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Capacity Building for National Sustainable Development: The Nigerian Experience

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ABSTRACT The necessity of human capacity building cannot be overemphasized. Whether we like or not the human being remains the centre of creation. This is regardless of the advancement in science and technology. At one point or the other you still need the human touch to make things work. It is for this reason that the author decided to take a look at capacity building for national sustainable development. As the race towards rapid and sustained improvement in knowledge and human resources fast gathers steam, Nigeria must not be left behind. Rather, formulation of a long-term growth strategy geared towards the development of human capital and infrastructure will redress the current imbalances in the system and drive economic growth.

INTRODUCTION

Joking with education is laughter into penury and poverty, and this has come to characterize our national life: economic, social intellectual, cultural and spiritual poverty that make us a laughing stock in the comity of nations.

The 2003 UNDP Human Development Report found out that despite being the world's sixth largest exporter of petroleum, Nigeria ranks extremely low in terms of human development making it impossible to attain the benefits of globalization (Ekemenah, 2004).

In 2005 the Human Development Report (HDR) revealed that Nigeria has slumped from 144^{th} position in 2004 to 151^{st} position in 2005 out of the total of 177 countries surveyed and a reduction of life expectancy at birth from 56.1 years to 43.4 years (UNDP 2005 Report). Nigeria according to the report is in the category of Low Human Development with Madagascar, Swaziland, Cameroon, Lesotho, Djibouti, Mauritania, Kenya, Gambia, Guinea and Senegal, incidentally all other countries listed are ahead of Nigeria.

The necessity for capacity building cannot be overemphasized. There is a strong dialectical relationship not only between geographical, anthropoid and abstract sources of wealth generation, but equally a strong relationship between intellectual property, research and development activities carried out in the universities or other research institutes. The fact that we have no intellectual property to protect as such is as a result of our poor state of research and development in the universities and research institutes in the country.

Whether we like it or not, the human being remains the centre of creation. This is regardless of the advancement in science and technology. At one point or the other you still need the human touch to make things work. It is for this reason that the author decided to take a look at capacity building for national sustainable development.

The paper is divided into five sections. Section one is the introductory aspect. Section two take an overview of capacity building for national sustainable development in developed countries, while section three examined capacity building for national sustainable development in developing countries. Sections four focused on recommendations and finally Section five is the concluding part.

CAPACITY BUILDING FOR NATIONAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

December 2004 global ranking of the best 200 universities was indeed a great eye opener to the academic world in particular and the entire global world at large. The exercise indicated that no Nigerian or any African university was included in the best 200 universities worldwide. Four American universities namely: Harvard University, University of Berkley California, Massachusetts Institute of Technology; and California Institute of Technology topped the list as the best four universities, while Oxford University and Cambridge University both in Britain came fifth and sixth respectively. It was further revealed that the 200 elite universities are located in 29 different countries of the world with the United States, Britain, Germany and Australia having the highest number of well-ranked universities with a total of 62, 30, 17 and 14 entries in that order (Amalaha, 2005, p.13).

The indices used in assessing the universities include: teaching strength and research; international reputation; teacher/student ratio; research impact which was calculated by measuring citations in bolometric indices per faculty member (that is a measure of articles published in international journals by lecturers of the universities). Other indices include: the proportion and percentage of international students and international staff on the undergraduates and academic staff roster of the universities.

The essence of this overview is to expose the true state of our educational system in Nigeria to the extent that the sector has been relegated to the background with little or no attention. A nation that refused to invest in human capital development is bound to retrogress, and this is exactly what we are faced with.

It is not therefore, surprising that 123 i.e. 61.5% of the total number of universities ranked came from developed countries. A close examination of Harvard University showed that the institution has 84 academic staff members who are international award winners, out of which 40 are Nobel Laureates while the remaining 44 had won the Pulitzer price at one time or the other as at 2003/2004 academic session. It also has 15 million volumes well stocked library, and it has produced top U.S presidents such as Franklin Roosevelt, John F. Kennedy and George W. Bush among other international figures. The University of Beckley that came second also has 18 Nobel Laureates and five Pulitzer winners on its academic staff list. Other elite universities such as Massachusetts Institution of Technology, Oxford, and Cambridge etc also possess all required facilities according to their order of ranking.

It should be reiterated that no university in the whole Nigeria at present has even one Nobel Laureate as a lecturer. The question now is why? It is not because our lecturers are incompetent or not knowledgeable; rather it is simply because the necessary facilities for teaching and research are not available. Nigerian universities are ill-equipped, overpopulated and under-funded. Tables 1, 2, 3 and 4 below give clearer pictures of our situation.

From table 1, it is clear that none of the faculties on the average complied with the National Universities Commission (NUC) parameters during the 1998/1999 academic year. In short the lecturers were being over-loaded; and this could be a factor in the lowering of standards.

From table 2, it is glaring that there is perennial shortage of funds for the educational system at all levels; hence allocations to education as a percentage of total budgets have been consistently low.

From table 3, only 12.79% of what was requested by NUC for capital development was

Table 1: Student teacher ratio 1998/99

	Standard	*Compliance*
Agriculture	9:1	16:1
Science	10:1	18:1
Health Sciences/Human Medicine	6:1	14:1
Engineering/Technology	9:1	27:1
Veterinary Medicine	6:1	7:1
Pharmacy	10:1	19:1
Environmental Science	10:1	19:1
Law	20:1	36:1
Social Sciences	20:1	30:1
Arts	20:1	16:1
Education	24:1	22:1
Administration	20:1	41:1

Source: NUC Annual Reports, 1995-1999

Table 2: Federal Government Budgetary Allocation to Education (%) from 1994 and 2003

Year	*Total Budget*	*Federal Allocation to Education*	*Allocation to Education as % of Total*
Budget			
1994	110.5	8.655	7.83
1995	98.2	12.729	12.96
1996	124.2	15.3	12.32
1997	186.0	21.8	11.59
1998	260.0	26.7	10.27
1999	249.0	27.710	11.12
2000	677.51	50.666	8.36
2001	894.2	62.6	6.75
2002	844.0	17.7	6.8
2003	765.1	13.9	1.83

Source: ASUU National Secretariat Publication, 2001, Duke, 2003 and Ikharehon, 2004 released by government in 1991. In 1992 the situation improved considerably as the amount released was 283.37% over and above what was requested for. In 1993 it dropped to 50.03% and continues to decline.

It should be noted that the amount and volume of research carried out by the universities is what distinguish them from other forms of higher education. Unfortunately, very little research is going on in our universities today, and major factor responsible for the poor state of affair is the inadequacy of research funds. Table 4 above reveals a breakdown of NUC releases for research grants from 1987 to 1998. The figures between 1987 and 1991 were consistently low which might be part of the agitations and demands of the ASUU culminating into the 1992 national strike. Between 1993 and 1995, the figures were substantial and this might not be unconnected with the outcome of the agreement between ASUU and the federal government in 1992. Between 1996 and now, the amount has been dwindling even when the value of the naira has greatly depreciated.

Without mincing words, Prof Gabriel Oyibo the celebrated Nigerian mathematical physicist based in United States wouldn't have been nominated for the Nobel Prize in physics if he had been based in Nigeria because the facilities for his GAUUT research are not here. In the same vein, Philip Emeagwali, another Nigerian who today is regarded as one of the greatest computer magnets the world has ever produced wouldn't have achieved this feat if resided in Nigeria.

The importance of funds cannot be over-emphasized in the education sector. Government should funds education effectively rather than building this country by constructing gigantic buildings and other structures. It should be noted that the pride of a nation is not in those things but in the quality of her citizens. Our leaders must realize that cognitive pursuit is not just about magnificent structural edifice rather it involves more of qualified human capital resource and a rich tradition of academic excellence. Therefore, a nation built without education of the citizenry is going to crumble, no matter how good it looks from outside.

Table 3: NUC request for capital grant and actual release by government between 1991 and 1995 (21 federal universities)

Year	*NUC Request (N)*	*Actual Amt Released by Govt (N)*	*Difference (N)*	*%*
1991	93,300,000	11,944,078	-81,355,922	*12.79
1992	193,300,000	741,064,220	-547,764,220	283.37
1993	1,149,839,000	575,300,000	-574,535,000	*50.03
1994	1,114,000,000	965,535,350	-198,464,650	*82.95
1995	2,240,000,000	1,480,420,570	-759,579,430	*61.09

Source: NUC, 1996 in Ajayi, 1999:11

Table 4: Breakdown of allocation of research grants to federal universities between 1987 and 1998

Year	*Conventional Universities (16)*	*Technological Universities (5)*	*Inter-University Centers (4)*	*Others Total (3)*	*Grand*
1987	11,379,000	757,000	-	-	12,216,000
1988	17,796,500	1,199,500	-	-	18,996,000
1989	17,579,400	1,390,025	-	-	19,090,542
1990	21,470,573	1,704,798	-	-	23,323,915
1991	21,062,151	1,937,550	-	-	23,148,245
1992	13,341,821	794,424	300,000	100,000	14,536,245
1993	108,438,460	11,245,046	1,998,877	499,719	122,182,103
1994	116,042,390	13,456,107	2,157,856	539,646	132,195,999
1995	113,700,237	13,881,162	4,869,111	631,172	133,081,682
1996	81,282,424	11,864,673	4,921,114	640,484	98,708,695
1997	52,534,324	4,091,274	3,351,123	807,520	60,784,241
1998	15,552,618	-	-	-	155,552,618

Source: University System News, A Quarterly Publication of the NUC, Abuja Vol. 9, No. 1999, p.8

CAPACITY BUILDING FOR NATIONAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Why does India, now the world's sixth largest economy with a GDP of $1.4 trillion, need long-term vision?

India's immediate past President, Abdul karim explains:

"In the 21st century, a new society is emerging where knowledge is the primary production resource instead of capital and labour. Efficient utilization of this existing knowledge can create comprehensive wealth for the nation and improve the quality of life, in form of better health, education, infrastructure and other social indicators. This is what we aim to achieve by 2020" (Enwegbara, 2005, p.14)

He stated further that emphasis would be place on evolving a knowledge society; bringing about a second green revolution; providing urban amenities in rural areas, and creating an administration enabled by information technology, in order to ensure the success of India's vision 2020 plan.

From the foregoing, it is reasonable to conclude that knowledge economy will soon be the only economy, and States that fail to make rapid and sustained progress in that direction will be left in the back seat.

This position paints a grim picture for Nigeria, where human capital is in its worst shape since independence. It should be recall that since independence various long-term national plans have been formulated including vision 2010 by Abacha regime. None of these documents are considered by successive administrations; rather new documents are formulated by every successive administration. Yet the present democratic regime headed by President Olusegun Obasanjo came up with a document known as New Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS). This document aimed at refocusing government's macroeconomic targets, via:·expected to among others push the GDP to 5%

- reduce poverty incidence by 5%
- create one million jobs within the year (2004)
- achievements of 4.83% growth in real consumption expenditure
- a two percent growth in real per capital consumption, and
- reduction of the rocketing inflation pegged at 10%

The availability of potent policies is not our problem in Nigeria. Call it NEEDS or whatever, we have had them. The problem has been the absence of the desired will to see them through. There is no sense of continuity. Why can't we build on what is on ground, or better still improve on it. If we insist, every successive administration should dog new foundations instead of building on what exists; we will never reach the roof. For once Nigeria should stay focused and not keep on throwing away policies.

Six years after the new democratic regime, the economy is still plagued with poverty, low capacity utilization, rising inflation, towering cost of borrowing and excruciating exchange rates, ports' congestion, decaying infrastructure, unpatriotic consumption pattern, multiplicity of taxes, inadequate security, inadequate foreign direct investment, plaguing corruption and wanton waste of public resources and profligate government still hold sway.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made towards ensuring a sustainable development in developing countries, Nigeria inclusive, through capacity building:

- Enabling environment for competitive economy should be provided. This includes massive investment in technological education, intensifying regional integration efforts and strengthening partnership between civil society and the State to ensure participation in the development process.
- We must invest in Research & Development (R&D) in order to achieve meaningful technological progress, join the global hunt for researchers, make our immigrations and citizenship laws more immigrant friendly particularly for the well educated ones; provide talented entrepreneurs on knowledge based start-ups with investment incentives like loans, initiate the establishment of Silicon Valley or Science Park; setting up of a Venture Capital Company that has two major branches: one in Nigeria and the other Silicon Valley, California, USA. The object of the latter would be to provide funds to hi-tech start-ups that have skilled Nigerian leapfrogging their way into hi-tech world by using Small and Medium Industries Equity Investment Scheme (SMIEIS) to fund innovative cutting edge

start-ups especially if science parks are established; encouraging partnerships between our universities and foreign universities that have successfully commercialized their R&D like Stanford University and Massachusetts Institute of Technology; patronage of made in Nigeria software and hardware and finally, Nigeria should have a Technology Advancement Intelligence Task Force (TAITF) whose task will be to study what other countries are doing to advance technology.

· Restoration of education standards at all levels, to which the nation will need to commit 25 percent of its budget for the construction of classrooms, training of teachers and redesign of curriculum, rehabilitation of health care infrastructure, and a commitment of 10 percent of the budget to health. Creation of social security apparatus as a safety net, this will include an overhaul of pension scheme to make it contributory for everyone, employment creation, revamping the public transport systems and housing.

CONCLUSION

We must put a lot of money into education. It should be stressed that an educated populace is not only aware but will be automatically productive. The quality of education must be improved because it is only educated people who will move the economy forward and who will improve on welfare. No long-term economic vision plan will succeed without the contribution of the citizens. People must contribute the best of their abilities towards its realization. Again, more resources should be put into primary and preventive health and also supply of potable water. Investments in the social sector should be accorded priority.

All hope for a prosperous Nigeria is not gone if we can learn positively from the experiences of India and the developed countries.

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