Curriculum Restructuring For Sustainable Development in Emerging Economies: Towards Digitalized Basic Education for Relevance in Nigeria in the 21st Century

By

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Abstract

The contemporary global market economies require every nation to be part of the market by contributing its products and receiving from others in form of goods and services. Meaning a market where you give and take. But it would appear that Nigeria is only a consuming nation and needs to look inwards if she must be part of the global development. However, our educational system and by extension curriculum centred more on non-skills or what popularly referred to as 'grammer' aspects. Hence, even before Nigeria's independence graduates from different educational strata were produced mainly for white collar jobs. But today the system has created a lot of challenges where our graduates are no longer relevant in today's economy, and by extension unemployable. Against this background that it has become necessary to restructure the school curriculum to prepare our youths for the new wave of global development. In this way, the new curriculum should, therefore, be restructured to take into consideration the needs of individual and the wider society. Thus skills acquisition either in the vocational or technical would be appreciated for if the government or private sector would not employ graduates, individuals would create jobs for themselves and could as well become employer of labour. For any meaningful sustainable development, the curriculum requires restructuring from primary, secondary and even tertiary institutions with emphasis on vocational and technical skills. Teachers need to be trained to get abreast with the new trend. It is a huge task, and it is surmountable. The paper uses historical and multidisciplinary approaches as its methodology.

Introduction

Towards the end of the 20th century and now emerged a new global market economy driven by advancement in science, technology and ICT and popularly referred to as digitalize or globalize economy. It is a market system where every nation is involved, and every nation need to contribute or obtain from the market either through production, distribution or consumption or all of the above. One's national economy is in the hands of those nationals. Unfortunately, Nigeria is part of the market but only a consumer of goods and services from the west and Asia because she has little to export. Nigeria's export is mainly crude oil whose market price is determined by the buyers - the western and Eastern nations. On the other hand, Nigeria is a major importer of capital goods, food, arms etc. and always on market deficit to her trading partners.

However, for some time now, when issues of unemployment are being discussed at any forum, what is usually being expressed is that Nigerian graduates are not employable because they lack skills needed in today's market economy. That has been so because of the changes in global market that would not meet the type of education received that prepares individuals for the future.

Indeed, Nigeria is in this predicament because of the Eurocentric education bifurcated to us by Britain, our erstwhile colonial master. The type of education or the component received from them and maintaining it after they left place us on the disadvantage position among comity of nations. Thus, many youths and more so graduates from our secondary to tertiary institutions are not employable because they do not possess the skills needed in today's market economy. Against this background that it has become necessary to restructure Nigeria's education curriculum to reflect the realities of modern market system. It means Nigeria needs to incorporate technical and vocational disciplines as the basic component of education from the primary school to the tertiary level. That would lay emphasis on the teaching of science, technology, mathematics, ICT as an integral part of education. This does not mean that liberal education disciplines would be excluded from the curriculum. In other words, Nigerian education system would be comprehensive but more emphasis on skill oriented disciplines.

Meanwhile, as Nigeria is looking at the teaching of science, technology, mathematics, ICT, thus teacher education along that line become imperative. It means, teachers must be trained and retrained if the nation must succeed in this new development. Against this background, the new curriculum would become a nucleus for Nigerian children from primary to tertiary institution – acquiring skills that would be useful to them and nation as a whole and by extension graduates would become employable. The country would key in, in productive ventures, not only being a consuming economy but also a productive one. It means with basic digital education, if any individual is not employed, one could employ himself/herself. All these would lead to sustainable development in an emerging economy such as ours.

Conceptual Clarifications: Understanding Emerging Economy

The term "emerging economy" was first coined by Antonie Van Agtmael in 1981 to differentiate it from the touting phrase "The Third World" which suggested progress, uplift, and dynamism (Agtmael, 2007). An emerging economy is explained as a situation in which a traditionally agricultural exporter frog leap into major industrial centre with foreign firms investing in productive plants in the country thus facilitating the movement of peasants from the countryside into new urban jobs. It means an economy where millions of ordinary people begin to emerge from desperate poverty into, at least, the beginning of a decent life, and where some people are becoming very rich (Krugman, 2000). It also entails the production and expansion of goods and services beyond the domestic market through private or non-governmental actors, eliminating (or at least minimizing) government interference linking her market beyond regional to international levels. It means liberalization of production, distribution of goods and services beyond the domestic market thus leading to job/wealth creation (Viotti&Kauppi, 2009). It also describes an economy which progressively moves from a weak industrial or subsistence level to a more advanced level of economic development with a dynamic and sustainable industrial sector having close links with advanced market economies in finance and investment system (Akpan, 2011).

Understanding Sustainable Development

It is important to note that, the 1970s saw the beginning of international summits on environment and also a proliferation of international agreements on

environmental and related issues. According to the United Nations Environment programme (itself established in 1972), there are 144 regional and 97 global environmental agreements relating to the environment, more than three-quarters of which were signed after 1972. The first global environment summit was the United Nations Conference on Human Environment (UNCHE) held in Stockholm in 1972. It initiated a number of intergovernmental investigations, meetings and agreements on global environmental problems. These merged with parallel investigations into development and common security, and culminated in 1987 in the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) 1987 titled Our Common Future". The World Commission on Environment report popularized the term 'sustainable development', and it introduced the term 'environmental security' (Collins, 2007).

Sustainable development has, therefore, been defined as development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generation to meet their needs (Bruthland report, 1987). It is therefore a concept involving the utilization of available natural resources, the preservation of genetic diversity, and the maintenance of ecosystem. The Bruthland report view of sustainable development implies that future generation should be compensated for the damage caused by the present day activities for development to be sustainable. For development to be sustainable, it is necessary to sustain the ecosystem and strengthen the social and economic fabric that underscores development (Torado& Smith, 2009; Egwu, 2008).

Conceptual

Curriculum/Curriculum Restructuring

Curriculum means very many things to recipients of school education. It may be seen by some as all the learning experiences that the learner acquired under the guidance of schools directed towards acquiring some skills or competences. This concept is learners focus rather than teaching and its inclusion of all experiences of the learners (NTI, dateless). Hass (1980) sees curriculum as all the experiences that individual learners have in a programe of education whose purpose is to achieve broad goals and related specific objectives which is planned in terms of a frame work of theory and research or past or present professional practice.

Curriculum restructuring implies reorganization of the curriculum to carter for the need of the learners and by extension the needs of the society at present and for the future.

Curriculum Restructuring for Basic Education

> 'People are the foundation of the nation
> If the foundation is firm, then the nation will enjoy tranquility? James Yen'the first responsibility of any nation or people, at any time and in any place, is the care of its rising generation. It must be all possible means strive to secure that every child born to it is born healthy and capable of growth and development to full manhood or womanhood. It must never forget that the child of today is the man or woman of the quite near future, and that the quality and mettle of its people in a few years' time depend upon the wisdom of its treatment of its children now. G. B. Jeffery (Ukeje, 1978)

The above quotations are to show what should be the foundation of the society for growth and sustainable development. Essentially today the society is changing and new demands are emerging, demands that call for a new type of education for socio-economic effectiveness. In the complex society which is emerging, it will no longer be easy or even possible to operate effectively in ignorance and illiteracy. The complexities of modern society demand a new type of education for normal and effective functioning. Adjustments must be made and new values that would benefit the individuals and society have to be acquired. Thus, the demand for a new basic education for lifein the society rather than education merely for livelihood. Essential, the modern basic education should be far from elementary training given to children from about the age of six to about twelve or fourteen. In other words, the new curriculum should be above or prepare children to obtain education different from:

(a) the production of desks for the government service;
(b) the production of shop assistants for commercial firms
(c) the preparation of entrants to the traditional grammar school type of secondary school (Ukeje, 1978). It mean the old curriculum was merely eurocentric(basically, preparing individuals for white collar jobs, that has been a bane to our development. White collar jobs, that has limit expansion

> within and economy and people become consumers of industrial goods from developed economies. Remember emerging economies are commodities export based, and that had been counter-productive to these economies.

On the other hand, the new market economy is based on give and take. It is true that emerging economies have been giving out their products to the global market, but these products do not lift them out of dependence on developed ones. This does not mean that when you export capital goods one does not depend – no, exchange of goods and services need to be competitive hence would enhance development and not one sided.

Meanwhile, the emerging economies such as ours is not open for employment because investments are limited or in small scale. In this connection, West and Eastern European States who come to our shores for investment have qualified Nigerians for available jobs but lack the required skills needed for todays market global economy. Therefore, our needs are the production of youths or given basic education in technical, vocational and information, computer and technology skills. Five classes of trained man power – skilled, technical, scientific, professional and administrative. Thus, by a skilled worker, we mean one with distinctive abilities, a certain level of competence, and some special training. Essentially, therefore, our school system is the factory or industry that turns out productive people to the labour market. The market then see those they need and otherwise discriminate. The people needed in the productive system became inadequate because of lack of employable skills that drive economies.

That leads us to what subjects needed to be included in the new curriculum. The curriculum for basic education include – basic science and technology discipline based such as motor mechanics, sheet metal work, electricity, black smithing, welding, bricklaying etc. And Vocational subjects include technical drawing, crafting, painting, carpentry, general mechanics, typing and computer.

Besides, the curriculum, the environment for teaching these subjects need to be conducive for learning. Most school environments are not conducive for learning hence curriculum alone is not enough for the new market economy. Again,

teachers for the new system should be positive for learning. In other words, curriculum restructuring would need teacher training and retraining to adjust to the new system. The digitalized basic education is conformed to the information, computer and technology. In other words, the world is driven by science, technology and information – these assist in driving economies.

Conclusion

The paper has titrated the global market system and confirmed that it has changed or become more complex than before, and the developing economies have not derived the benefits of scale because of the Eurocentric education inherited from the colonial masters. The level of unemployment and lack of meaningful contribution to world economy is affecting the developing economies negatively such as ours. That there is need for us to restructure Nigeria curriculum of education to reflect realties on ground by laying a new foundation for basic education. The basic education would become the foundation for future development and its sustainability. It may take some time but would make the future bright. Besides, apart from the foundation in curriculum, there is need to prepare the learning environment through putting on ground the infrastructural facilities for learning. Above all, teachers for the new curriculum need to be recruited and trained and the existing teachers retrained. That may lead us to be part of the global economy and draw the economies of scale for our development in the near future.

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