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ENHANCING VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION IN NIGERIA FOR ECONOMIC AND NATIONAL SECURITY DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

A productive, vibrant, flexible and self-reliant workforce is a prerequisite for national development and national economic security of any nation. The demand for skilled workers and technicians is already acute and will become ever more intense as the industrial sector becomes the dominant provider of employment; yet Vocational and Technical Education (VTE) sub-sector is unable to respond to the changing labour market requirements because of the poor attention of government on this aspect of education system in Nigeria. The poor attention of the government is evident in its outdated curriculum, instructional equipment, teaching method, which leads to inappropriate low internal and external efficiencies in Nigeria. However, this paper examined the concept of Vocational Education, Technical Education, security, economic security, national security, national economic security and implication of VTE for national security. It was concluded that enhancement of VTE will bring about sound national economic security in Nigeria. Some recommendations were made. Among which are: there should be proliferation of National Directorate of employment schemes everywhere in Nigeria and Acquisition of vocational skills should be made compulsory from primary level of education.

INTRODUCTION

A productive, competent, flexible and self-reliant workforce is a prerequisite for national economic security in any nation. To achieve this, the need to strengthen Vocational and Technical Education in Nigeria becomes imperative looking at the present economic situation in the country. Comments abound on the relevance of

Vocational and Technical Education in the Country. For instance, Victor (2011) opined that technical and vocation education is an integral part of national development strategies in many societies because of its impact on productivity and economic development. However, the leaders of Nigeria have not given this aspect due attention it deserves.

Lamenting the poor attention of government to Vocational and Technical Education in Nigeria, Adebibe and Ojo (2012) asserted that the demand for skilled workers and technicians is already acute and will become ever more intense as the industrial sector becomes the dominant provider of employment. Despite this, the vocational and Technical Education (VTE) sub-sector is unable to respond to changing labour market requirements because of its present supply-driven orientation. Adebibe and Ojo further asserted that VTE curricula, instructional equipment, teaching methods, and evaluation techniques are outdated leading to low internal and external efficiencies. The management capacity of the technology and science department (TSD) is inadequate to improve the low-performing Vocational and Technical schools. If poor attention to (VTE) continues, it will bring a wider gap between the graduates and employers which can definitely lead to indulgence of our youths in insurgence act and eventually resorts to general anarchy in the country. However, this paper focuses on the enhancement of Vocational and Technical Education in Nigeria and its implications for national economic security.

The Concept of Vocational Education

Vocational Education is an essential aspect of the educational system. Musa (2011) conceived Vocational Education as skills acquisition manpower trainings, creation of occupations and jobs to prepare individuals for gainful employment as professionals in a competitive industry. The youths that range within the age bracket of 12-30 years are exposed to fantasy and idealism. They perceived life in terms of theoretical

concepts yet to be rested in practical form. In addition to the above statement Vocation Education is an occupation or employment that prepares people for specific trades, crafts and careers. In the same vein, Ugwuja in Musa (2011) stated that Vocational Education as an aspect of education was designed to prepare student for industry, agriculture, commerce, home economics, which are usually provided at the senior secondary or lower tertiary level. Ugwuja further reiterated that Vocational Education is a form of practical segment of education that involves skills acquisition for survival and self-reliant. National Policy on Education (NPE), (2009) defined Vocational Education as an aspect of education which leads to the acquisition for practical and applied skills as a basis for scientific knowledge.

Adebibe and Ojo(2012) explained Vocational Education to be skill-based programmes designed for lower level of skills education and focuses on a specific vocational for workplace entry. It is designed to increase the general skills of the vocational trainees as part of preparatory and for secondary education system especially, in relation to their present or future occupations. Vocational Education in this sense is seen as one of the major aspects of education that can heighten national economic security.

The Concept of Technical Education

Technical Education is an essential aspect of the education system in Nigeria. Adebibe and Ojo (2012) stated that Technical Education facilitates the acquisition of practical and applied skills as well as basic technical and scientific knowledge in general fields. They further pointed out the differences between Technical and Vocational Education.

They opined that Vocational Education is designed for a particular vocation while Technical Education does not target any particular vocation but gives general technical knowledge. It can be seen from the above that Vocational and Technical Education are interwoven subjects that cannot be separated from each other. Okorie (2000) viewed Vocational and Technical Education as an education designed to prepare individuals for gainful employment as semi skilled or skilled workers, technicians or sub-professionals in recognized occupation and in new and emerging occupation. It also prepares individuals for enrolment in advanced vocational training. This programme when pursued vigorously will reduce unemployment and encourages self reliance (Ojidu, 2012). Ojidu further added that VTE Programme is the bedrock for sustainable industrialization and national economic security in the country. The question now is, does VTE have any relationship with national economic security?

VTE is related to economic security because it enhances specialization in different skills such as tailoring, weaving, farming, wood work, welding, vulcanizing, bakery among others. These are services that are rendered to citizens as well as sources of economic power to individual. This will also lead to self-reliance, utilization of available resources, bringing about improvement in socio-economic status of the citizens; and eventually, guaranteeing national security.

Governments Efforts at promoting VTE in Nigeria

Suobere (2008) in Adebibe and Ojo (2012) stated that training for industrial occupations in Vocational/Technical school is comparatively recent phenomenon. Adebibe and Ojo asserted

that until the 19th century, apprenticeship and informal training are meant to develop skills for most manual occupation, this apprenticeship is through individual learning skills under their master for years as the case maybe. In recent times, technological advancement, analytical and communication skills were required in Vocational Education as well as more theoretical knowledge.

Uyaya in Adebibe and Ojo (2012) stated that the most important thing that ever happened in the history of Nigeria is the 1981 National Policy on Education, which emphasizes the acquisition of vocational skill and self-reliance. Although the type of education Nigeria adopted and tried to acquire serve the immediate practical needs of job placement, it did not serve the technological need of the country. The importance of science for technological development became imminent. Consequently, in 1970s, the teaching of science began to occupy significant place in the curricula of primary, secondary and tertiary institutions of Nigeria (FRN, 2009). Integrated science came into the programme of primary and secondary schools. Colleges of Technology and Polytechnics were established almost in all the states in Nigeria and more attention were focused on the University of Technology. Efforts were directed towards striking a balance between tertiary and science/technical oriented programmes for Vocational Education in Nigeria (Adebibe and Ojo, 2012).

The Nigerian Government took a bold step to promote the concept of VTE by stating among the objectives of Post Basic Education and Career (PBEC) in her National Policy on Education, which has undergone series of revisions from 1981-2009, includes the following:

- (i) Provide trained manpower in the applied sciences technology and commerce at sub-professional grades.
- (ii) Inspire students with the desire for self-improvement and achievement of excellence;
- (iii) Foster patriotism and national unity with an emphasis on the communities in spite of our diversity;
- (iv) Raise morally upright and well-adjusted individuals who can think independently and rationally, respect the views of labour;
- (v) Provide entrepreneurial, technical and vocational jobs specific skills for self-reliance and for agricultural, industrial, commercial and economic development among others apart from integrated science, and elementary science that were introduced at the primary and junior secondary level.;

Specifically, subjects in Vocational training and technical education were introduced for all students at the senior secondary education level and are made compulsory (FRN, 2009). These subjects include Computer Studies Entrepreneurial Studies, Agricultural, Industrial, commercial and economic security and development, training and impacting the necessary skills leading to the production of craftsmen, technicians and other skilled personnel who will be enterprising and self-reliant. Based on the above, this paper focuses on the enhancement of VTE in Nigeria and the implication for economic security.

The Concept of Security

Security is a concept which relates to the safety of a state. It is said to be the mainstay of any economy. Any country that has security problem is said to be Prabhakaran (2008) defined national security as the measurable state of the capability of a nation to overcome the

prone to danger and can collapse at any point in time. Every nation takes security issue as foremost on its agenda if she must succeed. In this light, Jakayinfa and Mofoluwa (2010) explained that security means freedom from, or elimination of threats, on the physical existence of the state. Issues of security relate to economics, food, health, environment, community, employment and politics. Apart from individual concerns, security is also the concern of government.

Economic Security of the Nation

Economic security comprise of basic social security, having full access to basic needs infrastructure, pertaining to health, education, shelter, information and social protection as well as work related security. Work related security includes income security, representation security, labour market security, employment security and skill reproduction. In the current era of globalization, the national government has been pre-occupied with economic security because social and political arrangements appear threatened. In this regard, the government of a nation tends to take and follow its choice of policies to develop the national economy in the manner desired through international trade, characterized by multinational agreement mutual interdependence and availability of national resources. In Nigeria, economic security today forms part of national security.

National Security

National Security is the measure taken by a country to ensure survival and safety of the human and national resources of the country (Jekayinfa and Mofoluwawo, 2010).

multidimensional threats to the apparent well-being of its people and its survival as a nation-state at any given time,

by balancing all instruments of state policy through governance, that can be indexed by computation, empirically or otherwise and is extendible to global security variables external to it. This implies that National Security relates to absence of threat to life, property and social-economic well being of the people. State-based institutions that are saddled with the responsibility of security of citizens include the police, state intelligence, agencies, the military, immigration and prison service (Thomas, 2009). According to Bernard (2014), any nation that does not take the issue of security, especially in the area of human, seriously will definitely record casualties. Such casualties could result from psychological trauma, apart from direct loss of life and properties. For instance the 'Boko Haram' insurgency in the Northern Nigeria, militant group assault in Niger-Delta area which could be adduced to unemployment and lack of education. Domestically, unemployment is an indication of poor national security in Nigeria.

Again, poor national security situation is also evident in the scourge of armed robberies, kidnapping, assassination, human trafficking and attack of high ranking government officials and selling of contraband goods and drugs across borders, proliferation of arms, street begging, prostitutions are consequences of lack or unavailability of jobs which are indication of national insecurity. Some of the evidences of the national insecurity in Nigeria manifest in bomb blast, Chibuk girls abduction in Bornu state, sabongarikano bomb blast, Nyanya bomb blast and terminus twin bomb blasts in Jos. Jakanifa and Mofoluwa (2010)

National Economic Security

National economic security has to do with the safety of both human and material resources of the state. The safety of individuals and material resources of any nation is largely dependent on the way education is being managed. It has been adduced from the assertion that VTE makes an individual to become self-reliant and it reduces unemployment as well as armed robbery, kidnapping, assassination, human trafficking and attack of high ranking government officials and structures, smuggling of contraband goods and drugs across borders, street begging, prostitution, among others Jakanifa and Mofoluwa (2010).

Implications of VTE for National Economic Security

VTE is an educational programme designed to prepare individuals for gainful employment as semi skilled workers, technicians or sub-professionals in recognized occupations as well as new and emerging occupations. It also prepares individuals for enrolment in advanced vocational training. It is a programme which is geared toward self reliance, self-employment, reduction of pressure on government and effective utilization of available resources in the country. The enhancement of vocational and technical education can lead to proper national security in all ramification especially economic security which includes the safety of personnel, infrastructures pertaining to health, shelter and education. Self-employment will thus reduce crimes, leading to national economic security in Nigeria.

VTE is a planned programme of courses and learning an experience that begins with explanation of career options, supports basic life skills and enables achievement of high

academic standard, leadership, and vocational education and training prepare learners for career that are based in manual or practical activities. Vocational Technical Education makes individuals to work as productive citizens.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, one can conclude that if VTE is given top priority by the government there will be effective national economic security in Nigeria, with commitment of educational administrators and their subordinates.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusion, the following recommendations were made:

A. There should be proliferation of National Directorate of employment schemes everywhere in Nigeria.

B. Acquisition of vocational skills should be made compulsory from the primary level of education

C. Training in vocational skills should be made compulsory for all citizens of a country if these must achieve national economic security.

D. Empowerment of youths should be the major concern of the government, with

these, national economic security can be guaranteed.

E. The Federal Ministry of Education and its appropriate agencies should continue to re-structure vocational courses to be offered on sandwich and on part-time bases to create more opportunities for those out of VTE domain.

F. Each state and local government, in collaboration with the appropriate agencies, should organize relevant apprenticeship scheme and also entrepreneurial training for its youth.

G. Artisan training is obtainable in vocational centres. Emphasis in such centres should be placed on the crafts and cottage industries within the locality. The products of these centres should be encouraged to take the National Telecommunication Commission (NTC) and Nigerian Broadcasting Commission (NBC) examinations

H. Collaboration between industries and institutions in training should be encouraged. Industrial Training Fund (ITF) should organize staff and students industrial attachment as appropriate and in collaboration with the proprietors, institutions and industries.

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