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TERTIARY EDUCATION; A PANACEA FOR SKILLS ACQUISITION IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The unprecedented increase in unemployment has led to development initiative (skill acquisition) in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The idea behind this is to enable graduates develop themselves economically and independently without building all their hopes and aspirations on government. And so, tertiary education is concerned with the acquisition of skills and values for the survival of the individual and society at large. This paper examined the mean of education, tertiary education, skills acquisition and the relevance of tertiary education for skills acquisition in Nigeria. The paper concluded that development is sine qua non to a healthy and happy society when each citizen puts into use skills acquired.

INTRODUCTION

Education is the right of every child. The whole aspirations and dream of this child becomes crystal clear to this child given the existing tertiary institutions that will help harness this endeavour. This is because in the absence of these citadel of learning such as the colleges, polytechnics, Universities, the skill acquisition becomes very difficult to acquire. It is against this background various scholars look at the meaning of education from different perspectives tailored towards the goal of skill acquisition. Plato as cited in Ezewu (1993) conceptualize education as that training which is given by suitable habits to the first instincts of virtue in children when pleasure and pain are rightly implanted in rational souls. In this same vein, Durkheim (1956) conceptualized education as the systematic socialization of the younger generation by which the later learns religious and moral beliefs, feelings of nationality and the collective opinion of all kinds. The logical corollary is that education should serve as a means of integrating the individual into the wider community into which he is born, taking his values and skills – intellectual and physical as equipment for both himself and the society he would be required to serve in his future life. The point in emphasis is that the goal of the educated child in terms of skill acquisition can only be achieved through a formal institutions of learning like the

mentioned schools where critical time would be devoted to learning a particular course such as Home Economics education, teaching education etc. The idea is for the student to acquire some training and skills at the end of the programme which will enhance his chances of developing himself independently and be seen as an employer of labour, particularly in a country where employment opportunity become very scarce. Such individual can now set up a business enterprise of his own and render some humanitarian services. With better quality service rendered by such enterprise coupled with the employment of many hands that affect the lives of Nigerians positively, national development is sustained.

For Aristotle, education was more than merely acquiring skills and common beliefs, a point reiterated by Smith in his plea for the division of labour and the specialization of skills. Education to Aristotle symbolized a way of life for individuals learned largely by doing. Its goal was not unity, but to foster and protect a way of life that encouraged and sustained diverse social and political activities (Subrata, 2007).

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

Education

Education is a process of developing the individual physically, mentally, morally and socially for his own welfare and for the benefit of the society (Whawo, 2005). It can equally be concerned as the aggregate of the processes by means of which a person or an individual develops his abilities. Education is an instrument of change, innovation and invention. Enaibe (2007), define education as the process whereby an individual acquires positive changes in behavior geared towards contributing positive development to himself and the society in which he lives. It is a necessary weapon that can be used to surmount ignorance, poverty, disease and to produce functional citizens with positive attitudes towards loving what they ought to love and hating what they ought to hate. Education is seen as a branch of knowledge whose primary concern is the preparation of the group members to be useful when they become of age (Money, 2007). Corroborating the position of Money, Ezewu (1993) citing Plato define Education as that training which is given by suitable habit to the first instincts of virtue in children when pleasure and pain are rightly implanted in rational souls. In Nigeria, education has been identified as the key that would unlock the potentials of our people as they strive for greater prosperity (NUC, 2004 and Ekundayo and Ajayi, 2009). This mission can be achieved through the effective application of the instruments that spans the gap between creative individuals with innovative

ideas, on the one hand and the application of science technology and arts for economic and social advancement on the other hand. It is an investment by the state for its continued existence, development and general welfare of its citizen, Bebebiafai (2000).

Tertiary Education.

Tertiary education connotes institutions of higher learning ranging from colleges of Education, polytechnics and Universities. It is the citadel of learning geared towards quality and sustainable education. Learning at this level is unlike what is obtainable at the secondary school education level where the learning experiences of the individuals is at the primordial stage of human development. The tertiary education exposes the individual to a lot of things such as skills of different magnitude, social education, independent living, development of morals and a lot more.

Skills.

Skills are naturally given talents that are put into practice through a formal setting or organizations. It is an established fact that effective training and acquisition of skills have very significantly impacted on the development of some countries.

It is against this background Ezeji and Okorie (1988) acknowledged that "Nigeria's social and economic problems will be drastically reduced if people are given adequate vocational training in skills because it is only with skills men that equipment and materials can be harnessed.

Skills Acquisition.

This is the process of acquiring the natural endowed ideas, potentials, through a formal learning in a schooling academy or an organization set up for such exercise. It is usually an idea, learning process acquired from the education industry. It is for this reason Nneji (1994) opined that education is "supposed to prepare an individual for a career in life. Unfortunately, most Nigerian children go into various stages of education right from the primary school to tertiary institutions without any preparation for whatever career they aim at".

TERTIARY EDUCATION FOR SKILLS ACQUISITION IN NIGERIA

Tertiary education is education/learning acquired at the higher institutions level ranging from the Colleges of Education, Polytechnics, Universities etc with the primary design or purpose of acquiring some skills, knowledge that will enable the student to develop himself economically and more importantly use this skill acquired to contribute to nation building.

According to Bulya (2011), a nation's functional educational institution exhumes human resources potentials, refine or sharpen them for maximum productivity geared at instituting positive national development and calling quits national underdevelopment. The challenge of this paper is to empirically draw attention to the existing tertiary institutions which are there but Jellisoned on which Nigeria's skill built upon human capital development would trailed and should follow after all the indispensability of quality human capital development lies completely on the fact that no matter the richness of any country interred of national resources "without the efforts of (quality) human resources (or capital), which act upon the natural resources in terms of exploiting them for the benefit of man and the nation) development can not take place" (Uwazie and Okezie 2009).

So, the existence of tertiary institutions should be more tailored towards training and producing people that will be skillful in different fields of human endeavour. The essence is for these set of people to be able to put their skills into practice. I am not saying that the schools have not done well in this area. But, more attention should be devoted rather than allowing the children to study courses they can not put in practice on their own not to talk of helping the nation. A child embarking on the NCE programme for instance is already on the course of how to teach once he or she graduates. This is because he has been exposed to the processes and methods of teaching. The one studying Home economics has equally mastered the processes and methods involve on how to prepare both the African and continental dishes, so that the moment she comes out of the school the desire to set up her shop become the issue. Unfortunately, we have a lot of these graduates roaming the street today because they are not skillful in the areas that should have prepared them for the future. The school should come up with a curriculum that should reduce the burden of employment on the government.

Tertiary education for skills acquisition must be centred on the notion that if people must be lifted from their raw state and launched into becoming the basic building blocks or active agents of national development they must be soundly prepared for this developmental task through adequately equipping them with all human capital development entail the knowledge, skills, competencies, behaviours, values and attitude germane to eliciting the desired quality of life. It must be admitted without any modicum of biased or prejudice that without a steady growth in educational opportunities built upon some skills so that the unemployment industry become less volatile, the quest for the country's economic and social break through would be a

mirage. As a process, they are a continuum by which knowledge, including the moral, cultural and so on values associated with it is remitted to individuals and groups as well as the manner by which such values are harnessed to promote and advance societal growth and development (Yesufu, 2000).

THE RELEVANCE OF TERTIARY EDUCATION TO NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Tertiary education is the means that helps to convey the traffic of economic and social advancement, that is very imperative and necessary in every existing country. This is in order for the people to secure the necessary platform for their development problem and to live a more independent and sustainable life in the face of very glaring economic competition and challenges.

Tertiary education in different institutions is aimed at the effectiveness of sustainable skills that make up the nation and to endow them with the ability to exploit the material resources for development and other spheres of human endeavour that are capable of promoting individual life.

Tertiary education geared towards the training and sustainability of skills for economic and social independence is an indispensable means in the provision of labour essential for the production and distribution of services. The case of some of the Nigerian comedian is a dependable example. Some of them naturally were endowed with the talent or skill to make fun, but for the added training and knowledge acquired from the university, polytechnic they attended. Today "AY", Basket Mouth, Melody just to mention a few have become skillful source of revenue to themselves and even contributing to national development through independent Performance music association of Nigeria (IPMAN). This industry has become a reliable entertainment industry that help generate money into the purse of the nation's economy.

Tertiary education is primarily accumulated through education and training in so far as these two variables are the most important means of upgrading the human intellect and skills. Education and training help to enhance human skill because they represent a commodity and a process. As a commodity, they are a stock or level of knowledge that is acquired through learning and experience by an individual or groups.

Tertiary education produce multiple results because such investment help to improve the health of the citizenry, since educated people take their health conditions seriously. Such investments also enhance living standards since they enable recipients to have access to better

paid employment as well as emancipate them from mundane cultural practices and superstitions. Besides, tertiary education enhances the active participation of recipients in the social and political Affairs of their communities and countries. According to (Adamu, 2003 and Ikhuoria 2008), education raises the quality of life through its impact on poverty reduction.

Investment in tertiary education is also an influential conduct for equitable income distribution. Income disparity is higher where a society is divided into a literate few and an illiterate majority as is evident from the experiences of most African countries. As the rate of illiteracy decreases, the number of people in paid employment normally increase with the possibility of more equitable income distribution. This in turn helps to lesson social tensions, promotes democratic ideals and supports more stable politics. Human capital could be poorly utilized when there is a mismatch between available skills and the openings in the labour market (Onwuka, 2012). We must all of us be on the look out for opportunities to promote products and services from our countries, and our continent. This is where wealth, taxes and Jobs come from; it is not rocket science, (Vanguard, 2016).

EFFECTS OF TERTIARY EDUCATION ON THE NIGERIAN SOCIETY

Education is an indispensable means of unlocking the human mind and protecting his personality. This pronouncement is totally justified on grounds that education provides the scaffolding that is required to secure good health, economic security and job opportunity. The logical extension is where the right to education is guaranteed access to and employment of other rights are enhanced. It is the greatest investment that a nation can make for the quick sociological and human resource development. Hence, according to Nwaham (2005), the societies and individual look up to it as a source of hope for the achievement of their goals and aspirations. Unfortunately, rather than meeting some of these goals as the target, some of these institutions have become a breeding ground for thugs, prostitutes, to mention a few.

In some of these tertiary institutions, students who have graduated often time may not be able to independently stand up to put in practice what they have learnt in these institutions. Worst still, some of them who may be engaged in public service may not be able to deliver effectively. The implication of this is that the employer of labour finds it difficult to engage the service of such a person. There are many people today occupying important positions in Nigeria, who have become a big burden on public revenue or threat to social and moral order, Zimako (2009).

Without any modicum of bias, Nigeria today has an overdose of educational institutions beginning from the early childhood education, lower, middle, secondary education to tertiary education. In our society today educational institutions are established with reckless abandon without the basic initiative to graduate students to independently sustain themselves skillfully. Some of the educational institutions look like glorified secondary schools without functional and quality education dividends that have positive impact on the school client's collective effectiveness.

When in the absence of quality and skilful service, there is nothing to positively expect from the students' brand of human capital (skill acquisition) except school products that are educated illiterates, without the requisite knowledge and skill acquisition, human initiatives, capabilities and values in the garb of educated people. These lead to maladjustment and delinquency, hence provoking all forms of deviant tendencies in youth's leading to the commission of criminal offences and other related social vices, (Ukpongson, 2000).

There is an unpleasant and unpalatable practice in most tertiary institutions or education of higher learning in Nigeria where there is a near total collapse of the practice and principle of learning. For political and informal reasons and the pretensions slogan that "teachers are the nucleus or engine of any education system some human beings in the name of teachers recruited to teach are in truth not teachers but 'cheaters' as they are empty upstairs and completely devoid of what to impact on the students as learners. In similar vein, student whose business should have been to be an apprentice to an artisan and a motor mechanic expert are all jam-packed into schools in the name of learning. The unbearable and disgusting effect is the inability of these supposed students to hold on to any economic venture that can produce results. Some of them become party thugs, kidnappers, rapists, armed robbers, militants which by implication has a negative effect on the growth and development of the economy. Innovation is meaningless in the absence of knowledge. In other words, innovation helps entrepreneurs to attain greater levels of productivity that constitutes the essence of economic progress (Inegbenebor and Iredia, 1995).

CONCLUSION

The desire to embark on this research is borne out of the heartfelt sympathy over the declining economy which consequently has made our graduands jobless and idle. But, the truth of the matter is that in a country where such category of persons now see the necessity to be actively and sincerely been involve in a study that ordinarily should placed him in a position

where he can do things on his own, at least to be economically independent, courtesy of the tertiary institutions, idleness and joblessness will become a forgotten predicament. So what is evident is for every institution to admit a student based on what he can carry out on his own after school and not just going to the school because others are going to the school. Flowing from this analysis, we will have less terrorist in the name of Boko Haram, Niger Delta avengers, Fulani Herdsmen, child trafficking etc in our society. Higher education, especially the university today plays a complex role in creating totally new institutions and new bases of economic and social integration in any nations development process (Castells, 1991).

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations have been suggested in the light of the nation's socio-economic challenges.

1. Having gone through the three or four years of formal education for skills acquisition, the student should be able to engage himself by operating a business centre in the absence of government paid job.
2. Again, once jobs are created from the skills acquired from any institution of your choice, it will not be a hidden thing to anyone in the country and foreign investors, particularly when you seem to be doing well in that endeavour. This will go along way to help build the reputation of the country and reduce social ills and malady
3. The creation of a strong private sector as source of growth and national development. Individuals who have gone through the formal process of "Home Economics" as a discipline need not be taught how to open a shop to render services on African and European dishes. Before you know a strong private sector would be built to meet both local needs and those of foreign countries.
4. Give the strong and compelling evidence on the professionalism acquired from the training, people would want to learn under such person to acquire knowledge and skill. The logicity in this is that such a person has equally become an employer of labour, there by helping the government to cushion the effect of unemployment in the country, which include the expansion of options and chooses for renewal of the job because of the personal initiative to always come up with innovations.

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