

NATIONAL TRAINING AS A PANACEA TO YOUTHS UNEMPLOYMENT IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This paper is aimed at discussing the immediate need to making vocational technical studies more relevant in the Nigerian Educational Curriculum so as to prepare Nigerian youths for gainful employment and in most cases making the recipient of such training to be self employed thereby alleviating the problem of permanent unemployment.

INTRODUCTION

The paramount aim of every nation is to provide among other things employment opportunities for its able citizens to guide against the ugly incident often posed by the inability of people especially graduates of secondary and tertiary institutions to secure job. Nigeria economy is faced with this problem of unemployment and it has eaten deep into the fabric of the nation.

Lambo (1987) observed that unemployment was not a problem in Nigeria until after the civil war in 1967 when almost 98% of the labour force were gainfully employed. Nowadays, the study is quite different, graduates of both secondary and tertiary institutions are unemployed. This high rate of unemployment is traceable to so many factors. Lambo was of the opinion that most of the urban unemployed are usually new entrant into the labour force with little or no vocational training and experience, more so, most graduates of universities and polytechnics are unable to secure appropriate employment because such institutions have not been adequately linked up with the labour market.

WHAT IS VOCATIONAL EDUCATION:

National Policy on Education (1981 revised) defined vocational education as that form of education which is obtained at the technical college. This is equivalent to the senior secondary education but designed to prepare individuals to acquire practical skills, basic and scientific knowledge and attitude required as craftsman and technicians at sub-professional levels.

Oxford advanced learner dictionary defines vocational education as "concerning the qualifications needed for trade or profession".

Majemite (1996) quoting Wenrich and Wenrich defines vocational education as a "specialized education where course or programmes are selected by those individuals who have special interest in preparing for a particular occupation or family of occupation". It is that part of the total process of education aimed at developing the competencies needed to function effectively in an occupation or group of occupations.

From the above definition, it is certain that one needs to have an interest in a particular course of study and specialized in it, not only that, he/she needs to be able to function effectively in the chosen career.

GOALS OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

The function expected to vocational education as stated in the new national policy on education include:

- To provide trained manpower in the applied science, technology and business particularly at craft, advanced craft and technical levels.
- Provide the technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, commercial and economic development.
- Give training and impart the necessary skills to individual who shall be self reliant economically.

All these goals will enable young men and women to be gainfully employed. It lays necessary foundation for the provision of quality and motivated manpower thereby enhancing the overall development of the nation's economy.

WHY THE NEED FOR VOCATIONAL STUDIES IN THE PRESENT NIGERIA SITUATION

Before 1970s in Nigeria, the need for vocational education does not arise as it is today and the few available ones were limited in scope in quality and in achievement. This should be attributed to the people's attitudes to vocational education. As Ajinuhi (2002) quoting Muhammed as saying that "people sees vocational education as something for the handicapped, dropouts, never do well and mental retarded, something not prestigious concerned only with man skills. Also, it is a fact that then, few privilege graduates of secondary and tertiary institutions could well be absorbed by the economy; and even employers of the labour compete for the new job seekers.

Therefore, as a result of rapid expansion in education through enlightenment and awareness, this created a situation whereby graduate turnouts both at the secondary and tertiary institution exceed that available job chance. The wide gap between vacancies and prospective job seekers has kept thousand of school leavers unemployed.

With alarming rate of unemployment among the youths in Nigeria, many graduates are now roaming the streets without any hope of securing a job. This calls for the need to restructure the educational system in order to accord vocational studies a prominent importance in the curriculum.

As a solution to the above named problems, the federal government has in the past introduced programmes like national directorate of employment (NDE) in 1986 to focus on the following:

- Youth employment and national skill development programme
- Loan for youths.

The new policy on education was revised in 1981 to provide functional education like the teaching of vocational subjects in primary schools. With these programmes and new policies, there is still gross unemployment; hence there is the urgent need to still review the new policy so as to produce informed and well trained graduates that will readily fit into the job and be self employed if the need calls for it. Ibemimako (1990) rightly observed that in an economy like ours there is an urgent need for citizens that possess the knowledge and skills in the production of goods and services. He further observed that in changing economy, well informed and well trained workers would be more productive on the job, and have greater independence and personal satisfaction.

Ibemimako sees vocational education as the only medium through which people can acquire such skills. In Nigeria we import goods from overseas countries mainly because we lack the knowledge and skills required to produce such goods creating employment for them over there at the expense of Nigeria citizens.

It is sad to spend several years in the university to acquire training and not to secure job. The hope of job seeker become slimmer as the schools produce more graduates every year. The causes of this can be best stated in the words of Alkasum (1985) "the very products of our educational system are not productive in the economy and hinders its development because what they learn is not as such useful and relevant; its products are not oriented productive work". The hopeless situation could be arrested if students from the on set took to courses that could make them self employed. In some cases, graduates of colleges of education, polytechnics and even universities become apprentices to tailors, printers, mechanics, arts designers etc. just to obtain basic skills that will earn them their living. those who see those jobs as "belittling" as they will put it, prefer going from one relative to another and even some criminally minded ones take to robbery or other frauds in the society.

this condition would have been averted through proper planning and review of the educational curriculum in a way that vocational studies becomes a part of the core subjects.

There is the need for making provisions to admit students into vocational studies just as arts and social sciences do. Social sciences courses do not in totality equip graduates with the required skills for self employment yet, they produce greater number of graduates.

For instance, a graduate of agricultural science, business education, fine and applied arts, home-economics, food and textile technologist, engineering, medicine etc. can easily become self employed if the labour market has little or nothing to offer, this is possible because of the skills gained in the process of training.

The need for vocational studies is an urgent one and should be addressed as such mindless the high cost of providing vocational education due to the huge amount of money involved in procuring these technical materials. But it is rather better to spend now and save the future from collapse and prevent the evil consequences of unemployment like crime, low productivity, low standard of living etc. which the government vocationally spend huge amount of money to curb in the society.

Tugbiyele (1973) says "vocational studies is a necessary national investment, for it is the key to the overall national development". There is no amount spent on vocational education that is wasteful, the end will definitely justify the means and as such, government the day must devote a lot of the nation's resources towards funding vocational education. Vocational education actually does not cost and it pays literally.

It can meet the needs of this nation in her economic revival for greater promotion of employment if it remains a strong part of secondary school curriculum.

In Nigerian society today, one observes that the youths are ready to do any job that demands skills, manual labour, not prestigious but fetches money. The need for survival has brought about the idea of believing that vocational education is not prestigious and that it is only meant for the handicapped, delinquent, dropout never to do well and mentally retarded people in our society. One will notice that other professions presently, are envying those who are vocationally trained because of the reward to them monetarily.

CONCLUSION

The utmost task of the day is the urgent need for the government to go beyond the designing, embracing and funding education which does not give the recipients any skill that could enable them to be employable in the labour market or to be self employed.

Government should spend more on vocational and technical education. Creating more schools in every local government of the federation that will specialize in technical and vocational courses. Also technical education must be made to start from primary schools as against the situation where students are introduced to it at their secondary school level.

Recent happening in the country has made many graduates to have weak taste for government job and strongly desire for manual labour which fetches them more income; then there is the need for government to take advantage of this condition and shift position from courses that are theoretical in nature to those that could equip the recipients with skills through training. We need to discover the reason, remove the cause, and the problem of unemployment will disappear like salt in water. Then, we can talk of the country moving towards mass employment of the youth in Nigeria.

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