



Governance, Education and Creative Potentials of Nigerian Graduates: A Discourse

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Abstract

One of the cardinal goals of education in every nation is to develop the minds, creative potentials and skills of the citizens. This can be achieved through a well thought out plans and policies of government, whose constitutional responsibilities include: the formulation and implementation of workable educational policies. Therefore, this study is an attempt to explore the extent of success and failure of education policy in Nigeria with specific focus on the creative potentials and skills of Nigerian graduates for job creation and self reliance, which is one of the goals of education policy in Nigeria. To achieve its objective, the paper adopted the descriptive method of research, in which data provided and analyzed were generated from secondary sources - journals, text books, government publications and internet materials. Findings revealed amongst others that, the rate of unemployment, criminality, insurgency, kidnapping and other social vices are not only consequences of poor implementation of education policy, but also, the unemployability and inability of most Nigerian graduates to create jobs and become self reliant, form part of the resultant effects of poor standard/quality of education in Nigeria. Based on the findings, the paper recommended, amongst others that, for Nigerian graduates to practically develop and utilize their creative potentials and skills for job creation and self reliance, teaching/learning should, indeed, be practical, activity-based, experimental and ICT supported, especially in the sciences, and entrepreneurship development. Government should not only make provisions for financial empowerment that will guarantee a smooth takeoff of creative ventures, but should also, ensure strict supervision to ensure that the money gets to the right individuals and utilized for the purpose for which it was disbursed (job creation).

Keywords: Governance; education; creative potentials; job creation; natural resources; self reliance

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Introduction

Contemporary issues in Nigeria's socioeconomic and political development over the years, have not only centered on the quality of political leadership, but also on the quality of education and school graduates' employability and creative ability. As a matter of fact, development experts have often established a high degree of correlation between creative, innovative and qualitative leadership and national development. Thus, Nigeria, the world's most populous black nation, has been a focus of attention by both the developed nations of the West, the African nations and the blacks in the diaspora, because to whom much is given, much is expected (Fejokwu, 1996). Unarguably, Nigeria is a resource-rich country. It is the world's largest producer of columbite, a mineral containing iron, magnesium, and niobium. Other natural resources include limestone, gypsum, granite, copper, zinc, gold and petroleum resources (crude oil). About 80 percent of Nigeria's land is suitable for farming and grazing. The variety of crops includes cocoa, cassava, yams, rice, maize, groundnut, millet, sorghum, plantains, amongst others. Goats are the leading livestock, followed by sheep and cattle. Despite these resources however, the mainstay of the economy since the 1970s has been petroleum (Fejokwu, 1996, Britannica, 2010).

Drawing from the Nigeria's economic potentials, Rodney, (1976 p. 10) asserts: "A society develops economically as its members increase jointly their capacity for dealing with the environment. This capacity for dealing with the environment is dependent on the extent to which they understand the laws of nature (science), on the extent to which they put that understanding into practice by devising tools (technology), and on the manner in which work is organized". Clearly therefore, the development of creative potential of the citizens through sound and qualitative education that will enable them interact with their natural environment in a manner that available natural resources are not only known and listed in their volumes and tones, but such that the training, skills and knowledge acquired from school can practically be applied in tapping and processing of available natural resources for economic prosperity of both the citizens and the nation at large. In other words, there is a correlation between and among political leadership (governance), education, development of creative potential/skills, available resources and national development. In assessing the level of national development in Nigeria therefore, it has become fashionable to lay blames on the



political leadership for their deeds and misdeeds. In other words, the level of creative potential of Nigerians since independence in 1960 is a function of the quality of education that is designed and implemented by the political leadership. From all indications, therefore, the questions begging for answers in this paper are as follows: why is the rate of unemployment increasingly high among school graduates in Nigeria? Why do most Nigerian graduates have difficulties creating jobs for themselves in the midst of abundant natural resources? Must every Nigerian graduate look for White collar jobs? Does an average Nigerian graduate actually have the requisite creative knowledge and skills for job creation and national development? Is teaching and learning in Nigerian schools practical, activity based, experimental and ICT supported as recommended in the Nigerian education policy?

Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of this paper is to examine the creative potential and skills of Nigerian graduates for job creation and national development. Specifically, the paper attempts to assess the following key areas:

1. Whether or not teaching/learning in Nigerian tertiary institutions is practical, activity based, experimental and ICT supported as contained in section 1(8b-c) of the National Policy on Education in Nigeria (2008).
2. To assess whether or not the implementation of education policy in Nigeria is directly related to "overall community needs".
3. To assess whether or not the average Nigerian graduate has the competence and skills for employment creation thereby contributing to national development.

Methodology

This paper relied on secondary data. This implies that the information/data presented and analyzed were generated from relevant literature, textbooks, journals, newspapers, including government enactments.



Literature Review

The Concept of Creative Potential

It is pertinent to realize that nature has not only provided man with natural resources but also, the creative potential and skills for tapping, processing and utilization of the end products for human survival and comfort. Therefore, the role of education in the development of creative potential/skills cannot be overemphasized. Thus, the term creativity has to do with man's ability to create or the quality of being creative. Besancon, Lubart and Harbor, (2013) assert that "creativity is increasingly recognized as a valuable asset for individuals in their daily problem solving and their professional careers, that contributes to personal and societal development". Without doubt, unemployment, joblessness, robbery and different forms of social vices and insecurity, characterize the Nigerian state today. In the context of peace and national development, and with particular reference to abundant human and material resources in Nigeria therefore, creativity is required by Nigerians to drive national development and as a remedy to social problems, through the application of knowledge and skills which are products of not just qualitative education, but creativity-driven kind of education. Thus, creative potential is a latent ability to produce original as well as adaptive work, which is a function of an individual's training or education (Walberg, 1988).

Besancon et al, (2013) differentiate creative potential from intellectual ability when they posit that whereas intellectual ability often results in academic success, creative potential is best accomplished in original and unique outputs, recognized as valuable in a domain-based context. Therefore, creative achievement refers to actual production of a creative output that has been recognized as creative by certain group of persons. Agba and Ushie, (2014 p 187) have pointed out that "Information and Communication Technology have reduced the employment of highly educated workers in most organizations since their jobs are replaced by sophisticated information processing machines." Teaching and learning in Nigeria should therefore promote indigenous knowledge (IK) to enhance productivity. Nakashima and Rove, (2002) define indigenous knowledge as "the incomplete arrays of knowledge, know-how, practices and representations that guide human societies in their innumerable interactions with natural milieu; ...fishing and gathering, struggles against disease and injury; naming and explaining natural phenomena, and strategies for coping and changing environments".



Apparently therefore, promoting indigenous knowledge in teaching and learning in Nigerian educational system is fundamental to job creation, employability, self reliance and national development. As Agba and Ushie (2014 p 75) have rightly stated, "it is the knowledge that enables members of a given society to carry out their economic, social and industrial activities effectively" thereby contributing in job creation, employment and national development.

Education and Development of Creative Potential

As earlier established, there is a linkage between quality education, creative potential/skills development, resources utilization and national development or nation building. In the light of this, the National Teachers' Institute, Kaduna (2016) defines education as the process of developing knowledge and ability in learners for personal and societal enhancement. It is clear from the foregoing definition that education involves teaching and learning (teacher and learner). Thus, developing learners' creativity in educational setting is a complex endeavour. First, it requires that the nature of the concept of creativity be consensually understood by psychologists, educators, teachers and the scientific community. Second, it supposes that the instruments measuring accurately this concept in learners be available. Third, interpretations made from creative scores should lead to informed decision in terms of orientation, and accurate implementation of creativity learning in the classroom (Besancon, Lubart and Harbor, 2013).

Advantages of Creative Potentials Development

1. Job creation
2. Low rate of unemployment
3. Increase in production of goods and services
4. Enhanced standard of living
5. Increase in Gross Domestic Products GDP
6. Maximum utilization of economic/available resources
7. Increase in per capita income
8. Export of surplus products
9. Economic growth and development.



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10. Reduced crime rate
11. Economic diversification
12. Invention/creation of appropriate/relevant technology with direct impact on both social and physical environment.

Theoretical Framework

The framework of analysis for this study is the Human Capital Theory. This theory presupposes that education and training are investments that make people genuinely productive. "The first use of human capital as a term in modern economic literature was by Theodore Schultz who classified expenditures on human capital as investment rather than consumption" (Adiele and Ibietan, 2017 p. 8). Adam Smith, Gary Becker and Nobel Laureate are some of the advocates of this theory. The theory sees human capital as knowledge, skills, attitudes, aptitude and other traits that contribute to production (Goode in Fleischhaver, 2007 p. 4). This suggests that, the knowledge and skills acquired by the citizens through education and training is a form of capital which is a product of deliberate investment that yields return in the form of employment, job creation and income earnings which further culminate in self reliance and better standard of living.

Thus, when Nigerian government gives priority attention to education by not only formulating education policies but also, ensuring that the policies are efficiently and effectively implemented, by providing both the human, material and financial resources needed for skills and knowledge acquisition in institutions of learning, the creative potentials of Nigerian graduates will definitely be enhanced. This will not only guarantee employable graduates but also, a number of them will be able to create jobs by themselves for income earnings and self reliance. In this context therefore, human capital development should not be theoretical or a mere paper work but practical in a manner that teaching and learning in institutions of higher learning should be practical, activity based, experimental and ICT supported. Hence, the economic benefit of investing in education and training the individuals can be measured by the net gain in lifetime earnings accruing as a result of their investment in education and training. As Pahos and Galanaki, (2018) "remarked that job performance is an achievement that is both practical and measurable" (Imucheri and Kakub, 2022 p. 67). Consequently, policy makers tend to accept the premise that investment in



education and training is not only a good thing, but a means of securing higher economic growth and national prosperity (Wobmann, 2008).

Natural Resources in Nigeria and their Economic uses

As earlier established, Nigeria is a resource-rich country. It is the world's largest producer of columbite, a mineral containing iron, magnesium, and niobium. Other natural resources include limestone, gypsum, granite, copper, zinc, gold and petroleum resources (crude oil). About 80 percent of Nigeria's land is suitable for farming and grazing. The variety of crops includes cocoa, cassava, yams, rice, maize, grandnut, millet, sorghum, plantains, amongst others. Goats are the leading livestock, followed by sheep and cattle. Despite these resources however, the mainstay of the economy since the 1970s has been petroleum (Fejokwu, 1996, Britannica, 2010). Akpan-Idiok, (2012) has identified some mineral resources and their uses in Nigeria with large reserves.

1. Tin: used for making cans, roofing sheets, petrol tanks, utensils and ornaments, tin foil as wrapping materials
2. Columbite: for manufacturing of heat resisting and chemical resisting steel in gas turbine and jet engine for aircraft.
3. Tantalite: because of its resistance to acid corrosion, it is used in chemical equipment, in surgery for skull plate, in tool steel.
4. Wolframite: for hardening metal in high speed tool steel, valves, springs, chisels, files.
5. Iron-ore: for production of iron and steel for mechanical, constructional, electrical industries; for ship building, making of rails, automobiles, aircrafts, bridges
6. Lead and Zinc: used for soldering, bearings, lead foils, ammunition and ornamental sting, plate for storing batteries, roofing, chemical and constructional industries, as a protective covering in galvanized structural steel products, zinc oxides in rubber industry, production of sulphuric Thorite
7. Gold: international standard for monetary system and medium of exchange in trade; valued as an ornament and jewelry, dental appliances.
8. Silver: used for photographic film emulsions, plating, brazing, alloys, table ware and electronic equipment, coinage.



9. Uranium: curing of thyroid disorder and cancer; sterilization, production of nuclear energy, destroys cells causing anemia and induces mutation.
10. Monazite: source of thorite.
11. Thorite: source of atomic energy, manufacture of mantles for Candescent gas light.
12. Zircon: source of metallic zirconium used for nuclear reactor.
13. Limestone: for production of cement, liming material for to reduce soil acidity; fluxing agent in tin smelting.
14. Marble: for production of cement, liming material for to reduce soil acidity; production of local snuff.
15. Industrial rocks and gravels: ceramic materials, as building and construction materials.
16. Clay/Shale: Ceramic materials for production of INA ware, shale, sewery pipe, and sand are used in glass production.
17. Kaolin: making bricks, drain tile and sewery pipe; manufacture of China and pottery, filler in paper, rubber industry.
18. Feldspar: manufacture of porcelain, glass, as ornamental material.
19. Salt: Seasoning food and stain removing agent.
20. Topaz: Ornaments or jewelry
21. Coal: being high calorific material, it is used in driving trains, by chemical industries, in cooking.
22. Lignite: for domestic heating, generating thermal electricity and in chemical industry.

Nigerian Government and the Development of Creative Potentials

Section 1(8a-c) of Nigerian National Policy on Education (2008) provides that: "In order to fully realize the goals of education in Nigeria and gain from its contribution to the national economy, Government shall take necessary measures to ensure that:

- a. educational activities shall be learner centered for maximum self-development and self-fulfillment;
- b. teaching shall be practical, activity based, experimental and ICT supported;
- c. education shall be related to overall community needs..." Furthermore, section 1, subsections (9 and f) state that "the quality of instruction at all levels of education



shall be oriented towards inculcating the following values: ...acquisition of competencies necessary for self reliance.

In the light of the above, Otache (2010:30) has pointed out numerous ways by which governments promote manpower training and utilization in Nigeria as follows:

- provision of short-term or soft loans through government agencies like National Directorate of Employment;
- organization of workshops and seminars where people are trained in trades such as carpentry, sewing, soap-making, shoe-making, poultry, fishery, etc;
- encouragement in the use of indigenous materials in industrial development activities (Local Contents Policy);
- fiscal and non-fiscal incentives for entrepreneurs and investors in the small-scale sub-sector of the economy in form of rebate on taxes paid as well as tax holidays;
- introduction of entrepreneurship development as a course to be offered in tertiary institutions in Nigeria;
- the institution of Entrepreneurship Promotion Award by the Central Bank of Nigeria: where the CBN recognizes the various categories of persons or institutions that have distinguished themselves in various facets of entrepreneurship development by giving them different categories of awards.

Furthermore, the Nigerian government has put in place several agencies that are saddled with manpower training and utilization in Nigeria; some of them are listed as follows:

National Directorate of Employment (NDE): Its roles are:

- a. To conduct vocational and apprenticeship training for the youths in the areas of Information and Communication Technology, textiles, catering, hair-dressing etc;
- b. To provide soft or short-term loans to young entrepreneurs to start small-scale businesses through selected commercial banks;
- c. To foster and promote self-employment;
- d. To recommend reputable sources and suppliers of plants, equipment and machinery to small-scale industrialists.

Industrial Development Centre (IDC):

- a. To render both technical and managerial assistance to small-scale enterprises;
- b. To provide industrial extension services to small-scale enterprises;



- c. To train and develop small-scale entrepreneurs and managers;
- d. To assist in product planning, development and control;
- e. To advise on the viable projects to select;
- f. To assist in technical appraisal of loan application;
- g. To assist in product design and redesign.

Centre for Entrepreneurship and Development Research (CEDR):

- a. To develop entrepreneurship spirit and mindset among Nigerians especially school leavers;
- b. To facilitate and enhance job creation among unemployed and underemployed school leavers;
- c. To facilitate skill acquisition and development among Nigerians especially school leavers;
- d. To enhance business for small scale operators and artisans especially through capacity building and linkage to finance and facilitate rural development in Nigeria and engage in development research.

Centre for Industrial Research and Development (CIRD):

- a. To provide counseling, technical assistance and training in productivity improvement and organizational development;
- b. To disseminate information on investment opportunity, finance, input requirements for manufacturing of specific products
- c. To render extension services in starting and maintaining a business;
- d. To conduct managerial training, seminars and workshops in different areas of small-scale businesses;
- e. To render consulting services on feasibility studies, financial analysis, project monitoring and evaluation;
- f. To conduct researches into various aspects of industrial development in Nigeria.

Centre for Management Development (CMD):

- a. To train and develop manpower for small-scale enterprises;
- b. Providing consultancy services as well as research and technical information to small-scale industrialist;



- c. To design programmes that will stimulate entrepreneurship.

Polytechnics and Universities

Polytechnics and Universities also play vital roles in manpower training and development in Nigeria. This is achieved by teaching business-related courses such as Business Administration and Management, Marketing, Entrepreneurship Development, Accounting, Economics etc.

They also engage in consultancy services as well as serve as centres for seminars, workshops and conferences where prospective and existing small industrialists are trained and developed on how to effectively and efficiently manage their businesses. **Nigerian Graduates and the challenge of joblessness**

Quartz Africa (2016) has reported that “By some estimates Nigerian tertiary education institutions produce up to 500, 000 graduates every year and there are also Nigerian graduates who studied abroad who come home to compete for jobs” (Para. 1) The online tabloid also pointed out that “...employers have attributed the problem to the quality of unemployable as they lack required skills”; Stressing that Nigeria’s university system is mostly overpopulated which results to a situation whereby universities struggle to deliver quality education as available facilities are over stretched. This implies that for effective teaching and learning to take place, the ratio of students per teacher is paramount.

Consequently, Olatomide and Adesola (2015) have rightly noted that:

Currently Nigeria has a youth population of about 80 million which is about 60 percent of the population, more than 70 percent are said to be unemployed. They maintained that “The danger of unemployment and idleness are very prominent as majority of the youths are roaming about the streets in search of jobs in order to survive, where there is no job, some of the youth out of frustration take to vices like engaging in criminality and drug abuse. Challenges which plague the Nigerian youth and acts as factor militating against the full realization of their potentials, includes: lack of access to education, high rate of unemployment, extreme poverty, political and economic marginalization, exposure to conflict and food insecurity.

Furthermore, a recent report published by the National Bureau of Statistics (2018) reveals that: the category of unemployed persons comprised 8.5 million people who engage in an



economic activity for at least an hour and 7.5 million people who did absolutely nothing. Also, 18.02 million people were underemployed, as they worked for 20 to 39 hours a week, which is less than the 40 hours required to be classified among the workforce. Fully employed persons, who worked for 40 hours and above in the third quarter of 2017, were 51.06 million people, resulting in a total of 77.6 million people engaged in an extent of economic activity (National Bureau of Statistics, 2018).

The Challenges of Creative Potential Development in Nigerian system of Education

1. Overdependence on paper qualification/certificate
2. Too much emphasis on theories and principles, rather than activity-based, practical and ICT supported method of teaching and learning;
3. Inadequate funding of the educational sector
4. Lack of technology/training equipment for processing of community based raw materials
5. Poor/lack of maintenance culture
6. Poor attitude to learning

Conclusion

No society can develop beyond the capacity of its human resources. Therefore, investment in training, skills acquisition and education must inform the perfection of work through better use of available resources and technology which ultimately, will enhance employability of school products, job creation, performance and productivity. The need for government to promote acquisition of indigenous knowledge and creative education in Nigeria cannot be overemphasized, as this will not only enhance job creation but will also boost the GDP of the nation as well as reduce the rate of unemployment, joblessness and criminality in the society.

Recommendations

1. Government should first of all guarantee safety of lives and property in Nigeria by beefing up the security architecture of the country.
2. Teaching and learning in school should be practical, activity-based, experimental and ICT supported, with little emphasis on theories and alien ideas or ideologies.



3. The equipment/technology required for practical learning and training in Nigerian schools should be adequately provided and maintained by government, likewise the professionals that would man the equipment.
4. Government should provide and maintain more infrastructures that will create the enabling environment for business and economic activities to thrive.
5. Education should promote indigenous knowledge and invention of relevant technology for dealing with the physical environment.

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