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THE IMPACT OF POOR INFRASTRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENT ON NIGERIA EDUCATION AND GLOBAL ECONOMY, 1960-2014

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ABSTRACT

Nigeria educational system and economy no doubt have received a lot of criticisms from economic historians and other scholars who are worried on the declining standard of education and quality of life in the country. The interest of this paper is to do a historical overview of education and standard of life from the date of Nigeria Independence in October 1st 1960 to 2014 and see how valid it is that, poor infrastructural development has affected Nigeria education and global economic recession. The paper shall also examine the causes of poor infrastructural development and determine their challenges and look for the appropriate measure to put a stop to the problem. Attempts shall also be made at suggesting a way forward. It is the opinion of this paper that, improvement on the standard of education will help to reduce level of world economic crisis. The work shall adopt normative theoretical framework in its analysis. It shall also make use of primary and secondary sources as well as eyewitness account.

Keywords: Infrastructure, Development, Education, Global, Economy

INTRODUCTION

To say that one of the major problems that bedeviled the process of development in Nigeria is the state of poor infrastructural facilities, is neither an over statement nor a criticism. It is a fact that is surrounded by evidences. It is reflected in almost all the sectors of the Nigeria economy and it is directly and indirectly affecting Global economy. This is because poor infrastructural facilities have systematically led to the present day underdevelopment with the associated high unemployment level and poverty which has led to frustration and desperation. It also led to different kinds of criminalities and migration from Nigeria to other countries especially to countries in Southern Africa, Europe and America. In the words of Eke Okechukwu(2011:39):

It is not a matter of rhetoric or polemics that basic infrastructure in Nigeria is in a semi-comatose state, and from colonial times up till the present day, issues of infrastructural development have remained on the lips of successive administrations with no visible indications of accomplishments.

Stressing the importance of infrastructure which has never appeared in the priority list of both the colonial British administration in Nigeria, and the post colonial administrations of Nigeria, Hembé Aondowase (2011:504) noted that “infrastructure as a critical form of development plays a crucial role in human society. Indeed it constitutes the hub upon which the socio-economic aspects of society revolve”. Obviously improvement on infrastructure is expected to play a vital role in nation building, hence the importance of education facilities, good roads, constant availability of power supply, availability of good water and other structural development will improve living standard, create job opportunities, job security and people’s happiness. It is sadly noted that in spite of all these imperatives, the Nigeria Government since independence has not made any significant improvement in infrastructural development.
Conceptualization of Infrastructure

Infrastructure according to Online Oxford English Dictionary, is defined as the basic physical and organizational structures needed for the operation of the society or an enterprise. This means that infrastructure is an essential ingredient for the smooth function of any economy and development of any nation. According to the structuralist/functionalist theorists, the progress or otherwise of a society depends largely on the functional structures of that society. What this means is that structures in the societies will largely determine the economic development. Ademola Ajayi (2003: 91) noted that:

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\text{Development is the quantitative change or a progressive series of such change in economic system or environment. Such quantitative aspect of living is made possible by infrastructures such as roads, water supply, basic education, health care facilities, electricity housing scheme development, recreational and transport facilities.}
\]

Therefore, the term infrastructure refers to the technical structures that enhance living condition in any society which includes health facilities, agricultural facilities, good road network and telecommunications as well as energy and water supply. It is the focus of this paper to appraise how well the Nigeria nation has propelled the engine of nation building through infrastructural development. The assertion of Emmanuel Oladipo Ojo (2011:188) may give us good hindsight. He noted that:

\[
\text{Unfortunately however, as vital as infrastructures to the socio-economic well-being of a nation, successive civil and military administrations in Nigeria has paid little or no attention to their development. The result has been a comatose economy, crippled educational system and fractured health delivery. In other climes, the development of infrastructure is the rule. But it is the exception in Nigeria.}
\]

Overview of Infrastructural Development in Nigeria

It is necessary to overview some key aspects of Nigeria economy which has negatively impacted development process as a result of poor infrastructural facilities. The reason for this is to give hindsight to the levels of decadence in the nation’s infrastructure. One of the most affected is the energy sector which has continue to receive undue castrated ovation and propaganda in Nigeria as one government come and go. According to Mahdi (2004:36):

\[
\text{The most spectacular failure of successive Nigeria Governments from 1966 to date, which actually boarders on criminality has been in the field of energy and power supply. The failure reached its peak to date ... if there was an area which needed concentration, which in fact requires the declaration of a state of emergency in the country, should be in the area of provision of power.}
\]

In line with Mahdi’s view, Olayemi Akinwumi and Patrick Ukase writing on the failure of electricity supply noted that “the electricity demand in Nigeria far outstrips the supply and “the supply is annoyingly epileptic in nature; a development which is hindering the nation’s development notwithstanding the enormous vast natural resources in the country”. The situation of power supply has degenerated so much in Nigeria that one can hardly boast of availability of power for six hours uninterrupted supply in a day. This can be dangerous and expensive for industries and domestic users. The effect is enormous. Mahdi (2004:36) also noted that “It is obviously impossible and unthinkable that investors would contemplate on investing in Nigeria when the country has been for most of the time in total blackout”. There is no doubt that many industries folded principally as a
result of poor power supply and the high cost of operating with private generator and plant. The reason is that operating with plant and generator resulted in high overhead cost which knocks off the product in the market as a result of competition with foreign products. It is almost impossible to talk of economic development as a reality in 21st century in a situation where greater percentage of operating cost of an industry is on power generation and maintenance. The opinion of the Guardian Newspaper in their Editorial captures the truth about electricity supply in Nigeria very well. It said:

> It is clear that without electricity there can be no industrial development and all these grand vision of becoming one of the world’s leading economies by 2020 cannot be realized. The harm caused by lack of power in Nigeria is incalculable, the statistics are daunting. In Kano, for instance it has been estimated that more than half of the city’s 400 industrial establishments have been forced to close down due to lack of power. With this closure some half of a million workers have been retrenched. The Kano example is been replicated all over the country and has already compounded the already tenuous security situation.

The annoying thing about this epileptic power is that the people are suffering in the mist of plenty. There is no doubt that Nigeria is blessed with natural resources which include energy. The nation had a proven reserve of 25 billion barrels of crude oil in 1999. This increased substantially to 34.5 billion barrels in 2004. Sambo (2008:34) projected that Nigeria’s oil reserve will reach 68 billion barrels by 2030.

**Agricultural Sector**

The state of agriculture in Nigeria since independence has not only been reduced to a sorry state but has also been neglected to a decimated state with people engaging in agriculture as a major source of livelihood seen as local people. The truth is that agricultural infrastructure, especially those considered as British colonial legacies have been left to dilapidation and decay. The famous groundnut pyramid of the North, cocoa farms of the West and palm oil trade of the East are now issues of history. Since the departure of the colonial government, different successive governments in Nigeria has come up with one high sounding programme in agriculture or the other. There was the Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) that was famous during the military regime of General Olusegun Obasanjo which yielded no result. There was the popular Directorate for Food, Road and Rural Infrastructure of the General Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida government which was very successful only in mounting of signpost all over the nooks and crannies of Nigerian territory. Others include the numerous none productive River Basin Authorities, the failed People’s Banks of Nigeria, the never do well Nigeria Agricultural Banks, Better Life for Rural Women which the wife of president Ibrahim Babangida used to project her image. In spite of all these organs, the colonial agricultural legacies were left to decay and nothing was used to replace them. For instance, the famous marketing boards across the country which were used to coordinate and regulate the prices of agricultural products were closed down. The famous Shika Government Stock Farm which served as a British Colonial Government Department of Agriculture was turned to Archives. As Abubarkar Zaria (2011:175) noted:

> In 1928, three sub–stations (of Department of Agriculture of Northern Province) were established and located at Kano, Mokwa and Shika-Zaria. The Shika substation was established as Government Stock Farm with the facilities for research on cattle breeding and management... however, the Nigeria political class...
failed to sustain this and other agricultural inclined legacies. Thus, since independence the agricultural infrastructure has been on the decline especially after the oil boom of the 1970s.

The objective of the establishment of Shika Government Stock Farm according to Archival report was essentially for “the improvement of the cattle of Nigeria”. There is no doubt that if the objective was sustained after the departure of British Colonial Government, Nigerians will be earning high dividend from cattle export. Today the state of Shika Stock Farm is better imagined. National Archives Kaduna report revealed that after the establishment of Shika farm in 1928, the farm started to produce working bulls to other Europeans and British farm centers in Northern Nigeria. It noted that British farm centers located at Kano, Gusua, Maigana, Sokoto, Bauchi and Mokwa benefited from the working bulls produced at Shika Government Stock Farm.

State of Health Services in Nigeria
The assertion by Ibrahim Waziri Abubarkar (2011:75) will serve as a good beginning in over-viewing the state of health services in Nigeria. He contends that:

Nigeria’s health sector has been performing below expectation for so long despite the billions of naira spent for it. Policies have been produced, refined, panel beaten and changed: agencies have been created to focus specific health matters: all sorts of foreign aids and assistance have been into the country for several decades, yet Nigerians still die of health conditions and diseases that are easily preventable.

The obvious truth is that cost of assessing medical services is very high, and in most cases, they are not affordable to the majority of the populace. Only few percentages of Nigeria can afford to travel to overseas for a better treatment especially for such ailment that may not be treated well in Nigeria or not treated at all. Problems like heart transplant, kidney and liver problems and some other complicated ailments may cost over two million naira to treat in India, Pakistan, United States. The cost is above the total earnings of an average Nigeria civil servant for five years, assuming he decided not to spend one naira out of his entire earnings. The cost does not include, transport fare, feeding and accommodation of the sick and his attendant. The alternative to this high cost is that people resorted to the patronage of quack doctors and other alternative medical solutions. A victim of heart problem Josephat Chukwukadibe, on interview revealed that his condition worsened when he was told what it would cost him to travel abroad for medical solution. He said that his blood pressure rose to abnormal level because, all through his twenty years as a civil servant, he had not been able to save such amount of money that might be involved. He wondered why the government should not take care of people who are in such condition when the medical solution could not be affordable and in most cases not available in Nigeria. It is true that the Federal Government has come up with the National Health Insurance Service Scheme. This is beneficial and applicable mainly to the civil servants who are still finding it difficult due to the associated deductions from their meager salary after other deductions including taxes. Hardly could the National Insurance Scheme be assessed by the rural dwellers. T. Pearce (2001:1-20) noted that “from colonial period, the pattern of medical care delivery and infrastructural provision favoured the urban population in particular at the expense and detriment of the rural settlers”. It should be noted that, most of the medical centers located in the rural areas were built by the Christian missionaries who were primarily for evangelism. According to Ademiluyi and Aluko (1982:105), “this medical centers in the real sense were merely mobile clinics and at most communities’dispensaries or outposts to treat primary health problems such as snake bite and minor injuries”.

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The Impact of Poor Infrastructural Development on Nigeria Education and Global Economy, 1960-2014
State of Education in Nigeria
The state of education in Nigeria could be best described as unhealthy and below standard. This is so because education standard is fast dropping on daily basis. A situation where a West African Certificate holder may not be able to express himself well is not good enough and it is not encouraging especially when compared with a standard six certificate holder in the 1960s and 1970s. According to Benjamin Chuka Osisioma (2012:2), “way back in the 1970s the quality of education was a thing of pride for the black race and a standard for the rest of African continent. We were then the envy of many developed and developing nations”. That was when education was given adequate attention by both the government, the parent and the students but this glory lost as a result of neglect, corruption and mismanagement. Osisioma regrets that, “three decades of diligent mismanagement and less than expert thinking by military and non-military hands have reduced Nigerian education to a shadow of its glorious past”. He noted that the issue of falling standard of education is not questionable as such discussions should be regarded as a mere debate. In his words “public figures have often indulged themselves at different times in the academic debate of whether or not the standard of education has fallen in Nigeria today. We call it a mere debate because every teacher in Nigeria today knows fully well that educational standards have plummeted perhaps to their lowest since the 1950s.

That both Federal and state governments have not been paying adequate attention to education is not in doubt. The manifestation is clear because the constant face-off between the government and the Academic Staff Union of the Universities (ASUU) as well as their counterparts in the polytechnics and colleges of education. On 17th July, 2013, Sun News Online reported that:

Academic Union of Polytechnics (ASUP) has suspended its nationwide strike following the progress it has made in its negotiation with the Government and the intervention of the Joint Senators and House of Representative Committee on education... the suspension of the strike was to enable the joint committee liaise with relevant ministries, agencies and parastatal with a view to tackling the issues contained in the Union’s demand within one month as against the two weeks requested by the union.

This temporary agreement or suspension took place after four months of wasted time by lecturers and students. Four months of idleness and wondering about by students, the suspension came even as the university lecturers (ASUU) are on strike over non implementation of Federal Government and ASUU 2009 agreement. Still on strike, Sun News Online on 16th of July 2013 reported that the committee of Pro Chancellors of federal universities on Monday expressed concern over the ongoing strike embarked upon by Academic Staff Union of Universities and called for its immediate resolution... the strike by ASUU has lingered because of the non implementation of 2009 agreement between the Federal Government and ASUU.

Causes of Poor Infrastructure Development
The honest truth remains that the major causes of poor infrastructure development that permeate Nigeria nation and indeed many African countries find their roots in the structural, systemic and socio-political lapses that are inherent from the past historical realities of colonial administration. This is worsened in the contemporary experience of the neo-colonialism, militarism and the current political maneuvering of the present bourgeois democrats. There has been no clear and implemented political manifesto and ideology with regards to good governance in Nigeria...
especially since independence. Habu Mohammed (2008:156) asserted that:

One of the challenges of development process in Nigeria as in other African societies has been most pronounced in the area of good governance... it lies with the operators of the system of governance in the country, the local and International elites and their perception of what democracy entails, represents and meant for society.

Good governance remains a theory that has not found relevance in the concept of empiricism and testability in Nigeria; it remains a utopian theory, a million miles journey that is waiting for a takeoff grant. Only God knows when the wind of good governance will begin to blow in Nigeria. According to Chinua Achebe (1983:1) “the Nigeria problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility, to the challenges of personal example which are the hallmark of a true leader”.

Associated to the good governance problem is the cankerworm called corruption which has eaten deep into the fabric of Nigerian economy. According to Francis Oluleye and Kenneth Obi (2012:25), “corruption can be said to be largely responsible for the under development of Nigeria. Funds appropriated for development purposes are either diverted or misappropriated for self-aggrandizement with the consequence that those projects remain undone or uncompleted”. A visit to some of the uncompleted projects or abandoned projects that are scattered all over Nigeria will give a hindsight and information on how very sound developmental projects which would have boosted the infrastructural state of the economy were abandoned to the detriment of the Nigerian poor masses. Some of these projects may have received certificate of completion from the appropriate authority even when they have not been completed. Writing on the effects of corruption on Economic development, Ihionkhan and Okpamen (2007:334) noted that:

Corruption reduces economic development by creating economic inefficiencies, increasing the cost of doing business, reducing competition, scaring potential investors, diverting public funds from services that benefit citizens and reducing compliance with regulation.

The Impact of Poor Infrastructure on Education and Global Economy

Poor infrastructure development has actually impacted negatively on the state of Nigeria education standard in particular and by extension on the global economy. There is no doubt that quality education is a vital tool for civilization and development. Whenever and wherever education is poorly impacted and imbibe the effect is tremendously volatile because it contaminates other spheres of life in any economy. The saying that one does not give out what one does not have is applicable in this discussion. When a teacher is poorly trained, the reality is that he will poorly train others. Osisioma (2012:5) tried to X-ray the decadence and danger in education in Nigeria as he noted that:

Yet another obvious area of decline in education in Nigeria today can be in quality and quantity of the teaching staff in our schools. Times there was when men and women attracted into teaching profession were the cream of the crop. They were then the best both in character and in learning. Today it is no longer so, the truth of the matter is that there is more cheating than teaching going on in the schools today. Men who entered teaching practically as missionaries have been displaced from the system leaving the arena for traders in academic gap lecturers.

The truth is that part of the effects on neglect of education sector in Nigeria is that lecturers embark on different clandestine means of making money to augment or better their condition. The reasonable ones prepare quality
and standard handout and textbooks, while the bad ones resorted to the production of poor handouts and textbooks and sell them at exorbitant prices. In the words of Osisioma “lecturer” handouts are often commercial papers that are aimed more at generating revenue than at teaching. The textbooks are hurriedly assembled, often without the simple courtesy of acknowledging authors whose copywrite have been fragrantly violated”. He never the less blames the government attitude and policy as contributory factors for the lapses in education standard. He said:

Un fortunately government by its policy of neglects over the years helped to turn the learning arena into the theater of absurd. For too long, teachers were made to be the scum of society - the least paid, and the first to go without pay in a cash crunch. For decades teachers grumbled that their take home pay could no longer take them home. Few could maintain their dilapidated cars; some even begged their students for ride. The military ran the system down to the extent that the system became almost irredeemable.

It is worthy to note, that for the standard of education to be improved so as to improve the living standard of the people there is need to review the condition of our infrastructures in the schools system which includes the human infrastructures. Osisioma recalled the statement of a well teacher of teachers (Ukeje) who emphasized the importance of quality teacher and the effect of neglect to teaching profession. He said:

Where this is allowed to take place consciously or unconsciously, by omission or commission, the nation will bear the wrath of Carelessness because the ultimate consequence is pathetic doctors and hospitals that kill more than they cure, in cautious laws

The global effect of the poor infrastructure is that as a result of hardship and frustration occasioned by bad governance and corruption, Nigerians began to migrate to other countries with no assurance of what to expect. Some of them met a worse condition while some were stranded and could not find their ways back. Hence some of them in the latter category resorted to different types of clandestine and illicit businesses thereby posing a social menace to the host country. In the recent past, some Nigerians were deported from various locations in Europe and South Africa. It should be noted that on 8th of October, 2010, it was reported by Mr. Ukeje of Nigeria Immigration Services that “at least 5,273 Nigerians were deported in the last twelve months (Sept., 2009 – August, 2010) by the authorities of Italy, Spain, South Africa and Saudi Arabia”. A similar report by Vanguard Newspaper titled: Shame and dilemma of Nigerian Deportees” reported that 33 Nigerians were deported from America for various offences while 46 Nigerians were deported from Ireland. On June 8th, 2012, there was another report that over 20 Nigerians were deported from United Kingdom because they have overstayed their visa and refused to leave the country. Similarly, another 65 Nigerians were deported from United Kingdom, Spain and Italy. In September, 2012, Saudi Arabia was reported to have deported 170 Nigerian women who entered the country without a male escort by Vanguard Newspaper. A similar report was made on January 26th, 2013. In September, 2013, Many dailies and Newswatch reported that the Controller General of Nigeria Immigration Services (NIS), Mr. David Parradang disclosed that 361 Nigerians have been deported through the Murtala Mohammed International Airport, Lagos, in two months
from July to September, 2013. Similarly, 98 Nigerians were reported to be deported from Tunisia. The truth remains that such reports are countless and the reason remains that Nigerians are frustrated in their homes and are searching for better leaving elsewhere.

**CONCLUSION AND WAY FORWARD**

It is the humble conclusion of this paper that although the standard of infrastructural development in Nigeria is at a very sorry state, Nigeria can still progress if the system is overhauled. Nigerians can still feel a sigh of relief and still march forward if adequate measures are taken. These can be done when the under listed recommendations are considered and put into use. They are that:

1) The government should sincerely declare a state of emergency in most sectors of the economy especially in energy sector, agriculture sector, education sector, transport sector and health sector. Honest and sincere people should be appointed to overhaul these sectors.

2) The issue of corruption should not only be discussed by relevant stakeholders and academics but government should consider the various communiqués released after conferences, seminars and workshops on corruption and allied topics.

3) The government should sensitize the people on the importance of good governance before any election is conducted. They should also impose and implement hard penalty on any politician who indulge in rigging of election. This measure will assist in producing quality and patriotic leaders who can move the nation forward.

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