EDUCATION AND LEADERSHIP IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY: IMPLICATIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA

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Abstract
Education and leadership are related concepts for their main focus is the enhancement of human society. Both of them also play complementary role to each other. For instance it takes political will to draw and implement proper and adequately balanced educational policies, develop acceptable curriculum, found and finance educational services, for proper functional education process. Also it takes well integrated, focused and balanced quality and quantitative educational process to produce quality leadership. In other words education without necessary political attention may not succeed as leadership without quality education is bound to fail. This paper adopts a conceptual study of the role of leadership on education for sustainable development in Africa. Accordingly, issues or concepts of leadership, education, sustainable development, leadership and education, as well as leadership and education for sustainable development are discussed using such philosophical tools as basis for analysis of concepts and languages to convey clarity of meaning and order or coherence. The paper admits that for any nation to achieve sustainable development, the issue of education must be taken seriously. It regrets that Nigeria experience, like most African countries is unfortunate as the impact of leadership on education is far behind international standards. The paper, therefore, calls for a change of attitude on the nation's leadership, if Nigeria and indeed Africa should continue to be relevant in the world community today and in the future.
Keywords: Education, leadership, contemporary society, sustainable development, political culture; contemporary society.

Introduction

The concept of sustainable development is not new, what seems new is its reawakening global interest. Every nation or society, no matter its size, designs an education system which it pursues for common interest of all. No education system is established without the aim of building human capacity for societal development; for the present and the future generations. One of the main functions of education is to produce quality manpower that would occupy the various sections of the societal life: politically, socially,

economically, morally, and so on. Education therefore plays a major role in achieving quality and durable leadership.

Quality leadership also encourages adequate and functional education. When leadership attitude to education is positive, the human development index continues to appreciate. This then adds credence to sustainable development. It therefore, takes a positive working relationship between education and leadership to achieve the much desired sustainable development in any nation of the world.

This paper examines the concepts of leadership and education respectively to shade light on their likely meaning and relate them to achieving sustainable development at both the global and continental levels. What then is leadership? What is education? And what is sustainable development?

Conceptual Framework
Leadership

Leadership is a sacred responsibility. It is for those who posses the spirit of sacrifice and selflessness. It is the ability of the individual to successfully direct the activities of the group to the attainment of organizational goals. (Agwaranze, 1997). Leadership, according to Fayemi (2008:3) is "the ability to take an initiative, to motivate, to influence, to direct and control the thoughts, the opinions and the actions of the follows in any given society towards the achievement of purposeful desired ends".

From the two definitions given above it is clear that leadership is a key factor in any major change in the society. A leader must have a vision and a mission devoid of selfishness. He must be properly informed of the people he is leading. Leadership requires a person of high intelligence, a motivator and of positive influence, as well as result oriented.

For effective leadership to be realized it requires exceptional gift of knowledge, intellect and training, since it involves the general well-being of all. A good leader is one who not only preserves the lives of his people, but also transforms them to human beings. Plato (1955:282) insisted that leadership should not be left in the hands of people of mean qualities and qualifications and observed as thus;

> When the supreme power in man coincides with the greatest wisdom and temperance, then the best laws and the best constitution comes into being: but in no other way... Until philosophers become kings in this world, or till that we now call kings and rulers really and truly become philosophers, and political power and philosophy thus come into the same hands... There is no other road to real happiness, either for society or the individual.

We are all living in a world where mediocrity, self aggrandizement, chance, accident and nepotism cripple or force themselves into the highest seat of leadership. The African experience is even more disturbing. The internal crisis, sometimes resulting to civil wars which some African countries are known today is mainly caused by imposition of selfish and unqualified individuals as leaders. In the same vein, Okolo (1985) noted that embezzlement of public funds, excessive greed, irresponsibility, lack of public accountability, tribalism, sectionalism, nepotism, absolute lack of concern for public good

and welfare, lack of patriotic spirit, are all perpetrated by, African political leaders and those highly placed in public offices.

Leadership could be seen as a selfless sacrifice. The implication here is that leadership is not for "all comers". It is meant for only those who are willing to make such costly sacrifices. It is a call of duty that only those called should respond. The virtues of wisdom, selfless services, public accountability and moral integrity among others are important for leadership positions at all levels. The leader must emerge from among the people as best. Functionally, leadership could be described as the capacity or potentials of an individual or group to direct, organize and control the actions of the other people or group for the attainment of the collective goal of the society or group (Agwaranze, 1997). Every society, organization or group has some set goals. The role of an effective leadership in this regard is to influence and inspire the people to attain the set goals.

From the literary perspective leadership, is derived from the verb "to lead" which suggests among other things "to guide" or "to cause to follow one", to direct by persuasion, influence or action of thought. It could also be taken to mean: to show the way to, to direct the course of, to conduct a certain direction, or to be a head. Leadership here implies quality guidance and direction of the people towards achieving some specific goals. Leadership, therefore is an institution that involves persons or group of persons who are well trained and exposed to set goals and vigorously pursue such goals for the general interest of the society, hence leadership is about leaders in action.

Confucius, a political thinker who lived between 551 – 479 BC opined that a leader must be virtuous and meritorious, emphasizing that government as an institution was a product of human reason and sound virtue. Infact, Mencius who was also Confucian philosopher declared that a leader who departed from reason and virtue could be executed. Both agreed that a ruler (leader) was responsible for the quality of governance and was accountable to his subordinates. (Subrots Mikherejee & S. Ramaswamy 2007 p. 44.) According to Plato a leader or leadership is a product of quality education. The leader whom he referred to as philosopher king should emerge from the highest level of well programmed coordinated education programme. (Amaele, 2007).

Ruling requires skills and qualifications for its aim is the general well-being of all. Thus, a good ruler is one who preserves the lives of his subjects and also transforms them as human beings.

The Concept of Education

Education is one major concept that is diversely discussed, defined, deserved or even prescribed. So many people examine the concepts in so many ways. Sometimes, it suggests that there is no definite definition of education that is universally acceptable. To some education is limited to that which is acquired through the classroom experiences. But to others it extends to the informal experiences. However, what appears to be a melting point of all arguments on education is that it is a process that leads to human development. Being carefully guided by the misconceptions of education, Fadatnensi (2008;1) described education in these words:

> *Education in its broadest sense, means formal, non-formal*
> *and informal life-long learning processes that develop human*
> *potentials for a meaningful living. Formal education is an*
> *organized, structured and controlled system of learning aimed*

at liberating people from ignorance. Non-formal education is equally a learning process for the inculcation and sustenance of basic and post basic life skills and knowledge. Informal education is a social learning promoted in family settings, culture, society, media, peer groups, etc.

He made this clarification because of the misconceptions in some quarters which narrowed education to mere schooling, thereby neglecting other sub-systems of education. Even at this broad description, there are issues that were not clearly defined. For instance what are these life-long learning processes that develop human potentials? Who develop these potentials and on who? How are these potentials developed? What is meaningful living? Who decides it: the individual or the society? Majasan (1998:4) emphasizes that growth and development is a function of quality education, stressing that "No nation can remain permanently in the forefront of development leadership if its education ceases to be qualitative". The indexes of quality education, according to him include disciplined behaviour, handwork, improved cultural heritage, patiently acquired skills, valuable techniques, acceptance of teachers' leadership role, mutual respect within the school community and devotion to high ideals.

We need sound education, competence and honesty to build our nation to the required standard, when we can contribute our quota to human growth and development, which responds only to qualitative education.

Education and Leadership

This sub-heading is designed to establish the relationship or otherwise the importance of education to leadership and vice versa. Commenting on Plato and Education Mukherjee and Ramaswamy (2007:73) revealed the relationship between education and leadership:

The ideal state ruled by the philosopher was made possible through an elaborate and rigorous scheme of education. The state was wholly constructed around the scheme of education, in the belief that if the state performed its task of conducting and supervising education properly, then it would succeed.

They argued further that education was seen by Plato as an instrument for moral reform. Hence, it moulds and transforms human souls. Education inculcated the right values of selfless services towards the people. It also enhances the performance of leadership, leading to the attainment of societal goals. This is why; in Plato's view leadership position should be entrusted to the hands of the philosopher kings: those who received the highest level of the rigorous education.

From the Platonic background above, education must be treated as a major societal issue since the quality of education given determines the quality of leadership expected. Hence, education and leadership are symbiosis and of great importance to the society. Leadership in world development depends directly on quality education, hardwork, and strict discipline within the nation.

Aristotle also asserted that education was an effective way to produce political unity. Hence, education was more than merely acquiring skills and common beliefs. It symbolized

a way of life, since the individual learn more by doing. The goal of education in this regard was not just unity, but to foster and protect a way of life that encouraged and sustained diverse social and political activities. Aristotle emphasized the political nature of man which informs the need for quality education and further noted that:

> *Man is thus intended by nature to be part of a political whole, and there is therefore an immanent impulse in all men towards an association of this order...Man, when perfected, is the best of animals; but if he be isolated from law and justice he is the worst of all. Injustice is all the graver when it is armed injustice; and man is furnished from birth with arms (such as, for instance, language) which are intended to serve the purpose of moral produce and virtue, but which may be used in preference for opposite ends. That is why, if he be without virtue, he is an almost unholy savage being, and worse than all others is the indulgence of lust and gluttony. Justice (which is his salvation) belongs to the polis; for justice, which is the determination of what is just, is an ordering of the political association (Aristotle 1979:7).*

The concept of leadership in Education in this discourse is to examine the extent to which leadership has imparted on education, given the ultimate relevance of education on leadership and national or international development. For a nation to enjoy quality and purposeful life demanded of an ideal society, it requires qualitative education that can co-ordinate the activities of human being on this planet and make it possible to cross to other planets to investigate conditions of life survival. For instance the quality of democratic leadership enjoyed by the United States of America today is greatly informed by the quality education in place. In this regard Majasan, (1998:31) observed that.

> *We have been looking at how much the quality of Americans to help themselves and others to contribute usefully to human growth and development. We have seen that they are not only learned, they are practical, creative, relevant, hard-working, sympathetic, freedom – loving, but aggressive and purposeful, which qualities make them effective and formidable with the world community.*

The quality of education recorded in Japan which gives the country a pride of honour in the global community is mainly enhanced by the government effort. Browne as cited by Majasan posited that:

> *An outstanding characteristic of the Japanese educational system is the amount of energy put into it. From the detailed organization and obvious financial expenditure at government level through to the principal's office and vice – principal's desk, to the staffroom and ultimately to the classroom, what one sees is one big concerned effort on behalf of a nationally espoused priority that has undisputedly important political and economic implications (Majasan 1998:35 – 36).*

Switzerland is one of the richest and most stable political country in the world. In 1995 it was recorded as the riches country followed by Japan (Majasan, 1998). The country achieved this fortune through quality education encouraged by political will. The country enjoys sound democratic principles and values and education is given high priority. This gives credence to responsible and credible leadership. Education in the country is so well planned and so painstakingly implemented that all its citizens are literate and civil duties conscious, which enhance performance, creativity and progress. Canada is not only a wealthy country. It is also peaceful as it develops its citizens through well coordinated education system. This in turn enhances quality living and governance. The country has a good school system in which every child goes to the school of his/her choice. The government is responsible for maintaining schools and making the teachers comfortable. Because of the high literary level of the country, parents take much interest in the education of their children, helping to maintain high standards in schools work. The teacher/student ratio as at 1988 was 1:18.

Education is a powerful instrument for effective and quality leadership, which ensures growth and development of the society. But a mere indoctrinated process devoid of practical reality of building quality manpower among citizen could end up deceiving the society without impart. Education can influence the political culture of the people. For instance, Almond and Sidney (1963) classified political culture into three:

1. **The parochial political culture:** In this case citizens are not fully aware about the presence of the government. They live their lives with least consciousness of the government decisions. This type of culture is irrelevantly to the citizen weather it is educated or not educated thatcontrols that government.
2. **The subjected political culture:** In this category citizens are aware of the government and are heavily subjected to its decisions. Here education can play a vital role in the political leadership but it is not evident that education is the only ingredient for its effectiveness.
3. **Participant type of culture:** In this case citizens are able to influence Government in many ways and are in term affected by the Government. This type of political culture is most appreciated in this work.

Sustainable Development
The concept of sustainable development has become a major issue of discourse in the recent times. According to World Commission on Environment and Development, sustainable development "is a development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs".

The Brundland Commission Report (1987) on sustainable development defined sustainable development as an economic and social development that meets the needs of the current generation without endangering the ability of future generations satisfying their needs and choosing their life style. Similarly Bryant (2003) describes sustainable development as infrastructure, policies and behaviours that are conceptualized, instituted, maintained overtime and which are considered essential to the vitality, general welfare and continued existence of a people and the environment.

Sustainable development implies improvement of the entire circumstances of man on earth; satisfying his social, economic and material needs granting him mastery of his environment. It has to do with improving quality life without compromising the needs of the future generation. Clayton (2001) however, argues that a commitment to meet the needs of the present and future generations has some implications. Meeting the needs of the present means satisfying:

1. The economic needs
2. The social, cultural and health needs, and
3. The political needs.

Sustainable development also means achieving a quality of life which can be maintained for generations yet unborn because it is socially desirable, economically viable and ecologically renewable or sustainable (Ekong 2002:7). Thin (2002:13) further stressed that sustainable development addresses four cardinal elements; such as progress, justice, durability and stability.

Thus, the concept of sustainable development cults across building the required human capacity to enable the individual to carry out his expected responsibilities without restrictions. It makes for purposeful life and enduring peace. This is where quality leadership and quality education need to be stressed, so as to achieve the right spirit of sustainable development.

Education and Leadership for Sustainable Development in Africa

Education is essential for achieving sustainability. Public awareness which is a mark of quality education and training is a key to moving society toward sustainability. Toolkit (2008) distinguished between education about sustainable development and education for sustainable development. Education about sustainable development is an awareness lesson, while education for sustainable development is a tool to achieve sustainability. The awareness concept is important but the tool to achieving sustainability is most appropriate. Education, worth its name is supposed to equip man with the necessary tools for sustainability.

The report on education for all in the year 2000 showed that the United Arab Emirate have made great progress in basic education and are getting close to the set target, because they are convinced that education is the main thrust for sustainable human development. No doubt that UNESCO (2008) clearly states that "No development can be possible without humans and no humans can reach development without quality education".

The quality of education that can produce sustainable human development, as pointed out in the United Arab Emirate, cannot be realized without committed leadership. UNESCO's report that in the last quarter of this century, the political leaders in the United Arab Emirate were aware that "the investment in human capital is the best investment on the longer run", stressing that education is a cool for rapid societal development. The strength of nations, according to UNESCO, is not measured by the nation's natural resources or its military strength but by its crop of manpower produced by well planned, funded, staffed, equipped and supervised education system.

The cited example of United Arab Emirate where quality leadership commitment to education yielded positive results cannot be favourably compared to the African and particularly Nigeria experience. Although, Nigeria has always formulated good policies on

education since her independence in 1960, the country has often lacked the political will to execute these policies. The nation is paying dearly for this. Oroka (2008) reports that the four best Nigerian Universities Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, University of Ibadan, University of Benin, Benin City and University of Lagos, Lagos were ranked 5834th, 6809th, 7,318[th] and7,601[th] respectively in the world Universities ranking order. It is further regrettable that no Nigerian University was rated among the World Top 500 Universities in the third World Countries; and none could be rated among the first 40 best Universities in Africa.

Oroka's report further revealed that Nigeria has only 15 scientists and engineers engaged in research and development per million persons as against 165 in Brazil, 459 in China, 158 in India and 4,102 in USA. This explains why our mineral deposits are under the control of other multi-national companies and powers.

Lack of political will and commitment to education are major consequent of educational bastardization. This could be explained under (a) budgetary allocation to education and (b) corruption. Funding is the heart of education, because it touches on various fundamental and critical aspects. For instance the UNESCO's recommended minimum annual budgetary allocation to education for developing countries between 1970 and 2000 was 26%, but between 1986 and 1992 Nigeria allocated an average of 03% to the sector. Below is the statistics put by Arubayi (2007) cited by Oroka 2008 p.10 (Table 1).

Table 1.

Countries	% on Education 1986-1992
Ghana	26
Botswana	21
Kenya	20
Malaysis	19
Uganda	15
Egypt	13
Indonesia	09
Nigeria	03

Arubayi (2007) in Oroka 2008: 10

Osisioma 2002 further created a more sympathetic historic reflection of the Nigeria scenario on education:

> *Way back in the 1970s, the quality of Nigeria education was a thing of pride for the black race, and a standard for the rest of the African continent. We were then the envy of many a developed or developing nation. This writer well remembers the furore generated by a back-page publication in one of Nigeria's weeklies in the 1970s, which equated to a sixth form certificate in Nigeria. Three decades of diligent mismanagement and less than expert tinkering by military hands have reduced Nigerian education to a mere shadow of its glorious past.*

The other major problem in Nigeria, which is also linked to lack of political will, is corruption. The corruption index put Nigeria at the most top. In 2003, Nigeria was ranked the second most corrupt in the world. The Editorial of Tell Weekly Magazine of February 20, 2006 placed Nigeria as the most corrupt nations of the world. The magnitude of corruption in Nigeria is most experienced at the leadership level. Where leadership fails, the people's vision equally fails, even in education. The Nigerian example is typical of most African nations. Leadership has failed to advance quality programmes for education which would have empowered mankind and the entire society for sustainable development in Africa. On the other hand the education process has not sufficiently addressed the quality leadership in the continent.

Conclusion

This paper has theoretically examined the concepts of leadership and education respectively, indicating their importance and centrality to the global and even African demand for sustainable development. It has equally analyzed sustainable development as the political, economic, physical etc development of persons and society for the present and future generation.

The global journey to sustainable development cannot be easily attained, it requires positive attitude, well articulated policies and programmes as well as selfless actions and sacrifice. Two major factors that can move this dream as stated earlier are quality education and quality but responsible leadership.

The paper therefore, contents that quality education and responsible leadership remains the best options to sustainable development in any nation of the world.

Recommendations
- ❖ For the world to achieve the dream of sustainable development each nation's leadership and education must be strengthened in policies, actions and funding. Also the best quality human materials should be allowed to aspire for any leadership position.
- ❖ The blind can neither lead the blind nor the sighted. Leadership positions should be made to be occupied by the most qualified in terms of aptitude, attitudes, ability, leadership position is a vision-any position and only those who have the vision should occupy it. Those who should lead ought to be chosen among the best so that they can give their best services to the people. When the best come to lead he will have focus on the quality life of the people for the present and future generation. His policies and programmes on education and other sectors of the people's life will be guided by sustainable development.

- ❖ Again education should not only be proclaimed as a right of every child but should be pursued and treated as the right of every citizen irrespective of race, colour, sex or status. The government, parents, civil societies, Non-governmental Agencies, and other local, state and national cum international functionaries must be held responsible for failing in their own expected roles to encouraging quality and equal opportunity to the education of any child or citizen. Sub-standard schools should be up-graded and funded, curriculum of all schools expanded in line with the realities of the present age, teachers be adequately trained, recruited motivated and paid for effective and efficient functioning. Above all, discipline and orderliness should be restored and maintained at all levels of the school system world over.

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