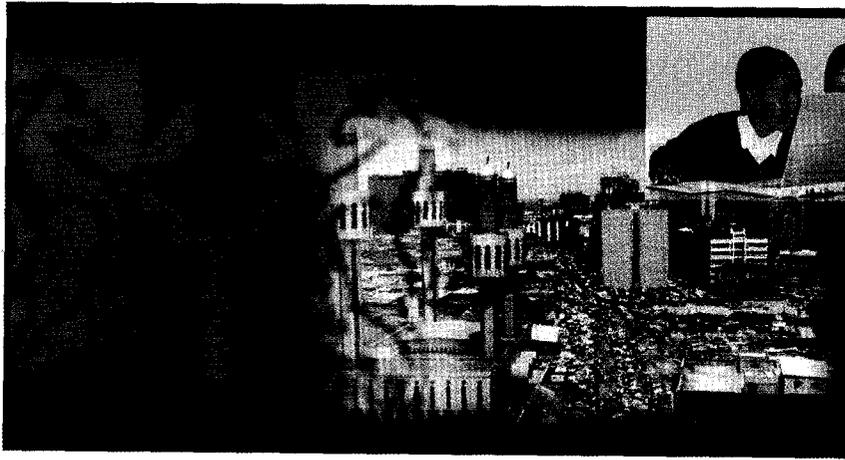


# THE EFFECTS OF GOOD GOVERNANCE AND EDUCATION ON ECONOMIC STABILITY AND GROWTH IN NIGERIA

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**T**he United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has defined good governance as “the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country’s affairs at all levels. It comprises mechanisms, processes and institutions, through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their differences”(UNDP, 1997). In its report, *Governance for Sustainable Human Development*, the UNDP identified nine core characteristics of good governance: (1) Participation, (2) Rule of law, (3), Transparency, (4) Responsiveness, (5) Consensus orientation, (6) Equity, (7) Effectiveness and efficiency, (8) Accountability, and (9) Strategic vision. Good governance ensures that political, social, and economic priorities are based on sound legal judgment, decision-making, rule of law, and consensus-building. Education, therefore, provides the knowledge and the pedagogy to realise all the elements of good governance.

In the above context, Nigeria then faces difficult political, social, and economic challenges ahead. The next general election in April, 2007, will determine the degree of the challenges. In the past, Nigeria has had political and economic instability which has led to many social conflicts. As a result, many Nigerians at home and in the Diaspora have lost confidence and hope in government, particularly in the executive and the legislative branches. They

claim that the executive branch has become too authoritarian and dictatorial and that President Obasanjo has not exercised any of the political will to effect and enforce binding national policies, allowing state governors to run amuck. Others see the legislative branch as lacking in political and collective will to compromise or reach consensus on vital national issues (allAfrica.com, 2007).

Furthermore, according to the Heritage Foundation/The World Street Journal 2006 *Index of Economic Freedom’s* report, Nigeria’s “per capita income remains low, and

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corruption, poor infrastructure and periodic labor strikes undermine economic growth and investment." In education, the report concluded that "the quality of public schools is so wretched that people living on less than a dollar a day pay a small fee to give their children better education through unsanctioned, privately run schools" (Heritage Foundation, 2006, pg 1).

## Demographics

Demographic changes around the world are forcing many nations to respond educationally - to meet the needs of their changing populations (Spring, 2004). In Nigeria, the demographic changes have implications for education and economic stability and growth. For example, many state governments are increasing their educational budget to meet the needs of the states and schools. With a population of roughly 140 million people, comprised of about 250 ethnic groups speaking approximately 400 languages and practicing traditional African religions, Christianity and Islam, the nation faces daunting social and cultural challenges.

Three major ethnic groups continue to dominate and influence social and political events strongly. These groups represent different political traditions. The Hausa-Fulani, in the north, are mostly Muslim and traditionally support a centralised authoritarian system with a strong village chief and local Emir. The Igbo, in the southeast, are mostly

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Christians who traditionally live in autonomous village communities and are noted for indirect democracy. The Yoruba, in the west, follow a mixture of religions and lie midway between the direct democracy of the Igbo and the authoritarian systems of the Hausa-Fulani in their traditional government. The Yoruba have traditional leaders and a council of hereditary chiefs who make decisions in addition to those made by local self-governing units. Although the Yoruba and Igbo differ greatly in culture and traditional political systems, they are often viewed as southerners in contrast to Hausa-Fulani northerners. Politically, the Igbo and Yoruba are lumped together because of their generally higher levels of education.

## History

In 1914, the territory now known as Nigeria came under complete colonial rule after the amalgamation

of the Northern and Southern Protectorates as well as the Colony of Lagos. The result was that the political and cultural boundaries were reorganised and redrawn. The nation was subsequently divided into four regions: North, South, East, and West. An educational system, political and administrative structure and governance were also quickly put into place. A political and economic base was also established to support colonial interests.

During this period, the nation relied on the agricultural economy to support itself (Uwadibie, 2000). However, as the nation prepared for independence in 1957, attaining it in 1960, she was not producing oil for export in any large quantity. When she did in the 1970's, the Nigerian economy changed. Oil export then quickly generated about 90 per cent of the foreign exchange earnings and revenues for the country. As a result, there was a shift in emphasis to a heavy reliance on oil exports. The concomitant effect of the over-reliance on oil has been the gross neglect of the agricultural and other sectors of the economy, which many people now believe is the source of the social and political problems facing the nation (<http://www.gamji.com>; [www.nigeriansinamerica.com](http://www.nigeriansinamerica.com)).

## The Nigerian Constitution

The Nigerian Constitution is the supreme law of the land. The Constitution has gone through rigorous national constitutional conferences that have produced a constitution at different times: Lugard, 1914; Clifford, 1922;

Richards, 1946; Macpherson, 1951; Lyttleton, 1954; First Republic, 1963; Second Republic, 1979, and Third Republic, 1989. The implication is that when the 1999 Constitution was created, many people believed that a new thinking about government and good governance would emerge. Furthermore, they believed that many changes in the new Constitution would engender strong feelings about the inequitable distribution of political power. As I mentioned earlier, political instability has led to great social unrest in the country. A case in point is the economic crisis of the 1980's.

As the nation goes to the polls in April, 2007, to elect a new President, there is serious concern about the government's ability to govern effectively and efficiently at the federal level. The new President must respond to the will of the people, just as he will respond to market conditions. Furthermore, the new President must avoid the political maneuvering between President Olusegun Obasanjo and his Vice President Abubakar Atiku over allegations and counter-allegations of misappropriation and embezzlement of petroleum funds.

The Constitution is very clear on the role of the Executive and its relationship to other branches of government. For example, national, state, and local issues such as citizenship, human freedom, rights, national identity, and political parties, are clearly delineated. The intent of the present Constitution, in addition to providing the structure and function of government, is to act as a catalyst that engenders national consciousness, political reconstruction, political participation, economic stability and growth.

However, the Constitution has received some sharp criticisms. A few Nigerians feel that it has been vague on some key issues that may divide the country. Some of the national issues have been resolved and others are emerging. For example, the case of Nuhu Ribadu – Chairman of the Economics and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) is relevant to our discussion. It has been reported that a President has power to appoint or nominate a candidate for a position, but the national assembly must confirm the appointment. There are other issues such as a revenue-sharing formula and presidential terms that are critical to national unity, peace, and security. In the United States of America, for example, the framers of the U.S. Constitution considered a number of limits on the length of the Presidential term. At issue then was a four-year term, with the President eligible for a second and final term, or a single six-year term. It is necessary to mention that many democratic nations respond differently to the issue of presidential terms. In Nigeria, the issue regarding a third-term was resolved by the legislative branch.

## Educational Reform

Education in Nigeria has been interrupted by regime change. Military rule has affected economic growth and stunted private investment. For example, between 1960 and 1999, there have been eight military rulers: Aguiyi Ironsi, 1966; Yabuku Gowon, 1966-1975; Murtala Mohammed, 1975-1976; Olusegun Obasanjo, 1976-1979; Muhammadu Buhari, 1983-1985; Ibrahim Babangida, 1985-1993; Sani Abacha, 1993-1998;

and Abubakar Abdulsalami 1998-1999. Military rule has implication for educational reform and for society at large because of its authoritarian and undemocratic tendencies. During past military regimes, democratic principles and processes were seriously undermined.

In 1960, there was an urgent need to chart a new political and educational course for the nation. Two questions facing the government were what constituted good education and good citizenship in a democratic society?

In 1969, a national curriculum conference was staged to overhaul the Nigerian education system. One of the goals, as outlined in the National Policy on Education (1981), identifies citizenship education as: "a basis for effective participation in and contribution to the life of the society; character and moral training, and the development of sound attitudes - developing in the child the ability to adapt to his changing environment."

Between 1970-1974, the federal government issued the Second National Development Plan. The objectives of the NDP were to build:

- A free and democratic society,
- A just and egalitarian society,
- A united, strong and self reliant nation,
- A great and dynamic economy,
- A land of bright and full opportunity for all citizens.

In order to achieve the NDP objectives through education, the document stated that the quality of instruction at the educational levels should be geared towards the following educational outcomes:

- Respect for the growth and dignity of the individuals;

- Faith in man's ability to make rational decisions;
- Moral and spiritual values in their personal and human relations;
- Shared responsibility for the common good of society;
- Respect for the dignity of labour; and
- Promotion of the emotional, physical and psychological health of children (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1981).

In 1996, a new curriculum for citizenship education was developed to reflect the transition to constitutional democracy and the new Constitution in 1999. The philosophy of social studies and democratic education focuses on Nigerian schools training individuals to be just and competent individuals and to function as contributing and participatory members of a free, constitutional, and democratic nation. This implies that students must rely on the skills, knowledge and awareness of the rights of minority and majority groups to coexist and worship freely. Respect for law and order and respect for public and private property of Nigerians and non-Nigerians must also be addressed. This includes the awareness of the rights and obligations of citizens to government and society, and reciprocal government responsibility to citizens.

In 2006, the Federal Ministry of Education released a report for education reform and intervention - *Vision 2020: The Role of the Nigerian Education Sector*. The document was prepared under the supervision of Mrs. Obiageli Ezekwesili, the Minister of Education. The report, which is aligned to the National

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Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy's (NEEDS) goals of social responsibility, quality service, economic growth, and democratic ideals, is consistent with the goals and aspirations of the nation. The document is intended to stimulate economic and political interest, stability and growth.

The document cites lack of inspection of schools as one of the major problems facing schools in Nigeria. As a result, the federal government through the ministry of education has embarked on 'Operation Reach All Primary and Secondary Schools' initiatives to correct the problem. These initiatives are redefining the role of the federal government in education. It is reported that the federal government will change from the management of education to an enabler and facilitator of the education system (Federal Ministry of Education, 2006). This means more federal government involvement in education. With more

money from the federal government for education and the state governments increasing the education budget, education can take its rightful place in the society. This adjustment is not only necessary, it is timely.

### **Democracy in Nigeria**

Democracy needs a well-educated citizenry. In America, two important documents, the United States Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, provide the source and inspiration for American democracy. It states, for example, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable Rights that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness." Good government, and thus good governance, provides its people with the feeling that they are an integral part of society, thus enabling civic participation. Early in the life of the United States of America, Thomas Jefferson expressed concern about the problem of democracy. He cautioned that American democracy and the experiment in self-rule hinges on how well the people manage and govern all levels of government. He believed that democracy can only exist if there is a climate of civic virtue and an educated citizenry. In Nigeria, the challenge is to provide a climate that will promote civic virtue, political participation, and an economic environment for stability and growth.

Dewey (1916) argues that "democracy required a public that was educated to understand the social duties and responsibilities of political life." Since 1999, the Nigerian society

has become more open, democratic, and global. In a democratic society, citizenship and democratic education remain at the core of national stability, unity and security, and act as instrument for political and economic stability, growth and development. Nigeria has a blend of cultural diversity. This diversity is symbolic of our national unity. Many people believe that the issue of co-existence was resolved after the Civil War ended in 1970. Today, co-existence is seriously threatened by religious fundamentalism both in the north and now in the south. Government at all levels must be vigilant.

Dewey also believes that a society which makes provision for civic participation of all its members on equal terms promotes democracy. Such a society must have a type of education which gives individuals a personal interest in social relationship. Democracy demands that individuals exercise their freedom of choice and expression, and in exercising this right, they must use

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discretion. According to Thomas Jefferson, one of the framers of the U.S. Constitution, if they don't, the "remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion by education."

### Conclusion

Good governance and education promote economic stability and growth. Social and democratic education has the potential to solve the nation's social, political, and economic problems. The new educational reform will ensure human capital development.

The sustained record of corruption and human rights violations and abuses in Nigeria continue to undermine our potential as a nation. This generation and future generations of Nigerian youth, therefore, must not only demonstrate a commitment to the democratic principles and economic goals, but also develop the skills, values, and disposition needed to sustain a constitutional democratic nation. The new education plan will also endeavor to create viable and enabling programs amidst the challenges of private vs. public education. Such challenges include funding, instructional methods, research, teacher education, citizenship and political education programs and activities that have become crucial to sustaining the goals, objectives, and aspirations of the nation. The challenge now lies in creating a curriculum and modes of instruction that will deliver and sustain good governance and democratic education. ■

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