

**TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION:  
PANACEA FOR ENHANCED EMPLOYABILITY OF  
NIGERIAN YOUTHS**

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PRESENTED AT THE

ASUP Federal Polytechnic Ilaro Chapter 4<sup>th</sup> National Conference Held at the  
Multipurpose Hall, The Federal Polytechnic Ilaro, On 5<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> September 2011

## **Abstract**

The world economic crisis has further made profound the woes of global unemployment. In Nigeria, the concerns for unemployment are graver because it is not all about the scarcity of jobs, but about the employability of the job seekers. This paper carefully presents the Nigerian employment challenges, establishes a nexus between employability and unemployment, dissects the concept of Technical and Vocational Education and suggests how employability of Nigerian youths can be enhanced with the instrumentality of Technical and Vocational education

## **INTRODUCTION**

In the report recently issued by the International Labour Organization (ILO) that coincided with the launch of the United Nations International Youth Year on 12<sup>th</sup> August 2010, global youth unemployment has reached its highest level on record, and is expected to soar higher in future years. The report gave pathetic details of how 81million youths out of some 620 million economically active ones aged 15-24 years, were unemployed at the end of 2009. The ILO report further reveals that youth unemployment rate increased from 11.9% in 2007 to 13.0% in 2009, and expatiated on how unemployment, underemployment and idleness can impinge on the future of economies. No thanks to the world economic crisis.

Staggering figures tend to exist for Nigeria's unemployment rate. However, most authoritative amongst the widely available data is that of the National Bureau of Statistics which according to Clement (2010) has it that the youth accounts for 94% of the total number of unemployed persons in Nigeria. It was estimated in 2006 that about 3000000 youths entered the labour market with tertiary education about 1 million with secondary education, about 2.5 million with primary education and about 08 million with no education making about 4-5 million cumulative entrance in 2006. This figure has now increased geometrically to about 13.5-14 million in the year 2011. Concisely, 60%-80% of Nigeria youths within employable age are currently unemployed. Corobatively, authorative information that was presented by thr Central Bank of Nigeria's Governor, Sanusi Lamido Sanusi during an address of the Nigerian Senate early this year was that unemployment in Nigeria was at an alarming rate of 41.6%. The foregoing leads to a conclusion: the fact that unemployment is extremely endemic in Nigeria. When locating this unemployment challenges internationally by recouring the CIA World Facts Book, which adopts an objective adjustment of unemployment rate of different countries that are usually gotten via different subjective methodologyies, to a common concept to allow for international comparison, the unemployment rate for Nigeria, though halted to 19.7%, was still worrisome when comparedto those of Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, and Bahrain, which had 9.4%, 13.0%, 13.3% and 15% respectively, and whose citizens have recently towed the revolution path in ptotesting the toll those relatively modest unemployment rates have had on their economies. The present calmness in our system is either a reflection of the hypothesis that Nigerian are the happiest people on earth or that their docility and religious nature have prevented them from being oushed to the limits. More serious concern is that of the employability of Nigerian youths, which is intertwined with this grave unemployment situation.

This paper, however strives at linking employability enhanced by technical and vocational education to a proactive panacea for addressing unemployment; preventing an eventual "revolutional awakening" of the Nigerian masses, and ensuring that Nigeria leap-frogs from economic back waters to achieving its vision of standing in the list of the best 20 economies by year 2020.

## **DEFINING EMPLOYABILITY**

Before an individual can be employed within a work setting, whether on a personal level or organized working environment, he or she has to be employable.

Brown and Hesketh (2004) define employability as the relative chances of setting and maintaining different kinds of employment. Similarly, Hillage and Poland (1998) define employability as a person's capability of gaining initial employment, maintaining employment and obtaining new employment if required. It is the ability to advance sufficiently within the labour market and realize economic opportunities via sustainable employment. However, employability is fundamentally dependent on the assets of knowledge, skills, attitudes and the manner by which such assets are presented and the context, both in terms of personal job circumstance or a formal working setting within which individual seek to work.

Employability now has new implications in the new world capitalistic order where emphasis is given to skill-based solutions to economic competition and creativity to subjugating poverty. And the new paradigm shift in employability is the focus on development capabilities for private engagement, and not just technical sufficiency requisite in presenting intimidating 'Curriculum Vitae' dominated by outstanding achievements to high paying formal organizations.

## **ENHANCING EMPLOYABILITY OF NIGERIAN YOUTH WITH THE INSTRUMENTALITY OF TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION**

In Nigeria today, the stark reality of high unemployment rate confronting us must first be seen within the context of employability of the teeming youths that are either out of job or seeking for job. While unemployment rate is alarming, employers are also complaining that most Nigerian youths are technically unemployable, while the vista of self sufficient technical and vocational jobs for youths equally seems to be at the ebb. And poverty and social problems keep compounding. Coincidentally, the foregoing has a nexus with decreased emphasis on technical and vocational education in Nigeria, even when countries like China, Brazil and South Africa have achieved self-reliance through aggressive pursuance of TVET

The need for employing TVET in reaching out to the marginalized and excluded youth groups and engaging them in income generating activities, as a means of proactively preventing social unrest and crime that can be spawned by idleness and frustration cannot be overemphasized.

Today in Nigeria, a high number of primary and secondary schools' dropouts either become loafers, peasant farmers or recourse to informal vocation under an apprenticeship system that eventually churns out half baked mechanics, welders, plumbers, electricians, tailors etc. that can hardly cope with the more refined technical and scientific nature of modern inventions.

## **THE CONCEPT OF TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION**

Technical and Vocational Education (TVET) have a long history before the industrial revolution. Technical and Vocational Education have been recognized as veritable tools for ameliorating poverty and enhancing technological development. As documented by Akeem (2011) UNESCO defines TVET as those aspects of the education process involving the type of technologies and related sciences, and the

acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of the economy and social life.

However, Mustafa (2011) clearly defines the distinction between Vocation and Technical Education. While it deems vocational education as skill-based programmes designed for low level of skill education, Technical education on the other hand is considered a programme that facilitates the acquisition of practical and applied skills, as well as basic technical and scientific knowledge. The major distinction is that whereas vocational education is designed for a particular vocation, technical education offers general knowledge. Cleverly, it was further put that while every vocational education programme is technical in nature, not all technical education programmes are vocational. Technical and vocational education is therefore the merging between Technical and Vocational education, the inclusion of basic technical and scientific knowledge with the skill based vocational programmes.

Further, even in the formal education sectors, graduates are churned out yearly to begin struggle in a labour market where employment hardly exist. Yet, the economic ideology of Nigeria is now tilted towards capitalism which emphasizes on free market enterprising that is normally energized by creativity afforded by expertise in a technical activity.

The foregoing brings to fore the importance of TVET in making Nigeria endowed with informed, developed and enlightened minds that are intellectually competent to participating in the development process, and yet securing sustainable employment opportunities for themselves.

TVET can be employed as an end to de-emphasizing job seeking, but systematically indoctrinating the youths from primary to tertiary level with the principle of specialization in a vocational and technical activity where economic niche can be secured and sustained for future self-reliance. With the full integration of TVET in our educational system, student who cannot dovetail into the academic-oriented curricula would be offered the required practical skills to function proficiently in the society.

## **CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS**

Presently, TVET has globally contributed in stimulating human resources development, and ensuring diversified employment opportunities, as opposed to the Nigerian environment, where the scarcely available employment opportunities are only in Government ministries, Banks and Oil Companies. Improved attention to TVET in Nigeria can be a veritable catalyst to realization of her vision 2020.

However, the following should be adopted by government as proactive means of enhancing employability through Technical and Vocational Education:

- Secondary education should focus more on TVET, and allow a situation where students' interests will be stimulated to further pursuing TVET at tertiary education level.
- The body responsible for regulating TVET-NBTE should ensure that funds are made readily available to ensuring the proper development of Technical education, most importantly at the Polytechnic level, which is highest level of TVET in Nigeria.
- Entrepreneurship should not just be taught in the tertiary institutions as one of those theoretical courses which students have to merely pass in their academic pursuit but must be linked to a specific vocational and skill building activity, where students can develop practical proficiency.
- Instead of the meaningless obsession for university education that is only fueled by the pressures of societal ego trip, Nigerians must be exposed to the conditions of Western Countries like the

United Kingdom, where despite the myriad of Universities present, citizens still overwhelmingly take delight in pursuing technical and vocational training that makes them eventually become experts in technical activities such as plumbing, fashion designing, arts, electricity technology, mechanical technology, inter alia, that mostly place them at an economic edge than their University graduate counterparts who end up in white collar establishments where mortgage and credits essentially decide their livelihood.

- The enabling environment for actualizing sustainable Technical and Vocational jobs in the provision of power/energy infrastructure and communication means is key and must be provided by government
- Non-Governmental organizations like the Nigerian Labour Congress, Trade Union Congress etc. should take upon itself the onus of sensitizing the public about the relevance of Technical and Vocational Education in economic empowerment and identifying with TVET establishment

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