

THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS (NGOs) TO VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN NIGERIA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Chinyere Shirley Ayonmike

Abstract

Tin's paper examined the contributions of Non-Governmental Organisations - (NGO's) to the establishment and development of vocational education for sustainable development in Nigeria. The paper highlighted areas of NGOs contribution to vocational education as employment generation agents and agents of scholarship awards, computer literacy, donations of tools, equipment, materials and provisions of infra structural amenities to vocational training centres. The different types of NGOs were also discussed in the paper. The earliest practitioners and trainers in vocational industry were cited.

Introduction

The concept of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), has over the years, gained international recognition. Very few people know about the existence and functions of NGOs. Those who know about their existence do not know much about their functions. It will not be out of place therefore, for one to think that the NGOs are social clubs, unions or associations charting tribal, ethnic, sectional, political or religious interest or defending same. In its developmental literature, various terms have been used to represent it. Such terms include among others: Non-Governmental Developmental Organisations (NDGOs), Organisation for Development (OFD) as it is being referred to in Latin America and the Caribbean. In the sub-Sahara, it is also referred to as the Voluntary Development Organisation (VDO) and finally, Private Voluntary Organisation (PVO), as it is known in the United States of America.

Historical Perspective

Historically, in Nigeria at any rate, the earliest practitioners and trainers in the vocational industry were the direct sons of Chief Nana of Itsekiri (Obaro Ikime, 1968 & 1995). Following the Ebrohimi war of 1894, Chief Nana was sentenced and exiled to Accra in the Gold Coast by the British Colonial Authorities. While he was there, the Chief after learning to read and write sent for his sons who all went to school in Accra. There they learnt carpentry and came back with their father upon regaining his freedom to establish the industry with full complement of tools in Nigeria. They established in Warri, Port Harcourt, Aba and from these centres, produced what then, were the first modern furniture in (lie country. None Koko indigenes came from far and near, for example. Aba, Benin, Kwale and Sapele to learn apprenticeship. The younger sons of Nana who for their tender ages did not go to Accra were apprenticed to the Nana senior sons (Ayomike, 1992).

Recently, one of the earliest machineries they used for turning wood, was discovered and is now adorning the Nana Living Museum in Koko in recognition of his foundations! contribution to the locations The Federal Government is in the process of establishing a Vocational Training Centre in Koko, Warri North Local Government. This was about 100 years ago.

Now in Nigeria, the need for the development of vocational education that takes place in the Technical Colleges and skill acquisition centres has become imperative, taking cognizance of its relevance to the socio-economic and manpower development of the nation. The need for vocational education and training for skill acquisition came up at the end of the Nigerian Civil War in January, 1970. At that time, there was the manpower need to face the enormous challenges of rebuilding - -battered economy. Also, (he problem of graduate unemployment became a social menace in the last few years. In view of the foregoing problems, vocational education and training for skill acquisition were seen as a veritable medium of supplying the much needed manpower necessary for speeding up the reconstruction efforts and inculcating in the youths the necessary skills for self-reliance. With a view to fulfilling these objectives, the government of Nigeria became very interested in establishments of Technical Colleges and Vocational Training Centres. However, it bee a TV . practically impossible for government alone to sufficiently provide this education for all the people in the required standard since

the government alone could not meet the financial, logistic and infrastructural needs of vocational education which is highly capital intensive. There fore, private individuals and corporate bodies, churches, political associations and NGOs started establish vocational training centres including technical and business schools to complement the efforts of -government. Against this background, it is worthy to note that the contributions of NGOs in the development of vocational education cannot be swept under the carpet. They are partners in prog.re--with government as they have common goal and have an equal stakes, though on a lesser scale than the government in the development of vocational education in Nigeria. However, it is on this premise that this paper seeks to examine the contributions of Non-Governmental Organisation (NGOs), to the provision of vocational education for youths in Nigerian Technical Colleges for sustainable-development.

The Concept of Vocational Education

Vocational education provides opportunities for youths and adults to be trained for gainful employment in specific occupations, faculties or occupations by providing experiences which enable them to develop competencies needed for such employment {Uwameiye, 2002). Vocational Education also imbibes all necessary skills, intellectual abilities, emotional balance and the right consciousness necessary to make a career in a trained field or occupation. Technical Colleges and similar institutions belong to the vocational educational sector which is primarily concerned with the training of individuals specially for various occupational skills (Sanni, 2004). Kahles and Hannburger, (19981. have contended that vocational education includes any education directed towards the preparation o: the individual for occupational life. The Committee on Research and Publication Of Americar Vocational Association (1984), also stated that vocational education is that aspect of education designed to develop skills, abilities, understandings, attitudes, work habits and appreciation. I: compasses knowledge needed in workers to enter and make progress in employment on a useful and productive basis. It is an integral part of the total educational programmes which contribute towards the development of good citizenship by developing the physical, social, civic, cultural and economic competencies of the individual, Olaitan, (1996), stated that vocational education prepares individual in skill acquisition that enables them not only to secure gainful employment in government departments or industries., but also provides opportunities for growth and progress within such occupation, as we" as provides self-employment for majority of people in a depressed economy. It is job-oriented training designed to develop appropriate knowledge, skills, attitude and understanding in all citizens.

When people become productive members of the nation's work force through their acquired vocational skill, they contribute meaningfully to the progress of nation building. Vocational education is the bedrock of national development as no nation can make a headway in her developmental efforts without people with various skills to handle various aspects of work. There is hardly any job execution in building, electrical installation, road construction, marble works, boat building, wood work and administrations that does not involve more workers at the artisanal and craft level. It is in line with this thinking that the National Policy on Education (2004, revised), advocated the training for occupation and skill at the primary, junior and senior secondary schools and their subjects should be basically pre-vocational; that is, preparing students for entry into vocational skill programmes in the future.

This emphasis goes a long way to show that (he National Policy on Education has foreseen that it is only vocational education that can remedy this situation of grossly inadequate skilled manpower and graduate unemployment in the country.

A Critical View of NCO,s

The category of NGOs referred to in this paper arc those voluntary non-profit making organisations providing parallel functions with government and directed at the same goal which is to improve the living conditions of the people in a particular location or environment. NGOs render assistance to educational, charitable and other welfare organisations. Broadhead (1996). opined that NGOs are diverse, sharing only their common origin as bodies \\hether as formal organisations or loose associations which are composed of people working together for government (o address a need, advance a course or defend an interest.

The underlying factors about the NGOs is that, they are usually established to meet the unmet social needs such as, the award of scholarship, apprenticeship scheme, in-service training, provision of educational facilities and materials, workshops, establishment of schools, vocational training centres, offering of expertise advice on curriculum development etc. In carrying out the above activities, NGOs depends on voluntary donations, subscriptions from groups and individual for their sustenance. One credit given to NGOs is that they are more effective and efficient in their operations in general, especially in Africa. This is largely because they have the administrative simplicity, ability to identify the needs of the people and effective and cost efficient modes of operations. Moreover, they are closer to the people.

Types of NGOs

There are various types of NGOs such as Rotary Clubs; Lion Clubs; The Catholic Social Centre; Live Above Poverty Organisation (LAPO); Girls Power Initiative (G.P.I); Women Health and Action Research Centre (WHARC); Civil Liberty Organisation (CLO); Environmental Right Agency (BRA); Jaycee Clubs etc. Those NGOs carry out different functions and they display diversity in origins, structure and purpose.

In recent times, the numbers of NGOs have increased tremendously. This could be traceable to the result of their significant contributions to the development of vocational education for the youths in the country. Though there is an argument in some quarters that NGOs are relatively new in Africa and that their development is still very slow when compared to Latin America and the Asian countries, but, according to Broadhead (1996), there is a rapid growth of NGOs in Africa, indicating a need for effective alternatives for social development and parallel democratic process now expanding throughout the continent.

In spite of their relatively being new in Africa, their operations have however, cut across a wide area of vocational education such as; auto-mechanical works, secretarial studies, fashion designs, computer appreciation, welding technology, catering services, refrigeration repair works, carpentry and joinery being offered by vocational colleges established by NGOs, among which are Afenan School Of Fashion And Textile Designs, Benin, St. Peter's Secretarial Colleges. Benin to mention but few.

Employment; - Many NGOs have given employment to youths who have completed and have acquired the needed skills for sustainable development in their various fields thereby, giving encouragement to the youth not to see vocational education as useless, The Sir David Osunde Foundation in Edo State is worthy of mention. The foundation has contributed in no small measure to the development of vocational education in the state with particular emphasis to the training of youths that are physically handicapped and also, the award of scholarships to deserving students undergoing vocational education and (Mining in me shift-. In this regard, youths who are supposed to be destitute in our streets, drop-outs and deviants, find themselves being gainfully employed and even end up employing others.

Scholarship Award: NGOs have contributed remarkably in the award of scholarships to deserving students in vocational and technical areas. Rotary Clubs, (Jons Club and N.O.J.C, in Lagos and other parts of Nigeria have done \veil in the area of scholarship awards to students in vocational training colleges, thus, assisting such students in the areas c-f their academic endeavours.

Computer Literacy: The world today has gone exceedingly computerized both scientifically and technologically, but unfortunately in Nigeria, the knowledge of computer is just beginning to gain grounds. These achievements cannot be attributed to the knowledge acquired only from institution of higher learning because of gross inadequacy of computers available when compared to the teeming population of students. Interestingly, because of NGOs participation in manpower training, computer education is almost available at all nooks and crannies of the state of Nigeria. Corporate bodies such as Guinness Plc, Nigeria Breweries, Igbinedion Iduration Centre, Okada and Uwagho Institute of

Computer Science, Benin City, to mention but a few have by way of in-service training or otherwise, provided these knowledge to their workers (Guardian Newspaper, 2007).

Organizing Training Programmes, Seminars and Workshops: Some NGOs such as churches do provide infrastructure for training of youths or local craft, establishment of trade centres where the youths are taught many skills. The Catholic Social Centre in Calabar established by the Catholic Mission is a typical example. Also Don Bosco Technical College in Akure in Ondo State was established for the training of youths for sustainable development.

NGOs contributes also by making useful suggestion along the development of curriculum for vocational education and also offer useful suggestions concerning the effective training of youths in the acquisition of relevant skills. NGOs like Lions Club, and Rotary Club, volunteer to offer training to the youths in vocational (training colleges by accepting invitation to lectures and organizing symposia during career weeks. Also, NGOs contribute by organising training programmes, workshops, seminars, thus, increasing the number of trained skilled manpower in the States of the federation.

Conclusion

in conclusion, the economic situation in Nigeria today has given rise to the growth of Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs). That is, the Government has been restricted by the ailing economy, which has limited its financial resources. It has been unable to meet the developmental needs of all aspects of the educational sector, to the detriment of vocational (training colleges. NGOs have contributed immensely in recent times to provide vocational training for students in Technical Colleges in Nigeria for self reliance and sustainable development.

References

- Ayomike, J.O.S. (1992). Nanna, British Imperialism at Work.
- Broadhead, M.A. (1996). NGOs and Third World Development; Opportunities and Constraint; The Scope New Journal. Canada.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004). National Policy on Education; Revised, Lagos NERA Publication
- Obaro Ikime, (1968 and 1995). Merchant Prince of the Niger Delta, Dalag Prints & Pack Ltd Ibadan.
- Olaitan, S.O. (1996). The Theory and Practice of Vocational Education in Africa Calabar, Cantevcr Press Ltd.
- Uwameiye, R (2002). The Origin of Apprenticeship Training, in Curts Finch and Crumkilton (1984) Curriculum Development in Vocational and Technical Education, planning, content and implementation, London.