



ENHANCING ACCELERATED NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION IN TERTIARY INSTITUTION

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ABSTRACT

Vocational and technical education gives individuals the skills to live, learn and work as productive citizens in a global society. The need for concerted education that can produce self-reliant, innovative and entrepreneurial citizens. This paper examined the need for Vocational and Technical Education for self reliance and national development in Nigeria and achieving accelerated national development through Vocational and Technical Education. This paper conceptualizes and highlights the importance of Vocational and Technical Education as a programme that provides students with proficiency through which graduates can be self reliant leading to effective utilization of natural resources and hence accelerating national development and productivity. Therefore, vocational and technical Education becomes imperative in Nigeria following current trend of unemployment among youths who would always rely on government for provision of employment. The paper submits among others that acquisition of vocational skills is a tool for shaping individuals to be productive. It was recommended that graduates of various institutions in Nigeria should be encouraged to acquire vocational skills that can lead to improvement in productivity thereby enhancing accelerated national development.

KEYWORDS: *National Development, Vocational and Technical Education.*

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is one of the developing countries that are burdened with lots of challenges ranging from unemployment, poverty, youth restiveness and population explosion. Higher institutions graduates thousands of alumnae annually but the available jobs remain insufficient to meet the needs of jobseekers. With the present level of unemployment, there is the need for shifting away from the general education that encourages mere acquisition of certificates to skill-based education which centers on what one can do and

the ability to apply requisite skill in real work environment.

The objective of national development is to ensure that lives of the populace gets better within the framework of emergent economy and an emphasis on the wellbeing of the community as a whole. Graduates from most of the tertiary institutions are not educated in anyway as applicants abound our streets and roads that do not fit into any employment. The situation of unemployment in Nigeria is indeed alarming. This is owing to the fact that, thousands of unemployable youths are roaming the streets seeking government



enhanced jobs, while the higher institutions keep producing graduates on yearly bases, not compatible with new jobs or vacancies to absorb these new job seekers (Nwaigburu & Eneogwe, 2013)

The reason for this deplorable development in the nation's educational problem may not be farfetched. The educational system lacks entrepreneurial competencies also the curricula is not competency-base; and as a result of these, many students lack saleable skills to stimulate self-reliance. This implies that something has to be done urgently in relation to the system of education (Okoye & Okwelle, 2017).

Education is recognized as a vital tool for transforming and empowering the populace. The education sector has responsibility for producing and supplying the personnel required to drive and enhance national development. The goals of self-reliance, employment generation, poverty reduction, and value reorientation can be effectively pursued, attained, and sustained through an efficient and functional education system. Before now, the education system in Nigeria emphasizes theoretical knowledge at the expense of technical and vocational education which is more relevant and practice oriented.

For a developing country like Nigeria to be economically self-reliant, she must necessarily diversify her economy as well as encourage the youth to embrace self-employment through appropriate favourable policy environment that would facilitate skills acquisition, entrepreneurship, and self-reliance. The place of skill acquisition cannot be overemphasized in the rapid development of other sectors of the economy (Iroegbu, 2017). Vocational and Technical Education (VTE) can be described as an education that prepares individuals to be able to work in a trade or a craft as a technician. Vocational education is sometimes referred to as career education or technical education. The primary purpose of Vocational Education is to prepare citizens for employment in recognized occupations. Vocational and technical education is any form of education that provides the skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary for effective employment in specific occupations. Vocational Education assumes that a choice of an occupation has been made and that appropriate training is necessary for effective employment in an occupation or vocation. The central process of Vocational Education is to get people into jobs requiring specialized training.

Bawa (2016) stated that the term national development is very comprehensive. It includes all

aspects of the life of an individual and the nation. National development is a process of reconstruction and development in various dimensions of a nation and development of individuals. It includes full-growth and expansion of our industries, agriculture, and education, social, religious and cultural institutions. Thus, national development implies development of a nation as a whole. It can be best defined as the all-round and balanced development of different aspects and facets of the nation viz. political, economic, social, cultural, scientific and material. National development is the ability of country to improve the social welfare of the people by providing social facilities, good education, medical care, infrastructure (Sivachitappa, 2017).

It could therefore be deduced from the aims and objectives of the education policy that vocational and technical education prepares youths for employment in industries, commerce and enterprises by exposing them to experiences that provides the manipulative, cognitive and attitudinal skills that make them qualify for it. This was collaborated by Ayeni and Kolawole (2016) asserts that an untrained labour (individual) will not be able to perform beyond his knowledge and cannot harness the resources derivable from the land effectively. An entrepreneur also on the other hand cannot record reasonable productivity if he cannot derived resources effectively and manage it. All this and more is what vocational and technical Education tends to offer.

Except for the primary school levels, each level of education is expected to give the graduates the foundation and vocational skills for employment. At the secondary school level, science and technology education is aimed at developing the capacity and interest of students to live effectively in our modern age of science and technology. At the tertiary level, it is about skill acquisition and the use of the skill in the society for the benefit of everyone. It is therefore the intention of this paper to emphasize that vocational and technical education helps in employment generation, improve productivity and subsequently improve the growth of the economy.

The arrangement of this discourse shall adopt a comprehensive approach which includes to highlight vocational and Technical Education as a programme that provides students with skills and proficiency for self-reliant, examine the impact of vocational education in enhancing national development in Nigeria and draw attention to the challenges of Vocational Education in Nigeria. The study made use of the ethnography type of qualitative research. The researchers have been a



participant observer in the vocational education setting for years in Nigeria to understand the goals, cultures, challenges of the area under discussion. The study also involves the review of current situation especially existing in vocational education and how it relates to national development. The researchers made use of library and the internet for the secondary data collected. The findings were discussed based on emerging issues.

CONCEPT OF VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In Nigeria, Vocational education had a slow start and development than other forms of education. This was partly because the voluntary agencies which pioneered Western education were unable to increase or popularized vocational education on the same scale as literary or liberal education since the former is much more expensive in terms of staffing and equipment. In the pre-colonial Nigeria, economic resources depended largely on agriculture and the bulk of the population was engaged in farming. However, there was a form of vocational training in traditional society which was largely run on the apprenticeship system at that time. The children were not trained by their parents but by relatives, master-craftsmen in specified vocations in order to ensure discipline and concentration (Fafunwa, 1974).

Organized vocational education started with the establishment of training course in some departments. In 1932, the Yaba Higher College was established specifically for engineering course for post secondary schools leavers. The Railway Training Institute and the U.A.C. Training school were established in 1954. Other vocational Institutions included the Hope Waddell Institute, Calabar, Women Training Centre, Idi Aba, Abeokuta. Trade Centres were established in the old Western Region to cater for the products of the Secondary Modern Schools. Shortly after the independence in October 1960, Agricultural Science was introduced to secondary schools (Osuala, 2004). Formal, recognition was given to Vocational Education when the University of Nigeria, Nsukka was established in 1960 with the inclusion of the Department of Vocational Teacher Education. The conscious efforts of that department in projecting the image of Vocational Education led to the prominence given to Vocational Education in Nigeria (Osuala, 2004).

Akaninwor (2004) stated that vocational education is a type of education or training designed for

preparing the individual learner to earn a living (to be self-reliant). Vocational Education may be regarded as that aspect of the total education process that focuses on getting people ready and keeping them ready for the types of services needed by the society. Its function is to provide knowledge, develop skills and inculcate the attitudes that are necessary for entry and progress in an occupation. Okorie (2001) asserts that vocational and technical education is an educational process involving

the acquisition of practical skills, attitude understanding and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of economic and social life. Vocational Education is usually viewed as consisting of these major areas –They are Agricultural Education, Business Education which is also an umbrella to Secretarial or Office Education, Accounting Education, Computer Education, Distributive/ Marketing Education. Another area is the Industrial and Technology which has Electrical Education, Mechanical Education, Building Education, Woodwork Education and Metal work Education. Others are Home Economics and Fine and Applied Arts.

Vocational and Technical Education plays a major role in promoting community and national development. It facilitates the acquisition of applied skills and basic scientific knowledge. It is a planned programme of course and learning experiences that begin with the exploration of career options, supports basic, academic and life skills, and enables the achievement of high academic standards, leadership, preparation for industry and continuing education (Ozoemena, 2013). Vocational and technical education is “any form of education whose primary purpose is to improve persons for employment in recognised occupations (Oguejiofor & Ezeabasili, 2014). According to the National Policy on Education (2013) the goal of technical and vocational education includes the provision of trained manpower in the applied sciences, technology and business particularly at craft, advance craft and technical levels and to give training and impart the necessary skill to individual who shall be self-reliant economically among others.

Vocational technical education can also be defined as an educational training which comprehends knowledge, skills, competencies, structural activities, abilities, capabilities and all other structural experiences acquired through formal, on-the-job or off-the job which is capable of enhancing recipients opportunity for securing jobs in various sector of the economy or



even enabling the person to be self-dependent by being a job creator (Masaruf Magaji 2015). For vocational education to be self-reliant and productive, it needs not be operated in a vacuum. It has to be hooked unto factors that will help learners and all stakeholders in vocational technical education to be practical and not only theoretical in their approach to making vocational technical education meaningful and life-long.

ACHIEVING ACCELERATED NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

Education is an investment in the acquisition of skills and knowledge which will increase earnings as well as provide other long-term benefits. The importance of vocational and technical education in transforming Nigerian economy cannot be over-emphasized. Technical and vocational education adequately prepares the individual in skills, techniques, knowledge and attitudes for effective employment in the world of work place. In Nigeria, full participation in the economic activities requires vocational and technical education at all levels of our educational system, which will equip the populace with different skills and abilities and give an equal opportunity to all and sundry to prepare for work.

Vocational and Technical Education (VTE) systems play a crucial role in the social and economic development of a nation. Owing to their dynamic nature, they are continuously subject to the forces driving change in the schools, industry and society. Mechanized farming requires technical skills that could be obtained in technical and vocational schools. The real tests of success of VTE are the employability of the graduates, personal development, opportunities for further education and career development, public acceptance and image. Ultimately, the effectiveness and responsiveness of a VTE system would be measured by its impact on the social and economic development of the nation Masaruf Magaji 2015.

Vocational and Technical Education is a programme that provides students with skills and proficiency for self-reliant. The programme help to solve the problems of unemployment and reduces the number of people who depend on government for job. When the youths and adults are trained to acquire the necessary skills, it would enable them to be self-reliant in different areas. Vocational and technical education is always serving as a motivating force in individuals to

work for the nation because it stimulates technological and industrial development through the production of competent and honest workers who are capable of utilizing the abundant natural and human resources available in a country for economy and industrial growth and development. Through vocational and technical education, local technology can be developed by indigenous technicians and technologists. These relevant skills can be used to solve peculiar problems of the given society. Therefore, it will take the ingenuity of local artisans, craftsmen, technicians and technologists to design and fabricate tools, equipment and simple or complex machines to solve local problems. This eventually will save the nation billions of Naira or Dollars in foreign currency that would have been used in importing machines.

Vocational and technical education is needed in every aspect of our natural life. The problem of juvenile delinquency and crime can be reduced if the youths are given the necessary vocational training that will keep them busy. Ukuma, Tiough and Amenger (2016) opined that strategizing vocational and technical education would bring about new methods of instructions, new approaches, materials and development: it would also increase the rate of production of goods and services in our industries companies and institutions of learning, occupational needs are all indicators of globally dynamic technological progress.

Vocational education acts as a means of reducing social vices in the sense that those who graduates from business education never depend on white collar job only. Rather they go into business and ensure that they earn a living. Also the magnitude of social vices could be reduced through functional business education, which should be integrated into school curriculum right from primary school to enable the students to develop vocational skills that will make them to be self-employed even if they find it difficult to proceed to higher level (Nwogu & Oguejiofor, 2016).

CHALLENGES OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

There are many challenges facing vocational and technical education in Nigeria. Titilayo (2002) stated that Technical and vocational education in Nigeria today is in shambles. The system is creeping to a point that, if nothing is done, it may collapse. This accounts for why technical and vocational education as



it is in Nigeria today remains one of the country's problems of development.

Many people do not know that vocational and technical education is the only branch of education that can provide gainful and immediate employment to graduates, and that liberal arts education only makes graduates to be job seekers. This is due to erroneous belief that the course is offered to the never-do-well members of the society and it has greatly affected the interest of students in both secondary and tertiary schools towards vocational and technical education (Ukuma & Deke 2010).

Oni (2006) was of the view that Nigerians need to create a new approach for the concept of technical and vocational education and its purpose to the society. This is because technical and vocational education, for some decades now has been perceived to mean the education for the mentally retarded, physically handicapped and socially maladjusted students. It is regrettable that many Nigerians still believe that technical and vocational education is for students with low intelligence and dropouts from formal school system.

Vocational and technical education is expensive as it is capital intensive. Funding is a serious problem affecting Vocational Education. Where there is inadequate funding it is virtually difficult for vocational education to meet up with societal expectations. Ukuma and Deke (2010) argued that, vocational and technical education cannot be effectively and efficiently repositioned for sustainable national development, unless 26% (percent) of the Federal Republic of Nigeria annual budget is allocated for the upliftment of education sector and out of the 26% (percent) of the annual budget, 18% (percent) should be allocated to vocational and technical education subsector to enhance better performance and higher productivity of the Nigerian economy so as to meet global challenges. If vocational and technical education is not positioned, no meaningful development can take place in Nigeria.

Vocational institutions are inadequately equipped with laboratories/workshops, which house the tools, machines, and equipment required for the training of students, are hardly available and the available ones are obsolete. This is why many vocational and technical education teachers resort to theoretical teaching. Where few functioning equipment or machines are available, students are divided into groups. This system is not effective, as many students do not have access to

such equipment for practice as much as they want. Robert (1996) also observed that classrooms and desks, workshops, laboratories, libraries are inadequate for effective teaching and learning. Tools and Equipment necessary for imparting knowledge are inadequate. The ones available are obsolete. Vocational Education cannot achieve much in producing quality skilled human resources when facilities necessary for the training are inadequate.

Another problem of vocational and technical education is the use of untrained teachers. If subjects are taught by unqualified teachers skills acquisition becomes a problem as graduates are half baked. Uwaifor (2009) stated that most schools lack qualified personnel who can teach the vocational subjects, as a result of this, the products of some schools are half backed and cannot perform to the optimum level required in the world of work. Osu (2010) confirmed that Nigeria has been experiencing brain drain in technical and vocational education which has adversely affected institutions of learning over the years. The receding influence of the academia ever since has had a severe implication on our national development because our poorly-staffed universities, polytechnics and colleges of education today produce half-baked products who are supposed to be future leaders of our country.

CONCLUSION

Education is the most valuable treasure any nation can give to its citizens. Education should be functional and should be geared towards the acquisition of knowledge and as well as relevant competencies (skills, attitudes, and aptitudes). Effective education therefore should go beyond mere literacy - ability to read and write. It should incorporate ability to "do" and "apply" that is, it should equip the learners with some form of technical know-how. West African countries are referred to as developing nations and therefore should endeavour to make vocational and technical education programmes functional in order to enhance economic development. Nigeria's economy will be left untapped unless Nigerian institutions of learning start to graduate people in technical and vocational education and utilize them effectively. Therefore, the economy needs competent, skilled personnel's in technical and vocational education to enhance accelerated development and in Nigeria.



Recommendations

The following recommendations are made:

- i. Government and management of vocational and technical institution should provide a conducive environment for learning, this is because vocational education will be efficient in proportion as the environment in which the learner is trained is a replica of the environment in which he must subsequently work (Prossers ,1949)
- ii. Policy makers, policy implementers governments at all levels should ensure effective counseling in the formative stage in order to avoid wastage of resources. Entrants into vocational educations should be carefully selected to ensure that they have the interest and aptitude to benefit from the training. Only those who are genuinely interested in entering should be considered for training.
- iii. The management of tertiary institutions should pay more attention to full implementation of school curriculum in ensuring effective compliance with curriculum implementation guidelines through effective classroom practices. Lecturers should be encouraged to cover the contents of the curriculum so that the students can acquire the necessary skills. They should be acquainted with the distinctive role plays by technical and vocational education in national development growth.
- iv. Lecturers should be encouraged continually to adopt teaching strategies that would enhance learning for better academic performance of the students. More emphasis should also be laid on classroom attendance and assignment.
- v. Government at all levels in Nigeria should provide adequate support for continuous training of teachers of vocational and technical education in Nigerian institutions. This could be in form of attending seminars, workshops and conferences so as to prepare them for greater challenges and to make them more knowledgeable, better skilled and more experienced.
- vi. Facilities which are necessary for effective learning should be adequately provided to aid teaching and learning for better skill acquisition and teachers should ensure that the

recommended resources provided for teaching are adequately utilized.

- vii. The need for adequate funding of the educational system should continuously be the priority of government, private organizations and the totality of the Nigerian citizenry. Central to these issues of enhancing entrepreneurship education in vocational programmes is adequate funding. Since vocational education is capital intensive, a deliberate intervention policy must be made towards the funding of vocational education. Government should establish a monitoring unit to ensure that funds allocated are utilized for the purpose for which they were made available in the institutions.

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