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Analytic Role of Technical and Vocational Educational Curriculum to Curb the Problem of Unemployment in Nigeria

Felicia C. Dim

Department of Educational Foundations/Administrations
Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Owerri Imo State
feliciachikadim@gmail.com
08038692272

Johnson U. Ofoegbu

Department of Educational Foundations/Administrations
johnson.ofoegbu@alvanikoku.edu
08038768767

&

Igbokwe Charity N.

Department of Educational Foundations/Administrations
charityigbokwe8@gmail.com
08035411839

Abstract

One of the most prevalent problems in Nigeria is unemployment. It is a major cause of the high rate of crimes in Nigeria. On this note, this paper analyzed and highlighted the need to implement fully the secondary school curriculum on technical and vocational education as they are documented in the National Policy on Education. This paper also advocates that; (a) vocational courses that are studied in the vocational institutions, colleges of education, polytechnics and universities begin from upper basic class/primary and secondary schools. (b) Nigerian indigenous education, which is, skills acquisition/trades like carpentry, tailoring, plumbing, welding, soap making, barbing, weaving, painting, farming, carving, hair plaiting, dress making, gold washing, pottery making, dyeing etc be incorporated in the school curriculum and should have their roots and be studied from upper basic class/primary to secondary, up to university level. (c). Skills acquisition/trades introduced recently in the NYSC camp be equally integrated in the school system and be studied in the formal school setting. This paper among others discusses the danger and effects of unemployment in Nigerian society hence suggested that enough teachers should be trained and retrained to handle skill acquisition or trades to curb the problem of unemployment. Again, there should be collaboration between the universities, colleges of education and polytechnics in the promotion of technical studies in Nigerian institutions.

Introduction

The survival of man in the society depends to a greater extent, on the quality of education he acquires. Education is the life wire of any nation. It is believed that education provides

happiness, enlightens the individuals, creates awareness and paves way for sustainable development. Education is expected to change and fulfill needs in the near future. There is a popular belief that education opens the doors of opportunities and this is true. It has been a vital factor in the economic progress of a people and should be made one of the keystones of national planning. Ivowi (2010) conceives education as the factor for human capacity development and whatever is learnt in educational institution is meant to serve as a tool for achieving and sustaining the workforce of the nation. It is on this note that Agbaeze (2009) stated that “education is the key to the future, you get it right and you get the future right, you get it wrong and you set the future on a perdition curse”. These means that any nation that want to survive economically must place much value on her education.

Schools are expected to provide significant job skills for their graduates. This is because the level and quality of education one has determines whether one will get employed in high status occupations. Many students believe that graduating from school will lead to greater employment opportunities, but unfortunately, it is not so. Nigerians are obsessed with paper qualification and as such the expectation of getting a job after graduation from Nigerian schools is not easy. This is a direct result of the fact that the teeming population of graduate youth is overwhelming and the school does not help matters in that it has failed to provide the adequate and necessary skills for the individual to survive on his/her own after schooling.

In the ancient time, the purpose of education was based on functionalism. The needs of the society was the main focus of education. Learners were involved in practical farming, fishing, weaving, cooking, carving, knitting etc. The problem of unemployment did not exist then, and even if it existed, it was minimal. It is on record that only very few young men roamed the villages and towns. The education then emphasized on character training and job orientation. Vocational training in the traditional society is largely run on the apprenticeship system.

When Technical and Vocational Education was initially introduced into the education system, it was a welcome development. Its purpose then was to acquire technical skills exposing students to career awareness by exploring usable options in the world or work and enabling youths to have an intelligent understanding of the increasing complexity of technology. In the present day development, the goal of technical and vocational education has its root directly or indirectly from the old traditional society.

The range of courses in the technical colleges as stipulated by NPE (2014) include but not limited to:

A. Mechanical Trades

1. Agricultural Implements and Equipment Mechanics Work.
2. Automobile Engineering Practice: Autobody Repair and Spray Painting.
3. Automobile Engineering Practice, Auto Electrical Work.
4. Automobile Engineering Practice: Autobody Mechanics Work.
5. Automobile Engineering Practice: Autobody Mechanics Building.
6. Automobile Engineering Practice: Part-Mechandizing
7. Air-conditioning and Refrigeration Mechanics' Work.

8. Mechanical Engineering Craft Practice.
9. Welding and Fabrication Engineering Craft Practice
10. Foundry Craft Practice
11. Instrument Mechanics' Work.
12. Marine Engineering Craft

B. Computer Craft Practice

13. Computer Maintenance Work
14. Data Processing

C. Electrical Engineering Trades

15. Electrical Installation and Maintenance Work
16. Radio, Television and Electrical Work
17. Appliances Repairs

D. Building Trades

18. Block laying, Bricklaying and Concrete Work.
19. Painting and Decorating
20. Plumbing and Pipe-Fitting

E. Wood Trades

21. Machine
22. Carpentry and Joinery
23. Furniture making
24. Upholstery

F. Hospitality

25. Catering Craft Practice

G. Textile Trades

26. Garment making (Ladies/men dress)
27. Textile Trades
28. Dyeing and Bleaching

H. Printing Trades

29. Printing Craft Practice
30. Graphic Arts
31. Ceramics

I. Beauty Culture Trades

32. Cosmetology

J. Business Trades

33. Stenography
34. Typewriting
35. Store keeping

36. Book keeping
37. Office practice.

A cursory view of the above listed trades give an insight that the problem of Nigerian education does not lie on knowing not what to do but rather failing to do what ought to be done. Our education policy makers, educators as well as research scholars have always come up with wonderful ideas and objectives on how to move our education forward and be more functional. In the National Policy on Education, each level of education has well defined objectives but unfortunately those objectives and ideas are often neglected, little or no attention is paid to them by the government and most of our vocational and technical schools have been abandoned for lack of maintenance. It is on this note that Amaele (2010) commented;

It is a sorry development that after more than four decades of the formulation of a national policy on education, our nation's education system is still turning out job seekers in their millions. Our education has become a factory, which is producing substandard human power. The fact is that the instrument of teaching and learning are poor, out-dated, out of fashion, incomplete and to a greater extent, not cared for.

He further stated that Nigerian education should go beyond idea and designs and face the practical realities. In support of this, Dorgu (2012) opined that the job opportunities in the 21st century are based on challenges that require specialized knowledge and skills which are not likely to be found in non vocational and technical education institutions. With such knowledge, Nigeria should endeavour to reposition her educational sector adequately to meet the challenges of our time. Dorgu further explained that after years of vocational education policy implementation, the programme has been ineffective and has shown disappointing outcomes. That Nigeria must learn to implement its educational policy with commitment and a sense of direction for a greater good of all its citizens to meet global demands. This paper seeks to lay emphasis on the need for full implementation of Technical and Vocational education curriculum as an answer to the problem of unemployment in Nigeria. Other issues discussed are the danger and effects of unemployment in Nigeria, as well as ways of reducing the problem of unemployment.

The major problem of unemployment in the Nigerian society is based on the inadequate implementation of educational policy as they appear in the National Policy on Education. In this regard, Amaele, regretted the collapse of the comprehensive curricular of the 6-3-3-4 in which he said that if the system was still in existence, people would have developed expertise in different aspects of the nation's economic life, such as food production and preservation, power generation and application, aviation and transportation, building design and technology, to mention but these few.

As a matter of urgency, Nigerian youths should be encouraged to learn and specialize in one or two of the above skills/trades so as to earn their living. This will go a long way to reducing vices and all forms of criminality in the society. This will also solve the problem of insecurity in the country.

Definitions of the Concept

The views of some scholars on the concept of vocational and technical education. Vocational education/training is connected with the skills, knowledge etc that you need to have in order to do a particular job.

UNESCO (2001) and FRN (2004:29) see vocational and technical education training as:

A comprehensive term referring to those aspects of the educational process involving in addition to general education the study of technology and related sciences and the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding and knowledge relating to occupation in various sectors of economic and social life.

Oziengbe (2009) defines vocational and technical education as the acquisition of skills and techniques in chosen occupation or profession to enable an individual earn a living. According to Nwanna-Nzewnwa (2012), vocational education refers to the total experience of a student which equips him with skills, attitude and knowledge needed for obtaining useful employment or making him self-employed and an employer. She further stated that technical and vocational education defined in this sense means that the individual has not only the skills but also knows the fundamental principles related to practices necessary for the development of the skills in his area of specialization. It is clear that Japan, America and other developed countries were able to reach the height they are today, as a result of technical manpower.

National Policy on Education FRN, (2014) sees vocational and technical education as the aspect of education that leads to the acquisition of practical and applied skills as well as basic scientific knowledge. It has the following as its goals;

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

In the view of Olutu (1987:264), the need for technical, vocational and agricultural education at the secondary school level in Nigeria is very obvious. This is because the goals for technological progress and the need for the creation of more employment opportunities strongly justify a solid introduction, proper maintenance and monitoring of technical, vocational as well as agricultural education in Nigerian secondary schools.

He further said:

One very encouraging aspect of these vocational and agricultural subjects is that they are productive because pupils actually discover – while successful learning of these subjects at the secondary school level which lead to the establishment of many cottage industries, small scale manufacturing companies and more self-employed individuals.

From the above definitions, it is deduced that vocational education does not stop at acquiring only knowledge but also include the acquisition of skills/trades that have focus on occupation. This enables one to be self-employed thereby being economically independent. So technical and vocational education is job oriented, and thereby should be fully implemented.

The Concept of Unemployment

Unemployment is a situation by which an employable person does not have a job. It means lack of job. It can also mean a situation where a person has nothing doing to earn his living. In today's Nigeria, thousands of young people are facing long term unemployment after graduation.

The major Causes of Unemployment in Nigeria

The major cause of unemployment can be traced to the nature of education a nation is able to provide to her citizenry, taking cognizance of the three educational domains. It is noted that the cognitive domain predominated other domains. The affective and psychomotor are less emphasized in Nigerian educational system and that is the bulk of the problem as it is rightly observed by Amaele (2010:229) who posited:

We still have the type of education system which forces the cognitive aspect of learning in everybody even with the little or no human and material resources. The result of the above is that our school system produces more people who are lettered but jobless. They are 'trained' to be seekers of white collar jobs rather than being 'educated' to be self-reliant.

The statement above indicates that Nigerian education is not adequately channeled according to the needs of the society. The majority of the population is not trained to be self-reliant. Research findings have shown that educational theories must be tested in real life. So Nigerian education must be practical and job oriented in order to reduce unemployment in the country. Our education must be more relevant and functional.

Other causes of unemployment in Nigerian society include:

Poor Funding: Poor funding is another major cause of unemployment in Nigeria. Teachers are not properly and regularly paid and as a result of this, education is falling in standard. This gives rise to incessant strike actions which disrupt the school calendar. Public schools and universities are regularly shut down. The truth is that the educational objectives can never be achieved without proper funding. Money per say is the pre-requisite factor for success of any project in the world, invariably nothing works without finance. That is why the proposed integrated education programme known as 6-3-3-4 system that could have transformed the Nigerian education and provide job opportunities failed because it was not properly funded.

Lack of Facilities and Infrastructures

Many technical schools in the country are poorly equipped. In some schools, they lack tools, instruments, materials and laboratories to carry out the practical work. These lead students into studying only the theoretical aspect of their courses making the problem continue. As a result, the three domains of the child according to his ability, aptitude or capability is not developed.

It is on this note that Amaele (2010:229) commented, “The result of the above is that our school system produces more people who are lettered but jobless. They are ‘trained’ to be seekers of white collar jobs rather than being ‘educated’ to be self-reliant”.

Lack of Trained/Skilled Teachers

This is another factor that causes unemployment in Nigeria. In many technical and secondary schools, there are few or no trained/skilled teachers to teach most of the technical/skills subjects as they appear in the National Policy on Education and as a result of this, learning is based on theory rather than practicals as earlier said, so the products of such schools came out being job seekers.

Apart from Vocational Education, our indigenous job oriented education should have their root at primary as well as secondary schools and should not only be studied in vocational institutions and polytechnics. Before western education in Nigeria, our indigenous education provided every individual child with skills that enabled him/her earn a living, which means there was no unemployment then, rather the ultimate aim of education then was character training and job orientation. The traditional vocation were mainly agricultural education and trades/crafts, examples were farming, fishing, weaving, smiting, pottery-making, mat making, painting, leather working, carpentry, barbing, building, carving, hair plaiting, dress making, soap making bead making, gold washing, dyeing, food-selling, wine selling, wine tapping and trading of all kinds. It is observed that most of the above trades were included in the National Policy on Education FRN (2004) but were not adequately given a proper attention or practiced in our schools today.

The Danger and Effects of Unemployment in Nigerian Society

The effects of unemployment in Nigeria are numerous. The high-level of insecurity in Nigeria is the outcome of unemployment. Many of our jobless youths have become nuisance and commit a lot of atrocities such as armed-robbery, kidnapping, prostitution, engaging in cyber crimes, cultism, practise human rituals, insurgency etc. Unemployment is one of the factors that spread sexually transmitted diseases through prostitution. The rapid spread of HIV and AIDS is as a result of prostitution among youths who are jobless. Our jobless youths operate in groups in different ways and are causing havoc in the society. Some are known as Niger Delta Militants, Boko Haram, arm-robbers, Avengers, kidnappers, unknown gum men etc. Each of these groups maims, kills, rapes and destroys properties. In recent times, the Niger Delta militants known as Avengers continuously destroy the oil pipelines thereby creating scarcity of oil products which led to inflation and brought untold hardship to Nigerians. It is not far from the truth that almost all the social vices witnessed in our country today are as a result of unemployment. The assertion that says, ‘an idle mind is a devil’s workshop’ is true. Unemployment has caused untold hardship to many families and as such, many die of hunger, sicknesses and diseases. Some are experiencing abject poverty which leads to depression, frustration and suicide.

Ways of Reducing/Curbing Unemployment in Nigeria

The problem of unemployment would be resolved by providing relevant and functional education. It must never be a business as usual rather our education system must meet up with the world standard. Although, many nations had similar experience of having non functional education but were able to rise to the challenge. Those nations embarked on what we call 'education reform and the system was later corrected. In the 1980s for instance, the United States of America, discovered that the nation's schools were not producing the kinds of graduates necessary for a revitalization of its economy. With visionary leadership in place, the United States of America embarked on educational reform. Beginning in 1983, with the National Commission on Education, Excellence's report, "A Nation at Risk", government leaders, educational reformers, teachers, organizations, administrators and other interest groups attempted to improve the quality of its schools.

In the same vein, the Ugandan government, in cooperation with UNESCO, embarked on large-scale educational experiment which came to be known as the Namutamba Pilot Project, and it was aimed at producing among other things 'job makers' rather than job seekers. The essence of the project was to provide children in rural areas with the type of education that would enable them set-up in some occupation on their own without seeking salaried jobs. It must not be forgotten that Nigeria had made similar attempt to revitalize her educational system in 1969 when the first curriculum reform took place, but the system collapsed as a result of poor funding. Nigeria should borrow a leaf from these countries especially where education for self-reliance and job creation oriented are their main focus. The government effort must be commended on the area of introducing entrepreneurship education in our schools. It is also a welcome development for introducing skills acquisition/trades for NYSC in the orientation camp. But more need to be done to achieve the ultimate aim of eradicating unemployment in Nigeria.

This will be done by integrating those skills acquisition/trades learnt in the orientation camp into the school system. Therefore this paper advocates that those skills acquisition introduced in NYSC camp, be incorporated in the school curriculum and should have their root and be studied from primary to secondary, up to university level. Again, the vocational courses which are studied in the vocational institutions, colleges of education and polytechnics ought to begin from primary and secondary schools. Preparation stage will start from primary schools. If our youths start early enough to be trained in skills, trades and entrepreneurs early enough, by the time they complete their secondary education, they must have been well acquainted to picking any trades/skills of their interest to further their education. It should be noted that secondary education is an aspiration stage of a child. Students in the secondary schools are mainly adolescents. Adolescence is a notable age of logical reasoning. It is a period when the young adults determine their destiny. If those skills/trades are absorbed, practiced and implemented in Nigerian schools, it would end up the problem of unemployment in Nigeria. In this same vein, Amaele (2010:219) commented,

the first three years in the secondary school is designed to strengthen their academic excellence with various practical subjects aimed at assisting the students acquire basic skills. The expectation of the above is that, at the end of the three years, those who

could not proceed to the higher class (senior secondary) could be better adapted as skilled workers, who could be employed by the public or the private sector or self-employed.

It is also believed that the incorporation of indigenous/traditional education into the school system could help to cushion the effect of unemployment in Nigeria, as rightly observed by Fafunwa (1974:34), “were it not for this traditional system of education which still absorbs millions of Nigerian youths, whether literate or non literate, there would be millions of instead of thousands of unemployed young men and women in Nigeria today”. He further stated that what the country needs is a re-organization of its educational system in such a way as to integrate the traditional and modern apprenticeship systems into the overall educational process.

The learning of indigenous trades/skills acquisition like welding, plumbing, carpentry, tailoring, fashion and designing, hair dressing, photographing etc. in the formal school setting promotes their outlook and make them appear more prestigious so that people will no longer show contempt of people who pick any of them as a profession. It would be an honour to answer a degree holder in carpentry, welding, plumbing, tailoring, photographing, hair dressing etc.

Again, a cursory examination of vocational and technical education as they are documented in the National Policy on Education gives another dimension to solving the problem of unemployment in Nigeria. The full implementation of the policy document will go a long way to solve the problems of unemployment in Nigeria.

Conclusion

To reduce the problem of unemployment in Nigerian society, this paper strongly upholds the proper implementation of secondary school curriculum on technical and vocational education or what can be called indigenous job oriented education. An individual student who acquires some of these skills like carpentry, tailoring, plumbing, bakery, fashion and designing and others in the formal school system will be happy coupled with an honour to answer a university graduate in the skill he acquired and at the same time earn his/her living from it.

Recommendations

1. Secondary school should be the appropriate place to inculcate the above trades discussed. This is because secondary school students are mainly adolescents whose minds are less occupied and most often career choices are made at this period.
2. Good values and skills that will enable them survive must be inculcated at this age. So our indigenous job oriented skills must be taught early enough to enable them pick any of the skills of their choice/interest to further their education. Those who are unable to further their education could professionalize on any of the skills to earn their living. This is exactly what is called education for self –reliance.
3. We should borrow a leaf from former President of Tanzania, Julius Nyerere, the father of education for self-reliance in Tanzania.

4. Education must be adequately funded by the government. The necessary facilities to teach these trades must be provided by the government.
5. Youth's welfare must be a government concern in order to minimize the social vices that often arise.
6. Skills acquisition/entrepreneur education is the solutions to the problems of unemployment in Nigeria and therefore the government should embrace it and make it a reality.
7. The government should play a vital role by granting soft loans to every student that have completed his/her vocational courses successfully so that they will establish their businesses or trades.
8. More technical and vocational schools should be established in Nigeria and be properly equipped.

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