

Religion: Panacea to Human Capital Development in the Contemporary Nigerian Society

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DOI: 10.56201/jhsp.v9.no2.2023.pg26.32

Abstract

Nigeria as a nation over the years has continued to crave for Human Capital Development. This is because the Development of Human Capital is critical for the Economic Growth and Sustainable Development of any nation. Since it is the Human person who spearheads any developmental strive of any nation, the need for the Development of Human Capital is indispensable, using the tools of analysis, the paper submitted that religion could serve as a tool for Human capital development in the Contemporary Nigerian Society, because as an institution, it has the potential train and equip the Human person as the agent of Development. It further analyses the possible ways Religion can be harnessed to promote Human Capital Development to include moral instructions, sermons, ethical teachings, training of clergy and religious functionaries, establishment of schools, and through healthcare delivery. The paper concludes that if Religion is given its proper place, it would fulfill this sublime role of developing the Human Capital. It proffers some practical suggestions that would help Nigeria as a nation achieve the target of Human Capital Development. These suggestions are taken as recommendations. Religion for the purpose of this study refers to Christianity, Islam and African traditional Religion.

Key words: Human, Capital, Economic Growth, Sustainable Development, Religion

Introduction

A nation is as strong as her human capital. Little wonder why great countries of the world accord priority attention to the education of its youth. This perhaps explains why the early Muslim scholars who promoted Islam in Nigeria and the Christian missionaries made the provision of education an integral part of their missionary enterprise. No doubt the history of western education in Nigeria is synonymous with the early Christian missionaries. The colonial government's involvement in education in Nigeria began by way of grants to school propriety missions, later followed with active involvement in the education of her subjects. With the secularization of schools in the early 1970's and the eventual collapse of the educational sector occasioned in part by poor funding and supervision, there was a gradual decline in the quality of graduates of the country's institutions of learning. Infact, many have argued that Nigeria graduates are not employable. Today, despite of the huge amount spent on education, the country is rated low on the human capital development index. This paper investigates the trajectory of church involvement in human capital development and how religion could be used as a tool for human capital development in Nigeria.

Literature Review

Religion as a way of life or as an institution is a very strong force which fosters human capital development for coordinating nation building. This it does by raising high quality human capital resources who are sincere and responsible to the need of the nation. Uche (2011), observed that "religion is a natural element in the life of man, which spurs him into developmental strives for nation building". Religious beliefs, tents and practices help to mould and re-mould man into accepting the responsibility of a nation builder. Religion promotes integrative value system through its beliefs, practices, norms and values, and all these are brought to bear on the human person who is the practitioner. The essence of this is to form man into becoming a responsible person who is equipped to contribute his quota to the development of his society. Ebeburu (2013), averred that religion helps to develop the human person psychologically, as he is taught to be a winner in all spheres of life. Through the practice of religion, man is prepared to contribute to the dynamic belief system whose aim is to preserve the awe-inspiring aspects of the country's national life and cultural heritage. Religion is an indispensable factor in the development of the human person. Nigeria as a nation is in need of radical transformation of the human person who will bring about positive, responsible and qualitative changes in the society. The problem of corruption and lack of patriotism in Nigeria can only be solved if human capital development is achieved and religion is a veritable vehicle towards its achievement. National development and the development of human capital will remain a mirage without religion. This is why religion should be given the proper attention it deserves in order for it to play this important role.

Okeke (2013), noted that religion has the power to produce men and women of integrity, who would uphold national integrity, enhance progress and national development. Nnabuife (2013), averred that if national development must be attained in Nigeria, all stakeholders must be prepared to denounce individualism, personal and selfish gain and embrace co-operative and collaborative strives for the common good. Religion, according to him, is able to ensue this. Omorodion (2012), remarked that one of the problems facing the attainment of national development in Nigeria is

distrust. Religion, he said can help to build trust among people and promote sustainable national development in Nigeria society.

Clarification of Terms.

Religion - this is a derivation from three Latin words' namely,

Ligare-to bind

Relegere-to unite, to link

Religio relationship, Omoregbe (2006), Essentially, religion has to do with relationship;

a. Link and a form of unity established between two persons, often, the human and the divine. Religion unites the human person with transcendental being, a deity or God who is believed to exit morally and demand worship. This relationship between the human and divine breeds morality and other religious values such as honesty, fair play, justice decency and the like. With these values, religion forms man and mould him into a religious man of moral probity.

b. Human capital - this is the embodiment of knowledge, which could be religious, secular or scientific, deposited in the human person through the acquisition of education and training, whether religious or secular, with organized and experimental experience. It refers to the trained or formed individual, who is so developed to be resourceful to the society. It means readiness, preparedness and capability to take up responsibility for sustainable development and nation building.

c. Development - this refers to the process through which someone or something grows or changes positively and becomes more advanced. Technically, development means the systematic use of scientific knowledge to meet special goals or objectives. When something improves, it is said to have developed. Asoya (2012), argued that development is the improvement, expansion or positive changes observable in state of affairs or phenomena. Development basically means changes capable of being utilized for the improvement or advancement of knowledge and realization of goals and objectives.

d. Human capital development: From the fore-going, human capital development means the training and retraining of the human person through formal and informal education. It equally refers to the recruitment of and investment on the human person through empowerment for the achievement of set goals.

The Need For the Development of Human Capital.

The development of human capital for the attainment of national goals cannot be over emphasized. This is demonstrably the case because Nigeria as a nation has been exposed to new ideas, products, strategies and more technically competitive economic orientations. Onwuka and Eguavoen (2007), adduced that this exposure to new ideas has led to remarkable growth in size and power of firms which in turn has enhanced better utilization of productive improvements in social development. They noted however, that the process has generated peculiar problems for the underdeveloped countries, especially Nigeria. One of such problems is that Nigeria can hardly produce goods and services that can withstand competition from countries with high industrialization. The cause of the problem is majorly, the non-availability of qualified human capital. Well developed and qualified human capital is undoubtedly needed to step up productivity for sustainable development of Nigeria.

Human capital development is needed to foster the utilization of domestic resources for further development of the economy. The continued dependence on foreign expatriates has not only crumbled the economy but has failed to enhance the desired results and set goals. Poverty and inequality are some of the greatest setbacks to Nigeria economic development. The increased global wealth is only concentrated in the hands of few privileged individuals in Nigeria. To this end, Abdul Raheem (2003), opined that there is a decline in the average income over the years in Nigeria. He noted that over three billion people in Nigeria live on two or less dollars per day, in a world unprecedented wealth. The above phenomenon can be properly managed with well-developed human capital. Human capital development is indispensable in Nigeria because there is need for a complete social transformation which requires competent and knowledgeable young men and women who, through their training and recruitment, can use their expertise to move the nation forward.

There is need for human capital development in Nigeria to handle the challenge of the integrated financial market. The global financial market tends to transmit international, regional, national and local shocks more rapidly now than in the past decades. It is the case that as Volumes of intermediation and currency transactions increase, global shock with its destabilizing effects increase. These problems can be tackled if the Nigerian nation employs technical manpower, (through effective human capital development) that can put in place appropriate fiscal policies aimed at reducing the negative effects of this shock.

Religion: Panacea to Human Capital Development

Human capital development is invaluablely necessary in today's highly competitive world. The same is true of Nigeria as a nation. Without human capital development, sustainable economic, social and political development is impossible. Thus, for nation building, the government needs to put in place all that is necessary for the development of human capital.

Religion is a very powerful force which helps to shape and build up the human person. It has a pervasive and powerful influence on all aspects of human endeavour. In Nigeria, religion defines the human person. The different religious faiths help to form man to behave in the ways prescribed by such religions and acceptable to the society. These religious beliefs and practices are fundamental to nation building. The nation builder is the human person and since religion moulds him as a person, it is therefore the case that religion can be a force in his development as a human capital.

The development of the human person depends, to a very large extent, on religion. To this end, religion acts as bedrock for moral development of man. The teaching of moral values which is majorly enshrined in religious tenets and doctrines help the human person to be morally responsible, economically prepared and socially available for nation building.

One of the factors militating against national and sustainable development in Nigeria is institutionalized corruption, among those who implement national programmes. Corruption fundamentally stagnates development, investment and growth. This underscores the truism in the saying that "any society built on the principles of corruption cannot develop". The Nigerian experience has proved this to be true. Religion however teaches that corruption is not only a vice but ungodly, thus anyone who engages in it would be punished by God. This teaching can help the human person to refrain from acts of corruption as this will attract punishment. Religion promotes

and encourages quality, scientific and technical education. Different Christian groups in Nigeria for instance, have established schools from kindergarten to tertiary levels. Such school include Holy Infant Nursery/Primary and secondary Schools Agbor; St. Peter's Group of School, Bojo – Boji Owa; Our Lady of Perpetual Help Girls Juniorate Issele-Uku; Bowen University, Iwo; Baptist University, Ogbomoso; Covenant University Ottah; Redeemer University, Mowe; Ajaji Crowther University, Ondo; Madonna University, Enugu; St. Paul University, Awka; Tarnsian University, Oba; Veritas University, Abuja; and many more. All these schools and Universities were approved by the relevant agencies of the government. As centres of academic excellence, the religious universities carry out researches aimed at developing human capital for sustainable national development. By establishing schools, religious bodies, have become veritable tools for the development of human capital in Nigeria. Added to the fore-going, is the fact that religion has not only helped to train and produce manpower as resource persons, but has equally provided jobs for many graduates, who work in these religious institutions and other areas in the Nigerian society. Many of the female religious (reverend sisters) in the catholic denomination are either lecturers in tertiary institutions or teachers in primary and post primary schools. Similarly, doctors and nurses in hospitals and health centers and most importantly Clinical Psychologist and Counselors contribute to human capital development. In the same vein, many pastors and prophets are in the academia, imparting knowledge and skills, thereby helping to develop human capital in Nigeria. Religious Priests are given rigorous training in philosophy, theology, psychology and counseling and thus provide moral guidance for the society. Elue, (2012), observed that the reason why the church agreed to partner with the ministry of education in providing quality education to the people is because the church believes that it is a means of spreading the gospel of moral probity and human capital development, In agreement with this view, Adeola, (2012), averred that human capital development in Nigeria is achievable through the provision and encouragement of religious education. He said that religious schools do not only teach academics, but try to develop the human person through the vehicle of sound moral institutions and formation. This, he said is achieved through the interplay of academic and moral dimensions of education, since any education that is geared towards human capital development must be scientific, experimental, moral and development in nature.

Human capital development requires that agents of development be trained to be accountable. Accountability and transparency help the development for the human person for sustainable national development. What religion stands for is that people should be transparent in their financial dealings and be ready to render account of their stewardship. In this way, religion helps to develop the human person as he assumes his social role in the society. No society can develop when her functionaries are not accountable. Accountability is one of the bedrocks of sustainable development in the society. Thus, when the individuals who pilot the affairs of the society are accountable, development follows and thus is the duty religion.

Human capital development requires leadership of high moral standard. One of the problems of Nigeria is leadership. To lead mean to put one's life on the line, to give up one's joy, comfort and pleasure for the good and welfare of others. In line with this, Okotie (2012), opined that a leader is a "king-servant" whose joy and fulfilment spring from the fact his subjects are well taken care of. Nigeria undoubtedly needs leaders of this nature. The Christian religion sees Jesus as a king-servant, a Master and Lord who serve his people, a Master who washes his disciples' feet. In

Nigeria, it is a known fact that in some quarters, religion has been used by fundamentalists and religious fanatics to cause mayhem. To this end, lives have been lost and property worth billions of naira lost. It is even not out of place to say that the Boko Haram insurgency and the mayhem caused by the Fulani herdsmen all over the country have religious undertones. This however does not invalidate the role of religion, especially in the development of human capital.

Conclusion

This study has been able to establish the fact there is need for human capital development in the contemporary Nigerian society. This need is an urgent and important one. Since human capital development is a veritable vehicle which drives and fosters sustainable economic, social, political and technological development in any society, its importance cannot be overemphasized. This study has also established that religion could be a tool for of human capital and for the acceleration of all round development in Nigeria. Religion teaches morality and values that can help build the human person as the agent of development in Nigeria. Religious groups have also established schools and institutions of higher learning, where human capital resources are trained and equipped as agents of development. The establishment of schools has impacted positively on Nigeria's manpower need. Health-care centres have also been established by religious bodies in Nigeria, to take care of the health needs of People health, they say is “Health is wealth”, a healthy nation Is a wealthy nation. This study therefore, advocates that if religion is given its proper place in Nigeria. It would fulfill its sublime role of developing the human capital.

Recommendations

Having established the fact that religion when properly harnessed could serve as a tool for human capital development in Nigeria the following recommendations are made with a view to enhancing the capacity of religion to contribute more meaningfully to human capacity development in Nigeria:

- i. Government should encourage religion by creating an enabling social-order for it to thrive.
- ii. Financial aid in the form of grants should be given to the various religious bodies who are into school apostolate by the government.
- iii. Schools established by religious bodies for the promotion of human capital development should be given equals status with government owned schools.
- iv. There should be interactive sessions between the religious bodies and the government in the bid to work for the common good.
- v. Religious bodies and the government should see themselves as partners in progress.
- vi. Religious leaders should focus more on policies and programmes oriented.
- vii. The various religious bodies should encourage peaceful co-existence.
- viii. More skill acquisition centres should be established by religious bodies to promote skill and man power development.
- ix. Government should provide grants to religious bodies to enable them Capital execute their human development programmes.

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