Vocational Education and Training: A Veritable Tool for Reducing Unemployment and Youths Restiveness in Nigeria

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Abstract
Vocational Education and training is an Educational programme which aimed at preparing students for industry, agriculture, commerce and home economics, which is normally provided at the senior secondary school or at lower tertiary level. It also leads to the acquisition of practical and applied skills as well as basic scientific knowledge. Despite several opportunities vocational education avail, most developing countries including Nigeria have not paid enough attention to this aspect of education which is necessary for national development as well as create the much needed employment to cushion some of the social vices and crisis being engaged by the youths in the country. This paper discussed the influence of vocational education and training in reducing unemployment and youth’s restiveness in Nigeria. Concepts on vocational education, training and the impact and consequences on youth restiveness in Nigeria were reviewed. The data for the study were sourced through secondary data. Ways to revive the vocational centers in the country were discussed. In conclusion, the modalities for repositioning vocational training education were emphasized. The paper recommended that more vocational centres should be established and soft grants made available for vocational graduates to cushion the challenges of unemployment and youths restiveness in Nigeria.

Keywords: Vocational Education, Training, Unemployment, Restiveness.

Introduction
On attainment of independence in 1960, Nigeria was faced with the problem of social and economic development problems. Also there was the need to develop all aspects of education in the country. Vocational and technical education was one of those areas needed to develop the country to reduce unemployment. According to Nnanna, (2012), in a bid develop Nigeria and tackle the problems of unemployment, many commissions were set up to examine the educational and manpower requirements in different sectors of the economy. Such reports was the Ashby commission titled “Investment in Education” in 1960 and Cottiers/Caunce report on the development of technical and commercial education below professional level between 1961-1976. The Ashby commission report suggested measures which would help to establish the foundation upon which Nigeria could build a balanced system of vocational/technical education. He was of the opinion that technicians were grossly in short supply, and that facilities for training them were inadequate. In a related manner Cottiers/Caunce report noted with dissatisfaction, the absence of national survey to ascertain from industries, the nature and extent of the educational needs for the planning and
administration for the vocational education system. The report also noted that since industries do not remain static, such survey must be continuous so that industrial innovation will reflect in the vocational education curriculum. The important aspect of the report was the recognition of the fact that there was need to develop and increase vocational and technical education in Nigeria. And this informed the establishment of National Directorate of Employment (NDE), by Decree No, 24 of 1989, to train young people on vocational education and skill acquisition, with the aim to reduce unemployment (Amoor, 2009). According to the National Policy on Education of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004), vocational education is that aspect of education that leads to the acquisition of practical and applied skills as well as basic scientific knowledge. Vocational and technical education is directed towards the preparation for occupational life, since the recipients are equipped to face the challenges of the world of work for national development. In a related manner, Okonkwo and Obinali, (2012) affirmed that the goal of vocational education and training is to impact the necessary practical skills, knowledge, work habits, attitudes and other values to the recipients. This is aimed at preparing the students for self reliance through self-employment. In corroboration of this assertion, Odugbesan (1995) noted that vocational education provides the recipients with all the necessary work characteristics, practical skills, knowledge and attitude to enable them live independently after graduation. In most advanced countries of the world, vocational education and training are given a very serious attention and are regarded as a valuable investment (www.nigerianbestforum.com). This is the reason many youths through vocational training have acquired the right skills that will enable them secure employment which at the long run benefit them and the society.

On contrary, the poor state of vocational education and training in Nigeria started right from the educational foundation instituted by the colonial government which paid more emphasis on training students for white collar jobs but paid little or no attention to vocational education and training. Vocational education and training promotes self reliant among the students on graduation. Regrettably, after many years of independent, Nigeria still practice the pre-independent form of education, which only equip graduates to seek for civil service and other related jobs, in spite establishment of specialized institutions such as universities of technology and polytechnics which is yet to produce the required result to address this issues. Presently, there are 125 technical/vocational centres in the Nigeria (www.everyculture.com/-/nigeria.html) which is not adequate compared to the increasing population of Nigeria estimated at 170 million. These few vocational centres cannot produce enough skilled manpower to reduce the increasing unemployed people in Nigeria. (Nnanna, 2002) noted that, Government of various administrations, have attempted to improve educational delivery especially as it relates to vocational and technical education. This is because of the recognition of the role which vocational education and training would play in the development of the country, by a way of reducing unemployment and youth restiveness in Nigeria. Thus, the extent to which vocational education and training manifests in reducing unemployment and youth restiveness in Nigeria forms the focus of this paper.

Major Issues of Concern
The poor state of vocational education in Nigeria could be attributed to the pre-colonial educational system, which was characterized by the tendency that was not only exploitative, but designed not to make the country self reliant. The colonial education system was tailored towards providing middle manpower and administrative personnel to help run the colonial government. Paradoxically, the post-colonial Nigeria educational system has not positively
departed from the colonial practices of training students for white collar jobs, neglecting vocational education which is supposed to position students to be self-reliant and employers of labour. However, it is disappointing that successive governments have neglected vocational education and training which would have had a lasting impact in reducing the perennial problem of unemployment and youth restiveness in Nigeria. Again, unlike in 1970s and 1980s when public primary school pupils and secondary students were encouraged through government policy to undertake handicraft and other skill acquisition tasks as part of continuous assessment during a prescribed period of time line. But today, handicraft are no more taken serious, most schools now seem to accept money in place of craft, while in most cases, some schools don’t even observe craft period in their curriculum any longer. This attitude seems to demoralize the students who would have offered skilled courses up to tertiary institution and even after graduation. More so, there has been neglect of investment in vocational education and training by the government and the private sector. This is observed has been a key factor hindering the growth of vocational education and training in Nigeria thereby, constituting some form of restiveness as observed in the Niger delta region, North east among others. Accordingly, the greatest weakness in the execution of vocational education and training is the disjointed training and lack of continuity of the programmes from primary to tertiary level of education on job training. In the areas where they available, they lack uniform standards of training and certification. This makes it difficult to integrate different vocational education training into one National system.

Therefore, the overall objective of the paper is to critically identify role of vocational education in reducing unemployment and youth restiveness in Nigeria. The paper will specifically, look at:

1. The factors responsible for youth unemployment and restiveness in Nigeria.
2. The problems militating against vocational education and training in Nigeria.
3. To suggest ways and strategies of revamping vocational education and training in Nigeria.

Conceptual Clarifications
Clarification of concepts is important for two basic reasons. First is to make clear the meaning of the concept, or term and the context of its application in a study. This is usually so because most concepts are capable of having more than a single meaning. Secondly, clarifications of concepts are necessary because it is an exercise that forms an essential part of theorizing a study (Satori, 1984). For the purpose of this study, three concepts are considered important namely, vocational education, unemployment, and youth restiveness.

Vocational Education
Vocational education and training have always been an integral part of national development strategies in many societies, because of its impact on productivity and economic development. Dike (2005) has observed that despite the contribution of vocational education, Nigerian leaders have not given this aspect of education the attention it deserves. And that is the reason for Nigeria underdevelopment. It is also an aspect of learning which leads to the acquisition of practical and applied skills as well as basic scientific knowledge. It prepares the learner for careers that are based on manual or practical activities. Traditionally, it is an education designed to develop occupational skills. Vocational education gives an individual the skills to live, learn and work as productive citizens (Dike, 2005). Prior to advent of colonial rule in Nigeria, all the communities and cultures had indigenous systems of informal
and formal education systems. Vocational education and training was done through the system of apprenticeship, whereby young boys and men were attached to master craftsmen, where they learn various trades and skills such as carpentry, masonry, blacksmith, foundry, carving, textile designs, and dyeing etc. These apprentices could spend three to seven years depending on the trade they want to specialize on at the end of such training. The graduate apprentice will be assisted by the family to acquire tools and other materials to start his own trade (Odugbesan, 1995). But the neglect of vocational education and training in Nigeria is socially injurious. This is because it has robbed the Nation the contributions the graduates of vocational education would have made on national development. For this reason Nigeria has remained underdeveloped; although, vocational education may be deficient in citizenship or leadership training (Friedman, 1982). It provides students with life skills to become productive entrepreneurs as it engenders creative and innovative ideas, enlarged economic opportunities and increase personal freedom (Alwasilah, 2002).

Again vocational education exist to impact practical and manual knowledge which leads to the acquisition of practical basic scientific knowledge which involves special manipulative minds and skills, creative minds, critical thinking and attitudes relating to occupation in various fields and sectors of the economic and social life. In view of the foregoing, the goals of vocational and technical education shall be among others;

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 and

iii. to give training and impact necessary skills leading to the production of craftsmen, technicians and skilled personnel who will be enterprising and self reliant.

Youth Restiveness
The National youth development policy (2001) has defined youth as people of the age between 18-35. Nigerian youths are estimated to be about 40% of 170 million Nigerian populations. In 2006, it was estimated that between the ages of 10-24 was 45.4 million, which stands at 34% of the total population. In order words Ekpenyong (2008) defined youth restiveness “as a sustained protestation embarked upon to enforce desired out come from a constituted authority by an organized body of youths” it is usually marked by violence and disruption of lawful activities. Youth restiveness in Nigeria has been a reoccurring issue in recent times. Such that they engage crimes like hostage taking, arms insurgence and cultism. Youth restiveness in Nigeria is not a new phenomenon. Most youth restiveness is motivated by economic, political or religious reasons. According to Ekpenyong (2008), young people all over the world are a vital and important segment of the society in which they live. A disciplined, focused and law-abiding youth can create a bright feature for any nation. On the other hand, a lawless, indulgent and violent youth is a great threat to a Nations peace and security. Ekpenyong (2008) further identified three reasons behind youth restiveness as motivated excitement of being a student, the intolerant ideas, and perceived victimization arising from economic exploitation.

On the other hand, a study conducted in Niger Delta region by Ofem and Ajayi (2008), identified humanitarian and social welfare, lack of good governance, corrupt practices of government officials, inadequate training programmes, unemployment, lack of recreational
facilities, lack of quality education etc. These factors as observed contribute to youth restiveness in Nigeria. Onyekpe (2007) in his observation noted that successive administrations in Nigeria have not allocated much funds and needed attention towards the needs of the youths, and even when some allocations are made available, they are often diverted by government officials for private use. This among others are the reasons youths are restive and agitated when they feel that resources meant for them are been looted to by individuals. In other words unemployment in Nigeria has become worrisome among Nigerian youths and other developing countries. There is high level of unemployment among Nigerian youths. In line with this view, is of the opinion that the rising tide of unemployment has been as a result of manipulations by politicians, religious demagogues and greedy multinationals that employ these youths and pay them a token for their selfish ends. From the foregoing, non availability of jobs in Nigeria is responsible for youth restiveness with serious attendant consequences such as the Niger delta Avengers, Indigenous people of Biafra, Movement for the Emancipation of Niger delta, Boko Haram among others.

Problems militating against vocational education and training in Nigeria
Youth unemployment has been a great challenge to many nations of the world, especially developing countries and sub-Sahara Africa in particular. Presently Nigeria is facing a lot of challenges of which youth unemployment is one of them. Vocational education and training are important in different sphere of vocational fields, such as construction, communication, agriculture, ICT, computers and data processing, and graphic arts. It is expected that youths should be equipped with technical skills regardless of their first course of study. Entrepreneurship should be encouraged among youths towards innovation such as job creation and self-reliance with wide range of employment-value-chain, which in turn will mitigate the high rate of unemployment among youths in Nigeria. But unfortunately, most of the vocational centers lack training facilities, inadequate training personnel, poor funding among others.

Invariably, vocational education and training has also been bedeviled by so many challenges, which have impacted negatively on national development. According to Oguntunyi (2013) vocational education certificates are usually regarded as inferior to regular university degrees, which has resulted in shortage of vocational education teachers. Again, Ekpenyong, (2008), noted that lack of adequate training of vocational teachers is also militating against the growth of vocational education. He further pointed out that about 50% of the institutions running vocational education in Nigeria schools have not met the required standard for accreditation. Again, a good number of vocational schools lack meaningful facilities, such as laboratories, electricity, machines and tools, and above all, well trained tutors. Amoor (2009) also believes that inadequate funding of vocational education and learning programmes, has contributed to the problems militating against the growth of vocational education in Nigeria.

In a similar context, vocational education and training in Nigeria, was never regarded as necessary to national development or for economic development. But was seen as meant for school dropout and the down trodden. Hallark (1990) postulates that vocational education is also linked to human resource development and that it impacts on more than just economic growth. But the government has failed to give it the needed attention.

Suggested ways and strategies to revamp vocational education and training in Nigeria
Vocational education and training will prepare youths for any specific job with an opportunity for self development and reliance. This is because there will be competence,
interest and job satisfaction to the highly skilled person, to effectively and efficiently carry out the job successfully for higher productivity. Akpomie (2009) asserts that no nation can progress technologically, industrially, and economically without developing a strong partner initiative in the creation of wealth, poverty reduction, and employment generation with required skills. These skills include technical, human, and specific skills to cope with the challenges of the feature.

Suggested ways to revamp vocational education and training in Nigeria are to;

1. Increase the number of vocational centers in Nigeria.
2. Employ more vocational and technical experts.
3. Build the capacities of the existing resource persons.
4. Improve the funding of the centers through government and private sector initiatives.

Conclusion
This paper has attempted to capture the place of vocational education and training in reducing youth unemployment and youth restiveness in Nigeria. Following this back-ground, the government at all levels has the responsibility to ensure the growth of development of vocational education and training. It is expected that every state and indeed local government should establish one vocational centre, with the view of training vocational education teachers, who are in turn expected to teach vocational education to the youths. The future belongs to the youths who make adequate productive use of vocational training. Nigerian youths can achieve their potential and participate actively in the reduction of unemployment and even create employment opportunity for other youths. It has been observed that, due to high rate of unemployment among youths in Nigeria, there has been an upsurge in youth restiveness, insecurity, insurgency and communal clashes perpetrated by this active population who are jobless, unskilled and with little or no education. The effective approach to arrest this ugly situation is to institute a comprehensive national policy on vocational education and training and as well implement them without prejudice. Finally, to curb unemployment and restiveness among Nigerian youths, it is pertinent to equip them with basic vocational education and training skills, including the right education that leads to self-reliant and as well support them with seed funds to start their own business.

Recommendations
• The following recommendations were made;
• Governments at all levels should provide access to credit facilities including other support logistics to young investors.
• Government and other stakeholders should ensure that vocational education is given top consideration for funding.
• Vocational education teachers should be availed with regular seminars, workshops and training to keep them abreast with the recent developments in the field of vocational education and training, which they will further impact on their students.
• More vocational and technical schools should be built across the country and the existing ones should be strengthened and upgraded to impact the right skills.
• Policy formulation and implementation on vocational education and training in Nigeria must be constantly reviewed and implemented to meet the ever changing demands of 21st century.
• It is important for government to have analysis of the number of vocational education and training centers in the country for proper implementation of government policies.
There is also need for government to put in place proper machinery to standardize, monitor and control the training given to the youths to ensure they are in accordance with the work of life.

References

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