Chapter 8

Education, Social Mobility and Development

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Introduction

In contrast to the traditionally mundane policy focus of development economics, the classic sociological literature on economic development engaged more broadly questions of why some societies generate higher standards of living for their citizens than others and, relatedly, how social conditions might be manipulated to equalise such differences. Over the past forty years, however, attention has shifted gradually away from the construction of sociologically informed policy interventions with prospects for genuine success toward the pursuit of purely descriptive explanations for national differences. As a result, mainstream sociology in both North America and Europe is now more detached than it has possibly ever been from concerns about the actual mechanisms by which economic growth can be forged in developing countries.

In this chapter, I will address these issues, emphasising the literature at the nexus of development, education, and social mobility, and summarising the findings from a stream of research on Nigeria that I have joined in recent years, but which is the result of collaborative efforts between Nigerian sociologists and North American sociologists dating from 1965. I will first discuss the evolution of scholarship in the sociology of development, focusing on modernisation theory, its abandonment in favor of dependency perspectives, and then the emergent (though unbalanced) middle ground position represented by the new comparative political economy literature. Following this introduction, I turn toward a brief discussion of the more targeted literature on educational expansion and labor market structure. And then, after summarising some of the core findings from the Kano Youth Survey, 1965 to 1992, I conclude with a brief discussion of policy-relevant issues in need of further research and then lay out what I see as the main policy conundrum for the leaders in charge of strengthening the educational institutions of countries, such as Nigeria.

Modernisation Theory and Its Abandonment

Although by the 1960s, modernisation theory represented a coherent set of theoretical statements generated by a broad community of sociologists and political scientists (see Hoselitz 1960; Smelser and Lipset 1966; Weiner 1966), Talcott Parsons is generally considered the main theoretical entrepreneur of the movement. Focusing on the abstract principles by which change evolves in social systems of all kinds, including nation states, Parsons asserted that the impetus for social change can be either endogenous (i.e., from within the system) or exogenous (i.e., from outside of the system). He then honed his theoretical attention on the mechanism of social change itself, detailing the interplay between greater differentiation of role structures, the need for new forms of systems integration to coordinate more finely differentiated role structures, the emergent valuation of social control mechanisms that preserve integration, and the development of a flexible system of socialisation to inculcate the changing valuation of competing normative principles (see Parsons 1961).

Modernisation theorists seized upon Parsons' mechanism social of change, inverted its ordering, and argued that social planners could create economic development by mimicking the institutional arrangements characteristic of fully industrialised nations while socialising individuals into a modern system of values. Going beyond the pattern variables that Parsons saw as the fundamental markers of the transition to a modern society – a preference for achievement over ascription and for universalism over particularism – modernisation theorists embarked upon a search for the appropriate qualities of personal character that could spawn economic development. Inkeles and Smith (1974:290) wrote:

> The modern man's character, as it emerges from our study may be summed up under four major headings. He is an informed participant citizen; he has a marked sense of personal efficacy; he is highly independent and autonomous in his relations to traditional sources of influence, especially when he is making basic decisions about how to conduct his personal affairs; and he is ready for new experiences and ideas, that is, he is relatively open-minded and cognitively flexible.

With these ideas in mind, modernisation scholars argued not only for the introduction of modern institutions – rationalised economic systems, democratic governance, national communication and transportation systems – but also educational institutions that foster this personality

structure in the citizenry. Although mindful of the need to couple the education system to the human resource needs of developing countries – primarily labor market demands of the private sector along with the planned needs of an expanding government service sector – modernisation theorists argued for the adoption of government-supported, Western-style education (what I refer to, at times below, as modern secular education).

Not only would a modern education system instill a modern personality structure in its products, its competitive and highly graduated structure would also shift the mechanism of allocation to the most functionally crucial positions in society away from ascriptive criteria (i.e., gender, parents' occupational position, and family wealth) toward achieved criteria (i.e., good marks in schooling, ambition, and hard work). Such a shift could be expected to release talent from the formerly marginalised strata of society, and hence directly promote societal efficiency in the pursuit of economic growth. But, just as importantly for modernisation scholars, such a change in the normative legitimation of social inequality, summarised in a recognised collective preference for achievement over ascription, would serve to better integrate increasingly differentiated social structures of emerging industrialised societies.

Given the brash nature of these claims, it is not hard to imagine why scholars and policy makers in developing countries were not fully convinced. Not only were most such nations eager to separate themselves from the legacy of colonialism, and hence particularly interested in establishing unique indigenous institutions, the logic of modernisation theory itself gave reason to question the advice. In times of rapid change, traditional values remained indispensable sources of societal integration. Regardless of whether or not they remained personally rewarding, which to most citizens one must assume they did, traditionalist orientations simply could not be cast aside as relics of a pre-industrial past. Reverence for established status orders, some of which were grounded in compelling religious doctrine, could be counted on to stabilise newly independent nations as they began their ambitious development programs.

Such resistance to the prescriptions of modernisation proposals was first given voice within scholarly circles by those affiliated with modernisation theorists – for example, Gershenkron (1966), Bendix (1967), and Eisenstadt (1970) – but who remained unconvinced both by the simplistic evolutionary narratives attributed to Parsons, as well as the atomistic social-psychological arguments of Inkeles (1973) and McClelland (1961). Instead, these early contrarian scholars argued for

more careful examinations of historical contingencies and state strategies, and, more than anything, the abandonment of the assumption that correlates of past development in Europe and North America could serve uncritically as forward-looking guides for future development in regions such as sub-Saharan Africa.

As reviewed by Portes (1976), a full-scale shift in the sociology of development then emerged in only one decade – a shift away from abstract prescriptive statements about the institutional and personality changes necessary for development toward descriptive characterisations of the forces external to developing countries that, more often than not, harm their growth potential. Dependency theorists (e.g., Frank 1972) and world-systems theorists (e.g., Wallerstein 1974) became the strongest voices in the sociology of development, arguing that close ties to core world powers limit the growth potential of peripheral nations, since such relations are necessarily asymmetric and exploitative.

Dependency theory, at least in comparison with modernisation theory, did not offer specific policy prescriptions. Certainly, the dependency perspective implied that benefits might result from limiting the powers of multinational corporations, restraining international financial institutions, and severing the ties between the elite rulers of developing countries and the core powers that legitimate them. But, exactly how such alterations to the basic structure of the world system could be effectively brought about remained almost entirely unspecified, and thereby opened the entire intellectual agenda to attacks that it was merely rhetorical.

Finally, in the mid-1980s, moderation entered the scholarly dialogue on development prospects. As detailed in Evans and Stephens (1988), this new form of comparative political economy sought a middle ground between the abstract institutional arguments of modernisation theory and the contrary emphasis on dependency, arguing for close attention to the state as a crucial but autonomous actor in the development process. According to this new perspective, the state cannot be treated as an abstract policy implementer, as modernisation theory implicitly assumed, nor simply as a tool of external powers, as dependency theorists sometimes argued (see Portes and Walton 1981). Instead, the state is an actor over which competing interest groups vie for control and within which bureaucrats and functionaries cultivate and promote their own interests. The justification for focusing on the state was grounded in part on the core assumption of the political economy literature – that unregulated markets alone cannot be guaranteed to provide the incentives that most effectively stimulate economic growth – but, it must also be

conceded, by pure scholarly interest in understanding how states function in the fractious societies of the developing world.

Although the work of Gershenkron (1966) became the touchstone of the new movement, Evans' own book, *Embedded Autonomy: States and Industrial Transformation* (1995) provides the strongest example of how such a middle road position can generate a convincing explanatory narrative of past successes and failures. And yet, the main theme of his study and others – that the developmental states of East Asia effectively leveraged incentives to turn their economies away from import substitution policies toward export-led industrialisation – does not seem to be as applicable to countries such as Nigeria, as Evans and others maintain. The nation states of East Asia occupied unique and advantageous positions in the global economy, benefitting in the case of South Korea, for example, from the excess labor demands of its neighbor Japan. Nigeria, by contrast, has strong exports in the form of oil and other natural resources and yet cannot attract labor demand from a similar industrialised neighbor in order to capitalise industry and effectively broaden its economy.

In short, while works in the new comparative political economy have produced convincing descriptive explanations for why some nations have succeeded in promoting robust economic growth in the past, extrapolations from these narratives remain unconvincing (paradoxically, precisely for the reasons put forth by Gershenkron) and hence fail to offer forward-looking policy prescriptions that deserve the close attention of policymakers and their advisors in regions such as sub-Saharan Africa. And as a consequence, development economists now dominate the policy dialogue to an unprecedented degree, even though it is now clear that the macro-economic adjustment policies that they advocated in the 1980s and 1990s were ineffective remedies.

Education and Development

Over the course of the past four decades, one of the most vibrant areas of sociological inquiry in development has focused on the expansion of modern secular (i.e., Western style formal education) throughout the developing world. While I have already argued that the sociological research on development in North America and Europe has already become too narrowly focused on topics of interest only to academically-oriented sociologists, the educational expansion literature bears examination because it reflects some of the general trends outlined above, but nonetheless has remained focused on a specific institution that most scholars recognise is crucial for future development.

Early research on educational expansion hewed closely to the modernisation perspective (or, rather its core structural-functional foundation), arguing that Western style education should expand because of the need for an efficient system of selection and allocation into a division of labor of growing complexity (see Smelser and Lipset 1966) and because attitudinal modernity among citizens is a necessary precondition for industrialisation and economic growth (see Inkeles and Smith 1974). At least three alternative explanations then arose to counter the basic functionalist modernisation line of argument. The expansion of Western style education throughout the world was seen as the result of an international social movement for Western education led by a transnational cadre of Western-trained educational experts (Boli, Ramirez and Meyer 1985; Meyer, Ramirez, and Soysal 1992), the result of global capitalism's quest for expanded consumer markets (Chase-Dunn 1982; Sklair 1991), and the result of patronage from political elites seeking equity and universal access for their regional constituents (Fuller and Rubinson 1992).

Although these alternative explanations may be valid descriptive statements (though not as generally valid as their proponents sometimes claim), it is not clear that they are entirely inconsistent with the modernisation theses they sought to supplant. And, they certainly are less ambitious, in that they do not offer policy-relevant guidance. Even if it were solely the case, for example, that the expansion of modern secular education is merely the outgrowth of capitalism's needs for cultivating global consumer tastes for Western goods, this implies no straightforward policy implication.

The useful questions that almost none of the recent sociological literature has addressed are these: (1) Does investment in education generate economic growth? (2) If so, are some investments more effective than others? (3) What are the unintended consequences for social structure, both its pattern of differentiation and its prospects for continued integration, of pursuing alternative policy interventions to strengthen the education system? There is an extensive and contentious literature in economics on the first question (see Bils and Klenow 2000; Hanushek and Kimko 2000; Hassler and Mora 2000; Krueger and Lindahl 2001), but for the most part none of these questions has been approached by sociologists since the abandonment of modernisation theory. Later, I will discuss how they might be more fruitfully engaged by sociologists, drawing on findings from the Kano Youth Survey, and giving particular attention to the second and third questions.

Educational Change and the Labour Markets in Developing Countries

Although formulated to explain economic growth in industrialised countries, the economic theory of human capital (Becker 1964, Schultz 1961) represents a narrow form of modernisation theory that was used to justify large-scale human resource planning projects in developing countries. And for Nigeria, a number of projects were proposed (see Harbison and Myers 1964; Bowles 1969). These early plans recognised that investment in education is fraught with complications because the labour markets of developing countries are divided into distinct sectors. Harbison (1967:174) wrote:

> The typical developing country has a dual economy with a modern and a traditional sector. The modern sector consists of government activities including education, medium and large scale commerce, manufacturing, construction, public utilities and transportation, as well as plantations and commercial, cash crop agriculture. . . . The traditional sector lies for the most part outside of the market economy, and includes subsistence agriculture, small-scale traditional construction, primitive transportation, petty trade and barter, as well as some family-sized craft and cottage industries.

Harbison (1967:174-175) claimed that the boundary between the modern and traditional sectors was "more like a gradient than a cliff," but he rejected the proposition that the modern sector would expand in proportion with the growth in educated labour. He warned that developing countries might mistakenly produce an over-educated labour force.

With modernisation theory under fire, and to some extent human capital theory as well, researchers affiliated with the International Labour Organisation (ILO) renamed the *traditional* and *modern* sectors of human resource planning models the *informal* and *formal* sectors. According to the much cited ILO report on Kenya (ILO 1972:6), the urban informal sector was characterised by "ease of entry, reliance on indigenous resources, family ownership of enterprises, small scale of operation, labour-intensive and adapted technology, skills acquired outside the formal school system, and unregulated and competitive markets."

Following the lead of these ILO researchers, subsequent empirical research on the informal sector has been limited to simple cross-sectional surveys and qualitative description. Despite the modest nature of this

research, findings since the mid-1980s have begun to contradict some of the basic predictions of the dual urban labour market model, suggesting that a more complex model is needed. Especially with the onset of the Third World debt crisis, first in Latin America and later in Africa, it was noted that the real wages of formal sector employees are often lower than those of successful members of the informal sector (see Mills and Sahn 1995). As a result, alternative definitions of the informal sector have been advanced (see Charmes 1990). For example, Fields (1990:69) has proposed that the informal sector should be divided into the "easy entry informal economy and the upper-tier informal economy." The conceptual confusion has led Castells and Portes (1989:11) to argue, inexplicably, that it would be helpful if the informal economy could be reclassified "as a process, rather than as an object."

Although this stream of scholarship is correct in emphasising the balkanised nature of developing countries' labour markets, and hence in urging caution in the planning of programs for educational expansion, their characterisations still remain too narrowly focused. It is not simply that there are two dominant sectors and reason to expect that formal education is more relevant in one than another. Rather, in some cases there are more than two distinct sectors, each of which has developed in relation to specific types of indigenous educational institutions.

For example, in northern Nigeria and Kano in particular, the ancient Hausa trading and craft economy centered around *Kurmi* market (and now also around its satellite markets) is the historical foundation of Kano's current labor market. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, first with the Fulani conquest and the introduction of an Islamic theocracy and then with the British conquest and the introduction of a colonial bureaucracy, new labour market segments were superimposed upon this foundation. These three labour market segments developed separate identities through the creation and subsequent maintenance of distinct educational pathways to their own occupational destinations – apprenticeship education for the ancient marketplace economy, advanced Islamic education for the emergent emirate theocracy, and modern secular education for the conquering colonial bureaucracy. Thus, since all the three labour market segments still exist to some extent in the 21st century in metropolitan Kano (and since there remains an agricultural sector outside of metropolitan Kano), simple dual labour market models do not provide sufficient analytic leverage to characterise the complex pattern of educational expansion that is evident in Kano, how such patterns are related to developments in the labour market, and as a result explain the emergence of new forms of social inequality that have emerged in the last several decades in countries such as Nigeria.

The Patterns of Educational Expansion in Kano

Before launching into a summary of findings from the Kano Youth Survey, a brief history of the most important and relevant government initiatives must be presented to build a context for interpreting the findings. Following the oil boom that began in the early 1970s, Nigeria launched an ambitious Universal Primary Education program, which has been well documented in the literature (see Adesina 1988; Agu 1986; Bray 1981; DuBey, Edem, and Thakur 1979; Etuk 1984; Forojalla 1987; Okon and Anderson 1982; Oyedeji 1983; Ozigi and Ocho 1981). Although UPE was initially quite successful, in the early 1980s a world-wide recession and the sharp erosion in the price of crude oil resulted in balance of payments problems for Nigeria. This global reality exacerbated Nigeria's shortage of foreign exchange and increased the burden of debt servicing. In 1985, a national economic emergency was declared, and the nominal wages of civil servants were cut from 2 to 20 percent in an environment of rampant inflation. The following year, under mounting pressure from international financial institutions, Nigeria's military government imposed a Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) to further reduce government spending.

A central component of SAP was a devaluation of the Nigerian currency, and thus a further devaluation of the real earnings of salaried workers (Lubeck 1992; Olukoshi 1993). The public sector wage share of the national budget dropped from over 40 percent in 1985-86 to under 20 percent in 1990-91 despite no substantial reduction in the total number of civil servants (World Bank 1994:122, see also Fashoyin 1993). Not only did these wage cuts severely harm the public education sector, both in morale and resources, but they introduced instability into the labour market itself. Currency devaluation and the decline of indigenous industrial output generated new opportunities for black market trading in hard currency, gasoline, and scarce imported goods. At the same time, consumption of the traditional goods manufactured by skilled workers declined with the general contraction of the economy. The virtual disappearance of the private ownership of cars and motorcycles by the cash-starved lower-income segment of Nigerian society, coupled with long periods of gasoline shortages, generated new sources of revenue for low-skilled taxi, minibus, and motorcycle drivers with access to black market traded gasoline. In such an environment, one of the most obvious expected returns to education – wages in the labour market – lost its visibility.

The Kano Youth Survey, 1965-1992. The Kano Youth Survey (KYS) consists of random area samples of two cohorts of young men interviewed in 1965 and 1979, and respectively re-interviewed in 1974 and 1992. For all waves of the survey, respondents were interviewed by indigenous Hausa speakers. Armer (1968, 1970) launched the first survey with 591 respondents in 1965, and in 1974 his research team located and re-interviewed 401 of the original respondents. In 1979, William R. Morgan (see Morgan and Armer 1988, 1991, 1992) assembled a new research team and drew a second sample of all seventeen year old males living in the same 22 wards identified for the random area sample of 1965, a total of 632 respondents. And, in 1992, the author returned to Nigeria, and with a new research team led by Salisu Abdullahi and Ismaila Z. Mohammed, located 525 of the 632 original respondents to the 1979 survey, had 276 of these re-interviewed, and collected educational and occupational attainment information on the others from wardheads and family members (Morgan 1993; Morgan and Morgan 1998, 2004).

Trends in Educational Attainment. The KYS collected information on three types of educational attainment – years of modern secular education, Islamic education (both *makarantar allo* and *makarantar ilmi*), and years spent in a craft apprenticeships. As mentioned above, the main empirical claim of the educational expansion literature is that modern secular education expands in developing countries under increasing government provision, gradually replacing all traditional forms of education (see Hoselitz 1966). Comparing the participation rates of the respondents from each KYS, cohort allows us to examine the pattern and degree of educational change in Kano since independence in 1960, and hence to evaluate whether or not the descriptive claim of replacement is valid for northern Nigeria.

The educational attainment results from the Kano Youth Survey show that, in spite of the rapid expansion of modern secular education, both Islamic and apprenticeship education remained important. While participation in modern secular education did increase as the pursuit of traditional apprenticeships decreased, participation in Islamic education remained universal, and attainment levels for Islamic and modern secular education became positively related. A more detailed analysis of this complementarity, conceptualised as structural accommodation, is presented in W.R. Morgan and Armer (1988, 1991, 1992). Nonetheless, the decline in the prevalence of apprenticeship training provides some support for the replacement explanation, even though the emergent

complementarity between modern secular education and Islamic education sharply contradicts it.

While interesting, and in itself reflective of the continuing importance of Islam in northern Nigeria, the development policy related questions are these: Has modern secular education expanded at the appropriate rate? Is apprenticeship education no longer relevant? Should modern secular education have replaced apprenticeship education to the extent that it has?

Educational Pathways in Kano. The KYS results summarised above show that northern Nigerians continued to participate in all three forms of education. Was selection into occupational destinations still guided by their training in these co-existing forms of education? The changing educational profiles of the five main occupational groups represented in the KYS cohorts allow for an examination of how such selection patterns have evolved in post-independence Nigeria.

Respondents' self-reported current occupations in 1974 or 1992 were initially assigned detailed occupation codes. For analysis, occupations were assigned to five groups – professional and clerical workers, teachers, traders, skilled workers, and unskilled workers, corresponding to Kano's traditional prestige hierarchy (Armer 1968; Armer and Youtz 1971; Paden 1973; Smith 1959). The professional/clerical group contains civil servants of varying levels, clerical office workers, and managers in large-scale business ventures and banks. Teachers are elementary and secondary school teachers and principals, all of whom were employed in government schools. Traders are self-employed businessmen who deal in commodities as variable as local crafts, laundry detergent, foreign currency, and imported stereo equipment. Skilled workers are traditional craftsmen – leather workers, blacksmiths, tailors – along with others employed in occupations for which specific training is required (e.g., automobile repair and carpentry). By contrast, unskilled workers are employed in occupations for which little training is required (e.g., laundry men, taxi and motorcycle drivers, and factory workers). A few farmers and mallams were excluded from analysis of the educational pathways because: (1) there were too few of such respondents in our young and predominantly metropolitan sample to sustain independent analyses of farmers and mallams, and (2) these are separate occupational status groups and should not be assigned to the other groups outlined above.

The KYS results show that all occupational groups experienced educational attainment increases between cohorts. For example, between

cohorts, the percentage of unskilled workers who obtained at least some modern secular education increased from 25.4% to 81%. For professional and clerical workers and for teachers, a modern secular education became a job requirement. For the other occupational groups, modern secular education remained less important, but it may still have yielded a slight edge to those seeking a more prestigious position in the traditional craft economy as a trader or skilled artisan.

In contrast to modern secular schooling, Islamic educational attainment showed little variation across occupational groups. Only for the first cohort did Islamic and secular schooling still operate as alternative rather than complementary educational choices. In essence, participation remained universal in both cohorts. However, for the first cohort, traders and skilled workers averaged three years more Islamic education than workers from the professional/clerical and unskilled groups. A similar but smaller difference held for the second cohort. This pattern is consistent with the traditional tie between Islamic religiousity and successful trade in the craft economy and with the decline in the relevance of Islamic education as a credential for selection into the increasingly secular government bureaucracy.

Participation rates in apprenticeship education differ substantially across occupational groups in both cohorts. Only 30 percent of professional and clerical workers from the first cohort had previously taken an apprenticeship position while an even smaller 14 percent of those from the second cohort did so. For teachers, participation rose slightly, from 13 percent for the first cohort to 27 percent of the second cohort (and it is unclear what to make of this finding). Participation rates were much higher for the other three occupational groups. Approximately half of all traders and unskilled workers and drivers from both cohorts had held apprenticeships. Skilled workers were even more involved in the apprenticeship system with 67 percent from the first cohort and 82 percent from the second cohort having participated. Thus, for those respondents who intended to pursue a career in the marketplace economy, an apprenticeship education was important. Of those who ended up as skilled craftsmen, the occupational group for whom apprenticeship training is of most direct relevance, the vast majority had entered and completed apprenticeships.

In summary, modern secular education became increasingly critical for entry into the professional and clerical office and teaching occupations. Apprenticeship training remained important for skilled workers but also for traders and unskilled workers. Islamic education remained universally valued and yet continued to be pursued longer by

traders and skilled workers, the occupational positions most deeply enmeshed in the traditional marketplace economy.

Labour Market Rewards to Educational and Occupational Attainment. Stable pathways to occupational destinations do not necessarily guarantee a consistent ranking of the standard of living. Trends in the rate of return on modern secular education in Kano mirror those documented elsewhere (see Mills and Sahn 1995; Schultz 1999). As part of a general economic decline in sub-Saharan Africa over the past two decades, the real wages of civil servants have fallen while the number of positions in the formal bureaucratic labour market has decreased (see Collier and Gunning 1999; Freeman and Lindauer 1999). As a result, although there remained a substantial positive rate of return on modern secular education within the public sector (as measured by average weekly earnings), the gross rate of return on modern secular education across the entire labour market declined.

As shown in Morgan and Morgan (1998, 2004), with the exception of traders, all occupations experienced real earnings erosion between cohorts. Skilled and unskilled workers in 1992 earned slightly more than two thirds of what their counterparts earned in 1974. Professional and clerical workers earned only 46 percent, and teachers earned only 33 percent of their counterparts in the first cohort. As a result, the 1974 differentials in median earnings between these four occupational groups disappeared by 1992. By contrast, traders' median earnings jumped to 170 percent of their 1974 level, such that they earned almost double what each of the other occupational groups earned.

Labour Market Rewards within the Marketplace Economy. In Morgan and Morgan (2004), we focused on a related story, one which we believe may be common throughout much of sub-Saharan but for which we have found no relevant literature. What are the rates of return on education, as measured by usual weekly earnings, within the traditional marketplace economy? Has there been a decline in the rate of return on modern secular education? Has there been any similar decline in the labour market payoff to apprenticeship education? We have found that even within the traditional marketplace economy (defined as all of the occupational groups summarised above, excluding professional and clerical workers and teachers), the earnings returns to both modern secular and apprenticeship education declined between 1974 and 1992, so that in the 1990s there were only small positive returns on human capital investment in modern secular education and little or no returns on human capital investment in apprenticeship education. Even for skilled workers employed in occupations for which apprenticeship training was

most directly relevant to their day to day work, the relatively high rate of return observed in 1974 had disappeared by 1992.

Future Research and Policy Directions

Research in the sociology of development must be reestablished as a forward-looking endeavor if it is to reclaim its relevance for development policy. In this section, I sketch some lines of sociological inquiry likely to yield fruit and then frame the main policy debate on education and labour market challenges that academic researchers must help policymakers in Nigeria to confront.

A New Commitment to Basic Research on Social Structure. As is implied by the title of Stolper's 1966 book, *Planning Without Facts: Lessons in Resource Allocation from Nigeria's Development*, the likely success of any policy proposal is a direct function of how carefully it is designed. In countries such as Nigeria, there is a serious lack of documented knowledge on the scope of the social problems that must be addressed. And, as a result, offering policy advice is necessarily a risky venture. Why there is a dearth of such knowledge is a complex issue, deserving attention on its own. From my limited perspective, two reasons stand out above the rest. First, nations such as Nigeria are extraordinarily complex and rapidly changing – in comparison, for example, to extraordinarily well-documented but stable and homogeneous countries such as Denmark, Sweden, and Norway. Second, nations such as Nigeria have dramatically under-invested their, albeit scarce, resources in basic research – in support for social and economic research in universities, in similar semi-autonomous branches of the civil service, and in creating a commercial environment in which private industrial interests have an incentive to gather, synthesise, and disseminate basic data on economic transactions.

Without information on the labour demands of various industries, potential mismatches between the products of the educational system and industrial needs, international capital flows, and basic trade data, effectively designing social policies to leverage as much productive capacity out of a nation's human resources is nearly impossible. Modest support for university research, larger budgets for developing first-rate national ministries for education and labor statistics, and small subsidies to financial auditors to create an incentive for simultaneously producing public versions of industry reports could go a long way toward filling in the lack of facts that undermines all attempts to develop forward-looking policy.

What topics might academically focused sociologists engage in support of this effort? The topics are nearly inexhaustible, and at least

initially most can be pursued profitably through small case-study research designs. A few deserve special attention. For education and labor market policy, research effort should be devoted to delineating the characteristics of effective and ineffective government schools, the effects of school fees on the enrollment of poor and marginalised yet academically talented youth, the prospects that private education can supplement government supported education without undermining mass education, the use of traditional apprenticeships to provide both narrowly targeted vocational skills and socialisation into the marketplace economy, and the processes by which primary and secondary school leavers seek employment in the labor market. For broader labor market and economic policies, much can be learned from studying the survival strategies of small businesses, the prospects for trade in domestically produced goods, the social networks among traders across regions, and the challenges entrepreneurs face in raising capital to support new business ventures. Finally, sociologists should not shy away from studying the basic linkages between the government and civil society, including the prospects for effective leadership from traditional rulers, political parties and their connections with youth gangs, challenges to an effective taxation system, free-riding on public goods provision (such as the stealing of electricity), and the misuse of public funds. Were the results of such serious and objective academic research more publicly available, the policy conundrum outlined in the next section might be resolved more quickly and with a greater likelihood of success.

Alternative Strategies for Education and Labour Market Policies in Nigeria. Modernisation scholars and the newly independent governments that they advised had it easy. Optimism was rampant. All past mistakes and present challenges could be blamed on prior colonial regimes. And, in comparison to the debt-laden national accounts with which many developing countries are saddled at the beginning of the 21st century, resources were plentiful. Yet, even in these circumstances, economists urged restraint in pursuing potentially effective policy interventions. For education policy, Stolper (1966:207) warned that "education is a voracious devourer of scarce economic resources; in effect the demands of education are limitless." With these resource constraints in mind, Stolper (1966:212) further argued that "The issue is not whether education is consumption or investment – it is obviously both – but how to maximise resource mobilisation and how to get education going without interfering with economic growth." Similarly, narrow policy agendas were proposed by Harbison and Myers (1964) and

Bowles (1969), following a rational planning paradigm characteristic of manpower development programs of the era.

Such restraint may not have been called for in the early 1960s, and especially less so in the late 1970s when UPE was launched in Nigeria amidst a flood of new petroleum revenue. But within the tight budget constraints of 21st century Nigeria, such an obsessive focus on the allocation of scarce resources represents one plausible strategy for education and labour market policy. Accordingly, one policy position suggests that countries such as Nigeria should carefully commit their resources in the following three-step plan.

First, a strong and universal primary education system should be more firmly established. The provision of basic skills and training for democratic citizenship needs to be extended as widely as possible.

Second, a strong but limited system of formal secondary and postsecondary education must be rebuilt. Ports of entry into the system should still be based on achievement in examinations and other close-to-meritocratic selection mechanisms. But, at some point, the race to get ahead should be declared over, and a system of sponsorship should be cultivated that trains as effectively as possible, the small minority of students who gain admission to these schools. Presently, it would appear that quantity concerns have run too far ahead of quality concerns in Nigerian secondary and post-secondary education.

Finally, further expansion of the elite system of secondary and postsecondary education should result only from demands of the private sector labour market, with one important exception. Teacher training programs should take the lead, generating a supply of skilled teachers capable of extending the reach of the primary education system.

From the perspective of sociologists, this three-step plan for allocating scarce resources to rebuild Nigeria's education system may be too narrowly focused on the pursuit of economic growth. Since growth is such an elusive goal, one that is susceptible to the myriad disruptions that might overwhelm any growth enhancing alterations to the education system, the old-fashioned goals of integration and social control might also be considered desirable ends of the education system.

Mass secondary education, although a sizable commitment of state resources, provides benefits beyond manpower training. Secondary education offers more effective training for democratic citizenship than primary education, since adolescents are more in touch than primary school pupils with the challenges faced by adults, and hence with the collective dilemmas democracy aims to resolve. Perhaps more importantly, mass secondary education fulfills an important social control function – the prevention of loitering among youths, a diversion from petty criminal activity, and a venue for associational activity that lessens the appeal of joining gangs or party struggles as a political thug.

Beyond these additional functions, mass secondary education also gives "late bloomers" a chance to catch up with their peers, and thus has the potential to release yet more talent from marginalised strata of Nigerian society. This, in itself, creates societal integration, since locking a large portion of a nation's citizens out of secondary education would necessarily create a reserve army of idle adolescents, caught in a liminal state of their transition to adulthood, yet cognisant of their consignment to limited future social standing (i.e., neither capable of securing modern positions in the bureaucratic economy nor satisfied with accepting traditional positions in the marketplace economy). Such adolescents would necessarily lack an appreciation for meritocratic principles of achievement, over ascription and see no hope for justice emerging from democratic governance. Thus, although not necessarily tempted by the criminal activity into which primary school leavers are drawn, these adolescents would be susceptible to recruitment as foot soldiers for all types of authoritarian social movements, and in particular for the causes that argue that democratic governance is an impediment to social justice and that the prevailing norms of meritocratic selection into secondary schools are at best a mirage and at worst an ideological strategy to suppress the masses. By prolonging the race for achievement – ultimately, access to post-secondary education through success on entry examinations – beyond adolescence through mass secondary education, the tinderbox of youth passions can be controlled and the normative valuation of selection based on achievement can be secured.

For these reasons, it may be that resources should not be shifted away from secondary education and toward primary education. Rather, both levels of education should continue to expand as rapidly as possible. And, in the future, quality concerns can then be more effectively addressed.

The main policy conundrum that confronts Nigeria is which of these two strategies should be followed. Currently, the second strategy is

dominant, and perhaps for good reason. If so, the policy issue to be decided is whether or not this broad-based strategy is working effectively and whether or not it can be sustained in the tightening budgets which the current global economic slowdown is sure to produce. It may be that more serious thought should be given to a more targeted and feasible strategy of promoting quality secondary education for a smaller proportion of the population. This is a decision that Nigerians must make, preferably through a responsive government better informed by the sort of research outlined above as necessary for the future.

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