

NATIONAL GOAL ASPIRATION ACHIEVEMENT: EDUCATION FUNCTIONS AND THE POLICY- ECONOMIC STATUS OF NIGERIA'S AGRICULTURE IN VIEW

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Abstract

Sixty and more years is enough period for achievement of national aspiration given year-on-year national development plans expected to hatch far enough accomplishments, extent to, their, implementation. This seems to inform goals appraisal and recent actions of various Federal Ministries of Nigeria's government in, initiating policy-reforms and programme-reforms to redress the failure of the past governments, plans, to, meet the country's goals. Agriculture is the most important sector in the Nigerian economy employing many Nigerians, including many rural women whilst contributing to the country's GDP. Education function too in general, is responsible and fundamental in particular to, the construction of a knowledge economy and advancement of society in all nations. As in many other African countries, Nigeria remains a net-importer of food. This vis-à-vis education function and protectionist-policy agriculture is juxtaposed for national goal and aspiration achievement in this study. Thus, this study recommends total rejection and resistance to non-innovative agriculture regime-production, zero tolerance for corruption and total commitment to the absolute rule of education function optimization for sustainable development in Nigeria.

Keywords: Education function; Economic performance, Agriculture, National aspiration and policy

INTRODUCTION

Man expects life in full. That is, one that brings satisfactions of living and offers opportunity to advance as far as possible along the path of knowledge, feeling, art and poetry. The consciousness of this makes him want and/or create a chance or chances to contribute to the making of a better world. Thence, needs a recipe for improving the structures and conditions of the individual life level and the society (Lengrand, 1975; Eneh, 2008).

This creates struggles and sacrifices that, sometimes require, organizational might and technological innovations, fortunes of

wars and treaties determining, the fate of individuals and the collective fate of nations, peoples alike – that are at stake and – must be properly combined and balanced in correct perspectives. This developmental challenge sometimes pose the need for rights, ownership, system of rights or mechanism that governs and, encompasses, delegates or confers rights, duties, responsibilities concerning the, usage, transfer, alienation and use of resources – short, medium or long term – for defined, absolute or non-derivative interests and derivative interests affecting development cum security and growth.

Policy, national goals, tenure system, constitution, education are all such sub-phenomena's or needed instrument, and, lifelong in this developmental process (Lengrand, 1975; Uchegbu, 2023).

Sixty and more years after independence amidst, national development goals and policy, how free, democratic, just, egalitarian, united, self-reliant is the Nigerian society? More precisely, how far in the education and agricultural sectors of Nigeria? How great and dynamic is the education-function, knowledge content and agricultural economy? Examining the state of the nation with respect to these, this paper x-rays the situations in Nigeria, highlighting the extent – failure or otherwise of, the national government, goals and policy to actualise the national development goals for Nigeria and in the education-function and agricultural sectors especially.

National goal aspiration: education functions in view

From a global perspective, education functions of advancement in education content and application of knowledge increasingly drives economic and social development. Education in general, and overall education capacity in particular, are fundamental to the construction of a knowledge economy and society in all nations (World Bank, 1999).

This responsibility especially in developing countries is frequently thwarted by long-standing problems of; finance, efficiency, equity, quality and governance. Now, these old challenges have been augmented by new challenges linked to the growing role of knowledge in economic development, rapid changes in telecommunications technology, and the globalization of trade and labor markets (Salmi, 2001). Thus, education function aspiration has become one most important

factor for economic development in the 21st century.

This capacity and potential of education to; fulfill the systems knowledge and overall development via education function-capacity and to develop productivity, increasingly, constitutes the foundation of a country's competitive advantage (Porter, 1990). This change is most evident in OECD countries, where investments in the intangibles that make up the knowledge base of a country and cause the realization of the core function of education (e.g., research and development) are generating exceeding development and, investments in the physical and overall society (OECD, 2001).

Developing countries, while affected by these transformations, are not yet reaping equaled benefits. This is because the education function of growing capacity to harness knowledge; generate and expand sustainable development for the pursuit of improved living standards is not widespread equally among individuals in the same such, developing nation. In 1996, OECD countries accounted for 85% of total Research & Development investment; China, India, Brazil, and East-Asia accounted for 11%; and the rest of the world only 4%. Consequently, advanced economies enjoy the fruits of a self-promoting cycle of education function effects of which research is sine qua non in producing these benefits that cause expanding wealth, enable cum help support needed public consciousness for investments that has continued in, Research & Development (Romer, 1990).

Nigeria in contrast as, many developing countries have, neither; articulated a development strategy linking knowledge to economic growth nor built up their capacity to do so. Nigeria although, is one of Africa's largest country with 20 percent of the region's population, yet has, only 15 scientists and engineers engaged in

research and development per million persons. This compares with 168 in Brazil, 459 in China, 158 in India, and 4,103 in the United States (World Bank, 2002a). Following this and, years of questionable higher education policies under various military administrations, Nigeria while standing great a chance at evolving giant education function gains and, participating in the emerging global knowledge economy by recent initiatives of democratically elected governments; still, suggest low levels of investment in research capacity and education which explain why the country's non-oil economy has remained consistently sluggish during a decade of international economic expansion (Saint, Hartnett, and Strassner, 2003). Invariably, while one-third of its population pursues a life style oriented in various degrees towards Europe and North America, the other two-thirds struggles to survive on less than one dollar per day (World Bank, 1996).

Wrapped in a culture noted for industry, creativity and initiative, some Nigerians prefer to apply these talents to questionable or illicit pursuits, while many others expect government to provide the cure for their economic and social ills. Consequently, in spite of substantial oil revenues, per capita income is lower today than it was in 1970 while the country's business environment is distorted and restrictive and the non-oil economy almost stagnant. A survey of international businesses working in Sub-Saharan Africa found that Nigeria is one of the most difficult countries in the world for private business (Center for International Development, 2000).

On balance, in recent years, the education function of developing the material minds and conditions for development that appear to be available in Nigeria, have created economic success of newly industrializing nations (e.g., the "Asian tigers"). This has been linked to substantial

prior investment in human resources in these industrializing nations via education function gains. This education function effect on human and cultural conditions that enable successive development to occur are probably not yet in place in Nigeria (Saint, Hartnett, and Strassner, 2003). Such education functions are strategic investments in national innovation system, together with particular institutional and policy choices concerning the nature of the university system, the extent of intellectual property protection, the historical evolution of industrial Research & Development organization, and the division of labor between private industry, universities and government in Research & Development performance and funding (Nelson, 1993).

Research suggests that education policy and philosophy plays an important role in shaping national innovative capacity by shaping human capital, overall investments and creating incentives for innovation. Countries that have increased this and other innovative capacities are reaping happily and heavily in science and engineering causing, further promotion of competitive education and, creating the basis for further investment in innovation (Stern et al., 2000). Education function proposes a simple framework that suggests policy movement in the right direction. It presents higher education conditions against the backdrop of policy initiatives for further improved system performance. Thus, with a population of 120 million and ample natural resources, education function effect in Nigeria is, somewhat deformed given that on the research side; Nigeria's number of scientific publications for 1995 was 711 – significantly less than its output of 1,062 scientific publications in 1981 by a comparatively much smaller university system (TASK FORCE, 2000). This orientation contrasts 3,413 scientific publications for South Africa, 14,883 for India, 310 for Indonesia,

and 5,440 for Brazil (TASK FORCE, 2000). Despite this, Nigeria's federal university system spends only 1.3% of its budget on research (Hartnett, 2000) which reflects the low priority accorded to research and development by government decision-makers and probably Nigeria's high-import dependence; food and nourishment insecurity aside low ease of doing business ranking – all appurtenances of low education function gains.

National goal aspiration: policy-economic status of Nigeria's agriculture in view

Pre-colonial era

Pre-colonial, the geography which constitutes Nigeria was exclusively based on the principle that family, family households, community, household and community heads are custodians of might and ownership and reserve the powers to allocate resources based on needs and/or other subordinate interests. Thus, the power or authority over land, pre-colonial, existed at the community or family level. Thus, the leadership of communities and families had absolute interests, while constituents had derivative interests (Uchegbu, 2023).

Colonial era

Based on the principle of democracy, that is, the norm that all members of society are equal rather than divided by money or social class (Oxford, 2001), the colonial era was defined (Eneh, 2008; Uchegbu, 2023). This traditional Nigerian society and, the concept of democracy manifested in different forms, no doubt, including, the age-grade system and the genealogical structure that determines citizenship, identity and other rights. As a noble ambition, the appeal to democratisation and its pursuit was because an essential aspect of the development of a modern nation-state is strong attachment to democracy, which is a political system in

which the people rule as a matter of sovereign will (Eneh, 2008; Angulu, 2000).

In agriculture, the ownership of land was regulated by the colonial authorities before independence using legislations such as, Treaty of Cession (1861), Land Proclamation Ordinance (1900), Land and Native Rights Act (1916), Public Lands Acquisition (1917), State Land Acts (1918) and Town and Country Planning Act (1947). These legislations regarded the principles of native law and custom; power or authority conferred on, household, community, household and community head; and, stipulated that the title of land can only be acquired through the high commissioner such to take rights especially property rights out of the reach of community leaders. This deviation post-colonial with the aspiration achievement system, sometimes referred to as the deviance of the colonial rule, was obvious in the Land Proclamation Ordinance created by Lord Lugard in 1900 (Uchegbu, 2023).

Incongruent or not with the pre-colonial aspiration achievement system, the British had brought all the Nigerian state and non-state societies into one fold under colonial dictatorship between 1914 and 1947. The Masters installed parliamentary democracy between 1947 and 1961. A was a. Unlike the military establishment of a developed country that evolved as a people's army to galvanise opposition of the populace against external interests or aggression, the Nigerian military system was like a standing army created as a/an; tool for the anti-democratic principles of imperialism and colonialism; anti-people's army to conquer and subjugate a recalcitrant population under a colonial system. Thence, originally named, Royal Niger Company Constabulary in 1886 to protect British trading interest against hostilities of the exploited natives and other colonial contenders in, 1891, it was renamed the Niger Coast Constabulary. This

Constabulary formed the nucleus of the West African Frontier Force (WAFF) established by Lord Lugard in 1897 and renamed to the Nigerian Military Force, Royal West African Frontier Force in June 1956 respectively (Angulu, 2000; Omeje, 2000).

In doing the fore-gone, this so called deviance of in the rule of the colonial masters potholed in the service of quashing internal insurgency, using, the Nigerian Army of the neo-colonial dispensation and thus, hardly respected democratic principles in certain cases. This advantage of monopoly of the legitimate use of force to subject the nation's political culture to buccaneerism surfaced, post-independence, thus, of the 63 post-independence years wherein, the military ruled for 29 there were, far-reaching negative consequences on the institutions of the nation and the culture of politics. From the first military political power outing in January 1966 – seized political power – its dictatorship was a dominant feature and paramount in the Nigerian political landscape especially, dictatorial, coercive and reactionary values in the Nigerian political system; values that, are anti-democratic, anti-people and anti-progress. The military and these values associated with military entrenchment aside its authoritarian subculture seems to have impacted on societal development, using its rule to, destabilise the political culture – corrupt and negate universal ideals of democratisation (Omeje, 2000). Describing this, Angulu (2000) posits this military interregna in the country as one legacy of eroded residual democratic values. However, this does not devolve the military with the legacy of sacrifice.

Though hard to certainly measure, such authors as Angulu (2000), Omeje (2000), Eneh (2008), Lengrand (1975) akin the military rule – that was enthroned through bloody and bloodless *coup d'etat* claiming lives of national figures, to; a predominant

tendency towards simplification which; could not abide discussion or subjective interpretation to create free and democratic society in Nigeria. Democratisation calls for expanding the political space to avoid oligarchy (government by a few people) and to encourage democracy (government by the widest majority of the people) either through defined, vertical expansion – enlarges the decision-making apparatus of various tiers of government (local, state and federal) to accommodate the democratic representation of more geo-political and other interest groups or, horizontal expansion – liberalizes political participation through popular franchise. Thus, a path to better life for the people, freedom and democracy is congruent with the expansion of political frontiers involving dismantling obnoxious structures of oppression, exploitation and discrimination based on gender, religion, caste, language or ethnic group, while developing new structure capable of promoting civil, social and economic rights (Omeje, 2000; Lengrand, 1975).

Post-independence

Capitalising on the setback of the Nigerian civil war, in January 1970 the, ruling national government articulated 5 main national development goals contained in the Nigerian Second Development Plan (1970-1974). These goals were later endorsed in 1973 as the necessary foundation for the National Policy on Education published in 1977 (FRN, 2004). This Second National Development Plan (1970-1974) was pronged on five-pillar national development goals of building a; (Federal Ministry of Education, 2007 and FRN, 2004):

1. free and democratic society
2. just and egalitarian society
3. united, strong and self-reliant nation
4. great and dynamic economy, and
5. land full of bright opportunities for all citizens.

In agriculture, the Plan years of (1970-1974) witnessed skyrocketed inflation coupled with the devaluation of the national currency and arbitrary hike in fuel prices. Though clear with import-substitution proliferation opportunity to, diversify the Nigerian economy, the petroleum-based wealth of those Gowon's regime years provided a powerful means to consolidation of power-base of some factional interests (notably the military and bureaucratic elites), using, the Indigenisation Decree review, the Land Use Decree of 1977, the new federal capital territory development project, the steel development projects and other 'white-elephant' projects scattered all over the country, and various international festivals and jamboree projects, like FESTAC '77 with prodigal propensities that drained the nation's oil revenue all, combined, to cause, excruciating poverty, hunger, homelessness, and deprivations (Toyo, 1984). Little wonder, when the global oil recession abruptly came in early 1978, the government imposed the first global oil glut-induced 'austerity' and subsequently resorted to the international money market for a \$1 billion jumbo loan, thereby shooting the country's external debt from US \$560 million in the Gowon era to US \$3.97 billion in 1978 under the Obasanjo regime (Obi, 1984). In the next 20 years, during which the military ruled for 16, the external debt rose to US\$36 billion (Eneh, 2008).

In his description, Dare (1991) detail those days of Second Development Plan as programme-vague and implementation-hypocritical and perfunctory, squander maniac, megalomaniac and bankrupt adduced amidst other things to one such statement, money is not the problem of Nigeria, but how to spend it, analogous to President Gowon (Egwu, 1995). Further, this oil wealth and the collapse of global oil price plunged African economies pre-1980 with, a crisis situation to deeply confront with

though Nigeria's experience of the economic crisis was delayed until the early- and mid-1980s.

Great and dynamic economy – status

To demonstrate Nigeria's poor governance-induced economic failures some, dimensions of, its wealth of human and physical resources notwithstanding, her economic indices declined thus, GNP per capita of respectively US\$ 1,200 in 1982, US\$ 1,351 in 1994, US\$ 220 in 1995 and life expectancy of 47.5 years in 2000 (Eneh, 2000; Ukwu, 2000; United Nations System in Nigeria, 2001). Sequel to this, many African countries including Nigeria adopted remedial and protectionistic measures, plans, policies and reforms to address their economic problems, either on their own or at the instance of multinational finance/development agencies such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Such protectionistic measures, policies, reforms, projects, and programmes executed in Nigeria from 1980 include but not limited to Green Revolution in 1980, Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) in 1986, National Fadama Development Project (NFDPP) in 1990, Better Life for Rural Women in 1992, National Agricultural Land Development Authority (NALDA) in 1992, Family Support Programme (FSP) and Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP) both in 1996, National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) in 1999, National Special Programme on Food Security (NSPFS) in 2002, Root and Tuber Expansion Programme (RTEP) in 2003 (Iwuchukwu and Igbokwe, 2012; Omeje, Arene, Okpukpara, 2019). Others include the Growth Enhancement Scheme (GES) in 2011 and Agricultural Transformation Agenda (ATA) in 2015 and Agricultural Promotion Policy (APP) in 2016. Each of these reforms consists of one or more of agricultural

protection instruments such as tax exemption, tariff reduction, subsidies, credit facilities, reduced interest rate, and regulations and each of them have cost implications (Omeje, Arene, Okpukpara, 2019).

Though promissory this political economy tool of agricultural protection, designed to, boost domestic production became justified due to the declining share of agriculture contribution in the overall GDP of Nigeria thus, 64% to the total GDP in the year 1960 compared to a meagre 2.6% of oil sector contribution to the GDP; 12% to the total GDP in the year 1970 compared to 57.6% oil sector contribution in 1970; and, up to 99.7% of oil sector contribution to GDP in 1972 compared to, decreasing contributions of 48% in the 1970s, 20% in 1980, 19% in 1985, 12% in 2017 of agriculture (Sertoğlu, Ugural, Bekun, 2017; Doguwa, 2010).

This supposedly has culminated in rising food import bill leading to the persistent huge deficit in the balance of payments over the years and further justifying the economic reason to increase protectionist policies on the grounds of fostering domestic food security and more stable price-level society (Sertoğlu, Ugural, Bekun, 2017; Doguwa, 2010; FAO, 1999). Thus, patterns of agricultural protection policies in Nigeria and other developing economies in Africa deepen despite the confounding paradox of growing protection and the declining share of agriculture as alleged by Gardner (1992) in his research. Further, due to poverty and poor agricultural growth that continued to prevail (Omeje, Arene, Okpukpara, 2019), creating, negative externalities to Nigeria and other African developing countries, Iwuchukwu and Igbokwe (2012) opined that, Nigeria's agricultural policies and programmes, especially in the post-colonial era, undergone changes that, according to Amalu (1998) are, a mere reflection of changes in government and administration, unique only in,

nomenclature and organizational network, maybe, gulping billions of tax-payers money, distorting trades of agricultural products which some developing countries have a comparative advantage in producing.

Thus, protectionist-policy agricultural growth may be dependent on some other relevant political economy factors or indicators expected to guide agricultural GDP boost. If so, political economy variables in lieu of protectionism must consider, according to, Bratton and van-de-Walle (1994) such economic and political exigencies factors or variables, including; the state of food security or food self-sufficiency status; the contribution of foreign exchange earnings from the sector's export; general economic welfare to farm producers; GDP of the sector; budgetary allocation to the sector; and political or structural changes in the economy. Though objective, these factors are regime-subjective reflections of, or dispositions to, varying economic and political interests expected to increase politically vulnerability for a nation whose food supply is grossly dependent on import – Nigeria inclusive (Amin, 1972) either, more prevalent following rapid escalation of food prices or congruent in political instability that ensues via food riots and violence (Pejout, 2010).

On the contrary, Goldin and Knudsen (1990) opined that since agriculture is a sector of comparative advantage for many developing countries now and for some time in future, agricultural protection does not materially impair their potentials for economic growth. Holistically whilst authors including, Moon, Pino, and Asirvatham (2016) may support that protection could bring about agricultural growth in the economy; protectionist-policy agriculture should only be a paradigm to improve the development of agriculture and the general economic welfare to farmers. Importantly too, is that ironically, protectionist-policy

agriculture is also a form of political self-interest-seeking opportunity of politicians, purposively designed in, increased, agricultural budget or subsidies in order to gain political support during elections.

Thus by, using their public rent-seeking position, politicians may, subsidise inputs or products, deliver on interest free-loans, or grants, distribute agricultural resources and create opportunities such that will, push for protection from farmers, increase farmer profit as expected, and, demand for more protection, likely, through votes to the same rent-seeking political class sometimes (Omeje, Arene, Okpukpara, 2019; Bratton and Van-De-Walle, 1994; Binswanger and Deininger, 1997).

Protectionist-policy agriculture and status-overview of agriculture in Nigeria

The potential of the agriculture sector in Nigeria is huge. The country has a substantial base to build upon: natural assets including land (39.6m hectares of arable land, of which 60% is under cultivation), climate and rainfall, its coastal areas, history as an agrarian economy either, using protectionist-policy, or otherwise, combined with reinforced trade policies and land tenure policies; investment in functional agricultural educational and research institutions; liberalisation cum easing government engagement in fertiliser, seed and input supply, distribution, and financing; providing incentives for financial institutions, especially agriculture cum commercial banks and insurance companies to support the private sector-oriented agriculture; ensuring strong and effective extension support services, and agriculture development programmes at the local government level; and providing adequate infrastructures, especially feeder road networks and consistent and affordable electricity for long-term processing and value chain-agriculture. Thus, moreover agriculture thence becomes

recognised as a key business sector in Nigeria – needed as in other sectors – for the required engagement of the organised private sector across critical value chains. Until then, maybe, the sector may unleash the tremendous opportunities for micro, small, medium and large-sized enterprises emergence which can create value and jobs across critical value chains; provide financing support systems – including equipment, processing, transportation, distribution and marketing support (Nwuneli, 2010).

It must be noted that agriculture is the most important sector in the Nigerian economy, though, currently hindered by; overall public sector administration – responsible for creating an enabling environment for agriculture to thrive. It employs over 70% of Nigerians, including many rural women, and contributes up to 35% of the country's GDP (Chukwuone, 2015). As in many other African countries, agriculture in Nigeria is largely focused on food crops for the domestic market, as, obvious with her agriculture protectionist programs given, the Nigerian population estimated at 300 million people (NBS, 2023). In spite of this reality, Nigeria remains a net importer of food, for many reasons. First of all, the majority of the agriculture-focused policies, programs and operations in the country are small-scale, with limited innovation regarding inputs, harvesting, processing, distribution, and access to markets. The vast majority of people engaged in agriculture, in addition, operate at the subsistence level, are uneducated and have limited access to training. Moreover, with, 95% of the country's exports coming from petroleum and petroleum-related products, central focus has shifted away from agriculture. As a result, until recently, there has been severe underinvestment in agriculture by the public and private sectors, civil society and bilateral and multilateral

agencies. This has been intensified by weak, un-enforced, poorly implemented and often conflicting policies at all levels of the country (Nwuneli, 2010).

Despite the fore-gone, today though, Nigeria is one of the world's largest producers of cassava, cashews, tubers (sweet potato, yams), fruits (mango, paw-paw) and grains (millet, sorghum and sesame). In addition, sustained local production and processing – playing a key role in West Africa and providing tremendous opportunities to other regional markets – is a large support that agriculture protectionist-policy domestic market rejuvenation may represent. Unfortunately, there is; limited collaboration across regional value chains; greater collaboration between West African countries and their former colonisers or the United States, than with their neighbours resulting in significant lost opportunities in sub-sectors such as rice, cotton and cocoa, and continued dependence on imports (Nwuneli, 2010).

Conclusion and recommendation

Sixty and more years is enough period for achievement of national aspiration given year-on-year national development plans expected to hatch far enough accomplishments, extent to, their, implementation. This seems to inform goals appraisal and recent actions of various Federal Ministries of Nigeria's government in, initiating policy-reforms and programme-reforms to redress the failure of the past governments and, plans, to, meet the country's goals.

In Nigeria, despite protectionist-policy agriculture, Nigeria's agriculture is obviously characterized by, generally low income from agricultural production (Oladipo, 2010), widespread poverty still prevailing and on the increase in the country (International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), 2016; NBS, 2017)

despite many laid down aspirations, plans and policy-economy efforts. Also, Nigeria's high-import dependence; food and nourishment insecurity aside low ease of doing business ranking – all makers of low education function gains are raising questions of government's accountability and extent or degree of education function and agricultural-sector appraisal, government-policy appraisal and extent; and, highlighting concerns for liberalization, more budgetary allocation to the agricultural sector for the purpose of embarking on massive construction of agro-industries, silos, and other important capital projects that would improve aspects of agriculture processing, storage, marketing, industrialization, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) – which represents the economic and political will of individuals to invest in the sector whilst enhancing education function research & development.

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