

A situational Analysis of Human Development in Benue State

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Abstract

Since creation out of the former Benue-Plateau State, much of the planning in the State has been centered on the accumulation of physical capital for growth and development, without due recognition of the important role of human capital in the development process. However, as society continues to globalize, human development has increasingly become an important component of overall socio-economic growth. This paper x-rays the concept of human development and outlines the situation of Benue State from precolonial period to date. The basic human development variables analyzed include Literacy, Health care, Gender Empowerment and inequality. The data were largely derived from reports of local planning agencies as well as the United Nations Human Development reports for Nigeria. It was recommended that, human development in Benue State must be deliberate and strategically made to suit the area of its highest potential which is agriculture. This must be emphasized in legislative actions as well as in the curricula and programs of training institutions which must explore the linkages with industry towards effective development and deployment of human capital.

Key Words: Human Development Index, Literacy, Health care, Gender, Empowerment.

Introduction

Human resources, often used interchangeably with manpower refers to the totality of the energies, skills, knowledge and experience available in a region. These resources constitute the ultimate basis for the wealth of regions (Sankay, Ismail, & Shaari, 2010). This is because, human resources are the active agents used to accumulate capital, exploit natural resources, build social, economic and political organizations and carry forward national development (Adeyeye, 2015). Thus, a nation or state that is incapable of developing the skills and knowledge of its people and utilize them effectively in the economy will lag behind in overall development.

Human resources development has the entire population as its target. This is because, human capital includes persons who work now as well as those who are likely to be employed later. Thus, human capital formation is a continuous process from childhood to old age. This process is also a must for any society that strives to survive under the complex challenges of the dynamic world.

Since its creation out of the former Benue-Plateau State in 1976, Benue State has since gone through many stages of administrative and geographical restructuring. At each stage, the overarching goal has been to accumulate physical capital for rapid growth and development. This is measured by political stability, material prosperity, peace and social progress. However, there has been no due recognition of the important role of human capital in the development

process though each of the structural changes had an impact on human capital development of what is now left as the present Benue State. The discussion in this paper dates back to the pre-colonial days in order to point out areas of weaknesses and strength as well as what needs to be done to improve the current situation.

Conceptual clarification and Theoretical framework

The term human development is so wide and will not be easy to define in a few words. For this discussion, we will attempt to split the portmanteau term into two parts for clarity.

The word human is simply defined as 'of or connected with people rather than animals or machines or goods' (Kwary, 2014). The category of people is however not classified. This means all categories of people starting from children to adults. Development on the other hand is said to be 'the gradual growth of something so that it becomes more advanced and stronger (Nchuchuwe & Adejuwon, 2012). Merging the two definitions together implies that human development has to do with the improvement and growth of a people towards the realization of productive results in all areas of need and wants both on personal as well as societal levels.

Since human beings exist in generations and their needs and wants also vary with time and prevailing circumstances, the decisions and actions concerning human development too need to be an open-ended matter varying with situations and time. In other words, there is no threshold to human development. As perceived needs and wants are resolved, new ones emerge with time and changing situations. This means there are targets or goals in development which if and when they are achieved, other new ones are set and pursued. For reasons of good and more result-oriented planning, the newer goals should be anticipated and arrangements made for accommodating them while implementing the older ones. Human Development must therefore be seen as a factor in the pursuit of current and anticipated goals and achievement. In business terms, the development of the people to be used in development programmes and projects is regarded as an input which is also referred to as human capital.

The concept of human development has now been expanded to include not just education where individuals are schooled in a system which improves their knowledge, skills and attitudes, but also health care, sustainability of access to the productivity that can guarantee equity and social justice in the sustenance of a decent standard of living. This also implies that such issues which have to do with empowering the people to influence decisions that affect their lives, the security of lives and property, and the cooperation of the individuals within their communities to work in harmony for the realization of set goals are all ingredients of human development. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) sums up this concept by describing "human development as the process of enlarging people's choices" (Edewor, 2014). The implication here too, is that of a well-being approach with the view to making the people capable of improving and sustaining the level of development and their standard of living.

Although the approach to this research is multidisciplinary, it is anchored on modernization theory which deals with the process of social evolution and the development of societies (Marsh, 2014). The analysis is at the finer levels that focus on the componential elements of social development such as literacy and health care. Other elements include Human Development Index (HDI), which measures the quality of life and possibilities in socio-economic development and the Human Poverty Index (HPI) which is a reflection of the extent of redistribution of state wealth among the citizens as well as Gender Development Measure (GDM), Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) and Inequality Measure (IM). These elements represent empirical trajectories and manifest processes of development of Benue State.

Human Development in Benue State

As an administrative unit or region, Benue State is yet to clearly structure its development programs in line with the understanding that human development can yield the desired results. Several factors, some of which are external to the state account for this failure. However, this aspect is not of immediate concern. The emphasis is on what exists and what is currently being done with the view to exposing what else needs to be done.

Human development in Benue State for quite some time now has been simply understood

and treated as the formal education of her people using the strategy of formal schools, be they for general education, technical or health education. Health institutions such as hospitals or dispensaries for example were treated as welfare packages and in many cases not significantly provided for.

The pre-colonial perception of human development manifested in the informal system of education where parents taught their wards everything using the strategy of on-the-job training. The training was tailored to meet the immediate needs of the household and the community. These two phases of human development is what we intend to look at in the discussion that follows.

Pre-Colonial period

During this period, almost all young people received informal education which was tailored to suit the needs of the people at that time. Areas of informal education included good and acceptable behaviour in the family and in the community; education for different levels of maturity to adulthood, education for professionalism on the farm, in hunting or trading, handicraft, cooking and housekeeping. In all of these areas, wards were taught on the job. They learned by following their parents/guardians and doing it as they saw it being done. There were no formal classes. It was simply home schooling with definite targets to achieve in each case. If one failed to achieve the expected targets, one simply, couldn't proceed to the next level. The only way to certify success was the ability to do it as it should be done.

The merits of this kind of education were commendable. There was no room for cheating and each person learned at their pace. There was also good competition among peers and the reward system was also clear and included privileged roles in family chores, gifts and public acknowledgements. The system also included every area of life as was then. Attitudes and manners were all taken care of in the training in addition to knowledge and skills.

The disadvantage of course was the fact that the system had very low adaptation capabilities. Many things had been done and are still being done in the same style and manner for years without change or improvement. Thus, selling such skills became difficult and so when western education arrived, it succeeded in sweeping away almost all of the traditional skills as well as their values (Richards, 2023).

The Colonial and Post -Colonial Era

The colonial and post-colonial period started laying its imprint on Benue State from about the 1915 when the first formal school in the Tiv speaking area was built in Wanune (Gbor, 2004). By the late 1940s the British system of education had introduced four different areas of education meant to develop the citizens in the four areas of need. These were:

- i. The administrative and leadership/literary area which includes an all-purpose education.
- ii. The technical area
- iii. The commercial area and
- iv. The teaching area

For this reason, we had secondary schools, meant to prepare school leavers for different kinds of middle-manpower jobs not requiring special skills and university education, technical schools, commercial schools and teacher training colleges for the respective areas mentioned above.

This aspect of human development was deliberate and focused on achieving newer and definite national or colonial development goals. The British colonial administration needed manpower in these various areas to prosecute their economic interests. The issue of the development of the local manpower needs which include the spiritual and the participated aspect of human development were more or less mortgaged to the religious houses. The Christian Church was expected to subdue the natives in their attitudes concerning resistance to western civilization, the perpetuation and allegiance to idols and witchcraft including inculcation of various ways of reformation of social character and conflicts.

Between 1940s and 1950s, a number of schools had been founded both by missionaries and the government. Early Primary Schools/Colleges built by the Native Authorities and Christian Churches were:

- i. Native Authority Primary Schools at Manor, Vandeikya, Kastina-Ala Gboko and Otukpo.
- ii. Early Government Schools/Colleges: at Kastina-Ala, (Middle School which later became government college) and Government Crafts School Makurdi.
- iii. Christian Primary Schools and colleges (built in the 1950s) such as St. Ann's and the Dutch Reformed Christian Missionary School Adikpo as well as St. John's School, Gboko. Others were St. Francis Teachers College Otukpo (Later Taken to Lafia as St. Augustine's), Teacher's College, Adoka and St. Michael's Secondary School, Kornya (Later taken to its Permanent site at Aliade).

Early education in Benue State was therefore more concerned with teacher training, secondary education, agricultural extension and crafts school for middle manpower in engineering services. The rest of manpower development was learning on the job. Much of the employment had and still is in government offices and what were required were mostly clerical administrative services. This could be acquired while in service including work attitudes which are critical in job performance. The absence of industries has not made the on-the-job experience common in the state.

University Education

In the then days of northern Nigeria, Benue Indigenes got their University Education mainly from Ibadan, and Ahmadu Bello University Zaria. A few went to University of Nigeria Nsukka and University of Lagos. The total number was however small. Up to 1975 it was possible to name all students of Benue extraction in all universities including those in foreign Universities. Today, Benue State is blessed with several tertiary institutions as shown in Table 1.

Type	Ownership			Total
	Federal	State	Private	
University	2	1	1	4
Polytechnic	1	1	2	4
Monotechnic	0	1	0	1
College of Education	1	2	5	8
College of Nursing/Health Technology	0	2	3	4
Total	4	7	11	22

Source: Reseacher, 2023.

In addition, Benue indigenes have continued to pursue tertiary education in the hundreds of other institutions scattered all over the other states of the Federation and beyond.

Unemployment

The unemployment rate in Benue is estimated to be around 12 percent (NBS, 2022). This is based on the new Nigeria methodology which defines an unemployed labor force as those who do not work at all or worked for less than 20 hours a week (Fadayomi & Olurinola, 2014). The international definition, instead, include people aged 15 years to 64 years old who were available for work, actively seeking work, but were unable to find work (Kingdom and Knight, 2006). Based on this international measure this measure, unemployment in Benue State is 43.5 percent (Vincent & Francis, 2023). The implication here is that there should be a deliberate programme of further developing the skills and attitudes of the unemployed to make them more employable either by themselves or by other organizations.

Unemployment is an interesting factor in human development. Whereas the unemployed can easily become a poisonous factor in the community by engineering and facilitating crime, creating anxiety among relations and forming a consumer group that does not contribute to

the production of what they consume, the unemployed can be transformed to become creative and ingenious enough to make positive changes in the community. For example, many unemployed have learned to start their own businesses thus increasing the robustness of the small and medium scale industries. They also can form a relatively cheap source of labour which could be an attraction to industrialists. Indeed the problem of unemployment can also become a push factor in government industrial initiatives. That is, the desire to reduce unemployment can become a reason for building more industries and other forms of development.

Building Human Capabilities

As mentioned earlier, the state does not have any deliberate or conscious agenda for the development of human capabilities outside the formal school and health systems. For example there is no deliberate legislation or organization to compel the planning instruments to disperse the concentration of goods and services from any point of concentration. The State House of Assembly which is charged with over-sight functions of ensuring equitable distribution of facilities appears to be limited to what changes they can make in the budget. They are often concerned only with the location and sometimes the cost of projects. Issues of the decision of the affected people and the level of their participation are not always considered. Private sector projects too are so profit oriented that decisions concerning them are not always referred to the local people beyond the level of site acquisition. The general trend is that, most development projects are concentrated in urban areas and rural areas are thus disadvantaged in many ways.

Literacy

Literacy refers to the ability to read and write in some language. In its specific sense, it also connotes the general understanding of a particular subject or a particular type of knowledge (eg computer literacy). The literacy level in a population has significant impact on the capacity of the people to communicate among themselves and with other groups, to understand government policies and programmes and comprehend government actions.

Figures from NPC (2006) indicate that, the literacy level for Benue State was 59.09%. This was lower than the national level of 66.9% but higher than the North Central Zonal average of 58.59%. Within Benue State, the distribution of literate population is shown in table 2.

Table 2: Distribution of Benue State's literate population by 5-year age groups and educational attainment

Age Group	Primary Education	Secondary Education	Tertiary Education	Total Literate	State Total	Literacy rate (%)
0-4	NA	NA	NA	NA	782828	NA
5-9	218188	NA	NA	218188	662745	32.92
10-14	304399	19457	NA	323856	513346	63.09
15-19	152255	212891	4201	369347	457625	80.71
20-24	34565	230258	22939	287762	385076	74.73
25-29	35750	153471	38392	227613	335468	67.85
30-34	30204	93119	34190	157513	259801	60.63
35-39	23266	62764	29855	115885	193663	59.84
40-44	18553	43125	26230	87908	172822	50.87
45-49	14185	26996	20703	61884	119226	51.90
50-54	12576	18314	13817	44707	112701	39.67
55-59	6900	8527	6297	21724	50593	42.94
60-64	7077	7103	5085	19265	71317	27.01
65-69	3751	2210	2093	8054	30101	26.76
70-74	3895	2345	1644	7884	38200	20.64
75-79	1946	1166	847	3959	18006	21.99
80-84	2082	1296	850	4228	24590	17.19
85+	2278	1405	917	4600	25533	18.02

Source: Benue State Statistical Year Book, 2016.

Table 2 shows a general trend of increasing literacy level for the younger population. It reveals that, the younger generations within the age brackets of 10 – 59 have relatively higher literacy rates compared to their older generations. The literacy rate has been extracted and shown graphically in fig. 1.

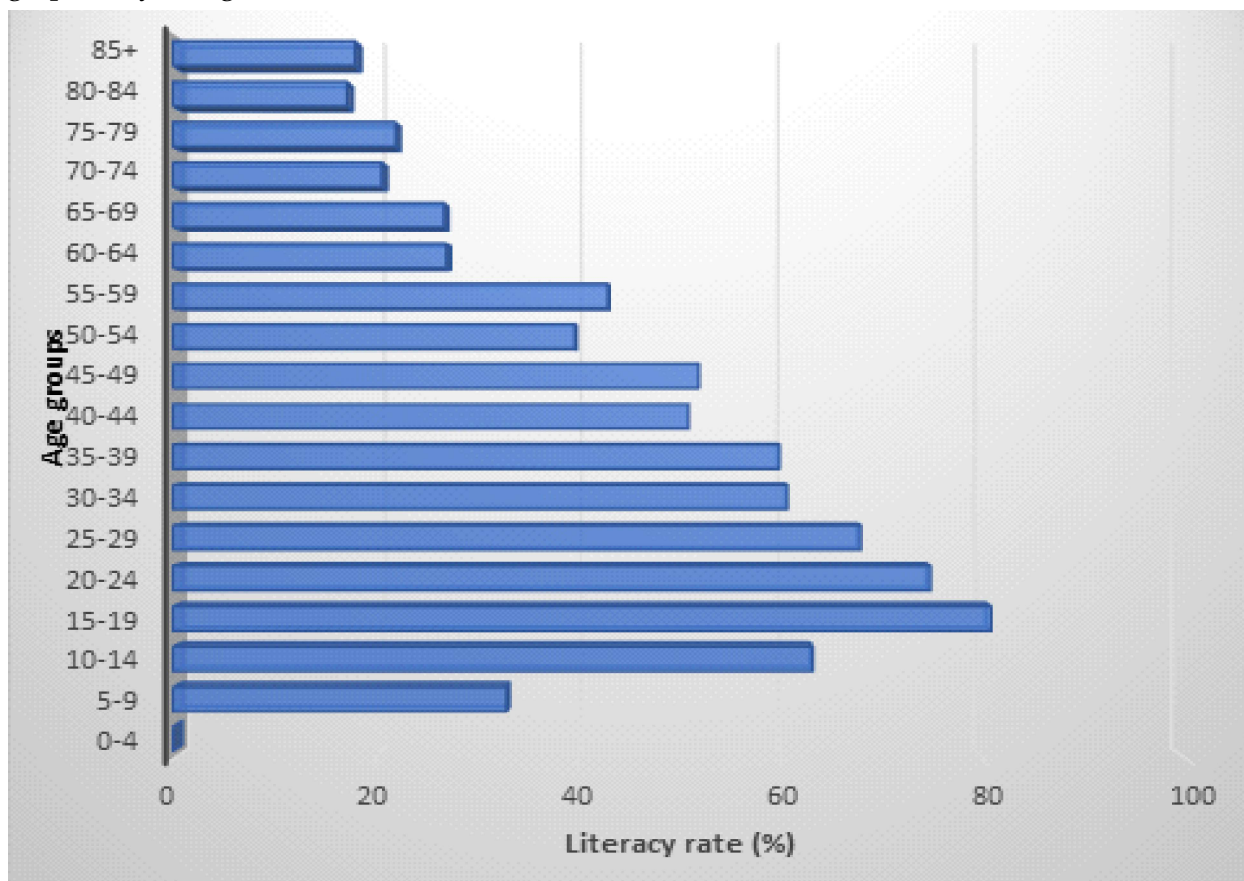


Fig 1: Literacy rates among the age groups in Benue State

Source: Derived from table 2.

Fig. 1 clearly revealed the age group of 15-19 as having the highest literacy rate. The people between the age group of 5-9 are at their entry levels in school and their literacy rates are understandably low. It is expected that, the efforts at improving literacy levels within the state will be up-scaled and sustained in order for the state to reap the benefits of a literate society.

Health care

Another factor of human capability is in the area of access to good health care. Long and healthy living is one of the most basic areas of human capabilities without which making the right choice is always impossible. In this regard Benue State has the following facilities as shown in tables 3 & 4.

Table 3: Health facilities in Benue State by Type and Ownership

Type	Ownership		Total
	Public	Private	
Primary	862	427	1,289
Secondary	24	93	117
Tertiary	2	0	2
Total	888	520	1,408

Source: Benue State Statistical Year Book, 2020

TABLE 4: Benue State Health Facilities by LGA, Type and Ownership

S/ No	Local Government	No of Wards	Primary		Secondary		Tertiary		Total
			Public	Private	Public	Private	Public	Private	
1	ADO	10	35	1	1	0	0	0	37
2	AGATU	10	49	6	1	2	0	0	58
3	APA	11	44	4	1	1	0	0	49
4	BURUKU	13	33	24	1	1	0	0	59
5	GBOKO	17	34	41	1	14	0	0	90
6	GUMA	10	56	15	1	0	0	0	72
7	GWER	14	24	10	1	3	0	0	38
8	GWER EAST	15	36	9	1	1	0	0	47
9	KASTINA-ALA	12	44	64	1	1	0	0	110
10	KONSHISHA	11	41	27	1	1	0	0	70
11	KWANDE	15	44	12	1	2	0	0	59
12	LOGO	10	28	24	1	1	0	0	54
13	MAKURDI	11	33	44	2	27	2	0	108
14	OBI	13	34	17	1	0	0	0	52
15	OGBADIBO	13	47	8	1	1	0	0	57
16	OHIMINI	10	24	1	1	0	0	0	26
17	OJU	11	41	12	1	3	0	0	57
18	OKPOKWU	12	44	4	1	5	0	0	54
19	OTUKPO	13	46	10	1	20	0	0	77
20	TARKA	10	25	9	1	0	0	0	35
21	UKUM	13	34	23	1	6	0	0	64
22	USHONGO	11	38	32	1	3	0	0	74
23	VANDEIKYA	12	28	30	1	2	0	0	61
	TOTAL		862	427	24	93	2	0	1,408
	GRAND TOTAL		1,289		177		2		1,408

Source: Benue State Statistical Year Book, 2020

These facilities are expected to service the state population of 5,085,505 (projected from NPC, 2006). In terms of their spatial spread, private Clinics are numerous and are found in all urban areas but all hospitals and most private clinics are located in urban areas while only a few dispensaries are dotted around in the rural areas.

This disproportionate location of health facilities denies most rural dwellers of the healthy living standard thus greatly reducing their contribution to human capital. The situation of low health care coverage for rural dwellers is compounded by their heavy consumption of locally produced gins which tend to exacerbate their physical and mental health.

Other Human Development Indices

Disaggregated data on other specific human development indices for Benue State are unavailable. However, in order to gain some insight into the human development situation in the state, certain benchmarks have been extracted from the national figures contained in the UN's Human Development Report for Nigeria (2018-2019). Parameters of interests include the Human Development Index (HDI), which measures the quality of life and possibilities in socio-economic development and the Human Poverty Index (HPI) which is a reflection of the extent of redistribution of state wealth among the citizens. Others include the Gender Development Measure (GDM), Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) and Inequality Measure (IM).

Unlike the HDI and HPI, GDM and GEM document the feminine perspectives to development. GDM portrays the level and extent of access of females to the gains of development while, GEM portrays the rate of deployment of women's mental and physical skills to national development. That is, the rate at which women are enabled to participate or contribute to national development through the display of their various endowments. IM on the other hand is an index of equalization or mal-distribution of common wealth among the citizenry. Data on these selected indices for the North Central Region of Nigeria have been presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Human Development Indices in the North Central Zone

State/ Territory	Human Development Index (HDI)	Human Poverty Index (HPI)	Gender Development Measure (GDM)	Gender Empower- ment Measure (GEM)	Inequality Measure (IM)
Benue	0.532	36.000	0.508	0.204	0.400
Kogi	0.411	34.400	0.359	0.069	0.460
Kwara	0.429	33.300	0.470	0.482	0.470
Nasarawa	0.488	38.500	0.465	0.236	0.480
Niger	0.463	42.800	0.474	0.244	0.480
Plateau	0.392	36.500	0.393	0.415	0.500
FCT	0.717	21.000	0.680	0.062	0.640

Source: Derived from table 5.

In terms of the overall situation expressed by the aggregate values, Benue State whose ranks added to 14 emerged 1st among the states in the zone. The state was closely followed by Niger state with a total of 15 ranked values while Nasarawa, Kwara, FCT, Plateau and Kogi followed in that order. The stellar performance for Benue state was recorded in terms of IM, HDI and GDM. However, the state performed relatively low on HPI and GEM.

It is thus expected that, specific intervention be directed towards addressing the problem of poverty alleviation and gender empowerment of the citizens. In terms of IM, HDI and GDM where the performance was relatively good, efforts should be made to sustain these situations while pursuing a long term plan to improve the overall situation of human development in the state.

A further perusal of the HDR (2018-2019) indicates that, the main predisposing factors for poverty or wellbeing in Benue State are Gender, Family background and location. Also, the major determinants of wellbeing are Education, Household Size, Sector of Residence (Rural or Urban), and Occupation of Household head as well as Age of Household Head. These conditions are also representative of the national situation as revealed in the UNs HDI (Resce, 2021).

Conclusion

Human development is an important area of national capital which needs to be developed from all aspects. Our universities for example indicate that the training they offer is in learning and character. Unfortunately the character aspect is often undermined by several factors which reflect on the quality of school graduates.

Another aspect of human capital development is in the area of the provision of the needed institutional fabrics and the correct linkages which will facilitate an effective development and deployment of the available human capital. The colonial administrations for example needed general literacy, middle manpower in the technical area and teachers trained to man these institutions and they provided the necessary schools, for these areas. They also entered into an understanding with the missionaries to develop further the aspect of character where the school system could not go further. This focus helped them execute their colonial programmes profitably.

Developing the total person is a necessary prerequisite for effective human capital supply for national development. If our school system must foster a positive change in the human capital, our human development agenda must be deliberate and strategic. The United State of America for example saw this need in the early stages of her development and introduced the social studies (an aspect of civic education) which was intended to foster national integration and discipline in the society.

In Benue State, the main-stay of the economy is agriculture. Industries are almost non-existent and for this reason the bulk of the school leavers cannot get jobs from the already saturated civil service. Yet, governments have not shown the required clarity of purpose in terms of the kind of human capital that is desired and what is needed to realize it. Instead, there are policy

incompatibilities and inconsistencies leading to stagnation and in some cases, deterioration in human capital indices.

It is thus recommended that, training institutions have to be right and good and all the facilities necessary for effective human development should be provided. Also, the equal spread of facilities is important for reasons of equity and social justice. It should also be remembered that when we strive for economic growth which is a means of enlarging people's choices, it must be with the understanding that building human capabilities is fundamental and strategic to enlarging these choices.

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