

VOCATIONAL AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP SKILL: A STRATEGY TO CURBING CRIME IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Nigeria is endowed with large youth population, projected to above 50 percent of its population, which can guarantee progressive economic transformation if effectively utilized. Albeit, reverse is the case as the large percentage of the teeming, agile and vibrant youth are unemployed and government over the past years have not shown much commitment to their plight. Worse still, the mainstream of these graduates are not able to engage themselves in self-employed job or business. This paper therefore argues that lack of basic skill requirement for self-employment is responsible for the inability of most graduate youth in Nigeria to be self-reliance. Consequently; youths with weak faith and in-resilient mind take up crime as their self-employment. This ugly situation account for more than 90 percent of the increasing crime in Nigeria, with its continual diversifications and mode of operations; such as internet crimes, Boko Haram disaster, tribal- religious crisis vis-à-vis kidnapping, cum pipeline vandalism by the militants. Considering the roles of vocational skill acquisition and entrepreneurship knowledge in curbing the menace of idle youths taken up crime as a source of livelihood, the paper recommends the need for the Federal Government of Nigeria to strengthen its educational policy with adequate funding and integrate educational program with vocational skills acquisition and entrepreneurship knowledge to provide the youth with the much needed basic skills requirements for self-reliance.

Key words: Youth Unemployment, Vocational Skill Acquisition, Entrepreneurship and Self-reliance.

INTRODUCTION

A country with a large population size, particularly where youths within the age bracket of 15 to 35 years (Reporters, AUG 12, 2014) constituting 70%

of the population like Nigeria, certainly has a sound human resources to guarantee a high Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to boost the country's economy, if such population is sufficiently and efficiently channeled to the production of goods and services, china is a good example. Unfortunately, the opposite is the case in Nigeria, as huge proportion of the youths; swift and very energetic are unemployed and left alone to fend for themselves. Different governments over long period of time have come and gone without really paying serious attention to address the situation. Hence, some of this youths lacking spiritual guidance, have lost hope in securing legitimate employment and fade-up of waiting for government to take care of their situation, particularly graduates among them take up various crimes at different levels as self-employment. Partly because of their levels of education, exposure, smartness and civilization which is not harness for productive activities and partly because they do not possess the relevant basic vocational skills and progressive entrepreneurship knowledge to make them self-reliant. It is based on this background that the researcher intends to showcase the necessity of equipping youths in Nigeria with the relevant vocational skills and entrepreneurial education at both secondary and tertiary levels of education to ensure our future graduates do not only obtain certificates but also possesses technical-know-how to qualify them for desirable employment in their various field of endeavor both at home and abroad and most importantly to make it possible for them to be self-employed, to achieve self-reliance.

Methodology

The study examines Nigerian policies on vocational and entrepreneurship skill acquisition using survey literature to generate relevant information. The sources include journal articles, annual report, newspapers, and magazines among others with a view to identify strategies to curb crime in Nigeria.

Literature review

Unemployment is a global phenomenon and varies across different countries depending on the size and capacity of the economy to provide jobs for its citizens. Unemployment situation in Nigeria, especially among the youth has been on the increase since mid-1980s (Onwuka, Ugwu, Chukwuma, & Chijioko) when the economy started witnessing a down-turn.

Population of Nigeria as of 1 January 2016, was estimated to be 184 635 279 people (Countrymeters, 2016). This is an increase of 2.67 % (4 796 305 people) compared to population of 179 838 974 the year before. Youth Unemployment Rate in Nigeria averaged 16.43 percent from 2014 until 2016, reaching an all-time high of 21.50 % in the first quarter of 2016 and a record low of 11.70 % in the fourth quarter of 2014.

Every coin is with two faces one is head and the other is tail and both faces has equal possibility to face up when the coin is toss, so it is; with a very large population of a nation, as it can be a very huge asset of human resources if efficiently harnessed or it woes when left idle. Large population can facilitate (CareerRide.com, 12/30/11) the development of labour intensive manufacturing sector which can bring about exportation of hand made goods and every hand can become an earning hand for our their country, just as it was in the very good old days of Nigeria at independence and the post-independence era up the time of the discovery of oil.

Nigeria Economy before the Oil: – a flash back.

Agricultural sector used to be the backbone of our economy. Before independence in 1960, Nigeria economy was predominately agrarian with active presence of exports and commercial activities, as raw materials comprising agricultural produce and minerals were exported to the industrialized nations. Nigeria was known worldwide for its exportation (.edu/by, 2014) of farm produce, mainly cash crops. Interestingly, the three regions in Nigeria then have something exporting; there was groundnut and cotton in the northern region, cocoa and rubber in the south and palm oil in the eastern region. The sector was supporting the country's manufacturing industry, as it was providing a steady supply of raw materials for the textile industry to flourish vis-à-vis employment to our youths. The unemployment rate was around 1.5 per cent and was most visible among primary and secondary school leavers (Nigeria.com, 2003). Everyone within the working class age, in the country and available for work; (I.e. not a student) has work, engages in one activity or the other. Ranging from government officials, teachers, and office Clerks, farmers, marketers, Agriculture Extension Workers, transporters, and so on, the list is endless.

Nigeria joined the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) in 1971 and established the Nigerian National Petroleum Company (NNPC) in 1977; (Rosenau, 2009) when it attained a production level of over 2 million barrels of crude oil a day.[as against what is obtainable today below One million barrels (Enejeta, 1st October, 2016) per day years after.] The government could not judiciously invest with the resources generates from the oil, but instead engaged in festivities that could yield little or insignificant result to the country. A good example are Lagos Festac; tagged Festac '77' (.wikipedia.org/wiki/, 15 January 1977 .) also known as the Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture, a cultural jamboree held in Lagos, *Nigeria*. Without any caution or having any foresight for possible negative effects.

Part of the reasons for this reckless spending can also be appreciated from a statement of one researcher, that it was money earned by a country (Sep, 2016) with less or little effort. (Abdulrahim, 2013). This celebration of self-acclaim affluence was totally uncalled for as it is deceptive and also economic evil. Because affluence is not a function of the availability of resources at one's disposal, (Abdul Rahim, 2013) rather extend of effective utilization of the so - called "resources" to meet the social and psychological needs of individuals, persons or nation in general. This, affluence Nigeria proudly announced to the world as contained in the speech of a former military Head of state,(Olayinka, 2014) that "Money is not Nigeria's problem, but how to spend it", was badly manage, wasted and stolen into personal pockets of those entrusted with government offices and treasury; and has now become the bane of the country's economic growth. As if the ugly situation was not bad enough, Nigeria government in continued celebration of the dominant role of Petroleum production in the Nigeria's economy, as it account for about 90% of her gross earnings, turns it back against agriculture, the traditional stronghold (Izuchukwu, 2011) of the nation economy from the early fifties and sixties. Like the proverbial saying; **"Nigerian government killed the goose that was laying the golden eggs"** (Abdul Rahim`, 2013) **thereby sawing the seed of a mono-economy and it resultant effects of unemployment and its aftermath consequences of raising crime in the country.** Since then, Nigeria has undergone fundamental structural changes resulting to structural shifts which have however not resulted in any significant sustainable economic

growth and development to ensure adequate employment opportunity for her youths (Izuchukwu, 2011).

To buttress our argument, on why Nigeria found herself in this unfortunate situation ALLAH (SWT) state in the Holy Qur'an (ch: 14 v: 7)

“Wa-ith taaththana rabbukum la-in shakartum laazeedannakum wala-in kafartum inna AAathabee lashadeed”. **Meaning ...and remember! Your Lord caused to be declared (publicly): "If ye are grateful, I will add more (favours) unto you; but if ye show ingratitude, truly My punishment is terrible indeed.**

By implication, the blessings to Nigeria through the discovery of crude oil and its subsequent exportation, (Rosenau, 2009) was not judiciously utilized which led to the untold hardship of our contemporary youths. If our leaders have shown gratitude to ALLAH (swt) they would have been blessed with the wisdom and foresight in utilizing effectively the new gift [oil], and, would have been able to put in place very solid facilities and infrastructures sufficient for laying basic foundation for the prosperity and development of the country.

Unemployment and the Raising Crime in Nigeria

Unemployment is a social and as well economic issues(Ogunyomi & Oginni, 2013; Onwuka et al.) which every nation deals with regularly but differently. In fact, the classical economists averred that there can never be a situation of total employment in any economy. Economic problems usually lead to social tensions (Ruhl, 2011) and it is youth that are the most powerful conduit of discontent. Disillusionment in the face of joblessness is all the greater when one has never had a job before, and the search for a job seems hopeless. Hence, not having the chance to take one's place in society leads to deep disenchantment with that society – and with its governing structures. Unemployed youth therefore, can be a destabilizing factor within fragile societies, (Ruhl, 2011) and we can see – from far away Greece, Tunisia, Egypt, and to the Niger Delta - how finely balanced social stability is when society's economic values are threatened. No value can be more important than a job. Phillipson (2009) cites Henrik Urdal (2006) who also argues that youth bulges provide greater opportunities for violence through the abundant supply of young men and women, who have low opportunity

costs and stronger motives for violence as a result of —cohort crowding around fixed resources. Jared Diamond (2006) has presented evidence to show that the genocides in Rwanda and Burundi were not so much ethnically inspired as responses to rural overcrowding and an unsustainable demographic explosion. Without jobs (Ruhl, 2011) many youth, especially young men, will not be able to play a useful role in the society. They are effectively excluded from mainstream society, unable to achieve —manhood and remain —youth men some members of this group may turn to escapism through drugs and alcohol. Others migrate to urban areas in an attempt to remake themselves in an anonymous setting like the case of Boko Haram in the Northeast of Nigeria. In areas of political and social fragility, others will achieve adulthood by joining rebel groups or armed militant gangs good example, is the so-called Niger Delta militant who now have a re-brand name as Niger Delta Avengers. Even after a conflict there is always the possibility of ex-combatants returning to an armed struggle if their demands or aspirations are not met. The overall picture that is emerging is quite grim, (Reporters, AUG 12, 2014) not only for our youths in particular, but also for the country in general. The implication of this dire condition of existence is that we are (Reporters, AUG 12, 2014) bringing up a generation that is alienated, angry, and seeking vengeance against society and the symbols of the exploitation and repression of the condition of youth. It is why criminal gangs, and all manner of rabid and insane insurgency and militancy entrepreneurs have a ready market for recruitment. This is why youth employment in Nigeria must be taken seriously as it is very significant in maintaining social stability to support nation building and to turn youth's intelligence, capabilities and zealotry into resourcefulness to be harnessed for the economic development of the nation.

When a crime is committed and the criminal is imprisoned he/she does not pay the price alone, like the report (Autumn-Winter, 1981,) of the average cost of holding a person in American jail. Rather a wide range of casualties are involved. First, the imprisoned loses his freedom, the period of life spent in incarceration [to us as Muslims] is a wasted portion of the fixed time privilege opportunity he/she has to live in this world [Q chapter: v:] and in a normal society with good morals, like Nigeria in the past up to the late seventies;(70s) the personality of the imprisoned is condemned and the future life

is also ruined. Depending on the nature and gravity of the offence, the children, down to the great grandchildren will be affected as history will forgive reminding them of this ugly past, as they will be refer to as the children of the prisoner. Government take in this is the cost of feeding, taking care of the imprisoned in terms of health, clothing, psychological and mental fitness. The society however, takes the bigger cost. Because the family of the imprisoned not lucky to be taken care of with love and affection, and thus experience the cruelty of the society is now a fertile ground for grooming of hard hearted individuals and most likely potential future criminals. The society therefore lost intelligence, capabilities and youthful zealously of these individuals that would have been channeled to productive activities towards the development of the nation to the crime empire. Again, the money spent on the holding, training and maintenance of continuing imprisonment of criminals is more than enough to provide gainful employment for thousands of graduates frustrated looking for work. And some of them in the prisons would not have been there, because they would not have shop for crime jobs in the first instants.

Past Government's Efforts Attempts to Reduce Youths Unemployment

There is no gain saying that the continued existence of Nigeria as a nation is at a delicate state. Because the grievous situation of its teeming youth unemployment can be likening to the popular phrase 'sitting on a time bomb' and the very little efforts made by past successive government to improve on the plight of the Nigerian youth have not really have (AGU & MBAH, 2013) desirable impacts as unemployment keep raising alongside the population raising of the nation geometrically. Though evidently, from the policies of the previous policy makers in Nigeria, one cannot be wrong to say that Nigerian government have from time immemorial realized the crucial role the attainment of for full employment of labour (AGU & MBAH, 2013) in the process of cementing economic growth with the developmental requirement of the nation.

Skills acquisition and employment generation have remained a central point in the Nigerian Government policy. AS each of the National Development plan were embedded in it, a clear good intention to create jobs as an effort in solving the lingering problem of the ever increasing population of unemployed youths. The first National Development Plan (FNDP) 1962-68,

(AGU & MBAH, 2013) was centered on creation of employment opportunity to all citizens. The Second National Development Plan (SNDP) used industrialization as envisaged in the industrial policy to create more employment opportunities (FRN, 1970). The 3NDP and 4NDP also have as one of their objectives, “the reduction in the level of unemployment” (FRN, 1975; FRN, 1980). Between 1973 and 1981, employment expanded in the public sectors, the private sector and the services sector (Ibe, 1994s). This tremendous success did however suffer some setbacks do to the continuous fall in crude oil price since 1982 and up to 1986 its resulting effects of shortfalls in the accompanying reduction in foreign exchange earnings shrinking government revenues, leading to shortage of raw materials and spare parts for industries relying on importation sources. Consequent upon this is setting in of depression in business of firms engaged in retailing and servicing imported goods. Retrenchment of workers was the reaction of both public and private sectors as a strategy to curb the economic realities of the time. This perhaps may be yet another laying foundation of serious unemployment problem in Nigeria, which continued till 1986 when President Babangida led administration come up with some sound strategies attempting to solve unemployment problem of the nation. Between 1986 and now, numerous administrations’ creativities to promote self-dependence and self-reliance in the generation of gainful self-employment have been profound. First was the acquisition of vocational skills, because it is believed that the education system in operation since the post-independence placed prominence on academic excellence rather than skill acquisition which can have fortified the individual for a more useful and fulfilling life within the society. A new national policy on education was promulgated in 1977, introducing vocational courses in the educational curriculum. Since it is believed that Vocational skills acquisition would be more relevant to the development of the nation, the ineffectiveness of the vocational courses in the school curriculum to address youth unemployment which assumed alarming proportion, prompted the Federal Government to set up the Chukwuma Committee on 26 March, 1986 (Omoruyi and Osunde, 2004). Directorate of Employment was created in November 1986 based on the report of the Committee charged with the responsibility of promoting skills acquisition; facilitate the spirit of creativity, self-reliance and independence. This has resulted in the creation of many vocational skills’ training centers some of which are still functioning (Awogbenle & Iwuamadi, 2010).

However, the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategies (NEEDS) published a document which states that many of the responses to improvement in employment and poverty reduction appeared to be ad-hoc, uncoordinated and more or less fire-brigade approach. The document shows that about 28 projects and programmes that assists in creating employment, intended to have impact on poverty reduction has been undertaken from 1975 - 2001 (NEEDS document, 2004). Programmes such as Community Bank, DFRRI, National Directorate of Employment (NDE), People's bank, Better Life for Rural Women, Family Support Programme were some of such projects aimed at curbing the menace of unemployment (NEEDS document, 2004). It is however, argued that, though none of these programmes is completely without merits, they obviously could not have a significant, lasting and sustainable positive effect. The Nigerian Living Standard Survey (NLSS 2004) www.nigerianstat.gov.ng/nlss/, (2006) of NEEDS document also supported this arguments reference to its data on poverty indices in Nigeria. (NEEDS document, 2004).

Directorate of Food, Road and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) established to provide immediate and direct jobs to the unemployed Nigerians interested in agriculture and, National Directorate of Employment (NDE) which served as the national agency for tackling unemployment in the country, was put in place to give training opportunities to the unemployed, especially the youth, to acquire skills in the field of Agriculture, Technical and Vocational jobs, as well as crafts and poultry. NDE also, was providing guidance, finance and other support services, to help the unemployed youths to create jobs for themselves and for others. However very limited funds was provided for this programmes thereby hindering their smooth operations (Onwuemele, 1990).

The overriding objectives of NDE were to give National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) which come up with the document castigating the federal government programmes established earlier, in an attempt to solve in particular youth unemployment problem in Nigeria, was introduced by the Obasanjo led civilian administration, which also, aims at providing multiple sources of employment generation through

education, investment and public policy. Shamefully and disappointingly disheartening, NEEDS was able to point accusing fingers to the earlier similar programmes established before it, but in the same vein, NEEDS also failed. Ironically, similar like's factors such as failure of infrastructural policies; deficient governance structure and mismanagement; poor projects/policy design and, the big one, problems of the educational sector were identified to be responsible.

Furthermore, same Obasanjo as the then Military Head of States introduces Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) in 1976. Again, lack of sustenance of agricultural policies, inadequate provision of fertilizers to farmers, as well as over centralization of implementation were pointed out as key factors that caused the failure of the OFN programme (Nzeshi, 2006). The immediate past government of Goodluck E. Jonathan, also makes some efforts in trying to content unemployment particularly among youths. Consequently, certain institutional arrangements and agencies were put in place to provide youths with employment opportunities. Most prominent programs among others include the Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P), the Youth Enterprise with Innovation in Nigeria (YOU-WIN).

The SURE-P was introduced in February 2012 and focuses on management and investment of federal government savings derived from proceeds accruing from the partial removal of the subsidy on petroleum products. The SURE-P is the flagship of Goodluck E. Jonathan led administration efforts to provide job opportunities to graduates of tertiary institutions. It is more or less a whole range of activities and programmatic schemes, including the Graduate Internship Scheme (GIS), Community Services Scheme (CSS), Vocational Training Scheme (VTS), and Community Services, Women and Youth Empowerment (CSWYE), the aforementioned programmes of the last administration aim at generating employment for youths did not record any significant success. As evidenced by the ugly and unfortunate disaster that followed the last the 4000 vacant positions declared by the Nigeria Immigration Service, which resulted into lost of lives of many graduate youths, as hundreds of thousands youths stormed various recruitment centers in the country (including the FCT-Abuja) struggling furiously to succeed in the recruitment exercise. This pathetic situation Nigerian youth find themselves was also confirmed by Special Assistant on Sustainable

Banking, CBN, Dr. Aisha Mahmood, serving in that government. In her words “In Nigeria, there is the issue of youth and employment. 70 per cent of the 80 million youths in Nigeria are either unemployed or underemployed (daniel, June 6, 2014). We are all witness to what happened recently during the immigration recruitment exercise and this is simply because 80 per cent of the Nigerian youth are unemployed”.

In view of the fact that Nigeria government over the years has failed to tackle unemployment problems of Nigeria graduates and couple with the fact most Nigeria graduates lacks the relevant basic vocational skills and progressive entrepreneurship knowledge that can empower them to venture into entrepreneurship in various fields of endeavor such as Industry and trade, Vocational agricultural education, home economics, business education, distributive education to be self-employed. Worst still, the few of these graduates possessing the prerequisites to stand on their own, to create job for themselves and be self-reliant lack the capital to do so and are not giving the desire financial support to utilize their acquired knowledge and skills to create job for themselves and others.

Consequently, these unemployed youths have taken into crimes as a surviving option. Hence, raising crimes in Nigeria is therefore not suppressing and not accidental or, a natural disaster that is beyond human control. It man- made and systematically deliberately planned by those giving the privilege to Governed this nation over the years. Different governments over long period of time have come and gone without really paying serious attention to address the situation. Hence, some of this youths lacking spiritual guidance, have lost hope in securing legitimate employment and fade-up of waiting for government to take care of their situation, particularly graduates among them take up various crimes at different levels as self-employment. Partly because of their levels of education, exposure, smartness and civilization which is not harness for productive activities and partly because they do not possess the relevant basic vocational skills and progressive entrepreneurship knowledge to make them self-reliant. It is based on this background that the researcher intends to showcase the necessity of equipping youths in Nigeria with the relevant vocational skills and entrepreneurial education at both secondary and tertiary levels of education to ensure our future graduates do not only obtain

certificates but also possesses technical-know-how to qualify them for desirable employment in their various field of endeavor both at home and abroad and most importantly to make it possible for them to be self-employed, to achieve self-reliance.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The nation's economic crisis is seriously affecting youths, because it has raised the rate of mass unemployment resulting in high rate of poverty at both individuals and family levels. The condition has been responsible for the increase in social vices, criminal activities and national insecurity. Hence the fusion of vocational skill acquisition and basic entrepreneurship education into school's curriculum in Nigerian Education sector would equip graduates with the basic industrial and commercial skills which is perceived to be a panacea to graduate unemployment. The study recommends that government should strengthen vocational and entrepreneurship skills acquisition in order to make it functional. The federal government of Nigeria needs to strengthen its educational policy with adequate funding. It is desirable to integrate educational program with vocational skills acquisition in Nigeria, so as to produce graduates that will be job creators rather than job seekers. Entrepreneurship knowledge and skills acquisition need to be upgraded to high level standard, for it to provide the youth with much needed basic skills required for self – employment.

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