

University education and its impact on human capital development in Nigeria

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Abstract. Human capital has been recognized globally as one major factor that is responsible for the wealth of nations. Education in human capital theory plays an important role in promoting economic and social development; it is strong catalyst of equity and advancement. University education is thus meant to be development-oriented, whether in respect of the society or the individual and whether in physical or psychological dimensions. In Nigeria today, the high level of moral decadence among the students, injustice and unethical value system that pervade Nigerian universities' system serve as indication deteriorating and degeneration of ethical values system that society desire for intense socio-economic development vis-à-vis peaceful co-existence in Nigeria. It is against this backdrop that this study investigates the impact of university education on human capital development in Nigeria. A descriptive method was adopted and data was collected via a survey of three hundred (300) respondents using non-probabilistic sampling techniques. Data collected were analyzed using correlation and linear regression analysis with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 17. The results of the study showed that there is significant relationship between university education and human capital development. As predicted, the study also revealed that university education exerts a positive and statistically significant impact on human capital development in Nigeria. Requisite conclusion and recommendations were provided in the light of the theoretical and empirical findings.

Keywords. University education - Human capital development - Economic growth - Nigeria

1. Introduction

The importance of human capital aggregation as an engine of economic growth and development has been widely recognized in theoretical and empirical studies. No nation has achieved sustainable economic growth and development without substantial investment in human capital (Sankay, Ismail & Shaari, 2010). Hence, sustainable

investment in human capital in the form of education is a prerequisite for sustainable economic growth and development. Pelinescu, 1992 cited in Idrees and Shah (2018) emphasizes that the targets of higher economic growth and development cannot be realized without a good education and training system. University education helps in the formation of human capital by making individuals more productive and increased the potential of their earnings.

According to Eseyin, Uchendu and Bright (2014:592), the “importance of labour to a nation especially developing economies like Nigeria cannot be over-emphasized, more often; the strength of nation is usually determined by the quantity and quality of her workforce. Physical and mental strength is a necessity for a nation to be great and gain respect and recognition from other countries around the world. Nigeria today is regarded as the giant of Africa because of her numeral and physical strength while America remains a world giant due to the quality of her skilled population”. However, the fact that a nation is endowed numerically does not necessarily mean that such a nation will be more developed than others. Thus, Olaniyan and Okemakinde (2008) argued that qualitative education is a major determinant of the stock of human capital. It has proved to be the vehicle for national transformation in human history and no nation ever rises above her investment in education. Physical strength is therefore not a yardstick for development, rather the quality of knowledge acquired through education is essential for economic growth and development to take place. The unprecedented expansion of Nigeria education system over the years has placed heavy demands on the management of university education. Despite efforts expanded towards coping with those demands, the university education is still lagging behind the growth in size and complexity of our educational system. Thus, the education systems, more especially the universities have been too much confirmed to quantitative expansion than educational quality in recent times.

In Nigeria today, the high level of moral decadence among the students, injustice and unethical value system that pervade Nigerian universities’ system serve as indication deteriorating and degeneration of ethical values system that society desire for intense socio-economic development vis-à-vis peaceful co-existence in Nigeria. Also, words and expressions like dilapidation, rehabilitation, refurbishment, deficiency (especially in funding), examination malpractice, nocturnal (cultic) activities, sexual harassment of female students, mediocrity have now imperceptibly crept into the university vocabulary replacing words like excellence, meritocracy, distinction, creativity, which were more common place forty years ago when the quest for academic excellence and high standards of scholarship were the order of the day. In addition, Nigerian educational system has undergone a great deal of change in the past fifty-nine years. However, measures to promote higher education and improve the quality of university education to meet the challenges of a constantly changing environment are often restrained by under-funding and inadequate financial resources which has brought about dearth of other resources and facilities, for instance, unavailable and run-down physical infrastructure, inadequate laboratories and ill-equipped libraries (Akintayo, 2008; Mohammed, Rufai & Azeez, 2016). These are snippets of the very low ebb to which the university system have sunk in Nigeria. Whether they are federal, state or private universities, universities in Nigeria are a rumble of multiple contradictions that are waiting to implode. Nigerian universities produce graduates who cannot find employment because they have acquired very little

knowledge and are devoid of appropriate skills for the current employment market. Graduates have become progressively unimaginative and lack the essential skills for problem solving. They are reactive rather than proactive and unable to assert their expertise in critical circumstances (Jike, 2018). In order to re-discover her lost glory, Nigeria must begin to renegotiate the idea of 'the university' as a universal concept. Universities are citadels of serious scholarship where productivity is subject to rigid criteria of assessment. This is not altogether the case in many universities. We may choose to adopt the business model, like most American universities where there is a systemic infusion of private capital and ideas to enhance profitability and enhance the carrying capacity of most programmes in the university. Against the foregoing, this study investigates the impact of university education on human capital development in Nigeria.

2. Literature review

2.1 Human Capital Development

Human capital as a concept can be traced to the classical school of thought in 1776, then as a scientific theory. Smith (1776) in the wealth of nations defined human capital as follows: 'the acquisition and useful abilities of all the inhabitants or members of the society. The acquisition of such talents, by the maintenance of the acquirer during his education, study or apprenticeship, always costs a real expense, which is a capital fixed and realized, as it were, in his person. Those talents as they make a part of his fortune, so do them, likewise that of the society to which he belongs. The improved dexterity of a workman may be considered in the same light as a machine or instrument of trade which facilitates and abridges labour, and which, though it costs a certain expense, repays that expense with a profit. Human capital, according to Beach (2009), can be categorized by 'something akin to property'. That is, knowledge and skills embedded in an individual. Rastongi (2002) defines human capital as knowledge, competency, attitude and behaviour engrafted in an individual. Schultz (1961) conceptualizes human capital as the stock of productive knowledge and skills possessed by individuals or workers in organizations. Similarly, Eseyin *et al.* (2014) refers to human capital as the set of skills and abilities which an employee employs in the organization to get work done.

The concept of Human Capital Development, according to Aluko and Aluko (2011; 106), is "a way to fulfill the potential of people by enlarging their capabilities and this necessarily implies empowerment of people, enabling them to participate actively in their own development" Obisi and Anyim (2012) posit that human capital development are talents, skills competencies and other advantages which people possess, and can be put to better use to give organizations and nations more benefits. Ogujiuba, 2013 cited in Halidu (2016: 542) affirms that human capital development is "strategic to the socio-economic development of a nation which includes education, health, labour and employment and women affairs. He further posits that investment on human capital development is therefore critical as it is targeted at ensuring that the nations' human resource endowment is knowledgeable, skilled, productive and healthy to enable the optimal exploitation and utilization of other resources to engender growth and

development". Reviewing the position of Ogujiuba (2013), one may induce to say that no country can attain economic growth and development without having a well talented, competent, and skilful workforce that can exploit, utilize, accelerate and propel the available resources of the nation optimally. Human capital development, according to Achugbue and Ochonogor (2013), is about investments, activities and processes that produce knowledge, health and skills. It means building the balanced human resources base and providing an enabling environment for all individuals to fully engage and contribute to the achievement of the goals of an organization or nation. Similarly, Kern (2009); Adeyemi and Ogunsola (2016) and Olusegun, Oluwasayo, Adetunji and Olomu (2018) noted that investment in human capital development is a strategy for achieving greater output. Therefore, improving individuals for personal and organizational efficiency and effectiveness is the focus of human capital development. In a nutshell, human capital development is an effort to increased human knowledge, enhance skills, productivity and stimulate resourcefulness of individuals.

2.2 University Education

Education is defined as the process of learning and training or educating, instructions as impacted in schools, colleges and universities. Thus, to educate means to develop knowledge, skill or character of the person (Webster Dictionary, 2010). In the light of the above, education therefore means a process by which an individual gains knowledge, insight, develop attitudes or skills (Achugbue & Ochonogor, 2013). The National Policy on Education (2004) acknowledge that the higher education should, among other things aim at the acquisition, development and inculcation of the proper knowledge, skills and values-orientation for the survival of individual and society, the acquisition of both physical and intellectual skill which will enable individuals to develop into useful members of the community. The university is a centre for the creation, processing and dispersal of knowledge. Besides, the creation of knowledge and skills impartation, the university also instills values and good traits of character in individuals so that they can fulfill their social roles properly. University education makes possible the acquisition of independence by individuals (Plessner, 1992). It promotes the awakening and consolidation of critical thinking of the ability to go beyond what is already known (Akintayo, 2008). Likewise, Rohrs (1989) affirms that the university strives towards intellectual freedom, by posing fundamental questions and isolating itself from social pressure in an environment of meditative calm. He posits further that the essence of university education is human capital development, which takes place in the living confrontation with knowledge, professional competence and a civil sense of responsibility, is merely the product of having received university education. This supports the assertion of Akinpelu (2001) who holds that universities are the seed-beds of liberty, of humanity, emancipation, freedom from poverty and of the charity of thought and deed.

Therefore, university education is a life-long socialization process through which social norms, values and cultures are learned, shared and transmitted from generation to generation (Schaefer, 2007). This supports the assertion of Adedeji, 2010 cited in Achugbue and Ochonogor (2013) who posits that education is a process of transmitting

cultural values and other information from generation to generation. Nuebeck and Glasberg (1996:390) have indicated that “education has come to be seen as the answer to many of society’s most serious problems ... from getting rid of poverty to maintaining our competitive advantage over other industrial nations in the global economy”. Nigeria has continued to drift because it has an educational system that is obsolete and out of tune with the requirements of the modern sectors of employment (Jike & Ogaga, 2005).

2.3 University Education and Human Capital Development in Nigeria

To educate the mind is to liberate it from the shackles of fear, prejudice, ignorance, superstition and to develop a free, independent and responsible citizenry. However, education is loathed in primitive societies where it is believed that learning brings disobedience and heresy into the world (Schaefer, 2007). In essence, the philosophy of education in Nigeria holds that university teaching should seek to inculcate a spirit of community in the students. It is however, being observed that this spirit of community, which is lacking in most universities, is required both within and among the different levels of staff in the university, as well as, between the students and staff. The failure of National Policy on Education (2004) is clearly seen in the fact that, over the years acts such as victimization of staff and students, cultism, examination malpractices, high handedness, injustices, sexual harassment, tyranny and corruption in Nigerian universities today have grown to unprecedented proportion. Nigeria since her independence 1960 has not shown much commitment towards the human capital development (education and training of her citizenry). According to Asiya (2012), in Nigeria, school enrolment continued to increase without a corresponding increase in facilities for effective and learning as a result of underfunding of education in Nigeria. The above situation, suggests that education is accorded secondary value in Nigeria’s value system. This is also evident in the states’ budgetary allocation to schools. The pattern of human capital development in Nigeria has failed to achieve desirable level of manpower mixes, not only in terms of categories, but also in terms of quality.

According to Aluko and Aluko (2011) and Halidu (2016), a cursory look at the magnitude and trend of increases in allocation might be misleading in passing judgment on the budgetary performance until they are placed side-by-side with their percentage allocations. They further noted that the characteristics pattern of the government (federal and states) allocations to education and health in Nigeria as a percentage of the total budget revealed inconsistency. The implication is that education is not given primary attention in the budget and since the late 70’s to date, budgetary allocation to education has not matched the increasing needs of qualitative education for Nigerians to be globally competitive. Also, research grants are administered discretionally instead of systematically when they are available (Aluko & Aluko, 2011; Halidu, 2015). As a result of this, government attitude towards education has been very poor and Nigeria’s educational system tends to produce graduates who lack job skills for employment than those the economy requires to remain vivacity. This supports the assertion of Olusegun *et al.* (2018) who posit that Nigeria’s educational structure depicts the dominance of formal education and places less emphasis on vocational and other training that would impact skills in Nigeria. As a result, nation’s institutions of higher learning, especially universi-

ties turnout annually thousands of liberal art graduates who are not in high demand in the nation's labour market and beyond.

In the view of Akintayo (2008), reflecting on the role of university in human capital development, it could be observed that, Nigerian universities, right from their inception, has neither inculcated a spirit of community and emancipation in the students nor has it imbued this value system in the staff. There remains a high incidence of political and ethnic conflicts among the staff of Nigerian universities. There are conflicts of interests and goals between universities administration and various academic and non-academic unions. There are conflicts between factions of the students' union and organized students fraternity in almost all our universities campuses. In Nigeria today, the university's management has largely failed to promote the fundamental educational goals of producing good and useful citizenry; ensuring greater efficiency and productivity and promoting attitude conducive to tolerance, justice, equity and harmony in the society. Thus, the failure of leadership in the Nigerian universities is seen in the unethical and leadership indiscipline displayed by a crop of university administrators who have emerged on the landscape of universities' governance since 1970s (Akintayo, 2008; Achugbue & Ocho-nogor, 2013; Halidu, 2016). This situation has therefore led to injustice, students unrrest, moral decadence and general apathy, examination malpractice, high rate of admission racketing, scandals, bribery and graft, victimization, persistent incidence of rape, female prostitution, proliferation of male and female cult gangs, murder, sexual harassment of female students, extortion, obscene dressing and soliciting for favours, homosexuality, intimidation of lectures by students and assassination and kidnapping of vice-chancellors (Obembe, 2001; Akintayo, 2008; Halidu, 2016). All these immoral, unethical attitudes and behaviours serve as indication deteriorating and degeneration of ethical values system that society desire for intense economic growth and development. In Nigeria today, the skills that job seekers possess do not match with the needs and demands of many employers. The educational system in Nigeria hat its liberal bias which indeed, over supplies the labour market with graduates who do not possess the skills required by employers. Many graduates in Nigeria lack entrepreneurial skills to facilitate self employment.

Nigerian university education is a system that emphasizes the passing of examination rather than instilling an epistemological basis for imaginativeness; a system that places premium on learning by rote rather than having a clear understanding of the contending issues that inhibit the nation's development; a system that is glaringly bereft of requisite infrastructures to sustain a worthwhile scientific enterprise, where there is no constant energy supply, where retired professors cannot be replaced and pensioners' benefits are not paid, where science students are known to acquire science-based training without the corollary practical laboratory component and a system which manifestly moulds good character but inadvertently encourages deviance and criminality. The human capital gone awry in Nigeria because of the ineptitude of education planners and administrators, it is a faulty educational foundation that has reproduced its kind in incompetence, knowledge-disconnect and gaping levels of social inequality around poverty and power relations in the larger Nigeria polity (Jike, 2018). Today, Nigerian universities graduate thousands of students every year into the unemployment market and ancillary criminal enclaves such as yahoo plus, ritualism, cultism, electoral thugs, kid-

napping, etc. One of the greatest contradictions of the Nigerian society is producing university graduates who cannot be usefully employed.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

While there are several theories which might prove appropriate for a discourse of this nature, the human capital theory present us with a heuristic tool for interrogating the central issue of the study. Based upon the work of Schultz (1961), human capital theory rests on the assumption that formal education is highly instrumental and even necessary to improve the production capacity of a population. Human capital theory emphasizes how university education increases the productivity and efficiency of individuals by increasing the level of cognitive stock of economically productive human capacity which is a product of innate abilities and investment in human beings. The human capital theorists contend that expenditure in formal education is seen as productive capital investment which they considered as equally or even more equally worthwhile than the physical capital investment (Smith, 1776; Schultz, 1961; Sakamota & Powers, 1995). More so, Aluko and Aluko (2011); Omojimito (2011), Asiya (2012) and Halidu (2016) gave credence to the theory and affirm the importance of qualitative university education as the key to participating in the new global competitive environment. Therefore, for Nigeria to fit into the comity of nations, her human capital requirement in all levels of education must be properly trained and equipped with requisite knowledge to withstand the technological and scientific challenges of global competitive economy. Thus, most supreme, manpower in the university as the engine room for nation building must be given the requisite human capital development so as to be self creative, innovative and a catalyst for propelling sustainable growth and national development (Halidu, 2016). In the final analysis, the relevance of the human capital theory is based on its ability to justify how university education plays a great and significant role in improving the production capacity of a population.

2.5 University Education and Human Capital Development: Empirical Review

According to Nakpodia (2010), education is a systematic instruction for the development of character or mental power. Roa, 2001 cited in Nakpodia (2010) noted that there is an immediate and urgent need for giving education to the people in order to build up our future. The success of every educational system depends on the quality and quantity of factors of production, which are human and material resources. However, Nakpodia (2010) argued that all of the factors, the human resources appear to be the most important because without human efforts, all other factors are inept. Similarly, Olaniyan and Okemakinde (2008:480) posit that “human resources constitute the ultimate basis of wealth of nations. Capital and natural resources are passive factors of production, human beings are the active agencies who accumulate capital, exploit natural resource, build social, economic and political organization and carry forward national development”. The importance of education and human capital has been noted in many studies of economic growth and development. Robert, 1991 cited in Olaniyan and Okemakinde (2008) developed a human capital model which shows that education and the

creation of human capital was responsible for both the differences in labour productivity and the differences in overall levels of technology that we observe in the world today. More than anything else, it has been the spectacular growth in East Asia that has given education and human capital their current popularity and the field of economic growth and development. Countries such as Hong Kong, South Korea, Singapore, Taiwan and China have achieved unprecedented rates of economic growth and development while making huge investments in education.

Clement, 2004 cited in Akintayo (2008) posits that over the years, the university has meant different things to different people, yet it has not detracted from the fact that it has a core meaning and set of functions as understood by scholars. However, the primary function of university is human capital development. Hannah (1998) contends that universities are enterprises that produce and distribute a public good, which is knowledge. In the same vein, Salter (1983) argued that education, as a key component of human capital formation is recognized as being vital in increasing the productive capacity of people. In their study, they found that tertiary education has a positive, strong and significant relationship with human capital development. Also, Bakare (2006) investigated the growth implication of human capital development in Nigeria using vector auto-regression and error correction of model. Finding from the study revealed that there is a significant functional and institutional relationship between investment in human capital and economic growth in Nigeria. Education therefore, is central to development in several respects; the quality of education determines the scope of capacity that could be nurtured to propel development.

In line with the literature review, the following objectives and null hypotheses were formulated for the study.

Objectives of the Study:

- To examine the relationship between university education and human capital development in Nigeria.
- To investigate the impact of university education on human capital development in Nigeria.

Hypotheses of the Study:

- H_1 : There is no significant relationship between university education and human capital development in Nigeria.
- H_2 : University education does not have a significant impact on human capital development in Nigeria.

3. Methodology

The study adopted a survey research design to determine the impact of university education on human capital development in the university of Benin City and university of Nigeria, Nsukka. Data was collected via a survey of 300 respondents using non-probabilistic sampling techniques comprising of purposeful and convenience techniques. The research instrument used for the study was the structured questionnaire. Out of the 300 copies of questionnaire administered, 267 were retrieved and analyzed given us a response rate of 89%. Out of the 267 respondents, 143 were female staff and 124 were male staff. The items of measurement were rated on 5-points liker type scale which ranks responses

on a scale of (1) strongly disagreed to (5) strongly agreed. Data collected were analyzed using correlation and linear regression analysis with the aid of Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) version 17.

4. Results

Variables		University education	Human capital development
University Education	Pearson correlation	1	.734**
	Sing. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	267	267
Human capital development	Pearson correlation	.734**	1
	Sing. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	267	267

Table 1: Correlation Matrix

**Correlation is significant at 0.05 levels (2 tailed)

Table 1 shows the correlation between university education and human capital development in Nigeria. There exists a significant positive high correlation between university education and human capital development ($r = .734$, $n = 267$, & $p < 0.005$). This implies that university education has a strong and positive relationship with human capital development in Nigeria. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Linear Regression Analysis

Model	R	R ²	Adj-R ²	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.594	0.568	0.407	0.213

Table 2: Model Summary^b

- a. Predictors: (Constant), university education
- b. Dependent variable: Human capital development

Model		Sum of square	Df	Mean	F.	Sig.	Remark
1	Regression	21.510	2	6.411	24.312	0.000 ^b	Sig.
	Residual	13.017	263	0.375			
Total		34.527	265				

Table 3: ANOVA^a

- a. Dependent variable: Human capital development
 - b. Predictors: (Constant), university education
- Source:** Authors, Field Survey, 2019

The linear regression shows (R^2) value of 0.568 which revealed that university education independently account for 56.8% of the variation in human capital development in Nigeria. The F. Statistics of 24.312 revealed that the model is statistically significant at 0.05 significant levels. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

5. Discussion of findings

The results amongst others showed that there is a positive and strong relationship between university education and human capital development in Nigeria. The finding is in agreement with Mohammed *et al.* (2016) study that revealed the relationship between tertiary education and human capital development. As predicted, the study also revealed that university education exerts a positive and statistically significant impact on human capital development in Nigeria. The finding is in agreement with Olaniyan and Oke-makinde's (2008); Achugbue and Ochonogor's (2013) and Eigbiremolen and Anaduaka's (2014) views that education plays a very important and crucial role in improving the production capacity of a population. From the findings therefore, Nigerian citizens especially the youth must be encourage to develop entirely new ideas, products, processes and methods through creative approaches.

6. Conclusion and recommendations

The study has revealed through its perceived findings that university education has a strong and positive impact on human capital development in Nigeria. Also, the relationship between university education and human capital development was confirmed. In conclusion, the driving force of economic growth and development is the investment in the citizens of the nation to be skillful and talented with a vision of ingenuity, innovative, creativity and techno-scientific wherewithal to successfully confront the challenges of national development. This is because investment in human capital building in the form of education or training impact positively on economic growth and development. Besides, no nation can rise above the quality of its manpower. The education system particularly university education needs constant review and reform for sustainable human capital formation. The Nigerian education system in recent times has gone comatose and it in dire need for emergency surgical operation in order to create room for effective educational service delivery. Based on the empirical and theoretical findings of this study, the following policy recommendations were made:

Nigerian government should intensify efforts towards the development of human capital by putting in place appropriate strategic management policies to enhance educational service delivery. Besides, private educational investors, teachers, parents, guidance and students should be re-oriented.

Government, in its employment policies should lay more emphasis on competence and specialization rather than paper qualification and ill-gotten certificates. This will go a long way to reduce the issue of brain drain.

The government of Nigeria should give primary attention to education and health by increasing budgetary allocation to education and health. Also, technical education

and innovation adaptation centres should be encouraged and properly financed to produce the quality of human capital required to develop the service sector and become a knowledge economy.

The government of Nigeria should increase investment in technologies to facilitate effective acquisition and absorption of knowledge. The government also should establish more technological-based universities to cater for the problem of unsatisfied social demand for higher education and technological advancement in Nigeria.

Capacity building programmes should be organized from time to time for all levels of education in order to abreast the academics of the changing trend. Also, government should vigorously enforce the law mandating universities in the country to improve the quality of human capital.

University communities should not become exclusive prerogatives of favoured surrogates of the system as is now commonplace in many Nigerian universities. A country is as strong as the capacity of its research infrastructures that is why government at all levels and significant stakeholders in the society must interrogate the current university system and revamp internal efficiencies and effectiveness. It is not enough to pump funds (the people's money) into universities without also monitoring how universities are deploying these funds to achieve results.

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