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State and Contradictions on Skills Development in Nigeria¹

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Abstract


This paper advances the scholarly position that skills development is imperative for Nigeria in an era of intense globalization. It argues that skills development is the key for Nigeria's socio-economic development, considering the country's political-economic history, current social, economic, cultural, environmental, and health problems it faces and the demands of a fast-globalizing world. However, its central concern is that successive Nigerian governments have been rhetorical about developing skills. The country is not lacking policy, legal and institutional frameworks on skills development; yet skills shortages abound. The paper explores the concept of skills development, its relevance in the age of globalization; the role of the State in skills development, and the contradictions which have played out in the performance of this role, using Nigeria as a case study. It also provides answers to the following critical questions: Why has the issue of skills development become problematic in Nigeria despite the country's rich natural, material, and human resources? And what are the contradictions that could be identified in national aspirations on skills development? The paper is based on qualitative research, and the researchers undertake a critical analysis of literature on the subject matter. A connection is established between skills development and the issue of governance in Nigeria in a conceptual framework for analysis.

Keywords: Nigeria, state, good governance, human capital, skills development.

¹ Research article.

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Estado y contradicciones sobre el desarrollo de destrezas en Nigeria

Resumen

Este artículo plantea una posición académica de que el desarrollo de destrezas es imperativo en Nigeria en una era de globalización intensa. Se argumenta aquí que el desarrollo de destrezas es clave para el desarrollo socioeconómico de Nigeria, considerando la historia político-económica del país, los problemas sociales, económicos, culturales, medioambientales y de salud actuales que enfrenta y las exigencias de un mundo que se globaliza con rapidez. Sin embargo, su preocupación central es que los gobiernos sucesivos en Nigeria han sido retóricos en cuanto al desarrollo de destrezas. El país no carece de marcos político, jurídico e institucional sobre el desarrollo de destrezas, sino que abunda la carencia de destrezas. Este artículo explora el concepto de desarrollo de destrezas, su relevancia en la era de la globalización, el papel del estado en el desarrollo de destrezas y las contradicciones que se han presentado al desempeñar este papel, tomando a Nigeria como un estudio de caso. Este trabajo da respuestas a las siguientes preguntas críticas: ¿por qué el asunto del desarrollo de destrezas se ha vuelto problemático en Nigeria a pesar de los ricos recursos naturales, materiales y humanos del país? ¿Cuáles son las contradicciones que se podrían identificar en las aspiraciones nacionales sobre el desarrollo de destrezas? El artículo se basa en la investigación cualitativa y los investigadores realizan un análisis crítico de la literatura sobre la materia. Se establece una conexión entre el desarrollo de destrezas y el asunto de la gobernanza en Nigeria bajo un marco conceptual de análisis.

Palabras clave: Nigeria, estado, buen gobierno, capital humano, desarrollo de destrezas.

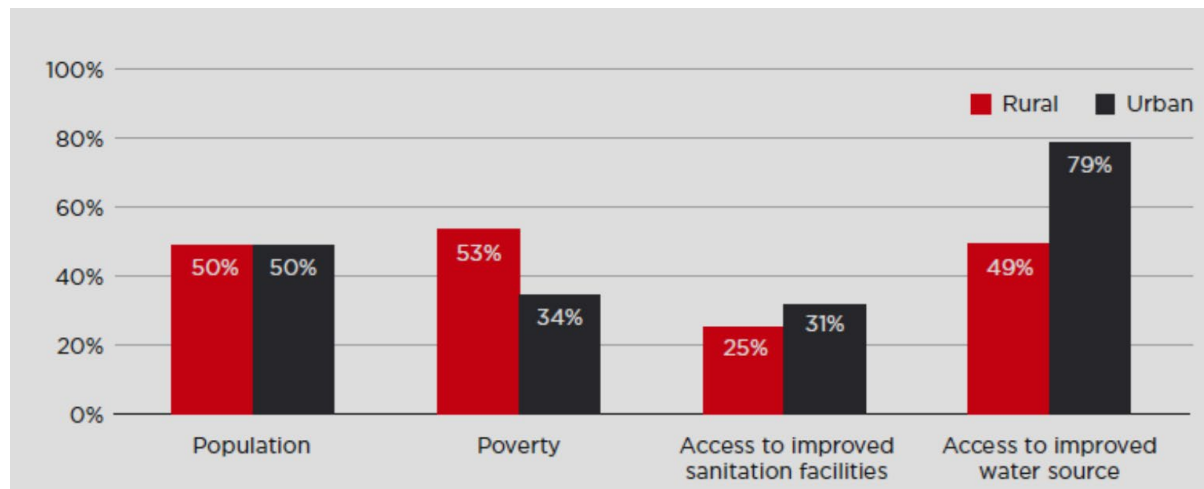
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INTRODUCTION

Nigeria presents several contradictions. The country's wealth in natural and material resources has not been exploited to benefit its growing population, to achieve socio-economic development and eradicate poverty. This ugly scenario has made many scholars refer to Nigeria as a "crippling giant". A large percentage of the Nigerian population wallows in abject poverty in the midst of the country's rich resources. Figure 1 below shows the level of poverty in rural and urban areas, and the prevailing socio-economic conditions in these areas.



Figure 1. Rural versus urban gap: equal population but socio-demographic inequalities



Source: GSMA Intelligence, (2014), Country Overview – Nigeria, June (p. 7)

In Nigeria, unemployment is a common feature among the youth and women, and this is a major factor that leads to crime and other negative social vices (see figure 2). The high level of unemployment is a pointer to the fact that the policies formulated to curb the menace have yet to achieve satisfactory results. Poor health and education systems are revealed for instance in the African Union’s African Peer Review Mechanism Report, as Nigeria lags in developing its human resources (AU/APRM, 2009, pp. 274-318). Not only being that noticeable, but Nigeria is also lacking in infrastructure, and this is particularly a problem in the power sector (see Foster & Pushak, 2011). These national negatives are major impediments to the realization of development objectives.

The education sector is not properly funded, as revealed in the budgetary allocations to the sector. Hence, the challenges in Nigeria’s educational sector are multi-faceted. Provision of basic necessities such as housing, water utilities and sanitation, that would enhance the standard of living of its citizenry, is inadequate. With these infrastructure deficits, the enabling environment is lacking for individuals to realize their full potential. As such, as many as an “estimated 17 million Nigerians live overseas and contribute remittances equivalent of 5 percent of Nigeria’s GDP” (Leke et al. 2014, p. 32). Nigerians have migrated to



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other countries in search of greener pastures. The reality is that the present state of affairs in Nigeria remains unsatisfactory. Whilst successive Nigerian governments have put in place various developmental strategies, policies and programs, the country's level of economic development over the past four decades has been disappointing (AU/APRM, 2009, p. 257).

Figure 2. Unemployment in Nigeria



Source: Trading Economics (2015)

This paper advances the argument that skills development remains the key to unlock the potentials for Nigeria's socio-economic development, considering the country's political-economic history; the current social, economic, cultural, environmental and health problems it faces, and the demands of a fast-globalizing world. Thus, skills development should be emphasized and accorded priority attention in Nigeria's developmental plans and policies. The argument is that people are the means and ends of development and should be effectively trained and prepared to contribute to the development process. However, the central concern of the paper is that successive Nigerian governments have been rhetorical about developing skills. The country is not lacking in policy, legal and institutional frameworks on skills development; yet skills shortages abound. This scenario provides room for critical questions: Why has the issue of skills



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development become problematic in Nigeria despite the country's rich natural, material and human resources? And what are the contradictions that could be identified in national aspirations on skills development?

Concept of skills: the definitional challenge

Skills development occupies a vital space in the development agenda of developing countries. Young (2005) asserts that skill is the creative force that drives economic growth and socio-economic transformation of a country. This assertion illustrates that skills positively influence productive efforts in socio-economic life. The International Labour Organisation (ILO, 2012, p. 11) defines a skill as a “the ability to carry out the tasks and duties of a given job”. This implies the possession of applied or direct knowledge that enables performance. The concept of skills has two dimensions. On the one hand, it is physical, involving extensive use of energy, which is a characteristic feature of shop-floor employees, craftsmen or low-level workers, and on the other hand, there is the mental dimension which represents the unique attribute of highly skilled knowledge workers (ILO, 2012). Gardner (1999), differentiating between physical and mental skills, states that both skills have their peculiarities and features but influence productivity positively (p. 2). Physical skills, according to Gardner (1999), need close monitoring and supervision, while mental skills require less supervision (p. 2). Both are needed in society for production and human welfare, according to in Gardner's view.

The notion of skills, according to Ugwu & Ezeani (2012), implies “abilities or proficiencies required of a person in a position to plan and execute an action geared at accomplishing some tasks or achieving some goals” (p. 4). Skills, Ugwu & Ezeani (2012) note, are the “learned capacity to carry out predetermined tasks with the minimum outlay of time and energy” (p. 4). This assertion corroborates the view of Ozoigbo & Chukwuezi (2011), who refer to skills as “an individual's knowledge and ability to perform specific tasks successfully based on acquired attributes” (p. 98). This definition aligns with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)'s (2008) definition of skills as the ability to perform specific tasks



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that are for productive purposes for the well-being of society. The views of OECD and those of ILO (2008) portray skills as the ability and capability that enhances the performance of complex motor and/or complex activities with ease and precision, a demonstration of mastery, while at the same time being able to adapt to changing or emerging situations in the performance terrain (p. 17).

The changing conditions vis-à-vis skills have been propelled by globalization, which has brought everything, including skills, to the global domain. Technological innovations such as Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have compressed space, thus making the best skills available within the global arena and within easy reach of MNCs. As Acemoglu (1999) notes, skills have implications, for instance, on earnings and human welfare as remuneration is sometimes tied to skills (p. 3). A person with high education may be paid highly due to his years of schooling. However, this may not be always correct as other factors come into play. In what Acemoglu tagged as the “unobserved heterogeneity issue”, not all pay differentials are necessarily linked to skills but to other factors. Bowles et al. (2000) argue that possession of skills and remuneration may not necessarily correlate as there are some privileged individuals in society who earn what is not commensurate with their skills due to inheritance or their privileged background (p. 2). In essence, pay differentials may not necessarily be due to skills acquired but to other extraneous factors.

The OECD Skills Strategy (2011) shifts the focus from traditional proxies of skills, such as years of formal education and training or qualifications attained, to a much broader perspective that includes the skills people acquire, use, and maintain —and also lose— over a lifetime (OECD, 2011). People need both ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ skills that help them to succeed in the labour market and a range of skills that help them to contribute to better social outcomes and build more cohesive and tolerant societies. Hard skills are technical skills and functional skills acquired mostly through formal instructions and training and are in most cases certified. They are the basic skills for securing jobs. On the other hand, soft skills are the skills required for retaining jobs and progressing on the job. They are socially determined and context specific and include motivation, work habits and adaptation (see, Fan et. al, 2005; Hsin & Xie, 2012).



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The foundational skills, core skills for work, are the generic skills that enhance employability and enable labour market participation. These have been defined as

the skills, knowledge and competencies that enhance a worker's ability to secure and retain a job, progress at work and cope with change, secure another job if he/she so wishes or has been laid off and enter more easily into the labour market at different periods of the life cycle. (ILO, 2008, p. 19)

Ogunade (2011) writes on 21st century skills which represent a unique blend of all the skills subsumed in technological literacy, which involves informational science, digital media fluency and advanced computer and internet communication (p. 9). This summarizes the whole essence or need for development of skills.

Skills and national development

The role of skills in national development is a subject that has generated several discourses in recent years, especially with the global shift in emphasis to human capital formation in the quest for sustainable socio-economic development (Maclean et al, 2013; Khiji et al, 2012; Brown et al., 2008). Scholars are increasingly realizing the impact of skilled human resource on national development (Nkogbu, 2014; Ogunade, 2011). However, while the countries of the developed world have invested in skills development and have advanced in the use of technologies, for developing countries, however, skills development has continued to remain a challenge, especially in the light of a rapidly globalizing world economy which is technology-driven and knowledge and information-based. Hence, there are different discourses centering on 'what', 'why' and 'how' the issue of skills development is addressed in developing countries. Several scholarly studies have therefore focused on the question of what skills need to be developed to stimulate economic growth in the developing world (Ogunade, 2011, p. 7). As much as there is scholarly focus in empirical research on how skills positively impact on economic growth of different countries (Kanayo, 2013; Isola & Alani, 2012), there is growing interest also on skills development as one of the key strategies for addressing human capital formation challenges.



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Scholars agree that skills are a factor in promoting national economic growth and development (OECD, 1996; ILO, 1998; ILO, 2009; Toner, 2011; Khilji et al., 2012). Ogunade (2011) notes, in particular, that any discourse on human capital must consider its relation to the level of economic and industrial development. According to ILO (2007), productivity growth is founded on “making changes in production processes to lower unit costs and shift production to goods and services that yield higher returns” (p. 41). The vital role of skills is visible at individual and corporate levels. Skills raise productivity in several ways. First, skills improve the productivity of the individual in terms of employability, wage rates, job stability and employability across jobs and industries (Ogunade, 2011; Onipede, 2010). Second, skills improve productivity at the enterprise level in terms of output per unit of labour, market share and export performance (Omoniyi & Omoniyi, 2014; Ogunade, 2011). By fostering productivity, skills create competitive advantage and surplus value used to upgrade technology and diversify economic activities, facilitating economic growth (ILO, 2008). This interplay between skills, competencies, productivity and technology produces employment opportunities that increase GDP and overall growth. Thus, “while technological change increases productivity in enterprises and value chains, diversification into non-traditional activities creates demand for labour and new employment opportunities” (ILO, 2008, p. 9). In developing countries, however, productivity in formal and informal economies remains low as a result of shortages in skills and skills mismatch, and these inadequacies impact negatively on the economy.

There is consensus in the literature that skills development is essential to improving productivity, income, and access to employment opportunities (Blomstrom & Kokko, 2001; Ogunade, 2011; Ozoigbo & Chukwueze, 2011). Training and education improve the capacity of workforce to absorb information and operate new technologies, and enhance flexibility (Bloom, 2014). As the ILO Report (2007) reports: “An educated and competent workforce is an important factor of economic growth: it facilitates the move away from traditional production models towards more sophisticated and high value-added products, commodities and services for global markets” (p. 41). This emphasizes the role technology plays in linking skills and productivity to economic development. At the tertiary level of analysis, there is a link between the skill level of a country’s workforce and the level of economic development. Without certain kinds of skills,



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the transformation of the productive process necessary for economic development cannot occur (ILO, 2008). The transfer and successful absorption of new technologies in developing countries is by and large dependent on the availability of competent professionals, technicians, and skilled workers (ILO, 2007). Moreover, increased international economic integration (globalization) has led directly to the emergence of many technologies that facilitate communication and improve economic production processes. These technologies require a better trained and skilled workforce to manage them, and this makes human capital development an economic imperative (Ogunade, 2011).

In examining the multidimensional role of skills in the economy, Bloom et al. (2014) assert that a nation's human capital endowment —the skills and capacities that reside in people and that are put to productive use— can be a more important determinant of its long-term economic success than virtually any other resource. As such, this resource must be invested in and leveraged efficiently to generate returns, for the individuals involved as well as for the economy as a whole (Bloom et al., 2014). Despite the high unemployment levels in many countries, the global economy is entering an era of skills scarcity and skills mismatch which, if left unaddressed will hinder economic growth worldwide. To this extent, “understanding and addressing challenges related to human capital is thus fundamental to short-term stability as well as the long-term growth, prosperity and competitiveness of nations” (Zahidi, 2014, p. 92). It becomes imperative for states to implement policies through education and skills development that will address these challenges in both the short and long run. In essence, the state of a country's education provides signals for the current state of that country's human capital as well as measures that reflect the results of a country's past practices. In addition, it includes indicators resulting from practices and policy decisions that impact on children today and will shape the future workforce in years to come (Banerji et al, 2014). In essence, the human capital of the moment reflects past investment, while investment today in human capital will manifest in the quality of human capital in the future.



THE NEXUS BETWEEN SKILLS, DEVELOPMENT AND GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA

This section of the paper establishes a link between skills, development, and governance in Nigeria. Governance is a more embracing concept than government. It is the practice of good government (Bratton & Rothchild, 1992, p. 267). Governance can be understood as the legitimacy of the State, its structures and institutions, and the *modus operandi* of government (Berhanu 2009, p. 109). As Williams (1992) posits, “governance presupposes the need for facilitating conditions that are hoped to bring about procedures and institutions whose aim is to facilitate efforts toward the entrenchment of an order that can lend harmony to the complex inter-state, state-society, and intra-state relations” (p. 98). On the other hand, development is a multinational concept (Bellu, 2011, p. 2). It connotes positive trends such as improvement, progress, and transformation at the level of individuals and society (Barder, 2012; see also Rodney, 1972, p. 9). Development, according to Barder (2012), consists of more than improvements in the well-being of citizens, even broadly defined: It also conveys something about the capacity of economic, political and social systems to provide circumstances for the well-being of a person on a sustainable, long-term basis. Socio-economic development, in its comprehensive sense, entails “the attainment of equitable conditions in society where individuals have guaranteed respectable outcomes in income, health, food, personal security and participation in policy making processes in a democratic process” (CUTS International, 2007, p. 1). There is a growing consensus on the symbiotic relationship between the two concepts —governance and development— one impacting positively on the other (see Landsberg, 2012). As such, good governance and development are key items on the agenda of many nations, both developed and developing.

The authors argue in this paper that while skills are required for development, skills development would remain elusive without effective leadership committed to the implementation of strong skills development policies that would impact on the lives of most of the people. The Nigerian State and its governance institutions therefore occupy a central place in promoting this objective. The examples of the fast-growing Asian economies such as Taiwan, Hong Kong, South Korea, and Singapore are remarkable models of the vital role of human resource to economic growth and transformation and the role played by their



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governments in developing human capital. Even though these countries are not rich in natural resources and minerals, they have managed to grow faster than many other countries, because they have had high quality and highly skilled human capital (Becker, 1993; Page, 1994). While other non-governmental institutions and organizations are also effective skills development agencies (where this is the objective that informs their establishment), the State leads in terms of policies and provides direction and coordination towards achieving national skills development aspirations. The State sets the platform upon which other constituencies operate through the enactment of relevant laws. Governance is therefore critical in the discourse of skills development in Nigeria since the country languishes in lack of skills and has not managed and utilized its vast population for the purpose of transformation.

The Nigerian State came into being formally with the amalgamation of the North and Southern protectorates by Lord Lugard in 1914. Prior to this time, the people had existed for long periods under different empires and kingdoms. As Rodney (1972) observed, before the coming of the Europeans, Africans were a developed people. They had their own institutions and governmental systems which were indigenous. Without doubt, it can also be inferred that long before the experience of colonial rule, skills development, education and training have been part of the lives of the Nigerian people, as the young ones were inducted and socialized about their culture, social activities, survival skills, work or craft. Most of the educational processes were informal, and in several societies, formal teaching was adopted to inculcate societal values and culture. In essence, the young ones, through socialization processes, imbibed the social capital to function for personal survival and societal well-being (Otitte & Ogiogwo, 1979). This represented the way the foundation of human capital formation, education and skills development was laid in Nigeria and thus provided the basis for Western European education which was introduced from the 1840s and began in the colony of Lagos, Calabar and other coastal cities.

The quest for skills development in Nigeria has been demonstrated by the several policies and programs and institutional frameworks established by successive governments to achieve this purpose (Umo, 1996; Ejere, 2011). Skills development has been constantly featured in Nigeria's development plans. For instance, shortly



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after independence from Britain in 1960, Nigerian leaders formulated a comprehensive plan for overall development encapsulated in national development plans: 1962-1968, 1970-1974, 1975-1980 and 1980-1985 (see, Chukwu, 2020). The first plan led specifically to the establishment of the National Universities Commission (NUC) and the National Manpower Board (NMB) in 1962. These were to act as think tanks for government in the area of developing relevant skills for national development. Other institutions have also been established for the training of human resource for different sectors of the economy. Government has also taken the initiative of establishing several training and skills development initiatives such as the Industrial Training Fund (ITF) and institutions like the Centre for Management Development to ensure training and skills development of the citizenry (see, ITF, 2013; CMD, 2009). Government, through its agencies, such as the Ministry of Employment and Productivity, is committed to ensuring that employees are trained by employing organizations. After such training, the employees could acquire a certificate of evaluation of their competences from the Ministry to enable them access to job opportunities beyond the environment of their trainings. Such certification confers recognition and wider choices on such trained individuals, especially those that do not have secondary school qualification (Jiboku & Akpan, 2014; 2015). The CMD and ITF are also not only concerned with certification of the employees but also that of trainers, to ensure that standards are followed in line with national aspiration on skills development (CMD, 2009).

The quest for skills development also explains the liberal incentives offered to multinational corporations to invest in Nigeria as a strategy of tapping into their skills advantage (Muogbo & Kayar, 2012). It is believed that technology transfer will occur through MNCs as the employees in this sector will be trained and retrained, and as they work with expatriates, they would acquire relevant skills. This is the idea embedded in the concept of “technology transfer” (see Dulupçu, & Demirel, 2009; Jiboku & Akpan, 2014; 2015). In essence, the Nigerian State has institutional frameworks for the training and development of competent workforce skills that is guaranteed for incumbent employees and for potential workers. This is to ensure that the relevant knowledge and skills demand of the modern complex knowledge-driven economy are constantly available. In addition to its role in the development of workforce skills, there are various measures for ensuring competitiveness, controlling social externalities possible from education and training,



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overcoming persistent structural unemployment among some segments of the population, and alleviating poverty. Through its skills policy, the State also ensures equity for all to have opportunities to develop their skills and potential and to acquire the knowledge necessary for the jobs in which they are interested and for which they are qualified.

Skills development has also featured in the agenda of conferences and think tank initiatives organized to strategize on methods of implementing Nigeria's development agenda and at most of these conferences and initiatives, different scholars identify the need for human capital formation. They therefore lament on the deteriorating level of Nigeria's educational sector from the 1980s (Babarinde, 2012; Leke et. al, 2014). These efforts point to the fact that both the Nigerian government and its people are concerned about the current situation in the country and have been proposing a way forward for the country. Thus, skills development has been identified as one strategy that could unlock Nigeria's potentials for transformation in a rapidly globalizing world.

Notwithstanding the different efforts made in skills development, it has remained a challenge in Nigeria. Lack of adequate skills has been identified as a major cause of unemployment, underemployment, and poverty in Nigeria. This often leads to several crises: health crisis, poor nutrition, environmental challenges, and conflicts. As the wise saying goes "an idle man is the devil's workshop". The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP) (2012) identifies the multifaceted nature of skills challenge in Nigeria, as in some other low income and middle-income countries (pp. 69-71) thus:

- **Skills mismatch:** Skills obtained through training and those required by the job often do not match, resulting in skills shortages in some areas and, simultaneously, a surplus of workers with skills that are not in demand, contributing to unemployment.
- **Limited involvement of social partners:** Lack of active participation of employers' and workers' organizations that are essential to ensure the provision of relevant and appropriate training.



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- **Poor quality and relevance of training:** Weak quality assurance, too few or poorly qualified trainers, poor working conditions for trainers, and outdated qualifications, curricula, training materials and methods all inhibit the quality of training.
- **Limited labour market information** and inability to translate such information into improved training undermines relevance.
- **Limited access to training opportunities:** The outreach of formal training is often very limited, especially where distances are great and political unrest prevails, the informal economy looms large, and literacy and educational levels are low. These are all factors that leave many people with few or no employable skills. Women and disadvantaged groups often face additional barriers in accessing training.
- **Weak coordination in the system:** Many actors and providers (ministries, agencies, central and regional governments, NGOs, employers and workers) are involved in skills development. Their efforts often overlap and are not well coordinated, especially in developing countries. Weakness in linking skills supply and demand also limits positive impact on employment and productivity.

Although blessed with enormous natural, material, and human resources, Nigeria has remained undeveloped. While it is the most populous country in Africa, having an estimated population of 173,62 million people in 2013 (World Bank, 2013), which ideally could trigger industrial production and provide a large workforce for economic development, if the workforce were appropriately skilled, the country lags in economic and social progress. The concern of the authors is that successive Nigerian governments appear to be rhetorical in implementing skills development policies and programs and in strengthening and enhancing the capacities of institutions established for this purpose, to function adequately. There appear to be gaps in realistically achieving national skills development objectives. Governments have not demonstrated the necessary political will to commit resources towards implementation of skills development policies and programs. Perhaps, there appears to be missing links in policy or, rather, lack of efficient coordination between government and other agencies promoting skills development. This is where



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this paper draws a link between skills development and governance in Nigeria. In order that skills development might be more relevant for the socio-economic transformation and national development, there is a need for the harmonization of policies and programs of different institutions and agencies concerned with the issue of skills development for maximization of results without duplication of efforts.

The Nigerian State and contradictions on skills development

The skills challenge persists in Nigeria due to factors which could be attributable to poor capacity development of skills development institutions, among other endogenous factors. The first critical factor that has often been mentioned is the poor state of Nigeria's educational system (Babarinde, 2012; Leke et al., 2014). A nation's educational system has a significant role to play towards the realization of the objective of skills development. The enormous contribution of education to the collective development and well-being of individuals and nations is well documented (Bloom, 2014; Mahroum & Scott, 2014). Studies suggest that education is the key that unlocks individual and group potentials. It opens individuals' thinking faculties, transforms individuals and, by extension, the society. Education creates an avenue for every child to reach its potential to lead a productive, healthy life, and to acquire a decent job (Ai Group, 2012). Thus, a new and expanded vision of education and training that is inclusive, responsive and of quality must play a central role in this endeavour. Quality basic education must commence from the formative years of life to prepare the young ones to meet the vision of development (Mohammed, 2014, p. 7).

In Nigeria, education is viewed as critical for development, and a tool for empowering the people, and reducing inequalities and poverty (Omoniyi & Omoniyi, 2014). The Nigerian educational policy since independence has been concerned more with developing human resources through the various schools for the country's development. From the Universal Primary Education (UPE) of the defunct Western and Eastern regions in the 1950s to the 1976 national proclamation of UPE and the current Universal Basic Education (UBE) programs (Denga, 2000), education has been recognized as crucial to the citizens' personal



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development. However, despite the educational policies in place in Nigeria, the sector faces many challenges: inequalities in access to education, dwindling financial allocation (Babarinde, 2012), and a dearth of infrastructure (Olorunyomi, 2014). In Nigeria, the aspiration to develop skills for empowerment and employment generation informed the introduction of a “6:3:3:4” system of education in 1982. This was a system in which a learner received six years of schooling at the primary level, three years at junior secondary, three years at senior secondary, and four years at university level. However, the educational policy failed to achieve the desired objective before it was scrapped in 2010 due to inadequate funding, shortage of technical teachers, and inadequate infrastructure, among others (Paul-Sewa, 2012). Instructively, the introduction of the 6:3:3:4 system was aimed at developing technical vocational skills (TVET). Yet, the educational system failed to develop TVET due to lack of commitment on the part of the government, inadequate funding, shortage of technical teachers and infrastructure to run the educational policy before it was eventually jettisoned (Paul-Sewa, 2012).

With the increase in population and high demand for education and skills, the number of educational institutions in Nigeria has also risen over the years. However, while Nigerians crave for education and high-level skills, the increase in number of schools has not witnessed a commensurate level of funding to ensure appropriate development of medium and high level human resource. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) recommends that at least 26 % of the annual country’s budget should be devoted to education. Regrettably, Nigeria is far from attaining this recommendation. This is revealed in the table 1 below, showing the percentage of national budgetary allocation to the Nigerian public educational system by the federal government for five years.

The proliferation of Universities and other educational institutions in Nigeria in recent times presents another critical issue in the discourse on skills development as skills shortage and skills mismatch still abound within the Nigerian economy, due to the disconnect between education and training offered by these numerous institutions and the economic demand. The quality of some of the graduates of these training institutions has been questioned within the global labour environment, contrary to the high



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premium placed on graduates of Nigerian institutions shortly after independence. First, there are many public and private universities and institutions in Nigeria that award certificates, yet the skills challenge is persistent; many graduates with their certificates remain unemployed while some are underemployed (Adegbami, 2013). Secondly, many university graduates have had to be retrained by their employers since they are found not to possess the skills relevant for the companies' production processes. Third, there have been abuses of university degrees, through collusions between 'certificate merchants' and some 'influential people' (see Punch, 2015; National Mirror, 2015).

Table 1. Percentage of budgetary allocation to public education (2010- 2014)

Year	Percentage of National Budget (%)
2010	7,32
2011	9,32
2012	9,86
2013	10,21
2014	10,63

Source: statisense (n. d.)

The causes of these negative trends are not difficult to see they are manifestations of the multiplier effects of the socio-economic and political dislocations within the Nigerian body polity. These have culminated in inadequate funding, a dearth of equipment and materials for training, corruption and other social vices plaguing the Nigerian State (Odia & Omofonmwan, 2007). With the low percentage of budgetary allocation given to the education sector and the existence of poorly funded human capacity building institutions, how can the products of poorly funded human capacity developing institutions compete favourably within the global economy in a knowledge, technology and skills driven age? Indeed, the ripple effects of dismally low budgetary allocation to the education sector in Nigeria are: Inadequate and dilapidated physical



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infrastructure; insufficient and outdated instructional materials; and irregular payment of teachers' salaries culminating in low morale and attendant negative values (see Adedipe, 2013).

Arguably, this scenario contributes to the skills mismatch and skills shortage experienced within the Nigerian economy and perhaps heightens the desire of government to look outwards for Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) through MNCs to tap into their skills advantages. It is the expectation of government that MNCs' skills development programs could lead to technology transfer, domestication of technology, skills portability or adaptability, employment generating skills and development of indigenous skills (Muogbo & Kayar, 2012; Dulupcu & Demirel, 2009). However, while different MNCs such as Lafarge Nigeria Plc, Unilever Nigeria Plc, and others, have operated and conducted profitable business in Nigeria for several years with the claim to provide training and skills programs to Nigerians employed in their domain, the skills challenge has persisted. Notwithstanding the laudable training and skills development programs of different MNCs and the assistance they provide in training the youths in their host communities as part of their corporate social responsibilities, many graduates remain unemployed. Added to this challenge is the fact that numerous expatriates are still found within the various MNCs. In reality, local technologies are yet to be developed and the anticipated technologies are not yet transferred despite the institutional frameworks put in place to achieve this objective. The concern here is that the legal and policy frameworks formulated by the State to guide the operations and activities of MNCs, in line with national skills development aspirations, have not been strictly enforced by the institutions established to achieve this purpose. Non-compliance to laws and regulations are aftermaths of lack of adequate enforcement and monitoring mechanisms. Thus, MNCs have engaged in the business of skills development in the form and manner they deem fit (Jiboku & Akpan, 2014; 2015).

Above all, the establishment, management, and administration of higher educational institutions are no longer insulated from politics. The effects of these negative trends include incessant strikes of academics and administrative staff, student demonstrations and, most especially, the brain drain phenomenon aggravated by globalization. To this extent, the reasons provided for the poor state of affairs in Nigeria



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include poor leadership, corruption and poor management of public resources; ineffective policies; lack of adequate involvement of the civil society in governance and development processes, among others (AU/APRM, 2009, pp. 258-259). Nigeria was ranked 136th most corrupt out of 175 countries that were assessed in the 2014 Global Corruption Index. Nigeria was “classified the 3rd most corrupt country in West Africa after Guinea and Guinea Bissau” (Transparency International Corruption Index, 2014). Issues of corruption and misappropriation of funds by the political leadership has continuously hindered Nigeria’s development. The funds, which are improperly diverted by the State, could properly be invested into priority areas such as education and skills development, improving infrastructures, attending to the challenges of vocational and technical skills training centres, among other legitimate areas. Corruption is one of the greatest impediments to Nigeria’s political and socio-economic development. The negative effects of corruption, particularly political corruption, and its associated problems, are causes of serious concern. Notwithstanding the efforts of government in putting mechanisms, policies, laws, and institutions to combat corruption, the objectives are yet to be achieved. The authors advance the views of scholars that one of the factors limiting the success of anticorruption measures and institution is the cadre of officials that are involved in corruption (Ikejiaku, 2009; Uzodike, 2009).

The afore-mentioned issues are critical areas where this paper sees some contradictions in the claim of the Nigerian State to promote skills development.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper emphasized the role of skills in development discourse, and the nature of skills challenge vis-à-vis the issue of governance in Nigeria. It identified and examined the contradictions on the claim by the Nigerian State to promote skills development. The reality is that acquisition of skills benefits not only the individual but the society at large. For instance, while skills development will profit the trained employees beyond efficiency on the job, lack of skills portends grave consequences for the society. It is not surprising that the ‘North-South’ divide has been sustained. Developed countries, which have skilled human resources,



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continue to invest in skills development, capacity building, research, and development, to maintain their skills advantage. More so, some developing countries of Asia, such as Singapore, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and others which are not endowed with natural resources, have transformed their economies positively through investing and usage of their efficient and adequately trained human resource (Nkogbu, 2014, see also Page, 1994). Thus, the paper noted that lack of skills, arguably, accounts for poverty, unemployment and associated criminal activities in the Nigerian society, such as in the Niger Delta region. The Boko Haram Terrorism ravaging the Northeast of the country, that is accredited to be the poorest region in Nigeria, could also be the aftermath of lack of skills, unemployment, and poverty. Development of skills, especially of the youth, might be a sustainable approach to a lasting peace necessary for development in Nigeria. Skills development remains a strategy for Nigeria's development in the Twenty-First Century. Nigeria's quest to achieve development and socio-economic transformation could be accelerated by emulating the Asian Tigers, through investment in training and skills development of its human resource.

To this extent, the paper concludes that Nigeria must key into the skills development paradigm to achieve the needed transformation through identification of talents of human capital for optimum use and development. A nation's educational system has a significant role to play towards the realization of this objective, and so, the Nigerian governments at all levels need to pay particular attention to funding the educational sector adequately. The government needs to review the Curriculum of the Nigerian educational system as a step towards addressing the problem of skills mismatch. While different scholars have lamented the poor state of the educational sector in Nigeria, this paper also identified other areas of contradictions in the efforts made by successive Nigerian government to promote skills development. For instance, the issue of effective coordination and harmonization of policies and programs of the different institutions concerned with developing skills for the country, is critical. The issue of governance becomes imperative in achieving national aspirations on skills development.

The Nigerian State should play a leading role with other social partners in realizing this objective. There is a need for quality leadership that will be sincere, politically willing and committed to funding education and



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devoting resources to implementing skills development programs of the State and enhancing skills development institutions to perform their functions. In addition, Nigeria will not make progress in realizing the benefits of skills development if the political leadership, through its various agencies and ministries, does not demonstrate the political will and commitments to monitor, to ensure the effective implementation and enforcement of state laws with regards to how MNCs in the country go about skills development of their employees, while realizing their profit objectives. More importantly, there is need for capacity building, strengthening anti-corruption institutions and oversight bodies —parliament, civil society, and media, in the fight against corruption. Political corruption limits the opportunities to realize national objectives. It is imperative for the State to transcend these barriers to effective and efficient skills development for the benefit of all in the society.

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