

## **Rethinking the Function of Quality Education towards Societal Transformation and Sustainable Development in African States: Nigeria's 21<sup>st</sup> Century in Perspective**

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### **Abstract**

*Education in African states like Nigeria is supposed to be a tool for societal transformation cum sustainable development. Regrettably, Nigeria still struggles with projecting appropriate ways of making learning attractive for the enhancement of societal transformation and sustainable development. While focusing on rethinking the function of quality education in Nigeria's 21<sup>st</sup>-century societal transformation and sustainable development as well as the problems preventing quality education from engendering societal transformation and sustainable development of Nigeria; the researchers equally explored applicable remedies to the incongruous issues bedeviling the education sector in Nigeria's quest for societal transformation cum sustainable development from qualitative research method. The study revealed that the function of quality education in societal transformation and sustainable development is normative and formative. It advocated that societal transformation and sustainable development through quality education in Nigeria must focus on addressing the following core values: physiological, self-esteem, freedom, cum safety. Conclusively, quality education will truly become the*

*road map to societal transformation and sustainable development when the values of life sustenance, self-esteem, freedom, and safety as well other appropriate government agencies are used to fight against the hindrances in the internal and external environment of Nigeria's education policies.*

**Keywords:** *Physiological Needs; Public Administration; Quality Education; Social Transformation; Societal Transformation; Sustainable Development.*

### **Introduction**

This study titled: Rethinking the function of quality education towards societal transformation and development in African States: Nigeria's 21st century in perspective discussed the burning issues in the country that have hampered societal transformation through quality education such as religio-cultural barriers, lack of funding, poor management of available resources, impotent curriculum, poorly skilled teachers/incompetent workers, unethical promotion syndrome, inadequate or total lack of critical instructional materials and techniques (Bukoye, 2018; Chioke, 2021a, 2021b & 2022a; Dhakal, 2020; Elujekwute, et al, 2021; Punch Editorial Board, 2022), among other numerous obstacles. Without doubt, educating critical stakeholders on these issues would practically enhance the function of literacy as the building block for sustainable development, a platform for democratization and the road to human progress. Thus, this study adds to the discourses on realizing, re-patterning and refocusing Nigeria for proper acquisition of functional educational templates useful for re-engineering the public service and/or public administration of the country in general towards contributing to sustainable national development in the comity of African Union (AU) and United Nations (UN) at large.

Education has significantly affected the transformation of societies (Desjardins, 2015). In other words, education world over and African states in particular has been a tool for societal transformation and development. Surprisingly, the situation on ground at the sub-regional levels in Africa shows that nation-states especially Nigeria still struggles with projecting appropriate ways of making learning attractive for easier inculcation of knowledge for effective societal transformation and sustainable development. According to Nnaji et al (2022), there has been dearth of political cum educational leaders' utilisation of sound approach in

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governance in the sectors due to the influence of corruption, ethnicity, political influences and cultural affiliations in the management of Nigerian education system (Okpata & Ukeje, 2010; Ndukwe, et al., 2015; Ukeje, & Nwangbo, 2022). This calls for the adoption of sound governance-driven reforms (Ndukwe, et al., 2022); change management in the processes of human resources (HRs) acquisition (Ndukwe, et al., 2016; Ukeje, et al., 2020); as well as sustainable human capital development (Idike, et al., 2020) in all the sectors of the economy. Although, previous studies identified and equally perceived the inadequacy of human resource development as a key challenge hindering the provision of quality services (Ukeje, et al., 2015) as a result of the influence of nepotism, external politics, political cleavages (Ndukwe, et al., 2015) lack of responsible leadership/accountability challenge (Chioke, 2023) and political marginalization (Chioke, 2022b); recent studies argued that Nigerian public sector should be properly re-positioned through sound policy reforms and innovations for the attainment of effective service delivery (Ukeje, et al., 2019).

Following the findings of extant literature cited in the preceding paragraphs and the cumulative observation of the researchers regarding Nigeria's education; it should thus be borne in mind that better ways of andragogical (relating to the art and science of adult education) and pedagogical (art and science of child education) education have neither been explored in effective ways in Nigeria, as her educational development at various levels is deeply fraught with academic fraud and allied issues. Expectedly, this grossly affects development from the perspective of Remenyi (2004) who perceived development as the process of growth toward self-reliance and contentment and process through which individuals, groups cum communities acquire the means of becoming responsible for their welfare cum future. Given the inability of Nigerian government to ensure the foregoing, it appears that societal transformation and sustainable development have not been guaranteed through quality education. Hence, the goals of this study include an exploration of the issues that gave birth to the foregoing problem and rethink the possible means of enhancing societal transformation and sustainable development through quality education in Nigeria

### **Research Background**

The pride of any government as posited by Lawal & Oluwatoyin (2011), “is the attainment of higher level of development in a way that citizens would derive natural attachment to governance,” but Nigeria’s case is entirely different. At the sub-regional level, countries in West Africa and other African sub-regions appear to be only theoretically antipoverty oriented via educational policies. National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) (n.d:83) buttressed the point as follows: “Improving and widening access to education, especially basic education has been an objective of education policy in developing countries over the past few decades. This reflects the broad recognition that education contributes to development.” It is also on record that education for all policy is a serious matter in Africa (Carrol, 2013; Fatimayin, 2002, Wolhuter, 2007). However, in spite of the good intentions and consciousness of the place of education in societal development, African countries, particularly Nigeria has experienced one problem or the other which has threatened the realization of the lofty education policy goals of functional citizenship through harnessing human resources potentials and smooth practice of public administration at various levels of governance.

Nigeria for example is poorly administered and thus, societal transformation in Nigeria is far from being fully recorded. Again, it is clear that public administration is about the various activities involved in implementing policies of the government. Simply put, public administration is the running of state affairs. Societal transformation and development are part of the state affairs to be ensured in the course of administering the state. However, the extent to which these are attained is greatly influenced by the quality of education in such polity. Given this, there is need to explore the various issues hampering the running of the education sector for effective societal transformation and development of Nigeria. This is the key problem that prompted this empirical exercise.

Societal transformation in Nigeria and other African countries is a child’s play when compared to developed countries because of the availability of quality education in developed societies. It is thus true that any society that wishes to be developed or transformed should not joke with her educational sector (Fatimayin, 2002; Tambawal 2013; 2017); and part of the primary elements of a community (Joshua, n.d). Accordingly, “education is seen as

a solution for vast range of tasks of the society and the bedrock for national development (Ozochi, 2008:3).” However, recent happenings and past events show that Nigeria under the present and past leaderships undermined the prospects of societal transformation and sustainable development through quality education as a result of governmental actions cum inactions.

The 2019 global assessment report of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) averred that transformative changes in a society are sacrosanct for nature protection (IPBES, 2019). How can transformative changes be achieved if not through quality education? It is worrisome that, Nigerians play with education with the erroneous thinking that they have gotten manpower and as such therefore can neglect education (Samson, 2013). When we thoroughly focus on unemployment, underemployment and other allied problems of the electorates especially the youths in Nigeria; we would definitely agree that these areas need to be reconsidered especially in relation to the country’s education system and societal transformation/development.

Following the above explications and Josua’s (n.d:26) position that, the role of education is to help provide the opportunity for all people to develop as fully as possible; it becomes pertinent for this present study to critically examine the issues that have clogged the educational system in Nigeria. While the study focused on rethinking the function of quality education in Nigeria’s 21st century societal transformation and sustainable development; and an exploration of the problems militating against quality education role towards societal transformation and sustainable development of Nigeria; the following questions guided the study: What is the function of quality education towards Nigeria’s 21st century societal transformation and sustainable development? What constitute the public policy issues hindering quality education’s role towards societal transformation and sustainable development in Nigeria? How can Nigeria’s education sector be re-engineered towards ensuring societal transformation and sustainable development for all? The researchers thus felt compelled to x-ray applicable remedies to the incongruous issues bedeviling education sector in Nigeria’s quest for societal transformation cum sustainable development.

## **Conceptual and Theoretical Underpinnings**

### **Quality Education**

Interestingly, “Education is the generic processes involved in instilling the societal values, assimilation of values and the resultant use of such values/knowledge to usher in sustainable development in such society and beyond where such values have been imported, assimilated and practiced. Therefore, education in the above sense is an agent of social mobility and social engineering (Chioke, 2021a).” NOUN (n.d, p.83), predicates that, “In the strict sense it is a process to attain acculturation through which the individual is helped to attain the development of the potentialities, and their maximum activation when necessary according to the right reason and to achieve his perfect self- fulfillment.” Also, “Education is the aggregate of all the processes by which a child or adult develops the abilities, the attitudes and other forms of behaviour which are of positive value to the society in which he lives. That is to say, education is a process of disseminating knowledge either to ensure social control or to guarantee rational direction of society or both (Tambawal, 2013).”

So, education is significantly prompted by the need to impart new ideas in the student (Chioke, et al, 2021). This is where societal transformation and development appear in this study. Operationally, education is the training of the man for societal transformation and development. Hence, this study also adopts the view of Josua (n.d) who submitted that, “Education is more than an economic investment: it is an essential input upon which life, development and the survival of man depend.” Then, what is the goal of education? On the goal of education, this study adopts Johan & Harlan (2014, p.53) view: “The main purpose of education is to bring human beings to enlightenment, so that they know what is right and what is wrong. We must remember that intelligence does not suffice.

Intelligence plus character – that is the goal of true education. The complete education gives one not only power of concentration, but worthy objectives upon which to concentrate.” The family has been the first point of contact for the education of a human and as such, the role of the family in education cannot be quantified. Collaboratively, “People are born, bred and die within the family. That is where they receive their first education

(Josua, n.d).” Having considered the meaning of education, the study goes a bit further to consider the term, ‘quality education.’

Quality education as posited by Elujekwute (2019) covers the curriculum content, the instructional strategies, assessment and evaluation policies and procedures that enable determination the performance of the students. It is also the process that ensures that an individual is transformed into a stakeholder/participant in the socioeconomic development of the society (Daura & Audu, 2015).

Quality education is excellence and more of societal values entrenched in the school curriculum and it includes the processes, stage as well as the activities that students passed through before obtaining the necessary qualification from educational institutions. Quality education is about some standard of excellence of the education sector in achieving its desired objectives (Elujekwute, et al, 2021).

It follows then that quality educational system from 21st century realities should consider the dynamics of the labour market and its teeming population by equipping human resources with occupational skills that enable them become self-reliant for a better society – a sustainably developed country (see figure 1)

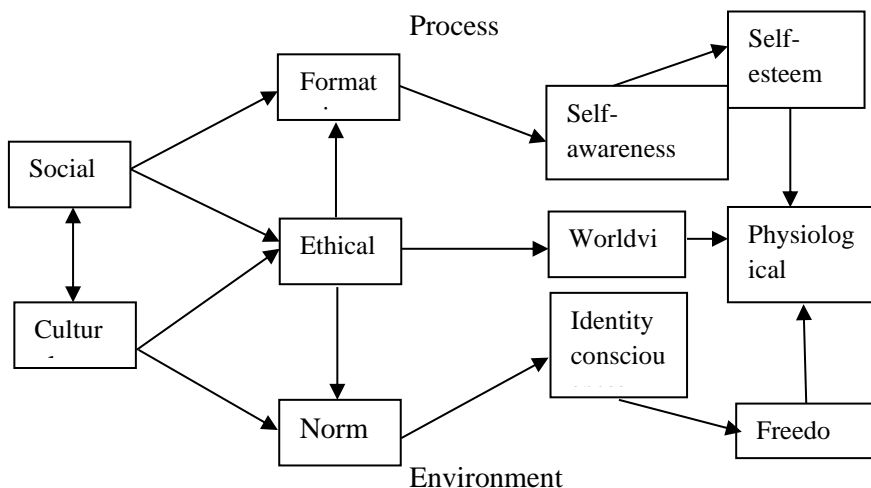


Figure 1: A conceptual model on the influence of quality education for sustainable

Since this study speaks about education for development, it is a common knowledge that HR development is the basic fundamental resources for economic and all other forms of development (Idike, et al., 2020; Ukeje & Chukwuemeka, 2021). Thus, cultural and social exposures produce normative impact and formative impact as ethics. This is because; quality education is that which transforms the mind and socio-cultural consciousness, self-awareness, personal and group identity. From the figure 1 above, cultural and social ingredients should be recognized for education to be qualitative.

Basically, quality education is that which transforms the mind and socio-cultural consciousness, self-awareness, personal and group identity. Socio-cultural consciousness, self-awareness and identity produces ethics which regulates the way a person acts or approaches things (his world view). Together, self-awareness and worldview leads to actions that produce physical, emotional, spiritual, economic, social and other forms of satisfaction. The satisfaction produces self-esteem and frees the educated mind from the entrapment of social and cultural inhibitions. This then is called development. When the members of society can make their lives better in all aspect and this begins with exhaustive, thorough education. Thorough education is quality education. And quality education is one that equips one with the skill of critical reasoning. And such critical reasoning begins with self-discovery.

### **Societal Transformation**

To get the nitty-gritty of the conceptual explication of societal transformation; a brief dissection of the term is needed. The term societal has to do with society. Literally speaking, transformation is, “a complete change in somebody/something (Hornby, 2020).” However, Bjorn-Ola & Wibeck (2019) noted that transformations take place over several centuries like that of Neolithic Revolution or at rapid space like the speedy expansion/increase of megacities in China. Social transformation was perceived as a nonlinear systemic change that is deep and sustained (Bjorn-Ola & Wibeck, 2020). Imperatively, societal transformation has been used in academic fields like anthropology (Kajsa & Jonathan, 2008), development economies (Clemens & Xinshen, 2008; Moshe, 1988), political economy (Karl, 1944), and history (Barry & George, 2015).

Societal transformation is a set of structural changes that occur in a society wherein such changes were designed to positively affect the society in specific manners. How can one differently perceive social transformation? There are arguments on the distinction that exists between social transformation and societal transformation.

Social transformation is about change in values, mores and norms guiding the interpersonal relations of members of a given society. In this connection, Wikipedia (2022) noted that, “Whereas social transformation is used within sociology to denote the process of change either in an individual’s ascribed social status or in social structures such as institutional relationships, habits, norms, and values, societal transformation refers to a wider set of societal structural changes.” Based on this, societal transformations could be referred to as civilization – that is the society at large having the features of a modern society. Societal transformation emanates when different changes in the subsystems strengthen each other and pattern the direction of the society’s development.

### **Sustainable Development**

Development entails not just one particular aspect on political, social and economic wellbeing (Abuiyada, 2018). In this regard, a country is underdeveloped when the masses lack enough food, job and the income inequality among the citizens has not been greatly reduced (Chioke, 2020). Given this, there is need for development that is sustainable. That is, one anchored on a well-developed human capital (Idike, et al., 2020). Development is useful not solely to enable citizens have higher standards of living (Igbokwe-Ibeto, 2003), but also includes the condition in which the electorates have enough food, job and the income inequality among the people in that society has been significantly reduced (Chioke, 2020; Seer, 1977).

Development is a hybrid terminology for a combination of strategies towards socioeconomic and environment transformation from its present condition to an expected state (Pearson, 2000). Development is a multidimensional process which generates technological, social, economic, and institutional change for supporting wealth of nations and the comprehensive wellbeing of citizens of in society (Coccia, 2019:1). The basic elements of development in a society are: the improvement of

health, the growth of wealth, the creation of new knowledge and technology etc (Ibid). This therefore suggests that development is a sign that the society is not static – a healthy symptom. It could be gleaned from the foregoing that knowledge, which is based on education is gotten through sound educational system. Therefore, education plays key role in developing the man and society at large.

Development is sacrosanct in a country, but sustainable development is superb and valuable. If it is not there, then men and the society will experience backwardness and life itself becomes brutish. This is because sustainable development according to Dhaoui (2019) is about development that attains present needs without compromising future generations' ability to cater for their needs. It is sequel to these perspectives that this study holds that sustainable development in this context comprises a change from the status quo geared towards better condition of living for all in a manner in which lasting satisfaction for all is attained and not just a few or unit among the whole.

Considering this, sustainable development is development that ensures the health, social, economic, political, legal and technological transformation of the citizenries while guaranteeing higher standards of living for them. Unfortunately, Ndukwe, et al (2022) observed that Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agenda provides directions for regional, sub-regional, national and sub-national development planning, but the politics of dependency which has continued to negate the purpose of SDGs shows that developed countries are just playing games with its objectives.

### **Methodology**

Qualitative philosophical approach of critical analysis of relevant extant literature was adopted. Attention was majorly given to concepts like education, quality education, societal transformation and sustainable development which resulted to critical analysis of the function of quality education in African states while focusing on Nigeria's side of the story. To gain insights on the specific cardinal purposes of this study, secondary data were sourced from reputable journal articles, textbooks, 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, internet materials and other relevant documents. Creswell (1998) advocates 20-30 samples for qualitative research. For this reason, multiple extant literatures on the

subject matter of this study were sourced and incorporated to reduce possible errors.

### **Rethinking the Function of Quality Education**

The significance of quality education in ensuring societal transformation and sustainable development cannot be exaggerated. Pertinently, the goal of education as seen from several templates such as Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is to engineer societal transformation, growth, change and development of the underdeveloped entities. Equally, education is a measure that ensures the consolidation of development of the developed societies. On this note, education is important to both underdeveloped and developed polities of the world. It should equally be added that human resource or labour force of a country is the major key to economic development (NOUN, n.d; Supriya, n.d).

According to Etuk, et al (2012) education is the basic instrument for attaining development at all levels of the society and the process of learning new values for smooth functioning of the society. Hence, it has been rightly stated that there can be no development without education (Ayodele, 2007). Education is the answer to existing socio-economic problems of the universe, as nations and individuals look up to education to produce the remedy for ignorance, poverty, climatic change, joblessness, mental deficiency, inadequate shelter, poor communication system, poor governance, hunger and among others (Elujekwute, 2019). Education in any society is development oriented. Apart from education being development oriented, it is the lens through which development is measured.

Therefore, Elujekwute, et al (2021) posited that education is the indices for measuring development capacity of persons and the country. Based on some statistics on ground, this study holds that there is no doubt that Nigerian education sector has witnessed a low contribution to the sustainable development of Nigeria from the economic angle. To buttress this, the following statistics typifies the prevailing reality in Nigeria:

*The educational subsector over the years has contributed minimally to the overall GDP as well as the specific GDP of the service sector. The contribution to GDP ranges from 2.6% in 1960 to 3.1% in 1965 and 3.2*

% by 1970. The performance of the educational sector from 1985 was extremely low in terms of contribution to GDP; in fact, the contribution was stagnant at 0.2% of the total GDP from 1990 to 2010. The contribution of the educational sector as a % of the service sector contribution was not anything different. It was at very low ebb, declining from 2.1% in 1990 to a meager 1.1% by 2010. This is simply because the educational sector is mainly in the hands of the public sector and it is highly subsidized with a non-profit making orientation. There is little contribution from the private sector although a growth in this direction is being witnessed in recent times (NOUN, n.d:85).

Apart from this, there are other factors that have added to the low contribution of education to sustainable development of Nigeria, which low quantitative expansion of educational opportunities is part of the allied contending forces. Therefore, there is need for quantitative expansion of educational opportunities in the country through education revolution that corrects poor academic achievements and industrial actions by university lecturers cum non-academic staff.

Societal transformation and sustainable development requires that the education system through its educators in Nigeria cum other countries of the universe must assume new duties of identifying problems through research, critiquing them and proffering lasting solution to societal issues. Regrettably, present conditions here and there depict that, “At the present, they seem to be simply following social consensus, trends and pressures, rather than being dynamic and critical intellectual leaders who positively influence and mold social values, beliefs and practices (Ekeh, 2021:344).” It is basically not only the quantitative improvement of educational opportunities but additionally the qualitative expansion of the kind of education delivered to the labour force is necessary for economic development (Supriya, n.d).

In the same way, the qualitative improvement of the lessons imparted to the learners or the entire human capital of a state is germane to societal transformation and all round development that is sustainable. Therefore, it should be added that, “Schools must face squarely and courageously every social issue, come to grips with life in all of its stark reality, establish an organic relation with the community, develop a realistic and comprehensive theory of welfare, fashion a compelling and challenging

vision of human destiny and become somewhat less frightened than they are today of the bogeys of imposition and indoctrination (Counts, 1932:259).” In this sense, education is an instrument for sustainable development. Sustainable development in this dimension requires investment in human capital. Thus, “education has been called human capital and expenditure on human capital (Supriya, n.d).”

To an extent, Nigeria’s education system has been dominant in establishing the standards for societal transformation and development. To do this, education systems through their educators and managers stipulates rules of behaviours and teaches same to the learners for the attainment of education based societal transformation and development. This is the normative side of the function of quality education in Nigeria’s 21st century. Regarding this, those stipulated rules of behaviours lead to societal transformation and sustainable development. It also plays a formative role by providing the shape or nature of societal transformation and development in Nigeria and constructing indicators to assess government performance in that regard. The role of education is formative as it plays crucial role in deciding the form of development in a society. Through quality education, government discovers societal problems and thus channels its resources in solving such developmental needs.

### **Public Policy Issues hindering Quality Education**

Education’s role in societal transformation and development is not a subject to be treated with a wave of hand. Despite the existence of policies in Nigeria’s education system; there is an array of diverse issues in the internal and external environment of her education policies that dampen attempts to transform and develop Nigeria from the grassroots to the central level. Regarding this, an exploration of these factors surfaces in the following dimensions:

Constitution creates the institutions of government which are necessary to the state’s internal stability and external security (Ezeodili, 2003, p.127). However, the constitutional loopholes in Nigeria’s 1999 constitution have undermined the application of education as an effective tool that ushers in societal transformation and sustainable development as it failed to create the institutions of government which are necessary for the state’s internal stability. Although, education teaches the sanctity and value for human life

irrespective of social class, ethnic and political affinity; Nigeria at the moment is an entity with little value for the sanctity of human life given the low educational qualification of her political gladiators as well as other innumerable factors. For this reason, President Nelson Mandela called for Nigeria's removal from Commonwealth after the killing of Ken Saro-Wiwa, as he condemned and stated the negligence of human rights during the era of late Sani Abacha (1993-1998) is enough reason for expulsion (Ossai and Babalola, 2020).

Given this ugly situation, Nigeria is among Africa's most divided countries (Adigboia, 2017). The foregoing are pointers that there are both procedural demerits/defects (lack of due consultation, the fact that the constitution is a military handiwork, etc.) and content demerits (centralization/concentration of powers, internal instability, insecurity and so on) that negate the principles of an egalitarian society in Nigeria's constitution. To see the matter, Falana (2022) posited that, "Notwithstanding the several decisions of domestic and regional courts which have upheld the socio-economic rights of the people, lawyers and judges have continued to give the misleading impression that only civil and political aspects of fundamental rights are enforceable in Nigeria."

The non-justiciability of the provisions of Chapter II of 1999 constitution wherein the socio-economic rights of Nigerian citizens are contained has in the view of this study erroneously garnered judicial backing in various cases such as *Adewole vs. Jakande* (1981 1NCLR, 262); *Okogie vs. A.G Lagos State* (1981 1NCLR, 337) and other judicial precedents. Whereas the socio-economic rights of the citizens which *inter alia* include education has remained unenforceable by virtue of section 6(6) (c) of the 1999 constitution, the fundamental human rights (civil and political rights) of the Nigerian citizens are properly enshrined in Chapter IV (that is, S. 33 to S. 46) of 1999 constitution and are enforceable. This is a practical procedural demerit hampering the sustainable growth and development of Nigeria.

Corroborating this, Falana (2022) stated that, "section 6(6) (c) of the constitution has stripped the judiciary of its authority in matters pertaining to Chapter 2. As a result, it represents a significant hindrance to socio-economic growth." Interestingly, socio-economic growth is a mark of societal transformation and development. With such document that is

expressly fraught with both procedural and content defects and implicitly lacking in acceptability, the education sector in Nigeria has not been able to sufficiently guarantee speedy societal transformation and development.

Academic corruptions are corrupt practices/abnormalities orchestrated by corrupt stakeholders in the sector – education sector (Chioke, et al, 2021).

Academic corruption entails the abuse of authority for personal and material gain (Pierre, 2014). In a study, it was submitted that:

*Education sector in Nigeria and Enugu State in particular is a huge enterprise, because of the existence of an avalanche of both public and private schools. While this is certain, corruption remains a time bomb in the education system waiting to explode and casualties unavoidable. In this dimension, it is clear that academic corruption stultifies national development as it relegates the need to supply students with pedagogical equipment of several colorations, reading and writing materials. Also, we cannot deny the urgent need for andragogical (has to do with adult education) equipment in the State to cater for the significant population of uneducated adults (Chioke, 2021a).*

Predominance of bribery in school admissions increases the costs of education and limits access among lower income earners (Stefan, 2017). This has a far reaching implication on development and societal transformation in the state. To this end, Nwankwo & Nweke (2016) in their study submitted that, “The concept of corruption has adverse effect on our social and economic development and also in building a veritable nation especially in diversion of development resources for private gain; misallocation of talent; loss of value tax revenue of the nation; negative impact on quality of infrastructure and private services; retardation of economic growth.”

Education for societal transformation and sustainable development is plagued by insolvable matters threatening its attainment in Africa and Nigeria in particular. In some African states, societal transformation and development through education policies have been very insignificant as a result of male child education preference over female child education. This is a serious problem in the external ecology of Nigeria’s education policies which has continued to prevent quality education from engendering societal transformation cum sustainable development. Studies have proved that this practice is sequel to cultural differences and value systems. In their

study, Qadir, et al (2011) revealed that in Pakistan, preference for boys' education over girls' education is highly culturally embedded. In this regard, it is clear that empirical studies support the fact that boys' education preference is highly imbedded in cultures and as such, it possesses some cultural undertone and affinity (Chioke, 2021b; Qadir, et al, 2011; Fikree & Pasha, 2004).

In Nigeria, education for all program may be difficult to succeed in some Northern Islamic communities where women education is not fostered (Chukwuemeka, 2020), because of the religious or cultural practices and peculiarities of Northern Nigeria. However, the reasons for male preference over females as perceived by Sen (1999:8) are: "Boys carry the family name, can continue the family trade, and are expected to provide for their parents in old age. Married women typically live with their in-laws and are expected to provide care and support to their husband's parents in their old age." The practice of male preference over females was common in Igbo land (Chioke, 2021b). This is part of religio-cultural impediments to quality education for societal transformation and development, and education for all policy.

Also, maintaining economic stability as distinctive mark of development seems to be irredeemable. For example, in Nigeria where there are high levels of security threats and agitations for self-determination of several ethnic nationalities, achieving societal transformation and development remain largely impossible as the constitutional powers of politicians cum state officials are largely unchecked. Ogbenika & Adeniji (2022) insisted that the challenge of insecurity in Nigeria has become part of the greatest inhibitors to nation-building. Likewise, this current study holds that apart from its threat to nation-building, insecurity has constituted heavy threat to societal transformation and development in the country.

Significantly, "When a country is emerging from decades of dictatorship as it is the case of most African countries, it becomes imperative to checkmate, monitor and restrain the powers of political leaders and state officials (Ukaegbu, 2013:34)." Federating partners in Nigeria such as Anambra, Benue, Borno, Ebonyi, Enugu, Imo, Kaduna, Kogi, Niger, Yobe, are practically insecure as there are news of loss of lives and properties orchestrated by bandits, boko haram, Fulani herdsmen marauders, and unknown gunmen. Regrettably, Chioke, (2022c) found that, some criminal

elements hijacked the struggle for self-determination in South-East, Nigeria to make troubles by maiming, stealing and other inhumane activities that have snowballed since the resumption of the struggle for Biafra in that geopolitical zone.

Our present study submits that this is sequel to the level of government's negligence towards education in Nigeria evidenced by the past industrial actions by university lecturers. In fact, the past administrations and especially the present administration of President Buhari has been indifferent regarding matters concerning the state of education, while the youths who ought to be gainfully engaged with studies are roaming the streets and adding to the security threats undermining societal transformation and development in Nigeria. Therefore, insecurity is a huge obstacle confronting the role of education in Nigeria's societal transformation and sustainable development.

### **Rethinking the Applicable Remedies**

It is no doubt that there are issues confronting societal transformation and sustainable development in Nigerian state. To forestall these challenges, the applicable remedies to the problems of quality education in societal transformation and sustainable development processes of Africans, especially Nigerians are highlighted hereunder:

The much needed societal transformation and sustainable development through quality education in Nigeria must focus on addressing the following core values of societal transformation and development:

1. Physiological,
2. Self-esteem,
3. Freedom, and
4. Safety:

**Physiological value:** The physiological values with which one could use in assessing development and transformation is about life sustenance. This aligns with Abraham Maslow's physiological needs. According to Uysal, et al (2017:215) these are needs that must be satiated for the continuation of an individual's existence, like taking oxygen, drinking, eating, resting, sleeping and sheltering and if these are not met to an extent other needs will not greatly occur. Maslow (1954) rightly contended that freedom and

democracy, quality music, art and sports are in the way they should be in persons and societies that have not fulfilled physiological needs.

**Self-esteem value:** Self-esteem helps in the achievement of personal and communal goals. This correlates with Abraham Maslow's esteem needs. Significantly, extant literature supported the idea that there are two kinds of esteem needs (Griffin, 2013; Maslow, 1954; Uysal, et al, 2017). First is the need to be appreciated and respected by others as regards someone's reputation such as recognition, status, as well as appreciation. The second is the need for self-appreciation and self-esteem, such as self-confidence, success, independence and talent (Griffin, 2013; Maslow, 1954).

**Freedom value:** To drive societal transformation and development; there is need for the sustenance of values of freedom. The reason for this stance is that lack of freedom could result to mismanagement of diversity. In this regard, Owolabi & Tijani-Adenle (2022) affirmed that, "The mismanagement of diversity in Nigeria has resulted in a series of inter-ethnic and ethno religious violence that threatened the nation's unity." This is a significant indication that Nigeria is yet to undergo serious societal transformation. Nwankwo, et al (2021:21) identified the following three evils that citizens should try to win so as to promote freedom: Want (hunger), Ignorance (illiteracy), and Squalor (filth).

**Safety value:** Freedom without safety is incomplete. Safety is part of the core indicators of societal transformation and/or development. Like other x-rayed core values, safety values are in line with Abraham Maslow's safety needs. Obviously, "It is axiomatic to say that there is hardly a country without one security threat or another, just as it is hard to find a state that can completely eradicate all threats to its security (Ukpabi, 1986:147)." Thus, safety does not entirely suggest absence of security challenges. Economic safety is germane to development. To attain development and societal transformation, a part of one's safety needs is to be secured economically through education and economic development policies. In fact, "The concept of insurance arising from the pension system and the worries such as flood, fire, and theft is based on this need (Uysal, et al, 2017:215)." Precisely, education helps to secure the economic safety of the people, as education enhances the economic gains of the government and the people. This is where Nigeria is lacking and must be re-engineered. According to Daft (2013) safety needs include being confident, protection

from danger and not feeling fear. It is clear that the military and police organizations of various communities arise from safety needs of the communities (Eren, 2012; Telimen, 1977). In addition, the safety needs can evolve in line with the social concerns and/or the conditions of the society people live (Uysal, *et al*, 2017).

Summarily, for societal transformation and sustainable development to be recorded; specific improvements in the provision of basic needs of the people; higher sense of self-esteem sequel to political and economic stability cum progress of the government and its citizens; and the electorates' unhindered freedom of choice within the confines of existing laws, ethics and code of conduct should be encouraged by all stakeholders. Emphatically, these cannot be achieved without a strategic repositioning of the education sector. It is therefore germane to note that:

*Life sustenance has to do with the provision of such basic needs as food, housing, clothing and basic education. Until the Nigerian government is able to provide its citizens with these basic needs, it is regarded as undeveloped...Self-esteem has to do with self-respect and independence. (Nwankwo, et al, 2021:20-21).*

It could be argued that, "Nigerian people desire freedom to be able to choose; and education to be able to afford a decent life (Nwankwo, *et al*, 2021:21)." Education avails total emancipation from the shackles of stupidity, ignorance, ignominy, inferiority complex and backwardness, which are all antagonistic to the well-being and development of the man and by extension, the society. Decent life is part of the cardinal aspects of societal transformation. Therefore, for Nigeria to be developed and enjoy societal transformation; questions regarding the quality of life of the masses must be addressed.

### **Conclusion**

The study has demystified the issues confronting quality education's role in societal transformation and sustainable development. This study stressed that the function of education towards societal transformation and sustainable development is normative and formative. It is formative as it provides the form of societal transformation and development in a society, especially Nigeria whereas it is normative as it provides the norms upon which societal transformation and development are enabled and sustained.

Government through quality education creates societal norms through which it forms the kind of development it desires. Based on this, government should restructure Nigeria's education sector to fit into the core values of societal transformation and development such as physiological/life sustenance, self-esteem, freedom, and safety. It is thus expected that this study will snowball into positive effects on both public and development administration practices in Nigeria.

From the discussions so far, the study concludes that quality education will truly become the road map to societal transformation and sustainable development when the values of life sustenance, self-esteem, freedom, and safety as well other appropriate government agencies are utilized to fight against the hindrances in the internal and external environment of Nigeria's education policies. The Nigeria Ministry of education should provide better curriculum that addresses the safety needs of the people.

Quality education is part of the permanent embrocation for addressing security challenges, as no sane person under favorable condition who passed through quality education will be involved in suicide bombing and other life threatening security issues. Therefore, this study agrees with the Deputy Minister, of Communications, Science and Technology in Tanzania, Makamba who said that: "No policy would work in Africa if we don't get education right." The study has contributed to knowledge by submitting that societal transformation and sustainable development through quality education in Nigeria must be geared towards addressing the core values identified in this study as useful tools for ensuring societal transformation and sustainable development in Nigeria.

### **Directions for Further Studies**

Every research is designed to investigate specific areas and as such, no research is adequate, comprehensive and holistic enough to cover all the important aspect and details about a research problem, hence the needs for further studies abound. It is in respect of this that the following areas of societal transformation and development were thus recommended for further empirical diagnosis:

1. Education and State Security Challenges in Nigeria: the Way ford
2. Education and Politics in Nigeria: Emphasis on Electioneering Issues.

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