The Role of Technical and Vocational Education in Poverty Reduction among Youths in Nigeria

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Abstract
This purpose of this paper is to examine the role of technical and vocational education in the reduction of poverty among youths in Nigeria after university education. The problem of this study is to ascertain the potency of Nigeria higher education for poverty reduction among youths in Nigeria. The area of study comprises of the eighteen local government areas of Edo State. Descriptive survey design was employed for the study with a population of 150 students. Three research questions were formulated and analyzed using arithmetic mean method. The finding of this study revealed that technical and vocational education can play a vital role in reducing poverty as well as equipping, building and making our youths self-employed, reliable and employable in an industry or company after university education. However, the paper recommends that one of the ways by which government should reduce poverty and generate employment is to focus on a functional, technical and vocational education and that graduates of the programmes should be encouraged with soft loans/micro credit for a start.

Keywords: role, technical vocational education, poverty eradication, youths, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION
The dawn of the 21st century has brought profound and fundamental changes to economics, technology, politics, culture, morals, social values and ethics. Globalization is the driving force in all these changes. While globalization has induced the collapse of time and space, it has also expanded opportunities and challenges for individuals and for nations and has sidelined the weak and unprepared (Anya, 2001). The task of the university education will then be to empower the youths to be able to cope with the industrial and economic environment to contribute to economic growth of the nation.

Education has for long been recognized and accepted as a panacea for Nigeria’s ills and woes particularly, in the case of higher education. Stupendous amount of money and the other resources, even though inadequate, are expended on the university annually. Unarguably, all stakeholders look up to the universities as the nation’s beacon of hope, light and civilization. For this reason, over 50 public universities are springing up all over the nooks and crannies of the country (Ejiogu and Onyene, 2006). Nigeria’s philosophy of education is aimed at education that foster the worth and development of the individual, for each individual, for each individual sake and for the general development of the society there is need for empowerment so as to break the chains of poverty for necessary liberation. Are the Nigeria youths hopeful? Do they see the light? The question and agitation for the empowerment of the youth and their liberation through higher education is fast becoming almost hysterical even after reported cases of incessant strike actions by lecturers, inadequate infrastructures in the universities, poor funding of the universities, brain drain and do on, within the university system.

Instance abound when university graduates are not employable in the labour market. The situation becomes worrisome and intriguing with the speed rate of opening up of new universities with its attendant alleged unemployment of “unqualified” staff, and stragglers from other universities. Higher education means different things to many people, but the purpose is perceived to be the same. It is the type of education that focuses on professionalization. Gay (2005), who opined that poverty, can only be eliminated if the students, who have been urged to go to school, actually receive some tangible benefit for their years spent in school.

In higher education teaching, there is research and social activities of the universities which are all within the realm of teaching. Higher education generally involves work towards a degree level or foundation for degree qualification. In most developed countries a high proportion of the population (Up to 50%) now enters higher education which is therefore very important to national economy, both as source of trained and educated personnel for the rest of the economy (Schofield, 2005).

University qualifications need to match employers and labour market requirements as closely as possible. Mass unemployment of university graduates
is the result where university programmed and the labour market are at variance. The issue of relevance utilitarian criteria based on prospects of income generation at completion of a programme should be uppermost in the programmes provided by universities. The idea of pursuing knowledge for its own sake or for the sake of engaging in a programme of study giving passion for learning in a particular subject area will seem quaint if it is remembered at all (Roberts, 2006).

Youth (in the developed world): like all identities, is a culturally relative manifestation whose meanings and applications are specific to certain times and locals for those living in present-day western cultures, the term youth refers to persons who are no longer children and not yet adults. In a strictly legal sense, the term is typically applied to a person from the time of their early teens until a point between 16 and 21, after which the person is legally an adult. As an adult they are endowed privileges such as the right to vote and consumes alcohol etc. used colloquially, however, the term generally refers to a broader, more ambiguous field of reference. From physically adolescent to those in their late 20s, the United Nations, for example, defined youth as people between the ages of 15 and 24 years inclusive (United nations education and scientific children organization, 2006).

Poverty refers to a situation and process of serious deprivation or lack of resources and material necessary or living within a minimum standard conducive to human dignity and well being (UNESCO, 2005). Poverty connotes deprivation of the means of subsistence, the manifestation of poverty, that is inadequate distribution of resources, access to basic social services like education and health, food scarcity, low life expectancy, and lack of participation in decision making process (Brown, 2006; Carrey, 2006; world Bank, 2006; web et al, 2005; Ransburg, 2006). For the purpose of this paper poverty is viewed as deprivation of common necessities that determine the quality of life which include food, clothing, shelter and safe drinking water, and may also include the deprivation of opportunities to learn, to obtain better employment to escape poverty and/or to enjoy the respect of fellow citizens. This can be measured in terms of absolute or relative poverty. Absolute poverty refers to a set standard which is consistent in over time between countries. An example of an absolute measurement would be the percentage of the population eating less food than is required to sustain the human body, which may lead to extreme poverty.

Vocational and technical education is that aspect of education that gives its recipients an opportunity to acquire practical skills as well as some basic scientific knowledge (Nigerian national policy on education, 2004). Pudding (2004) defined vocational and technical education as that type of education which fits the individuals for gainful employment in recognized occupation as semi-skilled workers or technicians or sub-professionals. 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 and employees or as self-employed. Vocational education nurtures skill that are necessary for agricultural, industrial, commercial and economic development and this builds a self-reliant nation. In effect, vocational education is the education that is focused on building a self-reliant society.

Vocational education according to Oni (2006) includes technical education while vocational education provides for the training or retraining designed to prepare individuals to enter into a paid employment in any recognized occupation, technical education on the other hand, in common practice, is composed of theoretical and practical instruction such instruction is usually given to those who need to be employed in commerce and industry or in any type of enterprise which involves the use of tools and other machinery for their operational service (Adetoro, 2003).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM
Poverty reduction or income generation is very important in the lives of the youths after university education. The questions therefore are: what is the hope of Nigeria youths after their university education? Do they really discover their potentials having gone through the university? What then can we say are the contributions of Nigeria universities to poverty reduction among the Nigeria youth? It becomes imperative; to ascertain the potency of Nigerian higher education for poverty reduction among the youths and to proffer that Technical and Vocational Education is one of the measures for enhancement and sustainability of youth empowerment.

PURPOSE OF STUDY
The purpose of this study is to find out the role of technical and vocational education in poverty reduction in Nigeria; specifically, this study sought to find out:

i. If technical and vocational education programme can earn the youths of Nigeria a living;
ii. To know the extent to which technical and vocational education has achieved its set objective in poverty reduction among youths in Nigeria.
iii. If technical and vocational education can be used in reducing poverty in Nigeria.
RESEARCH QUESTION
For the purpose of this study the following research questions were formulated:

i. What impact can technical and vocational education have on the youths to earn a living in Nigeria?

ii. Is technical and vocational education achieving the set objectives of poverty reduction among youths in Nigeria?

iii. What ways can technical and vocational education help in reducing poverty among youths in Nigeria?

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY
This paper will be of benefit to the Nigerian government. It will help the government of Nigeria to focus on employment creation through a functional, technical and vocational education that emphasizes practical skills and self reliance or employable in an industry or company after university education.

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY
This study is only a way of reducing poverty among the youths after university education in Nigeria.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY
This study was carried out in Edo State. Edo State is a very large state with a lot of geographical differences. To ensure proper coverage the technical colleges and the vocational centres of the 18 local governments areas were used for the research work since this is where most of the vocational centres are located. This was considered adequate and sufficient representative to make tentative generalization.

DESIGN OF THE STUDY
This study employed a descriptive survey design. Nworgu (2004) defined descriptive survey research design as one in which a group of items or people are students by collecting and analyzing data from only a few people or items considered to be representative of the entire group or by collecting and analyzing data from the entire population.

POPULATION AND SAMPLE OF THE STUDY
Students from all registered vocational training centres and the technical colleges in Edo state formed the population of this study. The sample of this study consists of one hundred and fifty (150) respondents of students from the registered vocational training centres and the technical colleges.

DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES
The questionnaires were administered by the researchers himself and they were immediately collected on the spot. The entire questionnaire distributed were duly completed and returned. This gave a 100 percent return rate.

METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS
The data collected were analyzed using arithmetic mean. A mean of 2.50 and above was taken as an index of agreement by the students while a means of below 2.50 was taken as an index of disagreement, by the students.

Research Question 1
What impact can technical and vocational education have on the youths to earn a living in Nigeria?

To answer this research question, Table 1 below is presented.

Table 1: The impact Technical and Vocational Education have on the youths to earn a living in Nigeria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>ITEMS</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>TOTAL NO</th>
<th>TOTAL SCORE</th>
<th>X MEAN</th>
<th>REMARK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Vocational and technical education can earn a living for the youth</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>538</td>
<td>3.39</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Vocational and technical education is a way of reducing unemployment</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>524</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Acquisition of practical skill help in personal development of youth</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>518</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Vocational and technical educational is the total of those organized and purposeful experience essential to career development</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>488</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Establishment of vocational and technical schools help in specializing the youth in any choice of study</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>470</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 above showed that items 1-5 agreed with a mean rating ranging from 3.13 to 3.59 which means technical and vocational education can empower youth and give them a brighter future.

Research Questions 2
Is the vocational education achieving the set objective of poverty reduction among youths in Nigeria? To answer this research question, Table 2 below is presented.

Table 2: The impact Technical and Vocational Education have on the youths to earn a living in Nigeria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>ITEMS</th>
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<td>150</td>
<td>538</td>
<td>3.39</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Vocational and technical education is a way of reducing unemployment</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>50</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>524</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
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<td>84</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>518</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
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<td>56</td>
<td>79</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>488</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
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<td>48</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>470</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2: Achievement of technical and vocational education objective of poverty reduction among youths in Nigeria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Vocational and technical education has a long way in reducing poverty among the unemployed youth in the society</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>498</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Increase in education also affect productivity and growth</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>442</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Corruption is one of the causes of poverty and vocational and technical education has the power to reduce it.</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>439</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Inadequacy involve in vocational and technical educational and training policy implementation bring about unemployment</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>407</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Vocational and technical education and training head-off the scourge of poverty by targeting the agricultural sector</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>460</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In responds to research question 2, Table 2 above shows that item 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 agreed with a mean rating ranging from 2.71 to 3.32, indicating that the set objectives in the reduction of poverty among youths in Nigeria can be actualized.

Research Question 3
What ways can technical and vocational education help in reducing poverty among youths in Nigeria?

Table 3: Ways through which technical and vocational education help in reducing poverty among youths in Nigeria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>ITEMS</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>SD</th>
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<th>X MEAN</th>
<th>REMARK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>National Directorate of employment, skill acquisition centre and vocational and technical education has the same vision</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>462</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Education ensures the success of poverty alleviation programme</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>485</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Skill acquisition centres are the best place to develop the wealth of a nation</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>457</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Rural development cannot be achieved without poverty alleviation programme in Nigeria</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>457</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Poverty alleviation program has no benefit on the poor masses of Nigeria</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>367</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>Disagreed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In response to research question 4, table 8 above shows that item 16, 17, 18 and 19 agreed with the mean rating ranging from 3.05 to 3.08 and disagreed to one of the item with a mean rating of 2.46, meaning poverty reducing can be promoted through the provision of technical and vocational education and poverty alleviation programmes.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS
From the study as showed in Table 1, it was discovered that vocational and technical education have positive impact on youth in areas of poverty reduction. It equally shows that vocational and technical education develop youths by equipping them with practical skill needed to earn a living thereby, reducing unemployment and specializing them in any choice of study for purposeful experience essential to career development, which tallied with UNESCO (2006) and Odusola (2001) that vocational education can help to make an individual survive/leave above poverty level of one dollar a day meal.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY
Based on the study, the following findings were made:
1. Technical and vocational education can empower the youths in Nigeria and give them a brighter future.
2. The set objectives of technical and vocational education can reduce poverty among youths in Nigeria.
3. Poverty reduction can be promoted through the provision of technical and vocational education and poverty alleviation programmes.
Also Table 2, it can be deduce that vocational and technical education has limitation in terms of policy implementation. Notwithstanding, vocational and technical education is achieving its set objective of poverty reduction by engaging unemployed youth in productive activities, increase their level of awareness and by extension their level of education.

In view of Table 3, one sure way for vocational and technical education to achieve it set objective of poverty reduction is by liaising with such other bodies that share the same vision with it, such bodies are National Directorate of Employment (NDE) and skill acquisition centre. It goes further to show that rural development cannot be achieved without programmes like vocational and technical education. This is why Oseyi (2004), Osuji (2004) highlighted that government strongly believes that the objectives of job creation and poverty reduction can only be realized through appropriate education which empowers the products of the education system with skills and competencies to become self employed. This hop of the federal government can only be true and realized only if the vocational subjects are well taught in our secondary schools and tertiary institutions and this correspond with the findings in table 2 and 3 respectively.

CONCLUSION
In summation, no meaningful poverty alleviation can be achieved by any nation without effective and efficient technical and vocational education system programmes, since the level of development in a country is often considered to be an offshoot of the nature of her educational programmes and system.

RECOMMENDATIONS
It is therefore suggested that the following measures if well articulated will mitigate and or reduce poverty among Nigerian youth graduates.
1. Government should focus on employment creation through a functional technical and vocational education.
2. Emphasis should be on the practical aspect of technical and vocational education which will help to produce productive youths of the nations’ labour force that will be self-reliant or employable in an industry or company.
3. Graduates of the programmes should be encouraged to be self-employed by assisting them with soft loans and /or micro credit. The quality of vocational and technical educational output must be improved if the expected outcome is to be achieved.

REFERENCES


