Human Capital Development, the National Question and Sustainable Development in Nigeria

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Abstract: This study is premised on the viewpoint that the national question is critically interwoven with every other developmental issue in the Nigerian nation-state. It argued that development is either sustainable or it remains ephemeral. We hypothesize that the crucial factor which may most consummately deter the phenomenon of ephemeral development is the human capital element. Therefore, we pose the following questions: to what extent has human capital development been embedded in the current attempts at answering the national question in Nigeria? How can human capital development successfully contribute to the provision of answers to the national question in Nigeria? As we interrogate the surrounding issues to the two questions therefore, we intend to be proffering solutions to the nagging national question in Nigeria. It is strongly suggested in this study that when the national question in Nigeria is being profoundly addressed, sustainable development will invariably begin to appear realizable. Hence, the general objective of the study is to examine the relationship among human capital development, the national question and sustainable development in Nigeria. The specific objectives are to (i) establish a relationship between human capital development and solutions to the national question in Nigeria (ii) examine the relationship between the national question in Nigeria and sustainable national development and (iii) make recommendations on how human capital development can meaningfully contribute to the national question's answers in Nigeria. The theoretical framework of the study is the human capital theoretical framework. The study's methodology is logical argumentation.

Key words: Human Capital, Development, National Question, Sustainable Development, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

To tell the truth, development has continued to elude Nigeria. Development in this study does not stand for material acquisition by individual citizens. Neither is reference being made to the erection of structures that dilapidate in no distant time, principally as a result of a national non-maintenance culture. But we shall later return to the full conceptualization of development (sustainable development). A fundamental proposition of the paper for now is that the national question in Nigeria is critically interwoven with every other developmental issue in the Nigerian state. It is intricately interwoven with the question of sustainable development and the human capital question is interrelated with all of this. Essentially, the objective of the study (the general objective) is to examine the relationship among human capital development, the national question and sustainable development in Nigeria. The specific objectives are to (i) establish a relationship between human capital development and solutions to the national question in Nigeria (ii) examine the relationship between the national question in Nigeria and sustainable national development and (iii) make recommendations on how human capital development can meaningfully contribute to the national question's solution in Nigeria. Invariably, the theoretical framework of the study is the human capital theoretical framework. The study's methodology is logical argumentation.

CONCEPTUAL ISSUES
Human Capital Development
The concept of human capital truly owes its origins to the field of economics. Among the earliest contributors to its conceptual evolution were Pigou (1928), Becker (1964), Lewis (1954) and Mincer (1958). In these works, Human Capital became similar to "physical means of production" like factories or machines. One can therefore invest in human capital through education, training or medical treatment. If this happens, one's output depends on the rate of return on the capital one owns. This is why human capital is seen as "a means of production" into which additional investments yield additional output (Idike, 2013). However, Crook et al (2011) have further argued that human capital is the stock of competences, knowledge and personality attributes embedded in the ability to perform of labour so as to produce economic value. This of course extends the concept of human capital beyond the confines of factory-production process. In this regard, human capital refers to skilled labour and the productive capacities embedded in a population. The World Economic Forum's Human Capital Report (2015) therefore highlights as follows:
A nation's human capital endowment—the skills and capacities that reside in people and that are put to productive use—can be a more important determinant of its long term economic success than virtually any other resource. This resource must be invested in and leveraged efficiently in order for it to generate returns—for the individuals involved as well as an economy as a whole.
Peterson et al (2011) posit that human capital refers to the skills and knowledge that employees possess, which are relevant to the organization and which could be improved upon through professional training or development. Then according to Olaniyan and Okemakinde (2008), in general terms, human capital represents the investment people make in themselves that enhance their economic productivity. And by this definition, a curious dimension is brought to the definition of human capital, whereby in absolute terms, people are to make the investment in themselves which would translate to human capital?

In this study, human capital refers to the skills and knowledge which citizens possess. It refers to the skilled and knowledgeable human resources of a nation. Differently denoted, a nation's human capital is made up of her enlightened citizens. In this study therefore, human capital development connotes the processes of investment in human capital that lead to the generation of returns for the individuals involved and for the national economy as a whole. It broadly refers to what governments do as different from what is done by Chief Executive Officers of business and other organizations. The primary motive of the process is the development of the individual as citizen, which is different from the conceiving of the individual as an employee of any entity.

The National Question
The national question as a concept is often bordered by the definitional disputations and (sometimes) conceptual ambiguities which characterize social science scholarship. Akwara et al (2013) for instance have argued that:
The vast majority of Nigerians have always reduced the national question to contradictions and antagonism between the various ethnic nationalities in the country. In order words, they see the national question in terms of inter-ethnic hostilities only. But the national question is far bigger and more complex than this. The national question is a big complex of political, economic, ideological, cultural, historical, religious, legal and other problems that arise during a people's struggle for liberation and for favourable internal and external conditions for further development; and also in the course of establishing equal, friendly relations between them and others.
In the above position all conceivable subject matters of liberation struggle and national development come under the conceptual focus of the national question. The national question as a concept in this case begins to seem ambiguous. However, citing Iyayi (2000) and Ezuonu & Chima (2010), Akwara et al further submits:
The national question in Nigeria is evident on daily basis in the reports of violence against people in the various ethnic nationalities in the country especially in the South-East and the Niger-Delta; against the peoples of the Middle Belt region; against South-Eastern Nigerians living in the Northern region of the country; and in the discussion of revenue allocation and resource control and in the calls for fiscal federalism by the southern states in Nigeria. In the South-East geo-political zone, it is seen in their cries against the marginalization of the Igbos in the political and economic processes of the country for having lost a war of independence in the Nigeria-Biafra war and in their agitation for state creation in their geo-political zone as the zone has the least number of states when compared to other geo-political zone.

In this study, the national question is rather concisely viewed as that amalgam of issues which must be resolved for national cohesion and progress to be achieved in a nation-state. The national question encapsulates those issues that negate national cohesion and make the status of nationhood disputable in a nation state. According to Igbokwu and Orhero (2014) some of the sub-categories of these (issues) questions in Nigeria include: to what extent do citizens and groups feel a sense of identity with the Nigerian state? Does the state protect citizens' interests? Is justice and fairness preserved in the manner in which the state relates to every section of the citizenry? To what extent is justice dispensed in the extradition and distribution of the proceeds of resources extracted in certain territories of the state?

Sustainable Development

The concept of sustainable development is enshrouded in ambiguity (Nwafor, 2006 in Nwakaire and Oreh, 2013). But we have to disambiguate it. We begin from the meaning of the specific concept of development as we agree with Onyukwu (2004) when he opines that no matter whether reference is made to societies, regions or individuals, there is an underlying association of development with positive change. Thus, development involves several dimensions of structural transformation which includes cultural, political, social, environmental, and economic changes (Onyukwu, 2004). The endpoint is positive change. Onyukwu (2004) further describes development as possessing fluid objectives, deriving from the mutation of nature and its derivatives which in turn lead to changes in the values of human societies. This takes us to the sustainability linkage. Hence in this study, sustainable development is about doing today what must be done for life to be meaningful for the present and future generations (Idike, 2014a). Sustainable development, argues Osadebe (2012) could be termed the lasting improvement of the social, physical, economic, cultural and institutional well-being of the people for a more meaningful living. It therefore refers to the provision of meaningful living conditions for present and future generations.

As a matter of fact, development is either sustainable development or it remains ephemeral. The surrounding activities remain uneventful and the national psyche completely devastated. Todaro in Onyukwu (2004) therefore notes that development connotes sustained elevation of an entire society or social system towards a better or more humane life. Sustainable national development has been an elusive desire in Nigeria (Idike, 2014b). The impact of human capital development on the national question and how this relates to sustainable national development is therefore a central matter in this study.

HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE NATIONAL QUESTION IN NIGERIA

Essentially, human capital development translates at the national level to the emergence of new nationals. In the Nigerian case human capital development should lead to the emergence of new Nigerians. It is not evidenced by certification of products of educational institutions. The most critical qualities to be possessed by these new citizens will be qualitative, functional education and demonstrable competence. Such education and competencies produce the multiplier of further creativities, further opportunities and immense national abundance. Under such a setting, divisive, ethnic and racist tendencies take secondary positions. It is always easy to appeal to the ethnic sense of many Nigerians because of the persistent poverty that alienates people from the state. It is this economic situation that sometimes pushes people to seek solace in primary group identity. In fact, the lack of socio-economic security makes many people vulnerable to self-seeking elites that present ethnic nationalism as a panacea for their predicament (Ake, 1999, Kaur, 2007 & Jinadu, 2004 in Attah, 2013).

According to Russell (1977) a nation is not to be defined by affinities of language or a common historical origin, though these things often help to produce a nation…what constitutes a nation are sentiments and instincts of belonging to the same group or herd. The Boko Haram insurgency in the Northern part of Nigeria is an instance of disbelief in belonging to the same group in Nigeria. In addition to whatever other categorizations that Boko Haram may be given, it is a separatist group. Separatism is undoubtedly a result of dissatisfaction by a people with their lot in a subsisting national arrangement. This dissatisfaction may not be fully unconnected with large measures of deprivation. It may not also be unconnected with lack of national focus on human capital development.

Thus, immense national abundance, arising from human capital development can engender the sentiments and instincts of similarities and belongingness among Nigerians. It was under similar settings that Barak Obama emerged against all racist odds, the President of the United States of America. Indeed, at the point of Obama's emergence as president, human capital development was no longer a national issue in

the American system. There was in relative (comparative) terms, a situation of national abundance in the American economy. The starting point is human capital development and consequently, citizens with requisite skills and capacities would become catalysts of national growth and abundance. Furthermore, in an environment of immense national abundance, tribal and sectional sentiments are very likely to wane and cease to exist.

The basic wants of human beings are few and if they are satisfied they become insulations from subversion (Azikiwe, 1980). History he adds has shown that the main cause why some societies became turbulent and unstable is because those who governed failed to discover this secret yearning of humanity. Azikiwe identifies these basic wants as: plentiful avenues for obtaining a balanced diet and wholesome food, comfortable and inexpensive shelter, a reasonable and frugal wardrobe and easy access to the necessities and amenities of contemporary life, above the minimum subsistence level. The point then is that, Nigerians that are availed these basic necessities of life are likely to become less attracted by ethnic chauvinism. Desperate politicians who enlist their services and support during such ethnic battles only succeed because the citizens lack these necessities. The most effective method of availing these necessities to the people is through human capital development.

THE NATIONAL QUESTION IN NIGERIA AND SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

It is strongly emphasized in this study that sustainable national development can only be brought about in Nigeria by the various Nigerian peoples believing in "One Nigeria". The national question in Nigeria is about the evolution of one Nigeria. Akwara et al (2013) add that it is only when the various groups and peoples in the country are involved in the formulation of governmental policies and their implementation; get a fair share of the nation's resources; and are not considered as peoples whose values, opinions and feelings do not matter in the country that they can cultivate the necessary sense of belonging and identify with their fellow citizens and the governments at all levels; and work in unity toward the building of a united and strong nation-state in which all will be proud to belong. This scenario suggests the resolution of the national question. And it is a necessary condition for sustainable development in the country.

A major indication of negative national development in Nigeria is in the increasing level of insecurity (of lives and property) of the citizens (Idike, 2014a). It is even also intertwined with citizenship issues. Thus, a Nigerian may be considered a non-indigene on Nigerian soil and when inter-tribal conflicts and other insurrections take place the "non-indigene" is always targeted. According to Eniola et al. (2012 in Igbokwu and Orhero (2014), one of the undoings of Nigeria, Africa's most populous nation, is the stifling problem of "indigeneity" ... Indigeneity and problems of citizenship in Nigeria make a person born and bred in Lagos, Ibadan, Kano, or any other part of the country not a true member of his society, contrary to what is obtained in other "developed' countries. This is because an Igbo man cannot contest and win governorship election in Katsina state and a Hausa man with Nigerian citizenship status, cannot contest election in Lagos and win, even though he was born and bred there and has contributed to its development. An Itsekiri man living in Oyo state for over 25 years making necessary contributions to the development of the state, is not regarded as an indigene of the state, irrespective of the number of years he has spent in Oyo state, he and all members of his family are still regarded as settlers and non-indigenes, hence, they cannot have access to or benefit from what is purely reserved for the indigenes, even if such indigenes have not been in Oyo State for over 30 years (Eniola et al, 2012 in Igbokwu and Orhero, 2014).

Indeed, the national question can only be considered adequately addressed when the interrelated citizenship issue has also ceased to be. State of origin and place of birth will cease to be yardsticks for obtaining access to national opportunities by Nigerian citizens. The latent energies of the citizens will become released, productivity will become nationally enhanced, and today's citizens would become prosperous and in their state of prosperities invest in the wellbeing of the future generation, as the resultant scenario translates to sustainable development.

Furthermore, the increasing level of insecurity of lives and property in the country is amply evidenced by the Boko Haram terrorism in the Northern part of the country. While the activities of the terrorist group remain interpretable as insurgency, it is also a manifestation of another dimension to the national question in Nigeria. Insecurity in any form is an opposing thesis to development. Igbokwu and Orhero (2014) thus argue that Nigeria's developmental problem is tied to the avalanche of security challenges bedeviling the country in recent time. Hence, as the security challenges are addressed, sustainable national development would begin to manifest.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

As an outcome of this study, the massive establishment of E-centers of learning by government, at different strategic locations in (different parts of) the country is recommended. This recommendation is in tandem with the findings of Idike (2013) which indicates that internet connectivity is a plausible measure for ameliorating the problems of human capital development in developing societies. 'Development' in the twenty-first century, despite tensions with liberalism, envisages a key role for the state, especially in the construction and deployment of human capacity (Anderson, 2014). It is the state therefore that is expected to create and run the e-centers of learning. Access to these centers will be free. The centers will not award certificates. Emphasis in this recommendation is placed on the utility of the information, enlightenment or education obtained from such centers than on the acquisition of certificates. The craze for certificates has remained a detrimental phenomenon in the developmental templates of the Nigerian state. There is a pressing need to place less emphasis on certificates in the acquisition of knowledge for sustainable development in in the country.

Government will pay the staff of the centers. The structures and operational spaces of the centers should not be bogus and not be over-ambitious but moderate places with minimal numbers of staff. The orthodox equivalent of the kernel of this proposal is a public library. But the proposed centers will have no conventional books. The books will be e-books. The centers will be centers of information and enlightenment, under the designated Ministry, manned by dedicated and professional officers. Todaro in Onyukwu (2004) has rightly observed that development is both a physical reality and a state of mind. Mindsets are functions of the available information. Nigerian citizens could freely walk into these centers and obtain qualitative and developmental information. The human capital development emphasis in this recommendation is on the utility of the information available to Nigerian citizens. Such information is fundamentally different from what is available on television and radio. They will be developmental information tailored towards human capital development.

Access to work-stations at the centers may be allotted to registered members on hourly basis or more. The center closes for business on daily basis when the other civil servants are closing for the day. This recommendation is interpretable as free education, as the truth is that, human capital development and education are conceptually and empirically related. Crook et al (2011) demonstrate the linkages among education; experience and human capital development. Hands-on experience and real-world education are the embedded ideas in this recommendation. Education consequently and squarely becomes an evident capital good. As a capital good, argue Olaniyan and Okemakinde (2008) education can be used to develop the human resources necessary for economic and social transformation. The focus on education as a capital good relates to the concept of human capital, which emphasizes that the development of skills is an important factor in production activities. It is widely accepted that education creates improved citizens and helps to upgrade the general standard of living in a society (Olaniyan and Okemakinde, 2008). But what is called education in this regard must be purposeful, utilitarian and developmental, tailored towards the obvious needs of the society where education is availed.

Oluwatobi and Ogunrinola (2011) have also strongly made the point about the appropriate channeling of a nation's capital expenditure to education. Experts and scholars have therefore, engaged themselves in a barrage of conceptual debates as to a better terminology to express this ever-recurrent theme of workforce improvement, facilitation and development (Idike, 2013). It is opined in this study that massive investments in masses-oriented IT-based education is as good as the massive erection of physical structures in the various educational institutions in the country, merely for theoretical classroom learning. The positive impact of such IT-based opportunities on the world views of citizens may not be immediately evident. Nevertheless, it is a proposal with highly impactful possibilities.

Human capital development is usually distinguishable into the following typologies: social capital investment, human resources development, human capital investment and intellectual capital investment. In this recommendation, these various classifications have been brought under the same template. With such centers in place, citizens will no longer for instance, go to Nigeria's federal capital in Abuja at their own expense, to obtain the comprehensive version of results of national elections, from the headquarters of the national electoral body. Citizens will obtain such information from these centers. Business men may not need to be physically at the embassies of their international business partners to obtain critical information. They will get it from these centers. Information, education and enlightenment that engender human capital

development will be obtained from these centers. Free education will become practicalized and consummated through such centers. Human capital development would have become revolutionized and democratized. The citizens will become knowledgeable and more creative and less acrimonious.

CONCLUSION

It has essentially been argued in this paper that the crucial factor which may most consummately deter the phenomenon of ephemeral development is the human capital element. In this study, human capital development has been treated from a holistic-functional perspective. We have suggested that the national question which also inhibits the attainment of sustainable developmental status in the country can be deterred by human capital development. However, human capital development has not truly been embedded in the current attempts at answering the national question in Nigeria. The national question in the country is usually seen from only the political perspectives and the proffered solutions have remained political solutions proposed by partisan politicians and other stakeholders with partisan and sectional interests. It has been argued in this paper that human capital development which would countervail the national question must be popular in content. Therefore, the recommended ICT solution in this study is popular in content. In other words, it is people-based and people-oriented.

It is strongly suggested in the study that when the national question in Nigeria is being profoundly addressed, sustainable development will invariably begin to appear realizable. ICT-based human capital development, when massively deployed in the national space of Nigeria can accelerate the pace of creativity, lead to increased productivity and tremendous national abundance. Thus, resort to ethnic and sectional opportunism will become reduced if not eradicated in outright manner. It has been strongly argued in the paper that the national question in Nigeria is critically interwoven with every other developmental issue in the Nigerian nation-state (inclusive of sustainable development and human capital development). Invariably, critically addressing the national question implies the acceleration of the pace of sustainable development in Nigeria.

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