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## **Entrepreneurial education and national reconstruction in Nigeria: Critical issues of sustainable development in an emergent African polity**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The state of education in Nigeria is describable as perilous. It is indeed, characterized by an unnecessary capitalist tendency. Yet, education is central to the progressive advancement of every civilization. In the Nigerian state, it has therefore been a scenario of a nation hoisted on monumental promises. These promises have however remained hanging on seemingly developmental mirages. The nation-state of Nigeria is accordingly depictable as a nation of destroyed promises. Consequently, the notion of destruction introduces the necessity for reconstruction. In this study, reconstruction translates to national reconstruction. We therefore argue in the study that national reconstruction in Nigeria truly necessitates the placement of education on a national emergency scale. We argue that the present attitude of Nigerian leaders towards education is highly pretentious. We have demonstrated with secondary sources of data that such attitudes inhibit the necessity for national reconstruction. We have attempted in the study to identify the critical elements of the pretension that characterize the core values of educational planning and administration in the country. Among the most salient positions of the study is that unbridled capitalism is dangerous to education for national reconstruction. This study has also led to the conclusion that weak intervention by the state in education is as needless as non-intervention by the state. To realize the objective of education for national reconstruction, the study has recommended strong and decisive state intervention at all level of the educational system in the

country. Above all, the study recommends that entrepreneurial education becomes the cornerstone of the philosophy of education in this emergent African polity.

**Keywords:** Entrepreneurial Education; Entrepreneurship; National Reconstruction; Nigeria; Sustainable Development; Emergent polity

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

When we look at the Nigerian scenario, the generic role of education as a catalyst for national progress appears cloudy. Moreover, in specific terms in the Nigerian polity, the place of entrepreneurial education as critical component of the developmental template for national reconstruction seems unsubstantiated. Indeed, after this West African state was granted independence by Great Britain in 1960, it has fought a civil war (1967-1970) and has also been subjected to incessant military interruptions of the governance process (between 1966 and 1999). Hence, it is possible to surmise that national life in Nigeria, from the country's independence in 1960 to the current era, has been marked more by general experimentation than discernible developmental determination. Precisely stated, the civil war of 1967 to 1970 and the surrounding aberrant military participation in politics have left deep psychological and empirical impairments on the national developmental process. These impairments translate to national devastation. Therefore, the continuing incidence of devastation needs to be properly recognized by the national developmental framework and the appropriate tools consequently applied to its reversal. Invariably, this imperative of reversal entails national reconstruction. And under this scenario, what is the role of education? In distinctive terms, what is the role of entrepreneurial education?

The methodology of the study is both descriptive and inferential. The general objective of the work therefore is to examine the relationship between entrepreneurial education and national reconstruction in Nigeria. Based on subject examination (and the consequent findings) we shall arrive at policy-making conclusions. We consider the study significant because, its findings and conclusions would invariably enhance the quality of national planning in the Nigerian state in particular, and in all the other polities of comparable experience and challenges.

## **2. CONCEPTUAL ELUCIDATIONS**

### **2. 1. Entrepreneurial Education**

We wish to underscore in this sub-section (of the study) that our focus is on an entrepreneurial brand of education. It is instructive to make this emphasis in view of the existence of *entrepreneurship education* as a concept of comparable origin. Hence, while entrepreneurship education deals with specificities and specializations, the entrepreneurial brand of education is the summation of these specifications and experiences. In other words, while the former may refer to curricular and course contents, the latter refers to philosophies and broad outlines of education. The entrepreneurial goal of education may accordingly be broken down into entrepreneurship classes and courses, to obtain entrepreneurship, as an output of the educational process.

## **2. 2. National Reconstruction**

Indeed, national reconstruction in this study presupposes a condition of national devastation or destruction. It derives from a condition of dilapidation of sundry national infrastructure and the incidence of despair as defining attribute of human existence in a nation-state. It suggests either that a functional nation was previously in existence or that the evolution of the national entity had invariably become stillborn. Hence, we conceptualize national reconstruction as a building activity that possesses physical and mental trajectories. Furthermore, national reconstruction in the study connotes the erection of the failed structure(s) on weak foundation(s) and the conviction that the new structures and mentalities would appositely be hoisted on solid developmental pillars.

## **2. 3. Sustainable Development**

The conceptualization of sustainable development may truly not be as uncomplicated as it seems. In the first place, it would be highly inadequate to merely define the composite terminologies, in attempting to make a meaningful explication. Implicit in the concept therefore is a notion of issues beyond brevity and fleetingness. Consequently, the World Commission on Environment and Development [1], in its report, *Our Common Future: From One Earth to One World*, (also known as the Brundtland Commission's report) defines sustainable development as paths of human progress which meet the needs and aspirations of the present generation, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. We indeed, consider the Brundtland Commission's definition, comprehensive and adequate for our purposes in this study. We further highlight in agreement, its positioning of the concept of sustainable development as a process that remains ongoing in the positive regard.

## **2. 4. Emergent Polity**

An emergent polity at once, throws in the issue of age-old and enduring polities. However, it raises in addition, questions that border on yardsticks for the determination of adequacy of age and the universalities of the enduring values in such other polities. But emergent and enduring polities are also not mere theoretical concepts. They are additionally, empirical realities. In our elucidations in this sub-section therefore, we present in contradistinction, the United States' system as an enduring polity and our Nigerian variable as an emergent type. Accordingly, whereas the United States have existed as an independent political entity for two hundred and forty years, the Nigerian state is only fifty-five years old as an independent nation-state. In comparative and real terms therefore, the Nigerian state is an emergent polity and considered in this study in such status. In such polities (emergent polities), the central issues are matters of sustainable development.

## **3. A CONCISE LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **3. 1. A General Characterization of Nigeria's National Condition**

In this section of the literature review, we shall deploy as starters, the position of Adebanwi and Obadare [2] as follows:

Nigeria offers a magnificent template for examining the chronic schizophrenia that characterizes the African postcolonial state and the resulting social (de)formations that (re)compose, and are, in turn, (re)composed by, the state. Although rigged against reason and rhythm from its very conception and inception, Nigeria ironically, contains perhaps the greatest combination and concentration of human and natural resources that can be (re)mobilized in creating an African power state with a capacity to stand at the vortex, if not the centre, of continental revival and racial renewal. This paradox raises a fundamental question: Why have the socio-economic and political actualities of, and in, Nigeria, been historically (permanently?) subversive of her potentialities?

Dike [3] opines that Nigeria has a weird value system and that it is a society where priorities are turned to their heads. Onuoha [4] also posits that Nigeria has experimented with all kinds of ideologies and economic management theories to move the economy forward to no avail. Nwanegbo and Odigbo [5] further observe that majority of the population of Nigeria seem to lack access to pipe-borne water, health care facilities, electricity and affordable quality education. And amidst these development(al) challenges; the security situation in the country deteriorated drastically, as the climax of these security threats is the insurgence of a group called Boko Haram in Northern Nigeria. Utomi [6] characterizes governance in Nigeria as a criminal enterprise. Invariably, the notion of criminality suggests plunder and destruction of values, plunder of common heritages and the impairment of national hope and aspirations. Hence, according to Odunlami [7], from being a relatively wealthy country in the 1970s, Nigeria has terribly degenerated into a community of impoverished animals, lean of limbs and shorn of happiness, rendered so by the unconscionable criminality of its leaders.

According to Olayiwola [8] the reverberating effects of the failure of leadership, corruption and bad governance are being felt across all sectors and segments of Nigeria - unemployment, insecurity, crude oil thefts, dearth of infrastructures, problems in education, health services, transportation, accommodation, communication, medication and so on and so forth. Consequently, Nigeria has remained a laggard in social, political and economic developments. Furthermore, citing Abbas [9], Olayiwola [8] submits:

As the ranks of the unemployed swell at one extreme, the number of jet owners grows at the other end. Excruciating poverty exists side by side with obscene opulence. The national airline has been 'killed' to allow for private airlines; the national electric corporation is gradually being 'killed' to boost the business of power generators; the National Communication outfit like NITEL is 'killed' for private ones to spring; the railway was 'killed' to enable private haulage to flourish; the National Universities are 'killed' that private ones can emerge; and stolen public funds are spent, to import weapons to suppress political opponents and rig elections.

Invariably, the rate of increase in criminal activities in Nigeria remains alarming and since the country returned to democratic rule (in 1999), security of life and property has been so threatened, and armed robbery, terrorism and other related crimes are on the increase. And this has resulted to high number of casualties on Nigerians and non Nigerians, as well as unpalatable consequences for the nation's economic growth and development [10].

### **3. 2. On Fundamentals of Education**

According to Kohlberg and Mayer [11], the most important issue confronting educators and educational theorists is the choice of ends for the educational process. They argue that without clear and rational educational goals, it becomes impossible to decide which educational programs achieve objectives of general import and which teach incidental facts and attitudes of dubious worth. Kohlberg and Mayer further remind us that there have been three broad streams in the development of (Western) educational ideology. While their detailed statements vary from generation to generation, each stream exhibits continuity, based upon particular assumptions of psychological development. The first stream of thought, the “romantic,” hold that what comes from within the child is the most important aspect of development; therefore, the pedagogical environment should be permissive enough to allow the inner “good” (abilities and social virtues) to unfold and the inner “bad” to come under control.

Then there is the cultural transmission ideology. The important emphasis here is that educating consists of transmitting knowledge, skills, and social and moral rules of the culture. Knowledge and rules of the culture may be rapidly changing or they may be static. In either case, however, it is assumed that education is the transmission of the culturally given. Thirdly, there is progressivism. Hence, as an educational ideology, progressivism holds that education should nourish the child’s natural interaction with a developing society or environment. In the progressive view therefore, education requires an environment that actively stimulates development, through the presentation of resolvable but genuine problems or conflicts. Consequently, the educative experience makes the child think - think in ways, which organize both cognition and emotion [11]. The concept of education in this study connotes Western educational ideology. The expositions of Kohlberg and Mayer in the foregoing section of the paper are therefore germane to our purposes in the study. We shall return to these positions in due course.

### **3. 3. The True Character of Education in Nigeria**

The rapid development of society has resulted in a higher demand on talent structure (Jing and Wei [12]. Invariably, talent structure raises the issue of talent effectiveness [13]. In addition, the engendering of talent effectiveness should be an objective of functional education. To what extent therefore, is the current educational system in Nigeria, capable of engendering talent effectiveness? According to Osalor [14] cited in Okeke [15], the Nigerian state operates in a 21<sup>st</sup> century economy, with a 19<sup>th</sup> century education system. A system whereby much emphasis is still placed on the conventional classroom environment with much reverence for certificate for graduates, who in most cases, are trained to be job seekers, as evidenced in the present high unemployment rate in the land. Joshua, Azuh and Olanrewaju [16] specifically identified and addressed the unemployment issue, as it borders on graduate unemployment. Hence, the issue of graduate unemployment not only begins to question the sufficiency of the overall content of education in the country but in specific terms, the purpose of the general studies programme at the tertiary level of education.

Poverty and unemployment therefore remain major developmental challenges in Nigeria [17]. According to Nwagwu [18] cited in Olotu, Salami and Akeremale [17] ineffective educational quality, inadequate job skill and training, are shortcomings militating against the productive sector of the Nigerian economy. Consequently, the private sector is not willing to

recruit Nigerian graduates because of the insufficient knowledge and experience of the graduates. Furthermore, Nigerian government is unwilling to finance and seriously invest in the educational sector, by encouraging research-oriented projects, through research institutes, as the consequence and result of this is the weak and unfavourable policy society (sic) for human resource development [17]. Ehinomen and Afolabi [19] have further argued that a situation whereby people who are qualified and willing to work are not able to find job is frustrating. We argue however that a contention such as this seems to beg the surrounding questions. For instance, what makes this “educated” person qualified? Is he qualified to do what? Why is this person not equally qualified to create employment? These are the surrounding issues, which truly border on the character of the educational system that produced this qualified citizen. Furthermore, according to Fashola [20]:

If ever there was a country of immeasurable employment opportunities, that country is Nigeria. More than any other nation of our population and size, we have houses, roads and bridges to build. Looking around us, it cannot be hard to see that we urgently require engineers, technicians and artisans in their hundreds of thousands. With acres and acres of land to farm, we obviously need trained Agricultural scientists and semi-skilled farm workers. And with such a vast network of inland waterways and contiguity to the sea, we could do with men skilled in modern methods of fishing and fish farming. Indeed...we have such an enormous amount of work to do, and we have such alarming shortages of all kinds of professionals – teachers, doctors, nurses, lawyers, firemen, waste management personnel, administrators, etc, who are ready, able and willing to work. It is therefore a worrisome contradiction that in a country with so much to do and to build, we can talk of unemployment [20].

Okeke and Chukwudebelu [15] had identified democratic capitalism as the possible underlining feature of democracy in Nigeria. Democratic capitalism was denoted in that study as a complex web of democratic and capitalist tendencies in a given society or polity. We concluded in the study that the national educational orthodoxy in Nigeria was profoundly complicated by the contradictions of democratic capitalism. Furthermore, the following studies and commentaries [21-28] have all amply demonstrated that the character of education in the Nigerian state is perilous. There have also been other contributions [29-34] in agreement with this characterization. Thus, while there are certainly other studies that immediately precede our current contribution, findings of this particular study will invariably serve the purpose of adding to the theoretical and empirical efforts, for the critically required need to reposition education in the Nigerian state for national reconstruction.

#### **4. THE STUDY’S HYPOTHESES**

We at this juncture, underscore the hypotheses of this study as follows: (i) the Nigeria state is critically standing on a very weak educational foundation (ii) the general studies programme at the tertiary level of education in Nigeria is fundamentally characterized by ineffectiveness and (iii) democratic capitalism has remained a pervasive problem of education in Nigeria

## **5. CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE HYPOTHESES**

### **5. 1. Nigeria's Weak Educational Foundation**

Despite what appears to have been tendencies towards proper planning, the truth is that the Nigerian educational foundation has remained weak. Its philosophical bedrock is heavily hidden in the academic imaginations of the nation's policy formulators. It is not identifiable by all stakeholders. Actually, the present attitude of Nigerian leaders towards education is largely pretentious. Such attitudes inhibit the necessity for national reconstruction. Hence, fifty-five years after political independence and fifty-five years of independent national planning, the educational system has largely continued to produce people that are unemployable. Consequently, the untoward character of Nigeria's national condition is a product of a weak national talent structure, which has resulted from an inadequate educational focus. We now return to the expositions of Kohlberg and Mayer [11]. Hence, we ask: among the romantic stream, the cultural transmission inclination and progressivism, which tendency is identifiable as the ideology or focus of education in Nigeria? If it were romanticism, why is criminality a prevalent attribute of the political class in Nigeria? Why is there so much of devastated tastes and nihilism in the country? According to Olayiwola [8]:

Many of the leaders have tended to plunder, defraud, embezzle, corrupt, mismanage and in the process envy one another with impunity and relish. They have also been possessive, egoistic, selfish, individualistic, callous, greedy and secretive (sic). The leaders and their regimes/administrations/governments were deeply engrossed in excessive acts of corruption, impropriety, mismanagement and squander mania. In addition, all available means were employed by Nigerian political leaders to 'grab' power, including the blatant rigging of elections, manipulation of census figures, violence, thuggery, arson, vandalism, gangsterism, corruption, religious bigotry, regionalism, tribalism, ethnic sentiments and acts of brigandage. Consequently, neglect of public interest, malpractices of all forms, crimes of every description, mendacity, lack of candour, readiness to cheat, grabbing, philistinism, egotism, ethnic and sectional inclinations have been the order of the day for many years. These have precipitated violence, national disintegration, abject poverty and socio-politico-economic instability...A society that is unjust, unfree and devoid of equality of opportunity is inherently unstable.

It is indeed, a society that calls for national reconstruction. We therefore further ask: Are the defining attributes of education in Nigeria, cultural transmission or progressivism? What then is the purpose of an educational system that has transmitted the negative attributes of the Nigerian leadership class, as identified in Olayiwola [8]? Can it be said that the leaders are not educated? Furthermore, if we argue that education in Nigeria is built on progressivism, then we begin to see why Olayiwola alludes to a society that is unjust, unfree and devoid of equality of opportunities – an inherently unstable society. This is essentially because, progressivism as educational ideology holds that education should nourish the child's natural interaction with a developing society or environment [11]. In what direction is the Nigerian society developing?

Consequently, where society cannot plausibly be denoted as developing and where the environment is immensely characterized by negativities, "education" becomes a recipe for

instability. Deviant characters would then begin to hinge the blame on Western education and consequently contend that Western education is evil (Book is bad or Boko Haram). We therefore argue that the weak political and economic talent structure of the Nigerian state, which features the prevalence of unemployed graduates, in a country where there is so much work to do [20], is a consequence of an unfocused educational ideology. Simply put, unemployment describes the condition of people who are without jobs [35]. It is therefore disturbing that in a country where there is so much work to do; there is also in abundance, the contradictory position of graduate unemployment.

## **5. 2. An Ineffective General Studies Programme at the Tertiary Level of Education**

General education (general studies) aims to promote the comprehensive development of the quality of college students [12]. Practically every tertiary educational institution in Nigeria has a general studies division. Further to the general studies design of the programmes of the schools, an elective course system is embedded in the curriculum of the institutions. All these are ostensibly aimed at turning out graduates that are employable, competent, productive, knowledgeable; creative and useful to their nation-state. Why then is it, that at the end of the day, the graduates are massively unemployed? We are of the view in this study therefore that the general studies programme in the Nigerian tertiary education system requires a rethinking. It does appear as if currently, the GS programmes are only conceived as methods of exposing the student to different vistas of knowledge that he may need, in order to get along in life (upon graduation). However, this concept of general studies does not serve Nigeria's current purposes. Nigeria's current challenges are gargantuan and they accordingly require fundamental changes in approaches and methodologies.

To address the problem of unemployment and the composite issue of unemployability among Nigerian graduates, it is becoming the practice for every tertiary institution to create centers of entrepreneurial studies. This is a welcome development. However, these centers of entrepreneurship need to be integrated into the general studies programme of the various institutions. Afolabi [36] describes entrepreneurship as the manifest ability and willingness of individuals, on their own, in teams, within and outside existing organizations, to perceive and create new economic opportunities (new products, new production methods, new organizational schemes and new product-market combinations). And to introduce their ideas in the market, in the face of uncertainty and other obstacles, by making decisions on location, form and the use of resources and institutions. Therefore, no objective can be more plausible for education in a socio-political and economic environment that demands national reconstruction. Obi [37] also strongly demonstrates the relationship among education, entrepreneurship and national progress (in this study, national reconstruction).

In the opinion of this study, entrepreneurship is primarily an attitude of the mind, which may come naturally or carefully created, where it was naturally non-existent. It is not a peculiarity of profit-seeking organizations. It is so vital to national reconstruction that it can become the sole national ideology of education. It should not be mounted as peripheral programmes for students who may find it difficult to obtain employment upon graduation. In the face of the apparent challenges surrounding the possibilities of nationally hinging the philosophy of education on entrepreneurship, it could be made the pivotal idea of the general studies programme of the various tertiary institutions in the country. This demands new designs for the general studies divisions. Indeed, the suggested new designs of the general

studies course-content are critically required, in order to make it possible for the Nigerian graduate to be unquestionably employable.

### **5. 3. Democratic Capitalism as Pervasive Problem in Education**

In this study, we further advance the argument of the negative colouration of the character of education in Nigeria by democratic capitalism. Under this circumstance, it is in contradistinction both democratic and capitalist to tolerate the mushrooming of pre-nursery, nursery, primary and post-primary institutions, which pass for educational institutions in Nigeria. These ostensible schools, ubiquitous in nature, can be found in sundry shanties, uncompleted double or multiple storied buildings, in Nigeria's over-populated urban and semi-urban locations. Usually, these caricatures of educational institutions are located where inspectors of schools can never dare to reach. Only the owners of these places can go to the offices of the inspectors, to present the scorecard of the so-called educational institutions. The promoters of these curious enclaves that pass for schools, are in many instances semi-literate capitalists, without any background in education. The personnel they hire as teachers are school dropouts and psychologically unstable individuals who could not be employed by any other sector of the economy.

The only resemblance of a teacher that may be found in such so-called schools are children and other relatives of the promoters of these places who are either awaiting the results of their qualifying examinations for further studies or they are on vacation from institutions of higher learning. Some of these relations of these proprietors of these places, are full-time students of certain tertiary educational institutions, and part-time teachers in these ostensible schools of their relations. You also find in these places, mere birds of passage that are relations of these promoters of such institutions but are only bidding time, in order to get into some other endeavours of their preference. According to Dike [3]:

Although Nigeria's educational institutions in general are in dire need, the most troubled of the three tiers is the primary education sector. The recent statistics on primary education available to this writer shows that there are about 2,015 primary schools in Nigeria with no buildings of any type. Classes are held under trees. The quality of lectures conducted under such an inhumane condition would not be anything to be proud of.

Indeed, under Nigeria's continuing democratic capitalism, if similar statistics of primary education as obtained by Dike were possible to obtain as at current date, it would be utterly incomprehensible. And the continuing danger in its broadest perspective is that, if Nigeria cannot give adequate and quality education to students at the elementary and secondary level, the tertiary institutions would continue to be populated by those who are least prepared to face the rigors of university education. And 'cultism,' 'intimidation of professors into better grades' and other vices will continue to blossom on the campuses across the nation [3].

Essentially, what these mindless capitalists (masquerading as promoters of education), add to the national educational template in Nigeria are trajectories of destruction. We consequently opine that another name for democratic capitalism is unbridled capitalism. We concede that it is in the nature of democracy to permit freedom of many sorts. But in the provision of educational services, such freedom may lead to uncontrollable multiplication of sub-standard institutions. And this is dangerous to education for national reconstruction. We

begin to see a situation whereby a weak intervention by the state in education and non-intervention by the state are coterminous. Invariably, a society that tolerates such deviant tendencies is tolerating the possibilities of an implosion.

In a related dimension, at the end of a recent World Economic Forum's Summit on Africa, held 3-5 June 2015, the following observation was submitted:

Last week's World Economic Forum on Africa 2015 summit in Cape Town (South Africa) was, I had predicted, full of optimism about the continent's future. Gratifyingly, the heady mood was tempered for the first time by an acknowledgement of a basic truth: most of Africa's education systems are irreparably broken. There was also an acceptance that standards will only improve with a massive increase in resources – which is beyond the scope of governments alone [38].

Therefore, when it is so contended that most of Africa's education systems are irreparably broken, educational and national planners in the emergent African polity of Nigeria do not need to exclude their country from such generic impressions. An irreparably broken tool creates a worrisome situation. And indeed, various sub-units of the education architecture in the Nigerian state seem to be irreparably jumbled. The disarray in the sector apparently impairs the chances of national reconstruction. We agree with Omede and Omede [39] that every nation's educational system is to help it overcome her peculiar problems. A peculiar problem of the Nigerian polity is the urgency of national reconstruction, in the face of abundance of both material and human resources (that have immensely remained unutilized). The role of education accordingly becomes critical. And when therefore the educational system itself is the source of the major problem in a polity, we arrive at a highly worrisome disorder.

We have thus, attempted to demonstrate in this study, the influence of democratic capitalism on this disorder. Pota [38] suggests also that standards will only improve with a massive increase in resources – which is beyond the scope of governments alone. But beyond the resources, there is this brigandage that is attendant to democratic capitalism in Nigeria, which democratizes the operation of institutions of negative worth by private schools' proprietors. Education for national reconstruction in the country must accordingly focus on the phasing out of such degenerate institutions and ensuring that they do not reemerge in the emergent African polity.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

Findings of this study have led to the conclusion that the state of education in Nigeria has remained perilous. Entrepreneurial education is yet to become a national goal in the country. National reconstruction has invariably remained elusive. It has been highlighted in the study that the historical experiences of the country have led to a situation of national devastation that has criminalized national values, and produced stunted national growth and impaired hopes. To reverse this trend of criminality and trend of stunted growth processes, rekindle impaired hopes in the developmental potentialities and actualities of the country, it is suggested in the study that education must be placed on a national emergency condition in Nigeria. It is fundamentally suggested in the study that the emergent African polity of Nigeria

should vote in favour of very strong state intervention in education. In addition, the national philosophy of education (for national reconstruction) in the country must have an entrepreneurial trajectory. It has accordingly been canvassed in the paper that entrepreneurial education is a precondition for sustainable development in emerging polities.

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