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EDUCATIONAL REFORMS AND SOCIAL SECURITY: IMPLICATIONS FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

This paper examines the possible gains of educational reforms in the provision of social security to individuals and its implications to national development. The terms educational reforms and social security are clearly explained and rooted as integral to national development. The paper contends that education and indeed educational reforms are determinants of meaningful development in any country. Thus, educational systems and reforms should be deeply rooted in theory and practice such that can produce results that are capable of meeting the needs for national development. Lastly, the paper made some recommendations, such as, basic social amenities should be provided in the rural areas as they constitute part of what is described as indices for development, social security and protection.

Introduction

Education is a social endeavour, a process and also regarded as an industry with certain inputs and outputs. Education needs to organize human ability at all stages of social, economic and political development of the society. Sociologists of education hold the view that development is the process of modernization that is centred on the transformation of social and political institutions of the society. Therefore, doing this requires human resource development in knowledge and skills. However, much as this is paradoxical in nature, it implies that it may be difficult to improve the quality of life of the people of a country without education. Education is therefore, a direct tool for social security, human upliftment and a means to better utilize the resources of a nation. This social phenomenon is dynamic and evolving, and thus, it is subject to transformation, change and reformation in the society.

The enormous place of education in the role of wiping out illiteracy, providing social security in society makes it a factor to be reviewed from time to time with a view to making necessary reforms and changes for improvement.

This becomes even more necessary in view of the current challenges posed by globalization in the country. There is hardly any structure of education in the world that is stagnant in nature; it is dynamic and constantly having changing values. Singh (2007) opined that, education in the present day context has become synonymous with intellectual pursuit and the inculcation of proper spiritual and moral values which are strong basis for the provision of individual and societal development.

The argument is that education should capture the culture or values of the society. It should be a system or an approach for ensuring the security of the social environment by making people to contribute to the development of the nation. In its broad sense, it involves reforming the multi-faceted structures of development by the use of education. In Nigeria today, there are various problems facing development and one of the areas we can look into, to enable us find solution to the problem of development is education. It is a known fact that education has the capability of turning around or transforming nations and bringing massive development. This implies that, for meaningful development to take place, the individual requires literacy. It is individuals that are key factors in national development, so literacy is capable of leading Nigeria to greater heights and able to favourably rub shoulders with other nations of the world, especially in the present era where the world has become a global village.

Educational Reforms in Nigeria

Education has never been static. Its methodological approaches have ever been dynamic, regardless of societal setting. This calls for various theories of educational implementation for human development and social security. Reforms have come a long way in making positive changes in the economy, politics, and human social values. Education is the deliberate attempt which was meant to effect these changes in the existing social institutions and enhance positive social arrangements that will perpetuate social security, enhance literacy rate as well as facilitate general development in Nigeria. To Ekwueme and Igwe (2001), education is geared towards attaining self-realization, promoting unity and sustainable economic development, the promotion of national consciousness and ensuring social, political and scientific development.

In the view of Anuforo (2007), education is a social and continuous process of initiating individuals into activities that are considered worth while in society. These include discipline, provision of social security and the transmission and transformation of people's cultural heritage. Reform in any sector of society is a total change that goes far beyond a peripheral restructuring of a methodological component of any existing structure. In trying

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to uplift the standard of operation in education and perhaps other sectors of the society, reform becomes necessary and in a particular case like Nigeria, it is inevitable. This giant movement is to reposition education, to be able to face the present global trends and challenges.

The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2007) posits that Education in Nigeria must be up to standard by means of satisfying the needs of every citizen. It is going to be vocational in orientation and be directed towards the attainment of self-reliance and the development of Nigeria. Further to this, Agarwal (2006), argued that education is open to changes, as it involves a series of developmental programmes and processes of helping to sustain the various parts of the social system. In Nigeria, reforms in education have a long standing history, because it started right from 1842 when western education began. Education as social enterprise, kept on improving and advancing. Even though some people resent the Universal Basic Education of 1999, the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2007), maintained that the initial methodological approach toward sustaining and revamping education in Nigeria is to inject sanity to the present system and uplift the standard by means of creating, reforming and redressing the entire industry towards development.

There is no doubt that the basis of Education Reform is to serve as panacea to illiteracy or its reduction, eradication of poverty, and the improvement of social security in Nigeria. These factors can be comprehensively managed through our school curriculum and education in general. Some factors to consider in reforming the education system in Nigeria are:

- education content and construct via curriculum should be made relevant to modern day needs and aspirations of the people. The content and construct should be reflective, up-to-date in pedagogy and relatively more responsive to individual needs and capabilities.
- in view of the free Universal Basic Education structure, it should be accompanied with the provision of structures and learning facilities, regardless of location, status or political affiliation.
- it should consider introducing programmes that would upgrade teachers, school administrators and to familiarize practitioners (teachers/administrators) with the new goals and pedagogies for teaching that would ensure the necessary improvement (Ravi, 2008).

Education is capable of improving the lots of individuals and society in various aspects, such as economic, political, structural, social and so on. This claim is further justified by Williams (1990, p. 7) as he endorsed that:

education has widened the horizon of ethnic groups to embrace the idea of a nation, it has fostered the growth of skills needed in a more differentiated economy, and also it has improved health and social welfare. Formal education has affected a silent revolution of immense proportions and has changed the face of Nigerian society than any other force.

However, development in any case, consists of social aspects of life which involves the educator, the curriculum and the entire educational system. The educator however is an important factor in promoting development in literacy rate. This is simply because development initiatives involve human beings, and it is humans that are the agents of development throughout human history. Rodney (1972) maintains that, development in human society is a many sided process. At the level of the individual, it implies increased skills and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self discipline, responsibility and material well-being. This therefore means that development in the Nigerian context may only be feasible when the rate of literacy grows higher. This will no doubt ensure that the Nigerian can use all available resources and channels for general development and sustainable social security, socialization and social integration in the society.

Indabawa and Mpofu (2006), assert that literacy and illiteracy are not straight foreword terms. By illiterate, it implies one who does not know how to read and write. However, the argument is that there should not be a generalization with regards to the use of the term illiteracy. There exist variations; there are some individuals that can use some other languages, say Arabic or Hausa to read and write. The fact that they cannot use English language should not make us apply the word illiterate to refer to them. Perhaps, the term should be applicable only to those who cannot read or write in any language or art. The high rate of illiteracy militates against social security and constitutes hazardous factors to national development. According to Ngwu (2003), Literacy campaign led to the National Action Plan for the eradication of illiteracy in Nigeria. The history of this campaign dates back to 1982 and it was reviewed in 1987.

In the view of Aggarwal (2006), the common use of the term literacy refers to the ability to read and write at a designated level of proficiency. Precisely, it is a technical capability which involves decoding, producing or printing symbols and letters. Schaefer (2004) maintains that basic literacy involves having some basic skills of reading and writing. To sum it up, functional literacy means the ability to read, write, calculate figures and carry out such activities that people considered educated can perform and therefore,

make an individual able to function in the society. These are regarded as integral factors for social security and development in any modern society.

Social Security in Nigeria

Social security is a programme that is designed to use public funds to provide economic security for the citizens of a nation. It is intended to maintain, protect and uplift or raise the living standards of the people. Social security covers publicly financed and administered programmes to provide social protection in various socially related aspects such as poverty, old age, disease, hunger, disability, unemployment, retirement, accident and so on. However, social security may also refer to the following concepts, namely:

- **Social insurance**, which means a situation where people receive benefits or services because of the contributions to an insurance scheme. For example, provision for retirement pensions, disability insurance, survivor benefits, unemployment insurance and so on.
- **Income maintenance**, which refers to the distribution of cash in the event of interruption of employment, such as retirement, disability and unemployment.
- Services provided by the various organs and institutions responsible for the provision of social services such as medical care, social work and so on.
- It also refers to basic security and it is used as an equivalence of basic necessities of life such as food, clothing, shelter, education and medical care.

Ephraim (2009) endorsed that social security is a human right as well as an economic and political necessity. It is an indispensable part of institutional tissue of an efficient market economy. It is well understood that without social security and poverty reduction, development may not be possible in the society. The system of socio-economic security were introduced in Europe in the late 19th century and were slowly implanted in most countries during the early 20th century and consolidated after the Second World War.

Ephraim (2009) further stated that in Nigeria piecemeal social security programmes have been in place since 1942 starting with the workmen's compensation. Others are benefits for temporary and permanent disability, unemployment, maternity and sickness. All these have been going on without a unified policy with no clear funding. Following a resolution of 11th

International Labour Organisation African Regional Meeting (Addis Ababa, 24-27 April 2007) a tripartite African ILO members committed themselves to develop **national action plans to build basic social security to all and Nigeria is an active player in the International Labour Organisations.**

However, the **International Labour Organisation (2008)** contended that **social security programmes simply means the protection which society provides for its citizens by way of putting in place various of public measures to tackle the economic and social distress that are caused by either stoppage or huge reduction of earnings income resulting from various variables, like, sickness, maternity, employment injury and death; the provision of medical care; and the provision of subsidies for families with children.**

In addition, Ephraim (2009) contended that:

Social security programmes are usually established as a means of improving the well-being of the poor, reduce inequality within society and conciliate different social demands, thus avoiding the social and political conflicts, which necessarily arose as capitalist forms of production evolved. Hands on experience of wanting to help the poor in our society have always been commandeered by the rich. For instance in some states, taxi schemes were set up to ease transportation difficulties but the cars were distributed to the well to dos who increased their capitalist pockets and later abandoned the real idea behind such schemes.

In another development, he further posited that:

The underlying aim of Social security in any country is protection from fear and want. The extent of insecurity, poverty, destitution and vulnerability in Nigeria reach far beyond the objectives of typical systems of social security implemented in developed countries or even developing countries in the same rank with us. Our social security should be for the young and old as well as the employed and unemployed. We should therefore be aiming for a social security system that will be integrated within the overall development strategy of the country rather than

implemented as individual programmes.

Furthermore, Ephraim (2009) endorsed how social security policy in Nigeria should be and proposed that it should cover the following aspects:

- The Social security policy should aim at the protection and promotion of both human and physical capital and should include better health support, better access to clinics and hospitals, health insurance policies, better nutrition, improved access to schools, universal primary education, and so forth.
- Physical capital can be protected by policies aimed at employment creation, promotion of rural development, research and incentives to encourage labour-intensive investments, better access to housing and land, improved infrastructures like roads, provision of water and electricity, reduction of remoteness of some population groups, measures to eliminate biases against women and other vulnerable groups as producers and consumers (minimum wages, measures against discrimination), improved access to capital through financial sector reforms of micro-credit schemes, implementation of employment support schemes, and provision of secure ownership of key assets.

However, it is pertinent to mention that in Nigeria, there are quite obvious basic amenities that are lacking for the citizens, such as, portable drinking water, fertilizer, electricity, medical care, basic education and employment. This being the case therefore, the provision of all the mentioned above would mean clear provision of social security for the Nigerian citizens.

Implications for National Development

Considering the importance attached to Education, there is need to encourage basic and functional literacy, for purposive social security and individual social protection. The Federal Government of Nigeria (2004) encourages the search for knowledge, as it states in its national policy, which it hopes to:

- provide functional literacy and continuing education for adults and youths who have never had the advantage of formal education or who did not complete their Primary Education. These include, the nomads, migrant families, the physically challenged and other categories or groups of people, especially the disadvantaged gender.
- provide functional and remedial education for those young people who

did not complete Secondary Education.

- provide education for different categories of completers of the forr education system in order to improve their basic knowledge and skills.
- provide in-service, on-the-job, vocational and professional training f different categories of workers and professionals in order to improv their skills; and
- give the adult citizens of the country necessary aesthetic, cultural an civic education through public enlightenment.

The implications of the above are to counteract the features and effects of illiteracy in our society and provide literacy services and programmes for enhanced social security, protection and the development of the nation. The philosophy that encompasses the methodological factors and features of development in our society are in line with the provision of education and social protection for the people. This has serious social inclination to individuals and groups in the society. Therefore, reform in education is a panacea to all factors hindering the smooth running of plans for progress as Indabawa and Mpofu (2006) suggest, illiteracy can be a tool for destruction, while literacy can be an effective instrument of assisting people to eradicate illiteracy and improve on social security and justice.

In the society where there is high rate of illiteracy the following are expected to occur or manifest:

- low level of understanding government plans and programmes. This factor affects progressive initiatives in the society.
- lack of basic and functional literacy and the knowledge of civic rights and responsibilities. This facilitates unemployment and high rate of ignorance and poverty in the society.
- where illiteracy becomes overwhelming in a population, the community or society may face or encounter consistent problems of health deficiency, thereby, the rampant breakout of diseases and epidemics.

Education reforms tend to mirror all factors by compressing them under a systematic educational pedagogy to be achieved for the general well-being and sustainable education, economic and security system of the society. Reform in education has a far reaching implication for development in Nigeria. This can be noticed since reforms in the Nigeria's educational system are towards an upward turn, which calls for the standardization of education by means of revising, revamping and restructuring. Where necessary, it may involve the entire aspect of the general development in Nigeria such as the following aspects:

- because the nation moves its philosophy of education from ideological theory to a more pragmatic approach, this is going to be more result oriented, by way of focusing on the desires, needs and aspirations of the society.
- Nigeria education reform is a lesson from various stages of the history of education in Nigeria. In this regard, reform takes the lead to enable the real actualization of democratic and universal approaches of providing education for sustainable development.
- education should be reviewed and be re-strengthened from time to time at all levels and should be based on the national goals and philosophy.

Recommendations

In order to achieve concrete and sustainable educational reforms in the context of social security for national development in Nigeria, the following recommendations are advanced.

Education reforms should only be when there is need for it and not be based on the will of the politicians, so as to avoid reforms that are based on personal and selfish interest.

Good and heavy investment for education should be made for the provision of enhanced reforms, literacy and social security for the overall sustainable national development.

Basic social amenities should be provided in the rural areas as they constitute part of what is described as indices for national development and social security in the society.

Greater emphasis should to be made in the area of social mobilization and sensitization for education and literacy, all with a view to achieving national development and social security in the society.

Conclusion

The paper concludes that in order to provide education, eradicate illiteracy as well as enhance social security in the society, there is the need for education to be directed toward the cultural norms and values of the society with a view to making education relevant to the needs and aspirations of the society. Thus, the present education system is an attempt toward the provision of the general wellbeing of individual lives in our society. By providing education, literacy level is enhanced and social security is ensured and thereby leading to development and social integration in the society.

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