

ENHANCING HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Educationists and economist have long been conscious of the fact that human beings are very important sources of the wealth of the nations. This is to say, that human capital has the capability of creating more wealth. That ability to create more wealth is dependent on the quality of education given to the populace. This theory has been tested by several other developing nations of the world such as Japan, south Korea, china, Singapore etc. these are countries with minimum natural resources but have been able to grow rapidly because of their high level of well trained dedicated and hard-working manpower. These countries have achieved rapid economic growth and it is believed that this is traceable to their huge investment in human capital. Many other countries, though rich in natural resources have grown poor because of their neglect of human capital development. It however opines that a dynamic education system needs a viable language as a medium to carry the weight of globalization. The inadequacy of education is immediately felt each time you interact with the average person who cannot express himself. Improper use of terms among highly learned persons is common. But the greatest harm is done in the lack of comprehension of basic science and technologies this is the singular most retarding fact of technological development in a country like Nigeria. The position of this paper is that more effort should be put into language and communication skills Development programs to equip both the teachers and the learners to be able to communicate effectively. This will no doubt positively enhance human capital development.

What is Human Capital?

Human capital has been variously defined by economists and educationist alike. Schultz (1961) sees human capital as the sum total of all knowledge, skills innovations and capabilities of employees to reach desired goals. Such goals include wealth creation, improved well being and general physical development. Todaro and Smith (2003) maintained that human capital is used in reference to education, health and other human capabilities that raise productivity when they are increased. Dees and Picken (2000) insist that human capital is known to consist of individual capabilities, knowledge, skills and experience that are relevant to the development of the nation's resources.

Need for Human Capital development

There is absolute need for human resources to be developed for various reasons. Human relationships must be built up between communities and nations as a way of enhancing advancement economically. This calls for concerted efforts as well as huge investments. Babalola in Olaniyan & Okemakinde (2008) advanced some reasons for the huge investment in human capital development.

- i. The new generation must be given the appropriate parts of the knowledge which has already been accumulated by the previous generations;
- ii. The new generation must be thought how existing knowledge should be used to develop new ideas and introduce new products and production method and social services; and
- iii. People must be encouraged to develop entirely new ideas and method through creative approaches.

Many researchers have continued to find out the important of investing in human capital as a sound basis for social-economic growth. One such researchers, Psacharopoudo & Woodall in Olaniyi & Okmakinde (2008;158) summed up this relevance as follow:

Human resources constitute the ultimate basis of the wealth of nations. Capital and natural resources are passive factors of production. Human beings are the active agencies who accumulate capital, exploit natural resources built social, economic and political organizations and carry forward national development. Schultz (1961) also identified several ways through which human capital can be developed and they include:

- i. Health services and facilities broadly conceived to include all expenditures, life expectancy, strength, stamina, vigour and vitality of people.
- ii. On the job training including old types of apprenticeship.
- iii. Formally organized education at the various levels of primary, secondary and tertiary levels.
- iv. Study programs for adults that are not organized by firms etc.
- v. Migration of individuals and families to adjust to changing job opportunities.

Education and Human Capital Development

All over the world, education has been seen as a strong force for the development of nations. The hallmark of development of any nation is related to the development of human beings. Odimegwu, (2005) posits that government all over the world are aware of the place of education and so invest seriously in the education industry as a way of laying a strong foundation for national growth. It is believed that high quality education will serve as a catalyst for human development. This will ensure efficiency of the workforce and increased productivity. Olu & Adenuga summarized it by saying: "There cannot be significant economic growth in any society without adequate human capital development." Put simply, education leads to human capital development which in turn leads to national economic growth.

Education is, no doubt the bedrock of all forms and development. It is critical component of human capital development. Everything relies on qualitative and functional education. A functional education is that which considers modern socio-economic, political and technological trends in the global arena in order to ensure that necessary knowledge and skills are put in place for the workforce. It is the resources inherent in man that education seeks to develop and sustain. The resources include knowledge, skills talents, experiences and attitudes. It is through education that the right type of training, skills and attitude are cultivated and imparted to the citizenry. This goal is clearly stated in the national policy on Education. According to the National policy on Education, Federal Government of Nigeria(FGN), the goals of tertiary education shall be to:

- i. Contribute to human development through high level relevant manpower development and training
- ii. Develop and inculcate proper values for the survival of the individuals and the society.
- iii. Develop the intellectual capacity of individuals to understand and appreciate their local and external environment.
- iv. Acquire both physical and intellectual skills which would enable individuals to be self reliant and useful members of the society.
- v. To promote and encourage scholarship and community service to forge and cement national unity.
- vi. Promote national and international understanding and interaction.

Human Capital Issues Raised

Despite all laudable strategies, the products of our education system have fallen short of expectation.

- a. There is massive unemployment
- b. There is underemployment
- c. Many university school leavers are unemployable because they lack knowledge and necessary survival skills
- d. Many tertiary institutions are poorly funded resulting in brain drain.
- e. There is uncondusive learning environment in our institutions of higher learning.
- f. General performance of students in internal and external examinations giving rise to lower standards
- g. Obvious unwillingness of many students to even work hard
- h. The desire to get rich quickly by fair or foul means, giving rise to different crimes like armed robbery, kidnapping swindling etc.

All these pose human capacity issues and they have far reaching consequences. There is urgent need to improve on human capital development and avert the imminent danger posed by frustrated, ill-prepared, poorly equipped graduates who cannot compete favourably in today's global economy driven by information and communication Technology, ICT.

Language in Human Capital development

The world is dynamic and education system is equally dynamic. Civilization has moved the world from Stone Age to age of industrialization through the world wars to the age of science and technology & the computer age. And now, the age of information and communication technology is here with us.

It has been argued that the level of progress and development recorded in our socio-economic and technological spheres must be dependent on the amount of investment in human capital. Effective building of human capital is dependent on quality education to equip people with necessary skills for optimal productivity. The national policy on education (1981) revised, states a philosophy based on integration of individual into a sound and effective citizen and the provision of equal educational opportunities for all citizenry. Part of the necessary skills to achieve this aim is the development of language skills. This applies especially to a language with

universal appeal. Such a language is English language which is universal in usage. English is widespread in its use and very essential as a tool for everyday use, (Onuoha, Onilimba & Ene, 1987)

According to Bashir in Ene (2006). The significance of language in nation building and in social communication has long been recognized by linguists and laymen alike and the precise role of a foreign language in a multi lingual and multicultural in dependent country like ours is quite vital and the concern of both government and scholars in many parts of Africa and Asia alike. In Nigeria, English is the official language of instruction in schools, the language of administration, the law, the parliamentary houses, the national press and broadcasting, commerce and above all, the language of education. Therefore, the fact that English education is needed at both national and international levels has important implications for teaching, education, and by extension, human capital development and nation building. If a speaker is to communicate, to understand and be understood, he must operate within the generally accepted level of communication. This will serve for communication, interaction, knowledge acquisition and general development of the human person. In Nigeria, multilingualism is entrenched in the Constitution of the Federal Republic. As such, the language policy of the National Policy on Education encourages linguistic pluralism whereby trilingual children are produced who can speak two Nigerian languages and English. Two of major Nigerian languages must be studied and a local one should be used for instruction within the first three years of schooling. This means that learners are encouraged to learn and develop cognitively in their mother tongue while gaining competence in their additional or second language. This is all because the policy appreciates the importance of language in the educational process. Language is not an end in itself but a means to interact with the world and form meaningful relationships. (Arua & Leaderer 2003). Language is a complex skill in itself that a child may develop spontaneously without conscious effort or formal instruction. Most children can use language without formally understanding the underlying structure. But this is only for speaking skills and that was good enough for the Stone Age. All the other skills of listening, reading and writing have to be learnt. Language per se is not a cultural invention but a biological adaptation to build communication. Language learning is a cultural investment that must be taught and learned as a measure to promote literacy. Literacy involves teaching of the language components and skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing. These skills are indispensable in the modern world. For through language skills, young learners ask questions and build up their words, concepts knowledge and understanding of their environment.

Dearth of Qualified teachers of English

One of the factors militating against human capital development is poor language base. Many graduates are shamelessly poor in the area of English language. There are even teachers who mix tenses and concord. This hinders understanding and mars communication and that is another possible reason why many people have lost interest in reading. There is absolute need for teachers who are proficient in language use as well as in the language teaching methodology. These are not available in right quantity. Ikegulu (2003) has since decried that dearth of effective English Language teachers in our schools. This she said is adversely affecting the quality and capacity of our graduates. Many countries in the new world like Japan, South Korea and Malaysia are spending huge resources on expatriate teachers in English language as a way of facilitating their human capital development. Nigeria should see the need to intensify our

language teacher production in order to improve student's knowledge of English language. This will complement human capital development.

Poor Reading Culture

The general lack of interest in reading is gradually devastating our country, Nigeria. A people that do not read denies itself of vast opportunities of discovering what information, knowledge, facts and news hidden in several write-ups. Ikegulu(2003) also lamented the poor reading culture which she says is taking a toll on our society and economy. She puts it thus: "Our nation is burdened with graduates who cannot read, do not read anything, and are not interested in reading. These people weigh down the economy. "No wonder the saying 'If you want to hide something from Africans, put it in a book. They will not go near it.'" This is very unfortunate because our people must read to learn, read about the past life and new discoveries. That is why Okoye and Ene (2010) lamented the current trend of poor reading culture which they said is surely but gradually taking a great toll on our national development. Therefore language needs adequate attention order to enhance our human capital development.

Second Language

In Nigeria, the use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction stops after the junior basic primary three. The language of instruction becomes the English language which is the official language of the country. This certainly poses some learning difficulties to learners because not all learners are equally grounded in the second language. For one thing, they have different starting points in the new language. This may adversely affect cognitive development. It will also affect the acquisition of knowledge, skills and other competencies required for the development of human capital. This therefore, explains why some people after graduation still cannot express themselves in English language or even in the native language. Of course, this affects interaction, communication and personal relationships. Such a situation calls for concerted efforts to upgrade our language levels. The human capital cannot be developed without the requisite language for communication, instruction and interaction.

Communication skills

Communication has been described by various experts. Knezevich in Ukeje et al (1992) sees communication as a process in which a communicator attempts to convey an image to the communicate. Every communicator seeks to achieve a goal or set of goals through a medium or media at a particular site or time no matter what. Experts see communication as a life- blood of existence. Effective communication involves the transmission and exchange of information, facts, ideas, data procedures, decisions and goals of a group, body, organization or even from one member of the society to the other. Communication is the most important activity in the world of business. Obi (2003) sees communication as a process of transferring information from one person to another. The word 'information' encompasses a wide variety of thing ranging from oral and printed words, figures, statement, files and documents to such intangible elements such as sounds, signals, rays and colours. It is the life wire of every business enterprise. Nwizu (1997:61) summarizes it thus, "communication is the most important element for enhancing human relationship" This implies that life and life activities will be meaningless without communication. Therefore, communication is taken out of existence then the wheel of social interaction and group activities will stop. He states, "Communication is an indispensable activity

in the life of every person, even the deaf, the blind and the dumb. It is the expression of thoughts, feelings, knowledge, perception and observation". Therefore communication skills should form part and parcel of educational packages to be incorporated in the educational system of the country. It should be a vital aspect of a dynamic educational system to make it comprehensive and vibrant. This is because human beings are social animals and they interact on a constant basis through various forms of communication which can be spoken, written, acted, observed etc. It must be noted that effective communication is only possible when the message or information has been adequately and appropriately interpreted and assimilated by the decoder.

Conclusion

It is obvious that adequate investment in education is essential to stimulate wealth creation through human capital development. It is also important that the education system should be dynamic and functional. It should incorporate diverse knowledge and skills such as language and communication skills to facilitate interaction and even transfer of learning. Many other developing countries have adopted these measures and are reaping huge benefits

Recommendations

The need to improve our human capital development strategies is urgent, for we find ourselves in a new world of information and technology. This has implications for human capital development.

- i. One important way to tackle the matter of human capital development is through qualitative and functional education. The government must show enough commitment.
- ii. The government must lay emphasis on the appropriate methodology of teaching to be sure to impart the knowledge.
- iii. The language of instruction in school should be such that it can put the information across.
- iv. The Students themselves must show enough interest in acquiring the relevant skills needed

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