employee. This paper also made some recommendations based on the reviewed literature, the state of the art and implications of the study. Some of the recommendations were that there should be an increased budgetary allocation to universities and more emphasis should be placed on practical in the universities.

Keywords: University Education; Human Resources Development; National Development; Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

The essence of every nation's education plan is to make her education system more relevant. One of these areas of relevance it aims at achieving is the generation of manpower needed to drive the nation's economy. Education to the economist is both a consumer and capital good because it offers utility to a consumer and also serves as an input into the production of other goods and services. As a capital good, education can be used to develop the human resources necessary for economic and social transformation. The focus on education as a capital good relates to the concept of human capital (resources) which emphasizes that the development of skills is an important factor in production activities (Olaniyan & Okemakinde, 2008). In this regard, the level of a nation's human resources is a function of their education system. Given the academic ladder of Nigeria education system, university education is the highest rung upon which this is achieved in totality. No wonder the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004:34) in defining tertiary education stated that one of the goals of tertiary (university) education is "to contribute to national development through high level manpower training".

Sriyan (1997) is of the view that education and training are the primary systems by which the human capital of a nation is preserved and increased. From an economic-stand point, higher standards in the schools are the equivalent of competitiveness. The basis of the above assertion is hinged on the Human Capital thesis. This thesis is premised on the notion that formal education has a positive relationship with the productive capacity of an individual and a nation; and the more educated an individual or a nation is, the more productive he/she is. Little wonder in the approaches to educational planning, the Manpower Approach assumes that:

1. various types of skills are required for productivity

2. it is true that it is education (university/tertiary) education that produces the required skills, etc.

The pace at which university education and training system transmits knowledge and skills of the requisite quality directly affects the pace of development. Countries that do not plan now to address not only the current human resources problems but also those of infrastructure conducive for to future knowledge work and workers through university education, will find out that the development gap between them and those that do will continue to widen as is the case in the present Nigeria. Bringing Nigeria to the fore on the issue of university education and human resources development, Harry (2010:2) asserts that:

Nigeria state has not demonstrated serious commitment to human capital development since independence in 1960. Indeed, the state has consistently under-funded education, research and health care. Globally, Nigeria is ranked 158 out of 182 countries assessed by the United Nations Development (UNDO) in 2007 in the area of human development index.

Drawing a relationship between higher (university) education and development, the International Institute for Educational Planning IIEP (2007) argues that universities play a crucial role in generating new ideas, and in accumulating and transmitting knowledge needed for national and human resources development. Writing on the benefits of university education, it opined that the individual benefits include better employment, higher salaries and great ability to consume and save. Abdulkareem (2009) argues that universities all over the world are accepted as citadel of knowledge and human development. The belief in the efficacy of university education as a panacea to human resources development, and invariably national development has led to various governments (regional /state and federal) to engage in the establishment of universities (conventional, agricultural and technological) which have now been proliferated in Nigeria.

Harry (2010), Sriyan (1997), Olaniyan and Okemakinde (2008) in their independent studies assert that the level of economic and all around growth and development enjoyed by the “Asian Tigers”-the present East Asia of today is as a result of the strong commitment to higher education and capital development. Given the centrality of university education in a human and nation’s human resources development, this provides the justification for a continued investment on higher/university education. It is in the light of the above that this paper seeks to examine Nigeria universities and human resources development with a view to proffering lasting solutions.

Human capital theory

Human capital theory provides a justification for a large public expenditure on education in developing and developed nations. This theory suggests that education or training raises the productivity of workers by imparting useful knowledge and skills, hence raising workers’ future income by increasing their life time earnings.

The concept of human capital theory was first used by the classicalist economists like Alfred Marshal and Adam Smith (although developed by G.S Berker, 1991) which stresses the significance of education and training as the key to participation in the new global economic order. Ramchandra (2009) writes that this theory roots from the branch of Economics, which

is Labour Economics. Labour Economics study is on workforce in quantitative terms, thus has the most accurate predictability than other social sciences. This theory posits that human capital is similar to “physical means of production”, e.g factories, and machines. In this case, a higher level in the provisions of these physical means of production would as well result to an increased productivity because one’s output depends partly on the rate of return on the human capital one owns. Thus, human capital is a means of production into which additional investment yields additional outputs.

In a nutshell, this theory is of the view that the most valuable of all capital is that invested in human being. Human capital of an organization or country is strictly tied to the education in that country. It therefore advocates for a continuous increase in the amount of investment in human capital through education. The investment in human capital creates in the labour force the skill-base indispensable for economic growth. Throw (1975) writes that education is used as a market signal to indicate the potential productivity of workers. It maintains that productivity is largely a characteristic of jobs rather than of workers; employers use education credentials to select workers because better educated workers can be trained for specific jobs more quickly and at a lower cost than their less educated persons. He therefore suggests that education enhances an individual’s ability to successfully deal with disequilibria in a changing conditions. Such ability includes that of perceiving a given disequilibrium, analyzing information, reallocating resources to act.

Human resources and human resources development

Human resources are considered by many to be the most important asset of an organisation. Human resources of an organisation consist of the human beings who work in an organization. The earlier statement is true because it is the human beings working in organization that coordinate and manage the physical materials / resources used to work in an organization.

Lado and Wilson (1994) defined human resources development as a set of distinct but interrelated activities, functions and processes that are directed at attracting, developing and maintaining a firm’s human resources. Neo, Hollenbeck, Gerhart and Wright (as cited in Maduagwu and Nwogu 2006) defined human resources as the organisation’s employees which are described with reference to their training, experience, judgement, relationship and insight.

Writing on the importance of human resources, Olaniyan and Okemakinde (2008) argue that most economists agree that it is the human resources of a nation, not its capital, not its material resources, that ultimately determines the character and pace of its economic and social development. Psacharopoulos and Woodhall (1997:5) assert that:

Human resources constitute the ultimate basis of 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 informed national development.

It is therefore that manpower which can be defined as the bulk of labour available for any particular kind of work. Given the other two factors of production- land and capital in their right quality and quantity, production still cannot be possible on its own. There is the need

therefore for a human-face of those productive factors, hence the need for human resources. As it has been established above, production can only be possible when there is a combination of land, capital with labour (Entrepreneur). No wonder Gbosi (2003) said it is the bulk of human beings with the relevant skills, energies, talents, knowledge and attitudes that can be committed towards the production of goods and resources.

Human resources development on the other hand could be conceptualized as a process of developing and/or unleashing human expertise through organisation development and personnel training and development for the purpose and individual/group levels (Swanson, 1999). He further highlighted the process of human resources development is made up of five core phases including: analyze, propose, create, implement and assess. To Sriyan de Silva (1997:2):

Human resources development is the process of increasing the knowledge, the skills and the capacities of all the people in a society. In economic terms, it could be described as the accumulation of human capital and its effective investment in the development of an economy. In political terms, human resources development prepares people for adult participation in a political process, particularly as citizens in a democracy. From the social and cultural points of view, the development of human resources helps people to live fuller and richer lives, less bound by tradition. In short, the process of human resources development unlocks the door of modernization.

In order to achieve human resources development, education is at the centre. Babalola (2003) argues that the rationale behind investment in human capital is for its development for better productivity and it is based on the following facts:

- i. that the new generation must be given the appropriate parts of knowledge which have already been accumulated by previous generations;
- ii. that new generations should be taught how existing knowledge should be used to develop new products, to introduce new process to production method and social services; and
- iii. that people must be encouraged to develop entirely new ideas, products, processes and method through creative approaches.

Based on the knowledge of human resources and its importance in that it is the major resource by which the organization combine other resources for the achievement of organizational goals, there is need for its development for a continuous and better productivity. It therefore calls for the integrated use of training and development; career development and organization development to improve individual and organizational effectiveness. Given globalization, accompanied by an increased world knowledge-base, increasing societal and ICT complexities; and most importantly, the dynamic nature of the world as the hallmark for production is geared towards quality; there is therefore the urgent need to train and re-train the workers working in an organization in order to meet up with the challenges identified above. One cannot help but wonder the fate of a worker whose knowledge is not updated on the current demands of his job/career, then goes out to meet these challenges

University education roles in human resources development in Nigeria

The above reviewed literature has drawn our attention to why investment in education should be taken seriously by nations, Nigeria in particular. It has been established that the more

educated one gets, the more his productivity and wages. Since this is so, our universities and institutions of higher learning have a huge role to play to actualize this.

At present, there are 108 universities in Nigeria, (34 federal, 34 state, 40 privately owned) as reported by JAMB (2012). All these universities are geared towards achieving the broad goals of tertiary education as stated by the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004:36). Amongst the seven broad goals, two of them border specifically on human resources development (goals a & d). They stated thus:

- a. contribute to national development through high level relevant manpower training;
- d. acquire both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to be self-reliant and useful members of the society.

Writing on the roles of the university towards national and human resources development, IIEP (2002) opined that higher education (university education) is the major source for providing the human capital. Babalola (2007) on the above writes that it is the statutory duty of university education to groom the required human capital, relevant manpower training, abilities, attitudes, skills and knowledge. Looking at the categories of labour- skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled labour, a greater chunk of the skilled labour in Nigeria is produced by universities looking at their number compared to the number of other higher institutions in Nigeria.

Another vital role the university plays towards human resources development is the improvement in individual earnings. IIEP (2007) writes that the individual benefits of higher (university) education are well known. It ensures a better employment, higher salaries and a greater ability to consume and save. Based on this, the university emerges as an important variable contributing significantly towards improving individual earnings. It is obvious that in Nigeria, so far as one is underemployed, the higher schooled he gets, the higher his pay in his place of work and a greater possibility for right employment or career placement. This informs the reason for the large number of aged men and women in schools, especially those enrolled in the part-time education programmes of universities. The reason for this is not far-fetched, just based on the axiom of the human capital thesis and that ordinarily, individual desire for a higher pay in the job he/she is doing.

It is obvious today that the society is undergoing a constant change, necessitated by globalization, ICT revolution; which has as well resulted in the increasing complexities experienced in our daily jobs. Taking the Nigeria banking sector as a case in point, looking at what it was like two decades ago and what it is now shows a lot of changes. Today we talk of electronic banking, sms banking, ATM banking, and so on. In order to cope up with the demands of our jobs, our universities have always brought the required novelty which they impart as well in order to make the graduates more equipped in meeting up with the demands of their present jobs. No wonder Wellerstein as cited in Okeke (2006:272) rightly argued as regards the functions of the university thus:

The primary functions of a university are neither professional training, general education nor intellectual research. These are all tasks assigned to the institution. It's primary function is perpetually to question the truths of the time-whether they are truths of the universe or of the social consensus.

Given the assertion above, it therefore behoves of the university to pursue truths which are 'relevant' to meeting up with the day's challenge.

The university also plays a huge role towards human resources development by the designing of curricular necessary for the training of the required skills, national development, development of textbooks for up-dating knowledge, training of teachers who impart these skills and as well certify individuals who had undergone various trainings in the universities. With the above, universities in Africa would be able to produce the skilled human resources necessary to manage newly independent countries as proposed by Saint (1992) in Okeke (2006).

It is true as established above that the required manpower needed by a nation; as a concomitant of the above, the university helps to increase the productive capacity of an individual and nation. This is actually the main tenets of human capital theorists like Berker (1964) and Schultz (1961). They are of the view that education increases the productive capacity of workers and the nation at large. What follows is that higher education (university education) equals higher productivity of an individual and the GDP of a nation. Usoro (2010) writes that after graduating from the university, these graduates are now more productive than they were before their schooling.

The hallmark for benching production today is quality. This call for quality can only be achieved through the organisation and development of human resources in various universities; and in order to continuously meet up with quality, there is need for a continuous development of the human aspect of the organization resources. The quality of people appropriate to the particular level and complexities of the activities determines how well or poorly these tasks are accomplished.

Implications of human capital thesis on university education in Nigeria

The human capital thesis posits the centrality for increased investment on education as a key to producing the required human capital resources necessary to fast track national development and productivity. This assumption has a huge implication for high spending on university education in order to realize the necessary human resources. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004:61) had long recognized this fact when it stated that education is an expensive social service. Since thus is true, it follows that if the government of Nigeria does increase its budgetary allocation for universities and other tertiary institutions of learning, the aim of generating the needed manpower necessary to drive forward economic development and required output/productivity would be a shattered dream.

CONCLUSION

Empirical evidence on the impact of increased expenditure on education abounds showing the increase in the availability of human resources and the tripled pace of development. A perfect example today is the case of East Asia popularly known as the 'Asian Tigers'. Looking at this, the writers conclude that continuous investment on education (university education in particular) in Nigeria is one which the Nigeria government must pursue vigorously in order to generate the needed manpower necessary to drive the long expected development forward and the actualization of vision 2020. Therefore, continuous investment in university education is sine qua non to development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In order for the Nigeria economy to derive the benefits as postulated by the human capital theorists, the writers recommend that:

1. There must be an increased budgetary allocation to the education sector (the university education in particular) because the more schooled we are, the more productive we become.
2. Our universities should offer courses which are of great relevance to the development of Nigeria economy. The mismatch between the needs of the labour market and the taught courses in the universities should be a thing of the past.
3. More emphasis should be given on practicals especially for those who are science inclined in the university education.
4. There should be a steady review of curricula to meet up with what is obtainable in the developed world such that our output/human resources can comfortably match or compete with them.
5. Teachers /lecturers should be reading and researching steadily in order to update their knowledge so that the required skills for developing human capital would be taught. The idea of using one lesson note prepared over a decade to teach/lecture students should be done away with.
6. Funding of universities should not be the sole responsibility of the state and federal governments, all hands must be on deck, a call for private and NGO participations.
7. Universities are not the only one to shoulder the responsibility of human resources development; public and private organizations should sponsor their employees to go for training, attend workshops, symposia, seminars and conferences.

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