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HIGHER EDUCATION: A PIVOT FOR POWER AND EMPLOYMENT IN A DYNAMIC SOCIETY

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Abstract
The unique position of higher education in making relevant education within the reach of average youth cannot be overemphasized. The need to improve on the access to higher quality education is an important instrument towards achieving functional literacy. The growth rate of graduate unemployment in Nigeria is becoming very alarming and there is need to ensure greater transferability of skills and their efficient use to help harmonize the educational system with the changing socio-economic needs and job training measures. This paper focused on higher education: a pivot for power and employment in a dynamic society. It highlighted the role of higher education on employment, higher education and skill development and higher education and the society. The paper concludes that, higher institutions of learning should produce graduates who have the ability to think productively and who can boast of skills to meet the requirement of a dynamic modern society. Recommendations were also made which include: Government should ensure that vocational education in higher institution is given priority attention and higher institutions of learning should be advised on the manpower needs of the country.

Key word: Higher education, power, employment, dynamic, society.

Introduction
Education is the pivot upon which the wheels of the society revolve. The effort of higher education in producing relevant and skillful graduates to meet the needs and aspirations of modern world labour market is a formidable task for education managers. The unique position of higher education in making relevant education within the reach of average youth cannot be overemphasized. It is paramount for higher institutions of learning to produce graduates who have the ability to think productively and the skills to meet the requirement of a dynamic modern labour market. Education and the improvement of human potential have been considered

prime conditions for profitable employment, especially in an era of fast and wide-spread technological change and intense completion. The need to improve on the access to higher quality education was deduced as an important instrument in achieving functional literacy. However, to ensure greater transferability of skills and their more efficient use, the tasks of better harmonization of the educational system with changing socio-economic needs and job training measures have been stressed as indispensable.

The level of educational system is especially important in increasing the capacity of each country to absorb, disseminate and develop new knowledge. The capacity of the different economies to absorb highly skilled people depends on a number of factors which include the size and structure of its innovative sectors and the attitudes of potential employees and employers. The role of education as a change agent is indisputable, and as Lebaking and Phalare (2011) have observed, education has always been a central mechanism for transmitting skills and values for the sustenance of societies and promotion of social change. In case of Nigeria, which came under the British Colonial rule towards the latter part of the nineteenth century, colonialism brought with it certain ways of reconstructing social reality and the vehicle employed was western education (Labaking and Phalare, 2011). During the colonial era which lasted between 1861 and 1960, education was a very powerful weapon for transforming the Nigerian society. As observed by Lebaking and Phalare (2011) colonial education called into questions the very humanity and essence of African people. Also called into question were many institutions and cultural practices. African religion, medical practice and the family as an institution were regarded as "traditional" and hence, were also regarded as "backward".

Role of Higher Education on Employment

The growth rate of graduate unemployment in Nigeria is becoming very alarming. Akomolafe&Adegun (2019) observes that, the role of higher education in preparing youth for labour market is becoming more challenging in themodern society. Many graduates get jobs that could not sustain them they engage in such jobs just to take care of their daily bread. That is why they receive wages far below the expected wages for those working in standard establishment. Agricultural sector which has been the main stay of Nigeria

economy before the discovery and exploitation of crude oil has not been developed enough to provide employment for higher education graduates. Idumange (2014) notes that, a lot of higher education graduates get job outside their disciplines which indicated that their jobs had no relationship with their courses of study. A large number of these graduates also look up to government and private companies for jobs but only a few of them are absorbed.

Ojedele and Ilusanya (2016) also notes that the National Policy on Education specified how higher educational institutions in Nigeria should achieve the goals of developing proper values for the survival of the individual and the inculcation of physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to be self-reliant and useful members of the society. Considering the importance of higher education, Ekundayo and Ajayi (2009) submits that the funds allocated to higher education should not merely be considered as an expense but a long-term investment that will be beneficial to society. It is clear, of course, that simply investing more money into the system is not itself an answer; how that money is spent matters greatly in creating a strong and vibrant education sector. The underlining premise of this statement is based on the working relationship with tertiary institutions and their ability to access and sustain available funds for the implementation of viable projects. Oyeagbako (2014) notes that, from 1999-2013, TETFUND has allocated about ₦297 billion to Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education but has only disbursed 55% of the funds. In order to ensure probity, accountability and due process, TETFund has approved guidelines for accessing and utilizing funds meant for higher institution.

Education creates the basis for employment and the supply of labour from primary education through to tertiary level for more highly skilled labour. However, Ute (2012) notes that the level of education determines how people work and what satisfaction they draw from their work. In other words, job satisfaction rises disproportionately with the duration of the educational career and this effect is dependent only to a limited extent on the higher earnings associated with a higher level of education. However, as the level of education rises, so does the qualitative assessment of the occupation by the workers themselves. Thus, the likelihood of becoming unemployed diminishes with the degree of education and the duration of unemployment is closely linked to the individual level of education. However, in many developing

countries, only some of the positions meet up with secured qualified employment. Many teaching positions are filled with poorly qualified and poorly paid temporary casual staff which has serious consequences for the quality of education.

Thus, education performs socio-economic roles through the process of socialization and acculturation. This means that education is an agent of socialization that helps in inculcating relevant societal virtues and values like sound human values, ideals of brotherhood, religious and moral beliefs into the citizens. It shapes both personal and collective identities that promote social participation. Through education, better citizenship is promoted in that, the citizens will be responsible to themselves, others and their nation, and also respect the human right of others despite cultural diversity (Addo, 2010). Education reduces social vices and creates conducive environment and conditions for achieving the collective development goals. However, education addresses the challenges of social inequality and reduces social stratification in the society. According to Ojiambo (2009), educational development will bring about advancement like economic growth, redistribution of wealth and income and increase of equality of opportunities, availability of skilled human power, political stability, control of population growth, and enhancement of life span, reduction of crime rates and insecurity security and improvement of national cohesion.

Education also plays a major role in national development through the discovery, understanding and addressing societal problems through involvement in research. Most tertiary institutions undertake research and facilitate knowledge that improve the quality of life, decisions and also enrich policies (Sirleaf, 2012). Apart from making provisions for laboratory researches, educational institutions also organize public lectures, academic conferences, where seasoned academics are gathered to discuss societal issues with the ultimate aim of proffering solutions to them.

Higher education and skill development

As we seek to achieve sustainable development, attention should be paid to strengthening the bridge between education and schooling and preparation for the world of work, with attention paid to improving vocational education and training. In Nigeria, vocational education and training have thus far been unsuccessful in preparing graduates to

meet market needs, particularly because of lack of interaction with the industries (Addo, 2010). To align the systems with market needs, it requires private participation in the management of institutions, curriculum development, system financing; upgrading infrastructure and instructor capabilities. There is also the need to allow training institutions greater autonomy to change course offerings, charge and retain fees. Curricula should be updated to reflect modern technologies and improve flexibility by mapping and supplying of demand for skills and by ensuring private sector participation in curriculum design.

Work based learning, coupled with related academic training, in formal education sector can provide young people with knowledge and skills they need to make effective transition from school to a first career job. This can be done through incorporating skills acquisition in the formal school programme. For instance, students in secondary schools could be made to engage in apprenticeships in local industries. They should learn about environmental regulations that insure high standard during product design and manufacture. They should also acquire technical and social skills necessary to join the already existing workforce. Asodike (2007) advocates that students who incidentally form the bulk of the unemployed and easily lured into activities that impede developments such as youth restiveness should be made to acquire income generating skill while in school. Maclean (2008) opined that, effective skills development for employability and sustainable livelihoods is essential if sustainable development is to be achieved, and this also provides a foundation for peace building through contributing to poverty alleviation and rising levels of income.

The reason is that work is a major feature in most people's lives. Not only does it provide them with means of survival in terms of food, clothing and shelter, but also the type of work undertaken by individuals and groups has a major impact on their self -identity, social status, and standard of living. For every community achieving development and sustaining it is a huge task Formal education cannot carry this responsibility alone. McKeown (2002) is of the view that non -formal and informal sectors of the educational communities must work co -operatively with the formal sector. This brings us to the roles of non-formal and informal education in sustainable development. Knowledge and information about sustainable development can be gained

through the media, workplaces, and community activities. These educational agencies are needed to expand access to opportunities to learn about sustainability issues. The assumption here is that the collective power of the people to shape the future is greater now than ever before, and the need to exercise it is more compelling. Mobilizing that power to make life in the 21st century more democratic, more secure, and more sustainable is the foremost challenge of this generation. The changing world in which we live requires that learners of all ages should constantly upgrade themselves through education.

Furthermore, education has a stake in enhancing the status of women in society. Women gain higher status in life and enhanced sense of efficiency when educated. They can make decision on when to marry and have bargaining power in household after marriage. Educated women create more equitable lives for their families, increase their participation in community decision making and work towards achieving local development and its sustainability. Ezekiel-Hart in Asodike (2007) notes that women who have acquired education, and those who have skills through which they generate fund feel satisfied because, largely, they do not depend on others for most of their need... having acquired relevant education or employable skills, and are subsequently employed or self-employed. There is a sense of self- actualization, higher order needs according to Abraham Maslow that gives the person a fulfillment. They will not be easily lured into prostitution and human trafficking – two avenues of promoting the spread of HIV/AIDs and retrogression to development. Moreover, the incidents of illegitimate children will be reduced. The products of such unholy coition are responsible for a greater part of the present-day general unrest in the country.

Higher education and the society

Presently, there are doubts whether Nigerian universities under the present conditions can continue to lay claims on being central to national capacity to connect with the new international knowledge system and adopt, adapt and further develop the new technologies needed in the wider society (Verspoor, 2004). The society presently is faced with the challenges of acquiring education that delivers students with the right set of skills and knowledge demanded by the labour market. There is the need for higher education to see new reality of education in modern world. The reality of education today, is that higher education must turn out students

who are employable and are ready to work in flexible organizations that will be constantly changing (Ekundayo & Ajayi, 2009). The students themselves will continue to learn and grow intellectually throughout their professional lives so that they can adapt and fit the needs of their organizations and grow with them. Higher education needs to produce employable graduates who have the knowledge and skills needed in the modern world. However, for this to be achieved, the educational system must be in close contact with the business community and be willing and able to determine and respond to the needs of that community.

The college might turn out to be intimidating when students find in a situation where they are not sure what to do next after graduating. The benefits of getting college degrees are gradually changing. Some of the benefits can even be life-changing and hence can lead to creation of several opportunities (Verspoor, 2004). The range of opportunities can be wide varying from employment to high paid salaries. So, the value associated to that with higher degrees is undeniable. With respect to changing scenario of current competitive business environment, knowledge is indeed considered to be power. Higher wages rates are most likely be offered to students with degrees of higher studies. This is mainly due to the fact that these students with higher educational degrees are considered to be well educated and knowledgeable individuals (Asodike, 2007). These individuals are considered to be the ones who have the skills to carry out with critical tasks and the ability to handle with jobs of higher responsibilities. There is no doubt in the fact; students with higher degrees will be offered jobs with higher pay package than the candidates with lower academic degrees.

Also, throughout surveys it has been identified that professionals with higher economic background earn about 30 % more than individuals with low academic degrees. So, it becomes evident that to a great extent, the higher wages depend upon the level of degree earned by the candidates or the professionals. Ekundayo&Ajayi, (2009) notes that, there is no doubt in the fact that individuals with higher educational degrees have greater employment opportunities. This is because; it has been considered that these individuals have higher level of knowledge that too on wide range of subjects. These individuals are the ones who take interests in wide range of subject matters and hence have the ability to deal with wide range of tasks. So, basically, an individual with larger expertise can also easily switch over to different career in

case he feels like to do so. Therefore, even at the mid of one's career if one feels under tremendous pressure or simply is willing to explore a new career, he can do so in case he has relevant educational qualifications. So, with respect to job employment opportunities, candidates with higher educational degrees have better professional lifetime opportunities than that of candidates with lower educational qualifications (McKeown, 2002). An individual with higher professional degree is offered jobs of higher pay. As a result of which these individuals are financially strong and are able to meet up their personal needs quite easily. These individuals are therefore more satisfied than those individuals who are less financially sound. Also, people with higher educational degrees are most likely offered with interesting jobs.

Therefore, these individuals would have greater job satisfaction and hence are less likely subjected to stress and depression. As these professionals doing interesting and high paying jobs, are less likely be suffering from depression in consequence of which they would have good health. Also, as these people would be occupying higher positions, they would be working in a work environment where physical work hazards are quite less and hence, they would be physically safe and also healthy (Sirleaf, 2012). So, in context of both physical and mental health, individuals with higher educational degrees occupying high position jobs with higher pay packages are likely to be better off economically than their counterparts with lesser educational degrees. The current job market is highly competitive as a result of which the business organizations are targeting to develop a human resource which can be utilized for creating a competitive edge. In this case, the business organizations would prefer individuals with higher educational degrees as this would lead to formation of quality human resource. Socially, individuals are considered not be a burden but rather individuals who are highly contributive to the society.

Higher education enables an individual learn and gain more knowledge. This in turn leads to considerable self-realization and understanding about oneself and the world around. An individual who have pursued higher studies is considered to be enlightened with matured mental and psychological health. As a result of which these individuals are considered to be wise and have tremendous ability to contribute to mankind and the society (Maclean, 2008). A well-educated individual is most likely a complete individual who is free from orthodox and superstitious beliefs. He is a man of good

reasoning and analytical power. Therefore, irrespective of professional or societal recognition, a well education man is individually a better human being than other people who have received low level or no education.

Conclusion

The unique position of higher education in making relevant education within the reach of average youth cannot be overemphasized. It is paramount for higher institutions of learning to produce graduates who have the ability to think productively and who can boast of skills to meet the requirement of a dynamic modern labour market. As we seek to achieve sustainable development and reduce the unemployment rate of our increasing population, attention should be paid to strengthening the bridge between education andemployment in a dynamic society and also prepare students for the world of work, with attention paid to improvement of individual skills.

Recommendations

1. Government should ensure that vocational education in higher institution is given priority attention.
2. The higher institutions should be advised on the manpower needs of the country.
3. Government should increase on the funding allocation in higher institutions.

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