

Integrating Technical and Vocational Education in Youth Empowerment Programmes: An Approach to Nation Building and Job Creation in Nigeria

Franca Chinenye Nwankwo^{1*}, Igwe Christopher. Obeta², Vivien Nkeiru Nwaogbe³
1, 2, Industrial and Technology Education Department, Federal University of Technology Minna, Niger State, Nigeria

3 Defence Industry Corporation of Nigeria (DICON), Kaduna State, Nigeria

* Email of the corresponding author: francanwankwo@futminna.edu.ng

Abstract

Youth empowerment in many nations is geared towards equipping youths with skills to for self employment and Nation building. The rate of unemployment and underemployment among Nigerian youths and graduates in on the rising, crime and poverty rate has equally increased. The federal government of Nigeria, International organizations and Non-governmental organizations has introduced some youth empowerment programmes to curtail the problem of unemployment in Nigeria. Despite the efforts of the government and other bodies to help in curbing this situation, it all seems that the expected results of these programmes are not seen. This is as a result of the syllabus of some of the programmes for the reason that they do not appropriately integrate Vocational and Technical Education in its program content. Vocational and Technical Education (VTE) leads to applied and practical skills acquisition. Integrating VTE in youth empowerment programmes will greatly equip the beneficiaries of the programme with practical skills; self reliance and this will in turn reduce underemployment and unemployment to the barest minimum and increase the economical growth of the Nation.

Keyword: Youth empowerment, Technical Vocational Education and Training, Nation building, Job creation

1. Introduction

Governments, funders, and charity organizations increasingly demand that young people be involved in the processes that affect their lives and communities. Youth empowerment programs (YEPs) are designed to build on the assets of young people through a focus on active participation, mastery experiences, and positive connections in order to improve developmental outcomes and positive transitions to adulthood. Proponents of YEPs suggest that they may constitute an effective, theory-based approach to youth development (Morton & Montgomery, 2011)

Vocational and Technical Education has been a fundamental part of national development many developed nations because of its positive effect on national industrial productivity and economic growth. The high rate of unemployment, poverty and poor Socio- Economic status of most Nigerian graduates has generated an outcry of many, non-governmental organizations, parents, government bodies and international organizations. Though many nations are faced with the problem of graduate unemployment as Nigeria does but as a nation with diversified employment sectors and unexplored sectors of employment, this problem is expected to be reduced to the barest minimum. Unemployment is a global trend, but it occurs mostly in developing countries of the world, with attendant social, economic, political, and psychological consequences (Emeka, 2011). Thus, massive youth unemployment in any country is an indication of far more complex problems. The situation of unemployment in Nigeria has been on the increase which has resulted in increase in social vices, human capacity under-utilization; increased poverty amongst the citizenry, social alienation and weak purchasing power among other negativity ((Njoku & Ihugba, 2011). The constant complains of insufficient jobs for youth by federal parastatals and other government organization has made it seem so difficult for graduates to have hope or even search harder for places of employment.

Other problems are the class of degree one graduated with, quota system, field of study and so on. Therefore Youth empowerment programme may seem to be the only solution to the enormous unemployment rate amongst Nigerian graduates. Such programmes should have Technical and vocational education (TVET) as its core content; this is because youth empowerment programmes are geared towards human capacity building and employability. The increasing rate of graduate unemployment and low socio-economic leverage of the products of formal education in Nigeria are encouraging a dwindling faith in formal education. Unfortunately many Nigerian's who have been to school are unable to secures good employment or live well. Vocational education provides skills for self employment and self reliance. (Famiwole, Oke & Amadii, 2012). TVET encompasses practical and technical skill acquisition training, manpower development which can also be called capacity building then this makes TVET the best programme content for youth empowerment programmes and training in Nigeria.

2. Purpose of the study

The purpose of this work is to understand the importance of integrating TVET in youth empowerment programmes. The specific objectives are:

- I. To identify the role TVET play in youth empowerment programmes
- II. To identify the importance of Youth empowerment programmes in nations building
- III. To identify the potentials of TVET in nations building and skill acquisition
- IV. To understand the concept of youth empowerment and the role it plays to reduce unemployment

3. Significance of the study

Findings from this study will be used as guideline to design youth empowerment programmes, it will provide information for government and Non-governmental organizations on the importance of investing in TVET for nations building and reduction of unemployment. Finally, it will build a platform for conferences, workshops and further researches on the importance of integrating TVET in Youth empowerment programmers.

Empowerment as it relates to Human capacity building

The word "Empowerment" has been defined by several authors and bodies as it relates to the subject they are dealing with. (World Bank, 2011) defined Empowerment as the process of enhancing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes. This definition sees empowerment in the light of human capacity building for the purpose of making the individual or groups self reliant. (Alsop and Heinsohn 2005) delineate Empowerment as a person's capacity to make effective choices; that is, as the capacity to transform choices into desired actions and outcomes. With the above definitions, one can say that empowerment is a process of building an individual in the aspects of skill, economic, finance, social, moral and psychological development with the aim of making the individual self-reliant and useful to him or herself and the society at large. Financial empowerment seems to be one of the most powerful tools in graduate empowerment, it should come after the training has been completed and should serve as a startup capital for the trainee at the completion of the training.

Status of Youth Empowerment Programmes in Nigeria

According to Ma'aji and Hassan, (2012) Nigeria establishes various forms of youth empowerment programmes to train youth for skill acquisition to be self reliant in various areas of Vocational and Technical Education, for example,

- National Directorate of Employment (NDE) in 1989
- Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES) in 1999, and
- Graduate Empowerment Scheme (GES) in 2004
- National Open Apprenticeship Scheme (NOAS in 2009)
- Graduate Internship Scheme (GIS) in 2012

Yet either the youth were trained without adequate skills or no appropriate plan for the scheme implementation. There have been and still are many empowerment programmes, poverty alleviation and youth development programs in Nigeria, but the major problem is the consistency and positive outcome of these programmes. (Ohize and Adamu, 2009) stated; Nigeria has witnessed a wide range of poverty alleviation policies and programs from previous governments. However, despite these concerted efforts by the government, the poverty situation seems to be getting worse. This situation could be as a result of inconsistency, poor administration, and poor programme contents in the youth empowerments programmes.

Youth empowerment programmes are expected to be accessible for every youth regardless of the individual's social status, class of degree of graduation, course of study and year of graduation. In addition, these programmes are also expected to be reachable to all and not a selected class of people in the society. For Empowerment Programme (SURE-P) and the Government Internship Scheme (GIS) introduced by the federal government of Nigeria in 2012, from the office of the Presidency, Federal Republic of Nigeria, the programmes are anticipated to be introduced to students in their final year possible immediately after their final exams while waiting for their undergraduate results, or during their national youth service year. But this is not the state of affairs of youth empowerment programmes in Nigeria. Graduates are not well informed about most of these programmes because of the medium of publicizing the programmes and delay in the publicity or advertisement. Also funds allocated for the implementation of these programmes are misappropriated. Therefore, it seems difficult for the youths to effectively access and be part of the program

VTE and its function in Youth Empowerment Programmes

Vocational education could be regarded as that aspect of education, which provides the recipients with the basic knowledge and practical skills needed for entry into the world of work as employees or as self-employed (Oni

2007). Vocational education if well implemented builds practical and applied skills in an individual which are essential for national development in aspects of commerce, agriculture, industrial, economic and socio-economic development.

Technical and vocational education according to Osuala (1981) is a form of education that includes preparation for employment in any industry for specialized education for which there is societal needs and which can most appropriately be acquired in schools.

According to National Policy on Education (FRN 2004), Vocational Technical Education is defined as that aspect of education that leads to the acquisition of practical and applied skills as well as basic scientific knowledge. The policy further delineated the goals of technical and vocational education as;

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

And the policy also enumerated the objectives of technical education as thus;

- i. To provide trained manpower in applied science, technology and commerce particularly at sub-professional grades.
- ii. To provide the technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for Agricultural, Industrial, Commercial and Economic Development.
- iii. To provide people who can apply scientific knowledge to the improvement and solution of environmental problems for use and convenience of man.
- iv. To given an introduction to professional studies in engineering and other technologies.
- v. To give training and impart necessary skills leading to the production of craftsmen, technicians and other skilled personnel who will be enterprising and self-reliant.
- vi. To enable our young men and women to have intelligent understanding of the increasing complexity of technology

Vocational and technology education encompasses every aspect of education and employment, this makes it unique form other forms of education. The neglect of technical and vocational education in Nigeria is socially and economically injurious because it is robbing the nation the contribution the graduates would make on national development (Abubakar, 2010)

Since empowerment programmes are geared towards skills acquisition, human development, self reliance, self employment and poverty reduction then it implies that youth empowerment trainings cannot be completely functional if Technical vocational education and training is not integrated in it, this is because vocational and technical education and training is practical and applied skills based.

4. CONCLUSION

The need to secure a society with adequate job opportunities, job security and a balanced economy is necessary for the youths of this nation. Vocational and technical education is practical skills oriented therefore, it helps in the maximum creation of jobs. Skills development can therefore contribute to strengthening the social links of a community by promoting employment creativity and sustainable means of subsistence. Vocational education and job training programme has been an integral part of national developments strategies in many societies because of the impact on human resources development, productivity, and economic growth. (Usman & Tyabo, 2013)

The majority of African youth continue to face unemployment, underemployment, poverty due to lack of skills, lack of relevant education, denied access to capital, and many unmet expectations. (African Union, 2012). This shows that the basic requisite for curbing unemployment and underemployment among Nigerian youths is equipping them with basic vocational and technical skills, relevant education that leads to self-reliance and self employment and empowering them with capital to startup their business. Vocational and technical trades are not high capital intensive, therefore, with the right skill and technical knowledge, one can start up his or her business without a large amount of money. Therefore when vocational technical education and training is integrated in youth empowerment programmes, there is bound to be visible results in capacity building, unemployment reduction and self employment amongst youths, this will in turn lead to national economic growth.

5. RECOMMENDATION

- Vocational and technical education is result oriented (Musa, 2010). Therefore, it is recommended that:
- i. Government and other educational funding organizations should make TVET a top priority when funding educational researches.

- ii. Since TVET has been proved as a programme that its curriculum stipulates practical skills acquisition and self development and job creating programme, it is recommended that TVET should be incorporated in all types of youth empowerment programmes.
- iii. Since it is observed that most Nigerian graduates are unemployed as a result of insufficient jobs in their field of study, it becomes necessary for emphasis to be made on the importance of vocational and technical education for youths seeking for admission into tertiary institution so that they can easily be self employed at the completion of their study.
- iv. No programme can thrive without financial supports for start-ups, therefore, financial provision for startup capital should be provided for the beneficiaries of the empowerment programmes at the completion of the training, this is realizable since technical and vocational trade is not capital intensive.
- v. Vocational and technical education should be introduced and implemented in all forms of youth empowerment programmes, graduate internship and youth employment training schemes.

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