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**Vocational Education and Economic Development
in Nigeria**

Koko Ekpo, Ph.D. (North Texas)

Professor of Curriculum Studies & Science Education
Department of Curriculum & Instructional Technology,
Cross River University of Technology, Calabar, Nigeria
E-mail: drkokoekpo1@gmail.com

&

Akpan Okon, Ph.D.

Department of Curriculum & Instructional Technology,
Cross River University of Technology, Calabar, Nigeria

Abstract

This paper discusses the capability of vocational education in creating jobs to reduce unemployment among the Nigerian youths which will result in sustainable economic development of Nigeria. It also defines Vocational education within the provisions of the National Policy on Education. Philosophy of Vocational Education is also defined. In African states, including Nigeria, much emphasize is not given to

Vocational Education which is a major instrument for the nations rapid and sustainable development with proper planning and implementation. Vocational education is capable of creating millions of jobs for Nigerian youths. This will lead to sustainable economic development for Nigeria in particular and African continent in general. The capability of Vocational education for job creation is not doubted but constrained by several challenges among which are poor funding, lack of training personnel and facilities. In order to overcome these challenges, it is recommended that Vocational experts, government officials and the business world should work together for the purpose of job creation, poverty alleviation and sustainable economic development.

Introduction

The major goal of Vocational Education is the development of occupational competence for obtaining a job with business carrier or be self-employed, (Oyebalu 2011) and (FRN 2004,).In the Nigerian Educational system, Secondary Schools and Technical colleges begin the vocational training of youths for different forms of creativity and employment until they specialize in the Polytechnic, Colleges of Education, Universities and other related tertiary institutions in the country.

Vocational Education may be seen to mean a comprehensive educational process and the acquisition of practical skills and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of economic and social life. According to Barlow Melun in Ekpenyong (2005) Vocational Education is a social process concerned primarily with people and their part in doing the work that society needs done. Thus, it prepares people for work and improving the work potentials of the labour force. Vocational Education therefore enhances economic independence and self-realization. Yusuff and Soyemi (2012) opined that Vocational Education is any kind of training that aims primarily at preparing individuals for a job. Accordingly, in Nigeria, a vocational skill is vital to economic development for enterprise productivity and profitability, national productivity and wealth

creation, and for individual prosperity. Nigerian youths are fully informed of the importance of Vocational Education. The lack of it has resulted in their failure to secure employment and other career development programmes in the country. Denga (2001) further highlighted that Vocational Education specifically is designed to teach skills, develop attitudes and competencies that are requisite to success in a given occupation. Thus it makes the citizens competent participants in the economic life of their country.

According to the National policy of Nigeria (FRN 2004), the philosophy of education is based upon a strong, united and self-reliant nation. It is a known fact that education is the biggest business in the country today and vocational education is not an exception. Vocational education, as one of the integral part of the entire educational system, is captured in the country's yearly budget subject to periodic review. Nigeria is not an Island; it exists in a world of global conflicts, economic activities and international relations which are routed from vocational education. According to Zanna (2000) the 1998 UNDP Human Development Report ranked Nigeria among the 25th poorest countries in the world and also rated her as the poorest among the twelve member countries of the organization for Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) in spite of the fact that she is the sixth largest oil producing (OPEC) members in the world. Eneji (2000) opined that Nigeria needs a major breakthrough in an attempt to come out of these abject poverty situations which have youths and graduates unemployment as major attributes. The Federal Government of Nigeria has made several attempts to reduce poverty level by introducing some programme like Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP) (Guidelines for implementation of PAP, 2000) which, of course yielded an insignificant result. Thus, according to Usoro (2001) this may be attributed to lack of proper recognition of the roles of Vocational Education to the Economic development of Nigeria. Therefore this paper sought to examine vocational education as an instrument for economic development in Nigeria and its challenges among others.

Vocational Education, an Instrument for Economic Development

Vocational Education according Ekpenyong (2005) is made up of formal and non-formal components and this could be characterized by long-term and general, credential based, long cycle, preparatory, full-time, academic, institutional-based, teacher-centred and resource-intensive for formal vocational education. Non-formal vocational education on the other hand is characterized by short-term and specific, non-credential based, short-cycle, recurrent, part time, practical, environmental-based, and learner-centred. In fact, some of the credential objective of non-formal education in the National Policy on Education (NPE) are vocationally-oriented (FRN, 2004).

Vocational Education is as instrument for economic development shall be considered under the sub units of vocational education which include according to Denga (2001). Business Education, Vocational Education, Agriculture, Home Economics, Carpentry, Dressmaking, Banking, Sales and Services work, Industrial and Office Education etc. The scope of this discussion is limited to Business Education, Vocational Agriculture (Agriculture Education) and Home Economics.

Business Education and Economic Development

Business Education is one of the integral skills acquired under the foundation of Vocational Education. It is one of the Vocational skills predicated on the development as a sort of insurance policy for self-employment (Denga 2001). This is in consonance with the philosophy or self-reliance and personal viability entrenched in the National policy on Education. Ekpenyong (2005) and Makeri, (1990) have clearly stated it that there is no need to go into so much literature to support the assertion that there exist unemployment crisis in Nigeria. Many University Degree holders and graduates from other tertiary institutions are jobless while holders of Vocational (Business) qualifications are averagely employed. This shows that they contribute significantly to the economic position of the country. No wonder, Ekwesli (2006) viewed Business Education as that aspect of total

educational programme that provides the knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes needed to perform in the business world as a producer or consumer of goods and services that business offers. This fact is further substantiated by the recognition accorded it by the Federal Government of Nigeria (2001) in her National policy in Education. A critical overview of this definition and role of Business Education shows that it:

- i. Educates individuals for and about business
- ii. Provides a continuous programme or planned learning experience that will equip individuals to (a) produce and distribute goods and services. (b) use the results of production as consumers (c) make judicious socio-economic decision as citizen.
- iii. Provides career information that helps student relate their interest, needs and abilities to occupational opportunities in business.
- iv. Provides educational opportunities for students preparing for careers in fields other than business e.g. the development of effective communication and human relation skills. The summary of these is that business education contributes to the building of a self-reliant nation and a great and dynamic economic.

Business education has areas of specialization which include Office or Secretarial studies (Ekpenyong, 2005) graduates of Secretarial/Office Education option can be employed as teachers to handle subjects/courses such as typewriting, computer studies, shorthand, commerce, business studies and other related Business Studies and other related business courses in schools. They can also be appointed as secretaries, computer operators or as Administrative staff in either Private or Public establishments as well as being self-employed. On the other hand, Accounting studies graduates are trained to teach Accounting, Economics, introduction to quantitative analysis, Business studies, Mathematics and other related business courses.

They can also be employed as Accountants, auditors etc. or self-employed. Moreover, graduates of Distributive studies specialize in Commerce, Marketing, Small Scale Business Management, Economics and other related business courses as teachers and can also manage both small and medium scale business enterprises as sole proprietors or as partners.

As clearly stated, one of the greatest challenges that significantly militate against the Nigerian economy is unemployment crisis, then it is very clear that Business Education Programme contributes to the development of a state.

Business Education is relevant to states economy in the following ways:-

1. It is functional, qualitative and capable of providing entrepreneurship, skills to make youths self-employed and also as employer of labour.
2. Business Education is the fundamental programme of economic education that facilitates conservation, expenditure of wealth and advancement in the job,
3. An effective Business Education programme minimizes the high level of corruption between both the ruling and the dependent classes in the society.
4. It is a programme that provides educational opportunities for students preparing for educational careers in fields other than business.
5. Worthy of note is that Business Education is a continuous programme of planned learning experience that equips individuals to produce and contributes goods and services use the result of production as consumers; and make judicious socio-economic decisions as citizens.

According to Usoro, (2001) Business Education encompasses courses such as Business Administration, Marketing, Accounting, Purchasing

and Supply, Secretarial Education and Business Law. It therefore follows that Business Education train Business teachers, manages and seasoned administrators, Accountants and Accounting teachers, producers and marketers of goods and services distributors, secretaries who are the engine worms (information network) of any organization and Business solicitors/lawyers. All these are what is required by any country's economic development, hence Business Education is the foundation of a nation's economic political and social development.

Agricultural Education and Economic Development

Agricultural education is one of the major components of Vocational education and it contributes immensely towards the development of the Nigerian economy. Both Udeolisa, (1997) and Egbule (2002) viewed Agricultural Education to mean the teaching of skills, values and other forms required knowledge in products. This includes the farming, processing and marketing of such products. The products are for consumption and for marketing.

Graduates of Agricultural education can easily get themselves either self-employed or employed by either the government or other private agencies. Thus, it minimizes the rate of unemployment in the country and contributes towards the development of the economic standard of the nation. Ekpenyong (2005) identified areas of specialization as Agricultural Education to include Agronomy, Soil Science or Forestry. These areas encompass other sub-areas of specialization, such as crop, poultry, fishery and livestock production. Agricultural education, as a Vocational sub-unit, is taught at the Primary, Secondary and Tertiary levels of education such as Colleges of Education, the Polytechnic, Colleges of Agriculture and Universities; (Ekpenyong, 2005, Egbule, 2002 and Udeolisa, 1997). The Federal Government of Nigeria (2004) in her National Policy on Education (NPE) has recognized Agricultural as an element towards the actualization of a United, strong and self-reliant nation.

Agricultural Education contributes to Agricultural growth and development since it deals with quality of output, level of Agricultural

technology farmer's education and standard of living of a given nature, (Moseri 2000). Anon (1998) has it that Agricultural education the programme is a complex process of increased investment, improved technology and redistribution of balances in economic system. Agricultural education in Nigeria has been given its proper recognition by the appropriate authorities. Moseri (2000) commented that the conditions for an effective agricultural development include a high average educational attempt, adequate capital, quantity and quality of land and technology, development of quality production skills, formation of agricultural associations and supporting services, facilities and programmes.

Contributions of Agricultural Education to Economic Development

Agricultural Education as an aspect of Vocational Education contributes to the economic development in the following ways:-

- i. It provides an increased production inputs for utilization by the expanding industries.
- ii. Agricultural education contributes to the improvement in the welfare of rural dwellers through the provision of some social amenities like electricity, good roads and portable water.
- iii. It leads to the introduction of effective and efficient management of agricultural production, processing and distribution of agricultural goods and services.
- iv. It reduces the rate of importation of agricultural goods and services into the country thereby contributing towards the attainment of a strong, united and a self-reliant nation.
- v. It encourages self-employment; hence it helps to minimize the rate of unemployment crisis.

Challenges of Vocational Education in Nigeria

Vocational Education has been facing a lot of challenges especially in Nigeria. Some of the Challenges Includes:-

- i. Quantity and quality of vocational teachers. There is a problem of availability and qualitative men power (teachers) to handle vocational courses. In many schools these departments are hardly accredited by their respective bodies of inadequate and sufficient men power.
- ii. There has been a structural defect in the curricula of studies in Vocational Education. Most of the courses offered do not graduate the students as experts in their specified options. And do not consider the Nigerian or even African situations.
- iii. An insignificant financial encouragement of educational sector economic in the federal state and even local government budgets in Nigeria.
- iv. As already stated by Yussuf and Soyemi (2012) there is the problem of low quality training among vocational students. Emphasis is much on theory and certification rather than skill acquisition and proficiency training.
- v. There is a general dissemination against graduates of vocational schools.
- vi. Comparatively, there exist a low enrolment at all levels of vocational education because many people still consider it as a course for the dullards.

Conclusion

Vocational education leads to the development of occupational competence for self-employment and for obtaining a job as a business outfit. It relates to theeconomic development of a nation.

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