

VOCATIONAL-TECHNICAL EDUCATION (VTE): AS AN OPTION TO  
THE CHALLENGES OF UNEMPLOYMENT AND YOUTHS  
RESTIVENESS IN NIGERIA.

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**Abstract**

*The security challenges presently faced in Nigeria today cannot be solved if there is no solution to the problems of unemployment and youths restiveness which have been perceived as the major causes of the challenging security issue that has tend to destroy the image of the nation. These youths from observation are aggrieved due to unfulfilled promises by politicians and neglect from multi-national companies operating in their areas that had failed to assist them acquire better skill for the challenges of tomorrow. Vocational-technical education is the only true means that the youths can acquire better skill that will help them become self-employed. This paper therefore examined the scope and meaning of VTE, the concept of unemployment and youths restiveness in a nation, training in VTE that will help to tackle the challenges of unemployment and youths restiveness in Nigeria, suggested solutions on how to ensure that training of our youths in VTE in Nigeria is achieved. Also articulated is the challenges of VTE programme in Nigeria. Useful recommendations were also made that if holistically implemented will help to solve the problems of unemployment and youths restiveness in Nigeria.*

The spate of unemployment and youths restiveness from observation in our country today has become an issue of public discourse which has kept the society asleep with both eyes wide open. The whole scenario calls for concerted efforts by not only the governments, but also the organized private sector, corporate bodies, communities and individuals to assist in finding lasting solution to this ugly problem which is fast becoming a spectra capable of destroying the image of the nation and eroding the confidence of prospective foreign investors. The high rate of crime and other social vices presently in the country from records can be largely linked to the ever-rising level of the unemployment of our youths (Terry, 2011). The level or nature of human, infrastructural and material development desired to attain in Nigeria for now cannot be

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achieved by merely relying on government annual budget considering the population of the country presently. This point is anchored on the fact that for rapid human and economic development of our nation much is needed to be done in terms of the training to be giving to our youths that will help them to live and contribute their quota to the development of the society. There is a widely acknowledged saying that “an idle mind is the devil’s workshop”. This cannot be different when it is related to the present chronic unemployment level in Nigeria (Ibebuike, 2013). A situation whereby yearly tertiary institutions in the country graduate students who will only come out to go into the society to roam about the street in search of job is something that is disturbing. With this case, many tertiary institutions in the country yearly still turn out more graduates into the labour market thereby increasing the population of street job seeking youths in our country.

The future of every nation is believed to be in the hands of its youths. These youths have to be well equipped and groomed to be able to face the trials of tomorrow. No nation in the world today that desire rapid economic and human development can afford to ignore the idea of training of its youths. Developing nations, like, Japan, United States of America, Britain, Maleshia and other Asian countries reached their stage of development today as a result of well planned and organized training that they normally give to their youths (Nwanoruo, 2008). World Bank (2008), added that other notable countries like France and China attained their developmental goal because of their support for vocational-technical education. Vocational-technical education is important to the challenges of the problems of unemployment and youths restiveness. In support of this view, Akaninwor (2011) echoed that, Nigerian’s quest for technological transformation and sustainable economy cannot come through without the essentials of technology and core basic science which can only be acquired from the primary school level to the higher level through vocational/technical education.

### **Scope and Meaning of Vocational-Technical Education (VTE)**

Vocational-technical educations have been defined by many authors and professionals in different ways. Nwanoruo (2008), noted that VTE is that form of education, which emphasis the development of occupational skills, needed as preparation for work. Okoro (2009), viewed VTE as the education that provides skills, knowledge and attitude necessary for effective employment in specific occupation. Utim (2014) viewed vocational-technical education as a training or retraining which is giving in schools or classes under public supervision and control and is conducted as part of a programme designed to prepare individuals for gainful employment as semiskilled or skilled workers and technicians or sub-professionals in recognize occupation, or to

prepare individuals for enrollment in advanced technical education programmes. Okwuanaso (2013), sees VTE as an education that prepares youths for employment in industries, commerce and other enterprises by exposing them to experiences that provides manipulative, cognitive and attitudinal skills that made them qualify for it. On his part Ekpenyoung (2009), concisely defined VTE as an education which is career oriented, with career specific courses offered in institutions, which are meant to equip the learner with knowledge, understanding and skills of different occupational area in the industry. However, Federal Government of Nigeria (2004), defined VTE as “that aspect of education that leads to acquisition of practical skills and scientific knowledge”. Federal Government of Nigeria (2014), further stated the objectives of vocational-technical education as follows:

- ❖ *To provide trained manpower in the applied sciences, technology and business particularly to craft, advanced craft and technical level.*
- ❖ *To provide the technical and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, commercial and economic development.*
- ❖ *To give training and impart the necessary skills to individual who shall be self-reliant economically.*

The major occupational areas covered by VTE according to Kanu and Nwogu (1997), as cited by Nwanoruo (2008), include: vocational agriculture; home economics, trade and industrial education and technical education. VTE is concerned with the whole hierarchy or occupation from those requiring relatively short period of specialized preparation and training (Akaninwor, 2011). Federal Government of Nigeria (2014) identified five types of institutions for this type of programme, thus:

- a. The pre-vocational schools at primary level
- b. The vocational school at post primary level
- c. The technical colleges at post primary and post secondary levels
- d. The polytechnics at post secondary level
- e. The colleges of education (technical) at post secondary levels and recently some universities have introduced department of VTE in their programme. However, youths who are willing to acquire a better skill for self-employment through formal training in VTE programme in Nigeria must therefore seek for admission in any of the above mentioned institutions. The actualizations of this objective can be achieved through sensitization programme which should be carried out by government agencies and non-governmental organizations through different mass media as to create the awareness to our youths on the importance of vocational-technical training to human and national development.

### **The Concept of Unemployment and Youths Restiveness**

The word ‘unemployment’ is a situation which arises when some members of labour force are willing to work, but cannot get job. According to Terry (2013), unemployment occurs when a person who is willing and able to work is without a job. For examples, graduates’ roaming the streets in search of job is as a result of unemployment. There are many types of unemployment, some of which are, structural unemployment, cyclical unemployment, seasonal unemployment, frictional unemployment, technical unemployment, residual unemployment and others. A situation whereby any of the above mentioned types of unemployment exist will cause some people who are willing and able to do a job to stay without job. Unemployment in a nation can exist as a result of the following; government insensitivity on the economic problem of the citizenry, inconsistency in government policies and implementation, lack of adequate information on job opportunities, reliance on one major source of economic (e.g. oil), lack of entrepreneurship and non-participation of individuals in industrial growth in a nation.

Youths restiveness on the other hand is the act of the youths been unable to stay still or unwilling to be controlled especially because they feel bored or not satisfied (Oduma, 2013). Agwi (2014) added that, youths restiveness is a problem that can arise as a result of idleness due to lack of knowledge, skills and competencies by the youths. Youths restiveness is a problem that is always difficult to control by individuals and government, a situation whereby this type of problem exist will always lead to the problems of lost of life, properties, economic melt-down and stagnation in both human and natural development. There are many reasons why youths can engage themselves into act of restiveness. Some of which are; failure to fulfill political electionary promises by politicians, neglect by both government and multi-national companies operating in their areas as observed today from the Niger Delta region of the country.

### **Effects of Unemployment and Youths Restiveness in a Nation**

As earlier state, there is a widely acknowledged saying that “an idle mind is the devil workshop”. Current statistics put unemployment rate in Nigeria at 3.5 million out of a population of 150 million. With the above figure, it is shocken to know that there are uncountable able-bodied men and women in Nigeria roaming the streets in search of jobs with none to come by. Out of frustration, coupled with mounting responsibilities to contend with. These able-bodied men and women take to social vices like robbery, drugs and human trafficking, cyber fraud and the likes. A situation where the above stated social vises exist, development and growth in the nation will remain a dream. Whatever economic reforms that may be going on in the country will be affected as security is the

substratum and cornerstone of all economic reforms. The aim and dream of any investor is to invest in an environment that guarantees return on investment and no well-meaning and articulate investor will gamble with his capital by investing in a high risk environment where social vices like armed robbery exist. The lives and properties of citizens of the country will also be threatened as observed today in our country, the high level of armed robbery as experience has led to the untimely death of some innocent citizens and lost of their properties worth millions of naira despite government effort to combat this crimes, the situation has degenerated so much that the criminals carry out their notorious operations in broad day light without fear of being confronted by security operators. This ugly situation presently has raised serious fear on the life of the citizens of the nation as their comfort to life is seriously affected since they can no longer sleep with their two eyes closed. The problem of unemployment also had led to massive travelling out of the country by our youths for search of greener pastures, this as a result had landed some of them into prison due to one crime or the other, while some has already died in the prison in some of the European countries because they want to make it at all cost.

Effects of youths restiveness on the other hand as presently experienced in the country is disturbing, as the economic growth in the nation have been affected badly. In the year 2011 only Nigeria lost about \$7 (seven billion USA dollars) on oil theft, this problem of oil theft have been in the increase, especially in the Niger Delta region, because of the bad image caused by this problem of youths restiveness, prospective foreign investors are now afraid to come and invest in our country. The number of death of security agents has also been on the increase daily as these youths go all out to engage them into shouting with the help of their sophisticated weapons. It was reported in the year 2012 that three NNPC staffs lost their lives in one of the Western states while they were on assignment to repair vandalized pipes in some of the pipelines that supply crude oil to NNPC Lagos terminal. Disturbing groups such as Boko Haram, Niger Delta People Volunteer Force (NDPVF) and others has also been formed as a result of youths restiveness as presently observed today in Nigeria. The activities of all these groups has caused both the Federal, state and local government to spend huge amount of money on security. On the increase as a result of youths restiveness in our country today is the problem of kidnapping, pipeline vandalization and killing of innocent citizens either in their various homes or those traveling for their business or legitimate duties. The consequence of this problem to the nation economy will be lack of growth which will eventually affect every other aspect of the life of the citizenry such as in health, education, agriculture, business, transportation, tourism and others.

### **Training in VTE that will Help to Tackle the Challenges of Unemployment and Youths Restiveness in Nigeria**

The future of every nation is believed to be in the hands of its youths. Therefore, these youths have to be well equipped and groomed to be able to face the trials of tomorrow. “Tomorrow belongs to the people who prepare today”, says an adage, making this future leaders acquire better skills that will equip and groom them for the challenges of tomorrow should be the topmost priority of every individuals including the government and non-governmental organizations now that the quest for technological transformation and rapid industrialization that will help to improve the economy of the nation is better felt than imagined. Vocational-technical education training of the youths is the only option for the actualization of this dream.

The major occupational areas of training in vocational-technical education in Nigeria that can help to equip and groom the youths for better tomorrow and as well lead to transformation of the nation technologically according to Adenle and Shobowale (2007), are in the following areas;

- a. Food and nutrition education
- b. Home management education
- c. Business and secretarial education

Industrial technology areas includes;

- a. Information/computer technology education (ICT)
- b. Automobile Technology education
- c. Agricultural technology education
- d. Wood work technology education
- e. Building technology education
- f. Metal work technology education
- g. Electrical/electronics technology education
- h. Welding technology education
- i. Plumbers technology education
- j. Funding practice technology education

There is technology in all aspects of human life, each of these areas, when developed is a world of its own. To achieve the objective of developing each of these areas; training of the youths in all these areas become a necessity, such training is a training geared towards providing the youths with trades and skills for securing gainful employment. These achievements is made possible through their mastery of skills, knowledge and efficient use of tools, machines and instructional materials. Agwi (2014) added that, with the acquisition of these vocational/technical skills the youths are salable

in the labour market either by employing themselves or being employed. Vocational-technical training is also concerned with the development and acquisition of skills thereby developing the necessary competencies so that persons trained can cope with both present and future challenges. In other words, it means preparing a person for the world of work.

Truly, prospective gainful employment opportunity awaits graduates of VTE. Some of the youths in our country today are blessed with natural skills that can be tapped for the development of our nation. A visit to the Niger Delta region of this country will showcase what some of these youths have done to build a local refinery where they normally refine crude oil, construction of mechanical tools and equipment that makes it easier for them to vandalize oil pipelines and other highly technical work. These youths should be encouraged at all cost to undergo special training programme in VTE, when this is achieved, they could become self-employed and self-reliant at the end of their training by engaging in one of the following;

- a. Establish a commercial institute where people could be trained as business men and women, typist or stenographers.
- b. Open a skill acquisition centre where people can come and learn how to repair some domestic items like radio, electric fan and refrigerator
- c. Organize extra-moral class for commercial students
- d. Establish business centre where typing, duplicating or photocopying would be done
- e. Establish a farm centre, like fish farm, pigry, grass-cutter or snail farm where people could buy fish, meat and other food items for sales and consumption.
- f. Open a provision store or operate any other small-scale business
- g. Own a workshop that could be hired to train company worker that needed some special skill to function.

The population of this country today is on the increase, to take care of this increase in population, a lot of effort needs to be put in place, such as massive production of food that will take care of the population. It is sad that today most of the local food that is supposed to be produced here in our country are still been imported from foreign countries. Most annoying today in our country, is that tooth pick for our domestic use is been imported from China. Emphasis should therefore be placed on the motivation of Nigerian Youths into various agricultural products, as this will go a long way in bringing about the much desired national development which will eventually boast the image of the nation among neighbouring nations of the world. Another reason why people should be motivated to go into agricultural products in Nigeria is that agriculture can be regarded as an indispensable instrument of productivity and national development because there is hardly any sector of the economy namely; medical,

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marine, engineering, power and steel etc where agricultural input by way of raw materials are not required. Agriculture still remains the largest employer of labour in the Nigeria economy today, it also stand out to be the main occupational area for people in the rural communities. The implication of the above stated facts is that agriculture can to a large extent reduce the rate of unemployment which has been of serious concern as far as the development of Nigeria economy is concerned.

### **Suggested Solutions on How to Ensure that Training of our Youths in VTE in Nigeria is Achieved.**

The need to come up with better training programme of our youths in Nigeria today that can help to reduce the problems of unemployment and restiveness is now better felt than imagined since the future of our nation is believed to be in the hands of the youths. To achieve this noble goal, the following as a matter of urgency need to be done;

- a. Adequate funds should be made available to technical training institutions to enable it acquire and equip up to date workshops, laboratories and libraries
- b. Competent skilled administrators and instructors should be the people that are to be employed to enhance the instructional strategies relevant in technical training in the institutions that will help our youths acquire better skills and competencies for self-employment
- c. A sensitization programme should be carried out by government and non-governmental organizations through different mass media to create awareness to our youths on how special skills that can help them become saleable in the labour market can be achieved through VTE
- d. Government as a matter of urgency should always sponsor the programme of in-service training of instructors in VTE, this will help them to update their knowledge on the operation of new machine and equipment as they come out from the market and also will help to reduce the cost of hiring foreign experts
- e. The curriculum of VTE programme in Nigeria should be reviewed at regular intervals and basic entrepreneurship education be infused into the curriculum to enable graduates float their own business or be self-employed on graduation.
- f. The salaries of VTE instructors and other financial benefits should be made attractive for this will encourage people to show interest and take up teaching opportunities in our training institutions instead of looking for a better white collar-job.
- g. A re-orientation programme should be carried out in a more serious way by individual, co-operate bodies and government agencies as to help and cause change



in societal attitude of people towards VTE as to accord it the right relevance and importance to national development.

- h. Leaders of educational institutions should ensure that partnership between them and the industries around them are effective, because effective training in VTE requires close working relationship between educational institutions and industries.
- i. Training programmes in VTE in our educational institutions should be made free at all levels of education, for this will encourage people to enroll especially the less privileged.

### **Challenges of VTE Programme in Nigeria**

For VTE to play its important role in the training of our youths in Nigeria as to acquire useful skills that will help them become salable in the labour market either by employing themselves or being employed. The following challenges as faced by VTE programme in Nigeria must be addressed;

#### **a. Scarcity of Human and Material Resources**

This is shortage and sometimes complete absence of VTE teachers and training facilities. In most cases, some of the equipment and machine found in vocational training centres are obsolete, electrical power supply is also not regular to operate these equipment and machine. On the other hand, even when these equipment are ordered, much time is been wasted to import them from foreign countries, some times they do not arrive at all due to mismanagement of fund from government officials. Nigeria has no enough manpower or expertise to handle the machines, service and maintain them well and unavailable spare parts to replace damage ones. All these will make it impossible for acquisition of skill that can help in achieving this goal.

#### **b. Poor Funding**

Vocational-technical programme is capital intensive because of this, it receives less priority in terms of resources allocation and management. This problem is compounded by lack of knowledgeable policy makers and administrators of VTE. Some of these administrators are ignorant while some do not have sound knowledge of VTE while more are antagonistic and pay a delay service to the crusade on VTE. To worsen the case the selfishness and corruption of our government functionaries does not help at all in funding of VTE as they are more interested in looting and diverting huge amount of money into their personal account, this problem has caused much grievances on the side of the youths.

**c. Wrong Societal Perception of VTE Programme**

The Nigeria society of our time regards VTE as a form of education meant for people who are backward academically. Added to this is the general poor image of the teaching profession. Hence, most people only enroll in VTE programme as the only last option. For the same reason, people and communities would rather invest or contribute to science and liberal education than invest on VTE.

**d. Poor Management of VTE Programme**

The stunted growth of VTE in Nigeria is traceable to the poor management of the programme as a result of recruiting people who do not have sound knowledge in VTE to play the role of administrators and supervisors in VTE programme. As a result of the fact that these administrators and supervisors have little or no understanding of the peculiar problem of VTE. Consequently, they are either directing their attention to those areas which appeal to them thereby allowing the real programme of VTE to be grounded.

**Conclusion**

It would be proper to conclude this study by emphasizing that vocational-technical education programme which is the only programme geared towards skill acquisition and occupational needs of the people is the only option through which Nigerian youths can be trained to acquire better skills that will equip and groom them for the challenges of tomorrow. These option is preferable to any other option now that the government is looking for the best possible means of tackling the challenges of unemployment in the nation. The welfare which those at the corridors of political powers at all levels are enjoying with their families alone should be extended to make this training programme of our youths through VTE successful because they are aggrieved due to unfulfilled promises by politicians. A nation ranked No. 6 in organization of Petroleum Exporting countries (OPEC) producing 2.4 million barrels of crude oil, sold above \$80 (dollars) per barrel, should not afford to toil with the future of their tomorrow leaders.

**Recommendations**

To achieve the goal of finding a lasting solution to the challenges of the unemployment and youths restiveness in Nigeria, which has been a major source of worry to both government and individuals, the following recommendations are made;

- Government at all levels should focus on people-orientated policies that will impact positively on the standard of living of the populace through VTE.

- There should be a special scheme for loan from the government to individuals who are willing to go into agriculture, for this is a sector that can engage more youths to work.
- Agencies like the National Directorates of Employment (NDE) should try and keep data of numbers of people that past out from the one year compulsory youth service scheme annually, this will help for future planning.
- Government as a matter of urgency should encourage individuals to go into industrialization because it is the driving force of developed economies.
- Ministry of youths development and that of information should ensure that adequate information on job opportunities both in private and public sectors are made known to the public.
- Government at all level should sponsor or participate in self employed ventures in agriculture and small scale industries for this will encourage people to show interest and participate
- Infrastructural facilities should be improved in the rural areas for this will help to reduce the problem of rural to urban migration of people and unemployment
- The one year national youths service compulsory scheme should be reviewed so that basic entrepreneurship programme will be infused to help graduates to equip themselves on what to do immediately after service.
- Reliance on one major source of economy should be discouraged at all level. Thus, all aspects of production must be carried out such as industrial, agricultural and service orientated production.

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