

# Vocational Education and Poverty Reduction: A Tool for Sustainable Community Development in Nigeria

Ishaq Abdulkarim<sup>1\*</sup> Mamman Ali<sup>2</sup>

1. Department of Continuing Education and Externsion Services, University of Maiduguri, P.M.B 1069 Maiduguri, Borno State, Nigeria.
2. Department of Continuing Education and Externsion Services, University of Maiduguri, P.M.B 1069 Maiduguri, Borno State, Nigeria.

\*Email: [abdulkarim\\_ishaq@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:abdulkarim_ishaq@yahoo.co.uk)

## Abstract

This paper reviewed some best practices of Vocational Education around the world. Vocational education as a concept provides people with a living skill to use as a means of livelihood. It further addressed the Nigerian experience from the pre-colonial period and post-colonial experiences. Some suggested measures were also advanced to provide for effective implementation of the Vocational Education programme in Nigeria. The paper also opined as a means which Nigerians need as a fallback position in their effort towards reducing poverty in their communities. Citizen participation as an important arm of Community Development was not feasible as most Nigerians are intimidated with poverty on their necks in the midst of abundance. Hence, the need for Vocational Education among the youths as a means of improving their quality of life.

Keywords: vocational education, poverty reduction, sustainable community development

## 1. Introduction

Nigeria as a nation is blessed with more than 120 million people, spread across the six geo-political zones of the country with more than 150 languages spoken by the ethnic groups. It has been asserted by many scholars that Nigeria can be described as agrarian society since more than 70% of its population engage in agricultural practices (www.cia.gov 2011). The nation is blessed with a vast land of 923,768 square kilometers all of which is arable, for both commercial and subsistence farming, as well as provision of almost all kinds of natural resources for industrialization. Some number of cultural Endeavours that enable people to be self reliant. Worth mentioning is the aborigines' ancient ways of meeting their economic needs before the advent of the imperialists. The citizens of this country were doing well in every facet of their life, i.e in using hand craft transmitted to them by their ancestors, which help them not only to survived in the society but sustain the society. For instance part of the nation is known for leather work, some known for curving, goldsmith, farming, business, etc; learning was purely apprenticeship which help people to graduate with

their jobs. It can be right to observe that, most first world countries of today became what they are as a result of good use of the vocational skills taught to their citizens, which provided them with means of livelihood, to enable them operate above the poverty line.

Nigeria got her independence in 1960, along a crescent of independences of countries such as India, China north and south Korea, Ghana, Camaroon and Pakistan, who formed the third world countries; but today the development gap between these countries and Nigeria must not be over-emphasized. Today, a lot of the products consumed in Nigeria were imported from abroad; which intimidatingly comes from countries we got independence along side or ahead of. Even the spring board our country started on has degenerated as in the case of the power sector due to inadequate skilled persons and poor maintenance attitudes of both leaders and users of the facilities.

The poor development of the Nigerian states could be traced to the concept of education. The citizens were given such education by the advent of the colonial rulers enable them to secure white collar jobs at graduation. Today a lot have gone to such schools, graduated and living without job; which results in the current high trend of unemployment that consequently affect community development. People living in the society lack the economic capability to support the community development or to have the skills to implement identified community development projects. Such situation contradicts the principle of community development projects such as self-help, citizen participation as well as self-reliance.

Currently, the nation is asserted by Dunia(2011) that, the Nigerian unemployment ratio is around 50% and hopefully going to escalate if the intended fuel subsidy is removed. He further said that the current 70% of Nigerians living below the poverty line coupled with the unemployment rate in the nation, removing fuel subsidy could increase the shackles of poverty rendering people to be poor. Because almost half of the population of the country is jobless. The statement release by the conference of Nigerian Political Parties (CNPP) on this figure seems to be classing with government rating of unemployment which was said to be at 14% as at the year 2011. Tube (2011) reported that in Nigeria, unemployment rate among youths within the age group of 20-24 was around 40%. To be realistic if 40% of this category are jobless how much more of those between 18-20 years of age? A simple count on the street is enough technique to falsify the government figure of 14% unemployment rate in Nigeria.

On the other hand, (cia.gov 2011) asserted that, the oil sector provides 95% of foreign exchange earnings and about 80% of budgetary revenues. The GDP of the nation seems to be on growth from 6% in 2008 to 7% in 2009 and 8.4% in 2011(cia.gov2011) such figure, would have been higher if not for our over dependence on the oil sector in Nigeria. It was also revealed by same source that, the current Nigerian labour force composition is put at 50.48 million people in 2010. looking at the labour force base on occupation. That is to say 70% of the labour force are in agriculture, 10% in industry and services. This explains why others argue that the government report on unemployment rate in Nigeria can't be 14% except that, at the breakdown we could see 70% of the 50.48 million people that are said to be employed in Nigeria are found to be in the Agricultural sector ([www.indexmundi.com](http://www.indexmundi.com)>Nigeria).

A question this paper would ask is how productive is agriculture in Nigeria? And how realistic is employment in the Agricultural sector in Nigeria? It was a recent development on the world food day celebration, the Guardian News paper reported that, Nigeria imports food worth N 24trillion annually and have spent \$628 billion per day on rice alone not to talk of fish, sugar and wheat. In this revelation, it was made clear that Nigeria spent N632billion to import wheat, N356 billion to import rice, N217billion on sugar and N97billion in the year 2010. The unfortunate aspect of this report is the fact that, Nigeria produces 500,000 metric tons of rice but consumes 2.5 metric tons hence a supply- demand gap of 2million tons of the commodity. The country as at 2009 was having a rice demand of 2.66 metric tons of rice but its production was at 0.78 metric tons with a supply-demand gap of 1.88 metric tons (Guardian October, 2011).

The report which made Mimiko to conclude in the Guardian news paper that, there is a great departure from the path of the country in 1960s when agriculture provided the main source of employment, income and foreign exchange earnings for Nigeria. If this is the production capability of the 70% ( said to be employed in the agricultural sector) of the said 50.48 million employed persons in Nigeria,(cia.gov 2011). It is better to hold the bull by the horn and accept the fact that unemployment rate in Nigeria is above '50%' (since more than 70% of the nation's populace live below the poverty line) so as to help us strategize for fighting poverty for our national community development as a whole. Hence, the need for vocational education for poverty reduction: A tool for sustainable community development in Nigeria.

## **2. Vocational education defined**

Vocational education is defined by wiseGEEK(2011) as the form of education which people are provided with practical skills that will help them to engage in careers involving manual or practical abilities. On a related view of the term, wikipedia (2011) defined it as a form of education or training which prepares trainees for jobs that are based on manual or practical activities, traditionally non- academic, and totally related to a specific trade, occupation, or vocation.

However in this paper it refers to the skills which if acquired will enable such persons to perform tasks that will earn them a source of livelihood. Education on the other hand is the total experience which results in positive change in human behaviour. Vocational education may be referred to as teaching procedural knowledge.

## **3. Best practices of vocational education around the world**

It can be taught in the secondary or post secondary level and can interact with the apprenticeship system (Non-Formal Education). For instance in Australia, Vocational Education and Training (VET) is mostly post-secondary and provided through the vocational education and training systems usually carried out by registered training organizations. This system comprised both public and private providers in a national

training framework consisting of the Australian Quality Training Framework, Australian qualifications Framework and industry training packages. Their duty is to assess standards for the different vocational qualification (<http://www.decd.org/dataoecd>).

It is worthy to note that, 60% of the funding for apprenticeship in Australia is done by industries and not government. In Finland, the requirements of vocational schools include completion of the LUKIO (high school); the education in vocational school is free and the students from low income earner families are eligible for a state students grants; hence encouraging self-reliance after graduating from high school ([www.en.wikipedia.org](http://www.en.wikipedia.org)).

In Germany, the legal backing for vocational education made youths to be accommodated in companies and trades of life to take the responsibility of training youths into one vocational skill or the other. It is reported that, in 2001 2/3 of young people aged under 22 began an apprenticeship. 78% of same completed it; meaning 51% of all youth under 22 have completed an apprenticeship. One in three companies offered apprenticeships in 2003; in 2004 the government signed a pledge with industrial unions that all companies except very small ones must take on apprentices (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/vocational-education>).

In Hong Kong, the Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education (IVE) provides training in nine different vocational fields, namely Applied science, Business Administration, Child education and community services, construction; design, printing, textiles and clothing. Hotel service and tourism studies, information Technology; electronic Engineering are being offered to post secondary 3, 5 and 7 students which prepares them for the world of life, hence creating employment opportunities for the youths. In a nutshell most if not all of the developed countries grew up to where they are today due to the unanimous efforts for requiring skills to the youths for addressing unemployment in their land ([www.en.wikipedia.org](http://www.en.wikipedia.org)).

In the US, the Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE) is created under the United States department of education to provide Adults and youths with vocational skills to live on instead of being dependant and unproductive. On the other side a post secondary education training is to enable graduates of secondary schools to learn skills that will enable them to get means of becoming productive members of the society, hence curbing unemployment among its populace. The strategy went on to establish community colleges to supply workforce and economic development. The program fall into four general areas which are:

- Adult education and literacy represented within OVAE by division of adult education and literacy (DAEL).
- Rural education represented by the center for rural education.
- Career and technical education.
- Community colleges ([www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)).

#### **4. Forms of Vocational education (skill acquisition ) practiced in Nigeria**

Under the formal sector, in Nigeria the creation of National Board for technical education programme was introduced to procure vocational skills to Nigerian students. These are reported to be giving skills in 6 major trade areas. These areas are, agriculture, business, computer, home economics, industrial technical and others. It could be observed here that going by the current number of these colleges, it may not be adequate to the unbearing number of youths in Nigeria. The population of which reads about 140, million with the children composition of about 59,623,111, which are mostly unskilled and a good number not in school. Eventhough Nigeria has had some history of transmission of life skills to youths by the elderly ones which has help so much in both sustaining and maintenance of the communities by meeting their socio-economic and technological needs through the instrument of traditional education.

### **5. Mordern vocational training centers in Nigeria**

The advent of the colonial rulers tactically discouraged our vocational training centers and modes of their operation; which consequently led to looking down upon our evolved ways of life expressed by Nigerians who call the commodities made within our country as 'local' while they referred to the ones from other countries as 'foreign' placing higher value to the foreign made commodities. And such product may not be of superior quality. For instance the Nigerian made copper wire is practically stronger and transmit higher current compared to the Chinese made. On the other hand, the hide and skin materials we make in Nigeria even though strong yet people opt for a foreign leather shoe which doesn't last in our hot weather environment. The apparent negligence of the traditional vocational training centers gave birth to formalizing modern centers to cater for man-power needs in the society which are often managed by government. These could be federal, state or local tier of government in Nigeria (Dike, 2010). The national policy on education provided a space for the establishment of vocational centers for training of students in technical schools.

Nigeria has about 125 technical schools at present ([www.eeveryculture.com/--/Nigeria.html](http://www.eeveryculture.com/--/Nigeria.html)). Looking at 125 technical training centers meant to cater for the teaming population of 120 million people it can be right to assert that, these centers are inadequate to empower Nigerians towards community development. Such centres could help in the level of empowerment that could reduce poverty situation, thereby involving them in active participation in nation building.

A new impetus came into Vocational education after the world war II, when the armed services had great need for technicians that the civil society could not supply. The aftermath of the war necessitated for the establishment of training centers for veterans wounded during the war to help restore hope in to their hopeless situations (Dike, 2010). In America for instance, several acts were made from 1960 to 1984 in vocational education to secure both youths and adults acquire life-long education to live on or to complement the work force in states or countries (Perkins in Dike, 2010).

Even though vocational education in Nigeria appears weak and not well organised, yet it could help provide people with skills that will make them productive entrepreneurs and involve in creative and innovative ideas that will enhance the nation's economy and its GDP (Friedman, 1982). It was in this light that, the Federal Government introduced the National Directorate for employment (NDE) which brought good news to the

Nigerian youths by providing them with the opportunity to learn various vocational skills under the non-formal sector of education. Skills such as mechanical trade, typing skills electronic maintenance, welding work, etc. The skills if learnt could provide the participants with means of livelihood, hence reducing the weight of poverty towards the development of the communities in the country.

The latest move by the Nigerian government to provide its citizens with vocational skills, was the establishment of technical colleges. However, not all of them are being maintained and effectively used due to poor funding of the educational sector. And vocational education falls under this sector. The effects of this shortage in budgetary allocation to educational sector as against the UNESCO proposed 26% of national budget allocation to education, is observed in the dilapidated structures or classrooms as captured by Daily Sun Newspaper on 27<sup>th</sup> September, 2011.

## **6. Conclusion**

Looking at the trend of unemployment in Nigeria and the over bearing effects of that on the economy, and consequentially development issues in the Nigerian community as whole, it is the candid opinion of this paper that if Nigeria wants its communities to develop, there is need for a quick design of a Non-formal Vocational Education Curriculum for the unemployed youths and adults who are battling with the shackles of poverty due to lack of viable employment opportunities towards building a dynamic Nigeria.

## **7. Recommendation**

- Trade Learning Centers (TLCs) should be established under adult and non-formal education in collaboration with Trade Unions in every community to enhance and address the problem of accessibility to the centers by the learners or participants.
- The Federal Government of Nigeria should ensure adequate and timely funding of the programme under vocational education.
- The government should and ought to collaborate with indigenous organizations interested in skill provision to be the implementers of the programme as partners at the grassroots' level.
- Government should make provision for procuring soft loans to the participants after a successful graduation from the vocational skill acquisition programmes.
- The agencies in charge of the vocational skill acquisition programme should provide market outlets of the goods to be produced for sustainable strategy towards expansion of the micro industry in view.
- The government should enact a law and enforce the banning importation of goods that could be produced in the country so as to encourage growth and development of our local industries.

## **References:**

Central Intelligence Agency (2011). *Unemployment rate in Nigeria*. [www.indexmundi.com](http://www.indexmundi.com)>Nigeria, wikipedia.org and cia.gov

Dike, V.E.(2010). *Vocational education: missing link in Nigeria's development policy*. [vdike@cwnet.com](mailto:vdike@cwnet.com).

Dunia, A.(2011). *Fuel subsidy removal will bring down Nigeria*. Blue Print,10/09/2011. pp 6.

Federal republic of Nigeria (1999). *Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria*.

Friedman, M .(1982). *Capitalism and freedom*: University of Chicago press, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition.

Guardian (2011). *Nigeria imports N24trillion food yearly*. Newspaper Sunday 16/10/2011.[www.ngr.guardiannews.com/](http://www.ngr.guardiannews.com/)

<http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/vocational-education#cite-o>

Tube, Y. (2011). The world fact book.cia.gov

wiseGEEK(2011). *What is vocational Education*.<http://www.wisegeek.com/what-isvocational-education.html>

This academic article was published by The International Institute for Science, Technology and Education (IISTE). The IISTE is a pioneer in the Open Access Publishing service based in the U.S. and Europe. The aim of the institute is Accelerating Global Knowledge Sharing.

More information about the publisher can be found in the IISTE's homepage:

<http://www.iiste.org>

The IISTE is currently hosting more than 30 peer-reviewed academic journals and collaborating with academic institutions around the world. **Prospective authors of IISTE journals can find the submission instruction on the following page:**

<http://www.iiste.org/Journals/>

The IISTE editorial team promises to review and publish all the qualified submissions in a fast manner. All the journals articles are available online to the readers all over the world without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself. Printed version of the journals is also available upon request of readers and authors.

### **IISTE Knowledge Sharing Partners**

EBSCO, Index Copernicus, Ulrich's Periodicals Directory, JournalTOCS, PKP Open Archives Harvester, Bielefeld Academic Search Engine, Elektronische Zeitschriftenbibliothek EZB, Open J-Gate, OCLC WorldCat, Universe Digital Library, NewJour, Google Scholar

