

# **CAPACITY BUILDING THROUGH EDUCATION FOR ALL FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND TRANSFORMATION: THE NEED FOR A FUNCTIONAL EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM IN NIGERIA**

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## **Abstract**

*Development is a cherished phenomenon both by individuals and nations because of its derivable benefits. It does not just occur in isolation, nor does it happen by chance. Development has to be planned, pursued and worked out by any nation or individual desiring to develop. One of the factors that facilitates, enhances and accelerates national development among other things is education. Education is seen as a catalyst for development; more so, if it is designed to be functional. A functional education is one which is packaged to cut across the three domains of learning; namely cognitive, affectionate and psychomotor domains, with more emphasis on practical knowledge or doing. This form of education therefore, enhances the capacity of the recipients and equips them with knowledge, attitude, skills and ability with which to face the challenges of their time, transform their environment for the betterment of the larger society. This paper therefore, sought to find out the role of functional education in national development and transformation. The study, recommended among other things that if Nigeria as a nation will witness any development and in the nearest future; and the transformation agenda of*

*President Goodluck Jonathan is anything to by; a well articulated functional education for all in all tiers of our educational sector cannot be overemphasized.*

Development contains the central notion of a process of change from a less desirable to a more desirable kind of society. Thomas and Potter (1992) asserted that there are three main schools of thought on the definition and approaches of development since 1950s. The authors further stated that the first school of thought is that of the economists. Economists such as Bernstein, Shultz and Psacharapolors viewed development primarily in terms of a nation's prosperity. A nation's development is thus assessed by measuring any increase in its Gross National Product (GNP). Development here is seen as achieved through investing in human capital and raising the productivity capacity of societies.

The second school of thought is that of the sociologists such as McClelland, Weber, Inkels and Smith. They proposed that modernizing a country leads to economic development and a modern society with modernization as the main goal. Emphasis is placed on education; while technology and industrialization are seen as agents of transformation. In the 1960s, and 1970s, another group of theorist such as Seer, Sen and Edward began to consider development from human needs perspective. The emphasis here was not so much on economic growth as the primary indicator of development, but more on assessing the needs of individuals; their freedom, equity, participation and empowerment to fulfill their potential capabilities (Sen, 2007). Sen further argued that if the focus is ultimately on the expansion of human freedom to live the kind of lives that people have reason to value, the role of economic growth in expanding these opportunities has to be integrated into that more foundational understanding of the process of development as expansion of human capabilities to lead more worthwhile and more free lives. Alam (2006) asserted that before the 1990s, the economics carried the strongest voice.

By 1990s, a more holistic view of development was beginning to take center stage, especially organizations such as The United Nation Agency for Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and The United Nation Development Programme (UNDP). From this perspective, development is not just measured in terms of the economy, but also in terms of freedom, equity (access to education, health), participation and quality of life. The United Nation Development Programme (UNDP) (2002) asserted that this wider meaning of development is about much more than raising of national income. It is about creating an environment in which people can develop their full potential and lead productive, creative lives in accordance with their needs and interest. People are the real wealth of nations. Development is thus about expending the

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choices and people have to lead lives they value, and it is thus more than economic growth, which is only a means of enlarging peoples' choices.

### **The Concept of National Development**

In the view of Thomson (2001), national development must be a country's development in terms of economic and social freedom. Thomson further contended that economic freedom and social freedom are interrelated; one cannot succeed without the other. To increase national economic development, a country must have social freedom; and to achieve social development, a country must have economic freedom. Operationally, national development therefore, is the economic and social freedom a nation attains which gives its citizens conducive environment to develop their full potentials, access to basic amenities such as health, education, political franchise, etc; as well as lead productive and creative lives in accordance with their needs and interests.

For this to be realized and actualized, education has been identified as a key agent to national development, either as a way of developing human capacity, increasing skilled workforce for modernization, or as a matter of personal freedom, developing capacity and empowerment (Thomas and Potter, 2002). Thomas and Potter further posited that education provides the requisite manpower which the country needs as an investment and which would yield both public and private rates of return. Hallak (1999) asserted that education contributes to individual creativity, improved participation in the economic, social and cultural roles in society. Hallak further stated that education improves understanding of an individual and their respect for others, thus promoting social cohesion and material understanding among others. Alam (2009) observed that education not only benefits those who gain it through increased income, but also helps in the overall social development.

### **The Concept of Capacity Building**

However, the World Conference for Education for all (WCEFA, 1990) noted that there was a general realization that education was not only the key to economic development and human capacity/productivity building, but that it was also a basic human right. The world body further argued that education should not only be seen as fundamental to the economic development, but also to the social and political development within nations and for individuals. Education is also linked to human resource development, and human capacity building and that this has an impact on more than just economic growth, but also on the wider development of individuals and societies (Hallak, 1990).

Asserting on the need for capacity building among nations, Mckibbon (2011) noted that the word 'capacity' speaks to our potential as people, and as community or nations. Mckibbon further posited that, "talking about capacity, we are talking about

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that which we have the potential to become”. The author further stated that capacity building is about change, about becoming more, and that a comprehensive, integrated approach to capacity building natures excellence, expansion and positive change in all areas of human experience, by building social, environmental, economic, physical, psychological, spiritual and cultural capacity; we are able to address the potential of the whole person within the whole community or nation. Sometimes, the changes in capacity we hope to achieve will include individual knowledge, behavior, skills and techniques. Capacity building encompasses giving a boost to policies, and infrastructure, funding, staffing, and other helpful resources”.

Capacity building has been seen from different perspectives, and defined by different institutions and organizations. Notable among them are; The Community Development; The Disaster Risk Management; The Food and Agricultural Organization. The International Economics; The Biology and Society; The Urban Capacity Building Network; The Urban Environmental Management, The Environmental Sustainability, among others. A few of these definitions will suffice in this study. According to the Environmental Sustainability (ES) (2011), capacity building is the development of the skills and activities of individuals in an organization to their full capacity; the investment made with the purpose of enhancing the ability of individuals to achieve their development goals. In the view of The Urban Capacity Building Network (UCBN, 2011), capacity building also includes the following: human resource development; the process of equipping individuals with understanding, skills and access to information, knowledge and training that enable them to perform effectively; organizational development: the elaboration of management structure, processes and procedures, not only within organizations, but also the management of relationship; between the different organizations and sectors (public, private and community); institutional and legal framework development, making legal and regulatory changes to enable organizations, institutions and agencies at all levels and in all sectors to enhance their capacity” The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO, 2011), posited that capacity building encompasses human resources development (HRD) as an essential part of development. According to the (FAO), capacity building is based on the concept that education and training lie at the heart of development efforts and that without human resource development, most development intervention will be ineffective. Capacity building according to (FAO) focuses on a series of actions directed at helping participants in the development process to increase their knowledge, skills and understanding and to develop the attitude needed to bring about the desired development change. However, in the view of the Engineering and Development (E & D) (2011), capacity building is a dedication to the strengthening of economies, governments, institutions and individuals through education, training, mentoring and the infusion of resources. It aims at developing secure, stable and sustainable structures, systems and

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organizations, with particular emphasis on using motivation and inspiration for people to improve their lives.

**Education as a Key to Capacity Building and National Transformation**

Capacity building enhances transformation either of an individual or a nation. One of the surest ways a nation could be transformed is by enhancing the capacities of its citizens and institutions, since it touches all aspects of national life and nurtures excellence, expansion and positive change in all areas of human experience. Education, training and mentoring have been identified as the surest vehicle through which national development and transformation could be achieved through capacity building, hence the need for education for all.

The above view is in congruence with that of the Federal Government of Nigeria in her National Policy on Education (2004), which states among other things that “education fosters the work and development of the individuals for each individual’s sake, and for the general development of the society”, and “education shall continue to be highly rated in the national development plans because education is the most important instrument of change; any fundamental change in the intellectual and social outlook of any society has to be preceded by educational revolution”.

Conscious of this fact, the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) asserted in its official document on International Conference of Education (ICE) – “The Inclusive Education: The Way of the Future”, stated that “Nigeria has fully subscribed to the goals of education for All...” Education for All or inclusive education “involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures, and strategies with a common vision, which covers all children of the appropriate age range and a conviction that it is the responsibility of the regular system to educate all children’. Consequently, it is held that “there is no legitimate reason to separate children for their education. Children belong together with advantages and benefits for every one (Kalu, 2008). Education is to be made available to cater for all categories of Nigerian people, children as well as adults through formal and non-formal means, including special education for those with special needs such as the disabled, the disadvantaged, and the gifted and talented. The disabled includes the virtually impaired, hearing impaired, physically and health impaired, mentally retarded, emotionally disturbed; speech impaired, learning disabled and handicapped. The disadvantaged include children of nomadic pastoralists, migrant fisher folk, migrant farmers, hunters, etc, who, due to their lifestyles and means of livelihood, are unable to have access to conventional education provision and, therefore, require special education to cater for their peculiar needs and circumstances. The gifted on the other hand, are at the other end of the spectrum of special needs. For them, the teaching and learning approaches of conventional formal setting may be inappropriate or even behaviorally counterproductive.

Providing education for Nigerians including the adult dropouts must not only be seen as a necessity, but must be seen to be of quality and functional to be able to cater for the diverse needs of Nigeria society. This is because the present system of education as it is presently operated has failed to meet the needs of the society. Iloputaife (2012) opined that: “It is no secret that we have sick society and sick generation despite our scientific and technological development. Therefore, the schools and education system can be saddled with the onerous tasks and challenges of finding the best cure or remedy for the replacement”. Iloputaife further observed that “a close look at the graduate teachers that are produced by teacher education arrangement raises a number of fundamental questions about the institutions charged with the responsibility of training teachers”. The author also asserted that “there are veritable indicators to accept the assertion that our educational system is not achieving the objectives of the society as a nation”, and blamed the system of education available for the people which has made the Nigerian society sick. He noted that the only way children and students can become global citizens is through their education. “This”, he asserted “can only be possible through an integration of the moral, scientific and technical skills as well as traditional academic discipline”. He therefore, called for functional education.

### **Functional Education and Human Capital Development**

Functional education is an educational system which produces the critical human capital that could build and promote knowledge management in a globally competitive world; devise and deploy relevant technologies, and skill to address developmental challenges and sustain progress (Obioma, 2012). A functional educational system guided with a workable policy framework can perhaps, bail Nigeria out of her socio-economic maladies and launch the nation into an economic bliss that it has desired; as well as give it a place among the comity of nations. A functional education is an educational system that is capable of responding to the immediate and future needs of a nation. Respond to industrial needs; respond to developmental needs, respond to transformation needs, to health needs, political needs, science and technological needs, space exploration needs, environmental needs, information and communication technological needs, managerial and administrative needs, and other spheres of our national live. A functional education is one which is packaged to cut across the three domains of learning; namely: cognitive, affectionate and psychomotor domains with more emphasis on practical knowledge or doing. This form of education therefore, enhances the capacity of the recipients as it equips them with knowledge, right attitude, skills and ability with which to face the challenges of their time, transform their environment for the betterment of the larger society.

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**Conclusion**

This paper has established that “capacity building” is all about change, about becoming more and that a comprehensive, integrated approach to capacity building nature excellence, expansion and positive change in all areas of human experience. By building social, environmental, economic, physical, psychological, spiritual and cultural capacity; we are able to address the potential of the whole person within the whole community or nation.

It has also been established that changes in capacity we hope to achieve will include individual knowledge, behavior, skills and techniques and that capacity building encompasses giving a boost to policies, and infrastructure, funding, staffing, and other helpful resources.

Also established is the fact that capacity building enhances transformation either of an individual or a nation. One of the surest ways a nation could be transformed is by enhancing the capacities of its citizens and institutions, since it touches all aspects of national life and nurtures excellence, expansion and positive change in all areas of human experience. Education, training and mentoring have been identified as the surest vehicle through which national development and transformation could be achieved through capacity building, hence the need for qualitative and functional education for all.

The paper concludes by stating that a functional educational system guided with a workable policy framework can perhaps, bail Nigeria out of her socio-economic maladies and launch the nation into an economic bliss that it has so desired; produce global citizens as well as give it a place among the comity of nations.

**Recommendations**

The paper recommended among other things that:

1. If the much touted about national transformation agenda of the Federal Government under President Goodluck Jonathan must not end up as a ruse, a well articulated functional education in all tiers of our educational sector should be a top most priority.
2. A well articulated teacher training programme different from what is presently on ground must be started by upgrading the existing infrastructures and building new ones.
3. Training and retraining programme must be for teachers of all categories with a view to bridging the existing skill gaps as many of the present teachers may not have got the skills that are required to train global workers.

4. Employment of teachers at both Federal and State schools must be based strictly on qualification, experience and merit as “no standard of education of any nation can rise above its players”.

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