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NEED FOR YOUTH EMPOWERMENT AND JOB CREATION FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF NON-OIL PRODUCING SOUTH -EASTERN STATES OF NIGERIA

Prof. K. R. E. Okoye
Vocational Education Department
Nnamdi Azikiwe University,
Awka, Nigeria

Okoye, Peter Izuoba
Vocational Education Department
Nnamdi Azikiwe University,
Awka, Nigeria

Okoli, Samuel Tochukwu
Vocational Education Department
Nnamdi Azikiwe University,
Awka, Nigeria

Abstract

The paper explored within the framework of available resources and utilization, the need for youth empowerment as well as job creation for economic development of non-oil producing south - eastern States of Nigeria. The paper encouraged Nigerians' involvement in agro-allied industries for effective national transformation, and advocates that human efforts especially in the non-oil producing southeastern States should be directed towards career in technology and vocational education (TVE). The authors were of the opinion that career in TVE encourages self-reliance, entrepreneurial skills and productive endeavour and that the introduction of TVE in the scheme of activities for the youths could inspire in them the spirit necessary to generate and nurture their ideas into reality. The paper also emphasized the application of modern technologies in exploiting available material resources for profitable opportunities that could empower the youths for paid or self-employment. In conclusion, the paper condemns poor attitude of Nigerians towards made-in-Nigeria goods and suggests that the nation's interest be applied in a manner that encourages indigenous productions in order to diversify and maximize Nigeria's export base and capacity.

Introduction

Arguments have been presented that the economic strength or weakness of any nation has strong relationship with both the quantity and quality of available goods and services. This in turn, is dependent on the level of technological advancement {Kolo, 2014), which is based on the quality and quantity of the nation's scientific and technological manpower (Nwodo, 1997). Unfortunately, technological manpower appears to be lacking in all the sectors in Nigeria. Thus, the major setback against successful and sustainable technological growth in Nigeria is due to acute shortage of technical and skilled manpower.

Indeed, in the country's energy/power stations, if any breakdown occurs, this cannot be remedied on time because there are no skilled manpower to effect repairs. Worse still,

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there are no spare parts to effect the repairs as a result of non-existence of basic industries to enhance technological growth. Under this situation, the society clamours for foreign experts who are technicians but would come to Nigeria and pose as engineers. The story is the same in many public corporations. This situation calls for urgent attention directed at thedevelopment of competent technicians in the non-oil sectors of the economy. The provision of basic indigenous industries would not only address the unemployment problem among youths but will provide training in different aspects of technologies necessary for national development.

Mineral oil or petroleum was discovered in Nigeria in 1950's. Since this period, however, little attention had been given to other sources of revenue generation in the country. Currently, everybody's attention seem directed towards the oil sector. The fact is that the country needed to diversify its sources of revenue and reconsider the agricultural sector as it was in early 1960's when the then Eastern, Western and the Northern regions were known for their palm produce, cocoa plantations and groundnut pyramids respectively (Okoye & Agwuna, 2004). These sources of internally generated revenues were the major driving forces of the economy in the country. It is perceived that the non-oil sectors should consider investments in small scale industries such as the production of soft drinks, preservation of fruit juice, plastic production, skills in information and communication technologies (ICTs), and so on. It is anticipated that these areas have a lot of opportunities for youth empowerment and job creation.

Non-Oil Producing South-Eastcrn States of Nigeria and their Technological Needs

During the first republic, 1960-1966, the then three regional Governments, Eastern Nigeria Development Corporation (ENDC), Western Nigeria Development Corporation (WNDC) and Northern Nigeria Development Corporation (NNDC) (East, West and the North) used ENDC, WNDC and NNDC to develop the agricultural sector of the economy and allied' agro-industries (Nwodo, 1997). The Nigerian economy then was buoyant and there was virtually no unemployment. Foreigners came to Nigeria to find and obtain jobs. Today, the reverse is the case when many Nigerian youths troop out of the country in search of job and in most cases the odd jobs. In that era, technological education Was acquired formally in technical institutes at Yaba, Enugu and Kaduna, and at the Nigerian railway training centres at Ebute Metta and Zaria respectively. At Oshodi in Lagos State, telecommunication services and technology education were also inculcated to the youths in large numbers.

However, with such provisions, youths were technically exposed to vital areas of the economy in line with the needs of the country. Youths could obtain jobs in any part of the country based on competence before the Nigerian-Biafran civil war in 1967. After the war, there seem to be a kind of scheming in the socio-political administration of the country, jobs were given on quota system; based on where applicants come from and scarcely on what individual can do. In 1970's, the idea of geo-political zones came into lime-light and

actualized. Currently, there are six (6) geo-political zones in the country, viz; the South-South, South-East, South-West, North-East, North-West and the North-Central geo-political zones. In some of these geo-political zones, oil is yet to be discovered. Majority of the states that constitute the South-East geopolitical zone for instance belong to the non-oil States, such as Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo respectively. This implies that such States must device some measures by which their revenue should be improved and in turn empower their youths for accelerated national development.

Thus, it is important to stress that concerted efforts should be made to focus on the human resource issues and material resources that abound in the South-Eastern States. If in the past, training institutes and centres were provided at regional levels and things worked well, it implies that such practices could as well be revived at state levels. In Anambra State for instance, the Awka people were known for their ability in blacksmith through which assorted kinds of farm implements, household tools and so on were designed and produced. It is possible that the State could seek to obtain licence for this technology to give room for mass production of these indigenous equipment/tools and other kinds of technologies for export purposes. After all Israel had no oil deposit or well yet she is strong and powerful among the comity of nations technologically.

Investment in Agricultural Practices and Technology

Investment in agricultural practices will not only empower the youths but assist in providing adequate food for millions of the citizens. It involves, among others, commercial cultivation of various food crops and agricultural plants. In the South-Eastern zone, palm trees are in abundance. The proceeds from palm tree are very vital. For instance, the fibre from the palm kernel has been acclaimed to be the major raw material used in the production of car body for many kinds of car, such as Daewoo and Opel Omega. The technology behind these productions would readily be harnessed and inculcated to youths at the Nnamdi Azikiwe University (UNIZIK), Awka, Enugu State University of Science &Technology (ESUT), and in some other established institutes such as Project Development Agency (PRODA) in Enugu. If centres or institutes for technical production are established and encouraged by the Governments, Non-governmental agencies, philanthropists, churches and traditional rulers in the non-oil producing States found in the South-East, employment opportunities would be created.

Sources maintained that Malaysia is currently the largest palm-oil producer in the world (Adebowale, 2012; Kolo, 2014) and that it was in 1976 when the Government of that country came to the then East Central State of Nigeria to procure the palm seedlings (Kolo, 2014); Palm produce is today the main source of that country's economy (i.e. agro-allied products, the palm oil proceeds) and industrial wares such as building materials (sheet metal works and long sheet rods) (Okoye, 2004). Besides, palm wine is a natural kind of drink from

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palm trees. Palm wine is consumed by Nigerians. It is possible that palm wine could be preserved for a long period and made good for increased consumption and for export trade. This assumption is made because, if the extraction from perishable fruits such as grape could be preserved and brewed into red wine, in the same manner, the palm wine could be preserved and processed for export to generate income.

Indeed, European countries like Italy and Spain rely on the exportation of red wine as part of their economy sustenance. It is possible that palm wine could be exported by the Eastern State Governments if necessary agencies would conduct research in this dimension. Industrial estate established by the Governments for this purpose would create numerous job opportunities for the youths. Also, the South-East and other States in Nigeria could as well harness and process other available resources around them to achieve better economy and as well provide jobs for the unemployed and the out-of-school youths.

Another agricultural produce found in great quantity and which thrives well in the South Eastern region is pawpaw *(carica papaya)*. Pawpaw has high promise for self employment. It has numerous economic values and pharmaceutical usages. Research has shown that fruits of pawpaw could be processed into a product called *papain* (Nnebedum, 2010). Nnebedum reported that *papain* was very useful in preparing digestive drugs and that the enzymes from unripe pawpaw were used as digestives. It is also used in the cure of several ailments such as pile, and some skin diseases such as ring-worm, scabies, craw-craw and heat-rashes. *Papain* can as well be used effectively in breweries, food industries, textile industries, and in cosmetic industries. *Papain* is used in; producing face creams, manufacture of chocolate and chewing gum. It was discovered that *papain* has a very high demand at the international market. It is mostly sought for in America and Europe at a high valued price (Nnebedum, 2010). One of the assertions claimed that even the green pawpaw fruit is used to reduce mortality rate in snail farming.

On the basis of these findings, it implies that if pawpaw is grown in large quantity, and its fruits processed and produced in commercial quantity for export trade, many youths in the South-Eastern region would have been given jobs in the plantations and many yet in the factories where the fruits are processed. In other words, if reasonable investment is made in this direction by the Local and State Governments in the non-oil producing States, the employable youths could have been provided with jobs.

More so, Cassava *(Manihot Esculenla)* is currently found to be a food crop that has gained a domineering importance in the scheme of activities worldwide. This food crop graciously thrives very well in this part of the world (South-East Nigeria). Findings showed that cassava is a raw material for the manufacture of petroleum products (Omokhua (Ed), 2010). It is used as medicine for the treatment of human and animal ailments. Textile industries also found the use of cassava beneficial in textile production. According to Omokhua (2010), starch from cassava is a good raw material for fine finishes in textile industries.

Furthermore, Omokhua reported that cassava flour is very good for bread baking, making of cakes, biscuits and other house-hold dishes. Currently, garri and akpu (fufu) are served as meals for both the rich and poor in the communities and outside the country. If factories are established where these extracts from cassava are produced in large quantities, it is obvious that such ventures would create many outlets for employment. Good packages of cassava produce (garri and akpu) could undoubtedly become major form of export trade for the States and Local Governments in the South-Eastern Region of Nigeria.

Investment in Education in the Non-Oil Producing States

It has been observed that Colleges of Agriculture constitute one of the potential remedies to youth unemployment. Unfortunately, most of the agro-related courses are more prevalent at the University level of education. For instance, Botany and Zoology are familiar courses often obtained at university offerings. Most Colleges of Agriculture in the country do not consider as important the introduction of these courses at college level. However, it is perceived that if necessary arrangements are made and adequate activity-based curriculum on theory and practice are organized for the youths at the Diploma and NCE levels, on courses such as; fishery, piggery, horticulture, snail farming, landscaping, animal husbandry, vegetation management (forestry), poultry, and more, many youths will be empowered to become self employed in these vocations. Hence, the authors of this paper strongly advocate that Botany and Zoology courses should not be regarded as exclusive reserves for University education, especially in the non-oil producing States such as the South-Eastern region of the country.

Emphasis should be laid on Vocational Education such as Home Economics Education. Good knowledge in Home Economics provides good opportunities to youths, in terms of job availability. Youths who are good in garment making (Fashion Designing) will always be engaged in doing jobs for both local and international consumption. Home Economics Education as a vocational program could be sponsored to meet international standard as found in Italy, Spain, Dubai and France. Food and nutrition, which is an aspect of Home Economics Education is also vital to gain more emphasis as a measure to create jobs. Indeed most homes have once or twice visited Mr. Biggs, Chukies, or Guaze food shops and a host of other big and successful names in food and nutrition business.

Investment in Scientific Research and Technology

Bill Gate, an American entrepreneur and a co-founder of the world's largest software company - the Microsoft, as an individual invested in Microsoft and it has been a huge success. He is one of the best known entrepreneurs of the personal computer revolution (Nwokoye, 2007). He became one among the world richest mankind up to date and he is

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widely respected by people who acknowledge his wealth as a product of intelligence and foresight. As chairman of Microsoft Corporation and the worldwide leader in software services, he helped people and businesses realize their full potential (Nwokoye, 2007). Thus in 2006, Microsoft had a revenue of US $44.28 billion and employs well over 71,000 people in 103 countries and regions of the world. The yearly earnings of Microsoft is higher than the budgets of some Nigerian states and that of some African and Asian countries.

The lesson demands that people of proven integrity should be encouraged. People of high intellect like Bill Gate hail from this part of the world. Batholomew Nnaji is from Enugu State and Philip Emeagwali hails from Anambra State. Incidentally, their States of origin are among the non-oil producing in Nigeria. These geniuses could be invited and encouraged for meaningful investments in their non-oil states for the youth empowerment and accelerated national development. Thanks to Goodluck administration. Bath Nnaji was invited in 2009 to become the Minister of Power and Energy in the country, it is expected that more responsibilities should be given to the likes of this genus in scheme of human affairs in the South - Eastern Nigeria and Nigeria in general.

More so, one Ajiwe of Pure & Industrial Chemistry Department, UNIZIK has successfully extracted oil from various plants. Oil from such plant as ***ehervetia*** had been proven to be very good for paint production. Ozumba of Parasitology and Entomology Department, UNIZIK had variously gone around African sub-region exhibiting the produce from ***moringa oliefera*** plant that are of vital importance to human needs and problem. Oil from moringa leaf is a good substitute for olive oil and also used for cooking, illumination and soap making (Okoye & Agwuna, 2009). The seed kernel of moringa oliefera tree contains natural coagulants which is very good for water purification. These trees are abundantly available and any of the Non-oil producing States that invest in the multiple production of these plants/trees would have no business importing water treatment chemicals or quality oil paints from abroad. Proceeds from moringa are also used to treat many health problems such as; diabetes, intestinal worms, abdominal disorder, anaemia, skin infection, high blood pressure (HBP) and numerous health problems. There are many more Nnajis, Emeagwalis, Ajiwes and Ozumbas East of the Niger and elsewhere in the Non-oil producing States and indeed in the country that if they are encouraged, most of these scientific discoveries and technologies could be expanded to create jobs and also empower the youths for improved economy.

Job Creation through Mineral Exploration and Extraction

In the local environment, many minerals and ores as well as industrial rocks abound. In Enugu State, there is coal. Lignite is brown coal, which provides raw material to industries for electric power generation and production of oil and liquid fuel. Coal is also used as solid fuel in cement factories and locomotives. Other use of coal is in the manufacture of fertilizer

(Okoye & Aguna, 2009). Is it impossible to reactivate the coal industry in Enugu for the purpose of job creation, improved economy through export trade and youth empowerment? High reserves of coal deposits exist in Udi, Ukana, Okpatu, Ezimo and Inyi towns in Enugu State, Owukpa, Okaba and Ogboyaga in Benue State and Lafia-Obi in Nassarawa State.

There is limestone in Nkalagu, Ebonyi State and in Awgu, Enugu State. Limestone and marble are the primary raw materials for the manufacture of cement. What happened to Nkalagu Cement industry? The cement industry in Nkalagu was owned by the former East Central State Government which metamorphosed into the five Eastern States. Is it not possible that the Governors of these five states should pull resources together to resuscitate the industry for both job creation and improved economy of the states?

It has been observed that in Awgu Local Government Area of Enugu State, gypsum which is also an essential ingredient in cement production is available. Gypsum as a vapourite controls the setting time of cement. It is also used for fertilizer production and for making plaster and plaster board. Its crystal in tertiary and cretaceous clays and shales are also found in Ogun, Benue, Kogi, Gombe and Sokoto States (Okoye & Agwuna, 2009). Tin deposits are found in association with younger granites in Jos and Bukuru, Plateau State. Small but rich deposits also occur in older granite pegmatites at Kwara, Benue and Niger States.

Furthermore, tin is used universally in food-canning, making of solder, type metal, and bearing metals. Collapsible tubes employ large quantities of tin. Also the compounds of tin are used in dyeing and fire-proofing. Iron-ore is found in large deposits at Agbaja, Plateau State, Itakpe Hill (near Okene) in Kogi State, Muro Hills in Plateau State and South-East of Abuja. Iron-ore is used for steel production. If the Non-oil producing States should sponsor labour force in the analysis and extraction of these mineral and ore deposits in their various areas, it is expected that that would boast revenue of the state and as well create job for the teaming population of their youths.

In addition, it has been recognized that in Uburu town, in Ebonyi State and Ogoja in Cross-River State, there are salt water streams. During the Biafra-Nigeria civil war and to date, domestic salt has continually been processed from such water streams/ponds. It is possible to produce salt from such streams/ponds in commercial quantity to serve the public, provide job to the youths and as well be exported for improved economy of the Non-oil producing States such as Ebonyi State.

Made-in-Nigeria Scorn as a Major Factor

One of the problems militating against indigenous goods and services is the cajoling of such goods received from the Nigerians (consumers) (Okoye, 1998). Made-in-Nigeria goods and services do not receive the appropriate patronage and promotion from fellow Nigerians, especially the country's social elites whose tastes and preferences are manifestly foreign in their choices of food, clothing, leisure and education (Atuona, 2010). Though such

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goods are made in Nigeria but bears product brand as made in Japan, Nigerians would prefer the foreign goods, in preference to the same product in both quality and quantity that bears the correct product tag-made-in-Nigeria. This is really a social malady and mistrust on the part of Nigerians.

Indeed, it seems that part of the problem bears on poor macroeconomic policy of governments in supporting or enabling the local industry competitiveness. As Atuona (2010) stated that the disincentive to the local industry competitiveness lies in the nation's decayed and morbid infrastructure in energy, education and health facilities. Hence, it behoves the Ministry of Commerce and Industry to direct its effort strongly towards designing policies to reorient Nigerians in their values system and evolve strategies that would secure functional infrastructure and energy at minimal cost to producers and investors. If youths should engage and commit reasonably some amount of capital in goods without market, it would be more disastrous than not.

Food for Thought: The Unemployment Saga in Non-Oil Producing South-East States

Most Igbo people in South-Eastern Nigeria have fallen prey to their erstwhile friends, on different occasions and different scenes. Many Igbos have fallen prey to different annual ethno-religious-political crises in some parts of this country, just because they travelled far out in search of greener pastures. In most cases such greener pastures are found in industries and establishments built and nurtured by Igbo indigenes in these places.

It has been noted that a good proportion of the privately owned industries scattered around the country that are of commercial capacity are owned by the Igbo extractions. Does it not seem possible that such Igbo extractions should look back home to have such establishments built in their fathers' enclave-the Igbo land, to create job for their kits and kins? Have such Igbo extractions not realized that most potential Igbo youths could because of nearness and proximity secure under paid job? For instance, an individual who is considered for a messenger or a cleaner job position within home environment could consider it worthwhile because he/she comes from home or from a relation's home to work place. Thus, feeding and accommodation costs are subtracted from living expenses. It is assumed that because of high cost of living and other unforeseen expenses, most youths do not find it worthwhile travelling far off only to be underpaid in a job for which he/she works extraneously hard. Alternatively, some become tempted into crime activities.

If the entrepreneurs of Igbo extraction are encouraged to build such establishments down home, it would go a long way to alleviate the problem of youth unemployment and other social vices among the Non-oil producing South-East States youths. It is possible that the leaders of thought in Igbo land including the Governors, Traditional Institutions *(Igwes & Ezes)* and *Officials ofOhanaeze Ndi Igbo* should consult together in this dimension. It is also possible that some hectares of land should be carved out from every South-Eastern State for

industrial estate, and invitation given to these capable entrepreneurs of Igbo extraction for development with some modalities and conditions guiding such activities. Just as people travel to the Northern part of the country to buy some agricultural produce, so could people also travel to Eastern region for some industrial wares. In such manner the status of this Eastern States of the country will be elevated. What is good to the geese is also good to the ganders. What is good to the Igbos could also be good to their fellow Non-oil producing States in the country. Therefore the information disseminated here could as well be practiced by such State leaders and Governors. The Igbo leaders of thought must not forget to acknowledge and admit that the problem of many talented Igbo youths is lack of sponsorship and encouragement. If the Igbo youths are encouraged, this part of the country would become heavily industrialized in both agriculture and technology FIDES (2010), a catholic newspaper, posited that;

a. if the necessary equipment for adequate practical activities are indicated by Igbo philanthropists to known Igbo talented youths;
b. if the State Governments in the Eastern region could each budget at least N3 billion as loan to say 10 diligent and gifted individuals in different expert fields selected from every community annually; and
c. if the industrial estates are adequately managed by special Commissions headed by people of impeccable characters, the region will have cause to celebrate optimum employment for the youths. More so, the region will as well become one of the best social secured regions around Nigeria and the world in general.

Conclusion

This paper tried to sensitize the leaders of thought in the non-oil producing South Eastern States of this country, especially the Governors and Traditional Rulers. The authors made itclear that most of the things needed to make the Non-oil producing States of this country economically buoyant are naturally abound and any meaningful exploration and investments on these outlets would surely enhance not only the non-oil States' economy but would also project the image of this country economically and technologically too. The authors perceive that the solution would emerge from co-ordinated efforts and ideas and by creating enabling environment where sustainable educational research will thrive, in conjunction with the propagation of skills acquisition (vocational) education programs in the country and especially in the Non-oil producing States that would encourage entrepreneurial spirit in individuals (youths) to generate and nurture their ideas into reality.

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