



Vocational Education for Socio-Economic and Technological Development of Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper seeks to view vocational education as a panacea for national development. It highlights the importance of vocational education in a nation's development process and the deliberate attempts at ensuring the realization of its national potentials. In the early 50s and 70s, secondary school leavers let alone those of tertiary institutions always had jobs begging for them with all benefits. This phenomenal change in trend in the employment world calls for greater emphasis and expansion of vocational educational opportunities to overcome the problems of unemployment which has become a big social challenge in Nigeria. The paper believes that Nigeria as a nation need to invest more in vocational education if its ambition of joining the technology driven, global link and realize its millennium development goals is to be realized. The study advocates that government at the federal, state and local government levels in Nigeria should redirect their energy and interest into vocational education in other to empower graduates for self-relevance and develop the needed employable skills. These three-tiers of government should provide funds to build and upgrade facilities, acquire the necessary vocational laboratories, working equipment and to recruit, train and retrain well-qualified and motivated manpower for quality service at all levels.

Keywords: Vocational, Education. Skill-based, Employable, unemployment

Introduction

Vocational and technical education have had a slow start and developed less quickly than other forms of education in Nigeria. This was partly due to the fact that the voluntary agencies that pioneered western education in Nigeria were unable to popularize vocational and technical education on the same scale as the literary education. In any case, the Christian Missions were more interested in the natives' ability to read the bible and literary subjects than in their ability to turn 'screws and prime water pumps'. The situation was further complicated by the fact that most of the British policy makers were literary men and women who had studied classics at the University of Oxford or London. Fafunwa in Ovbiagele (2007) captured it when he declared "the highest level of Technical and Vocational Education was the degree course in mechanical, civil, electrical, agricultural and chemical engineering run by all, but one of the six Nigeria, universities in the late 60s and early 70s. Though there were about five post secondary vocational and technical colleges in the same period, these institutions only trained people in commerce, accountancy, secretaryship, civil, mechanical and electrical studies at diploma level and for professional bodies like the City and Guild Institute of London.

Today, the National Policy on Education document in Nigeria attaches great importance to Vocational Education. This is because it is one of prime movers for achieving the desired technological and economic development of Nigeria. Prior to this new consciousness there had been a two-fold criticism of Nigeria education and training system. First, is the fact that the system was not geared effectively enough towards the realities and needs of the labour market; that is, it was not adequately employment-oriented. Secondly, there was insufficient application of the system's facilities and manpower towards solution of the country's most pressing problems, it was not adequately service oriented.

Generally, education is a variable tool for national development which requires deliberate plan to suit the development needs of a nation. More so, it is geared towards the system producing the right type of manpower in the right quality and quantity for nation building. It is an exercise that engages every one. It is a process that enables the individuals to live as useful and acceptable members of a society. An individual may go through liberal, general education or acquire knowledge and be useful to him and to the society at large. Education means more than just going to school (formal education). An adult, who did not have an opportunity of formal education, maybe directly or indirectly involve in education in the informal way. Okoye (2002) opined that an educated man is the gentleman, who is socially, morally, intellectually and physically useful to the society.

It is no gain saying that societal norms and values are prerequisites for a person to fit into any society, hence the need for the acquisition of vocational skills and competence for self relevance.

For any developing nation, the level of economic growth is tied to the level of technology that exists therein. Technology, by this we mean the ability to improve on the ways things are done for better performance, and it is only through the application of appropriate technologies that the skilful but jobless can be made functional in our society.

There is no doubt that the nations of the world that are technologically and economically strong have the story of their success rooted directly to investment in vocational and technical education.

Today's world of work which is ruled by information and communication technology (ICT), is a complex one hence the need for the individual to obtain the kind of education that would equip him with knowledge and technically variable understanding in order for him to be highly functional in the society.

To say ICT has taken over almost every sphere of life is an understatement, as it covers educational instructions, banking and commerce, health, building construction, forestry elevating, environmental population to mention but a few.

Vocational and Technical Education

Nwadioha (2009) said the terms “vocational” and technical education are in most cases used interchangeably. However though similar, they are not the same. Vocational education is an aspect of technical education that lay emphasis on skills acquisition and functional education for the development of the society. That is, it leads to employment in a job, a trade or occupation. Technical education is an aspect of education which leads to the acquisition of practical and applied skills as well as basic scientific knowledge. It gives both quality and quantity of the manpower required for transformation of a country in a technical world of work.

Osayomuanbor and Edokpayi (2008), Oluwalola (2008), Olagbegi (1995) and Ezennia (1992) in the same way define vocational and technical education as that type of education that train and help to prepare the individual for employment in a specific occupation or trade. To Osuala (2004) vocational education as the training or retraining which is given in schools or classes under public supervision and control. Vocational education leads to the acquisition of practical and applied skills, as well as basic scientific knowledge that will enable the individual to be prepared for the world of work.

According to National Policy on Education (2004), Technical and Vocational Education is used as a comprehensive term referring to those aspects of the educational process involving in addition to general education the study of technology and related sciences and the acquisition of practical skills, attitude, understanding and knowledge related science and the acquisition of practical skills, attitude, understanding and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of the economic and social life of Nigerians. It further expatiated the concept of vocational and technical education to include: an integral part of general education, a means of preparing for participation in world of work, an aspect of life long learning and a preparation for responsible citizenships, and an instrument for promoting environmentally healthy sustainable development.

Aims and Objectives of Vocational Education in Nigeria

The National Policy on Education (2004) gave the followings as aims and objectives of vocational education in Nigeria:

- Provision of technical knowledge and vocational skill necessary for agriculture, industrial, commercial and economic development.
- To give an introduction to professional studies in engineering and other technologies.
- To give room for young men and women to have an intelligent understanding of the increasing complexion of technology.
- Training and impacting of necessary skills leading to the production of craft man, technicians and other skilled personnel who will be enterprising and self-reliant.
- Provision of trained manpower in applied sciences , technology and commerce, particularly at sub-professional levels.
- To provide people who apply scientific knowledge to the improvement and solution of environmental problems for the use and convenience of man.
- restructuring the educational system at all levels to respond effectively to the challenges and managing the impact of the information age, and in particular the allocation of development fund to education at all levels

Problems of Vocational Education in Nigeria

That the transformational role of vocational and technical education is froth with a lot of problems is to say the least. Vocational and technical education in Nigeria is bedeviled with a lot of training problems such as:

- Negative Public Attitude towards Vocational Education

Most people see vocational education as inferior and therefore will not want their children to go into such profession. This fact was attested to by Nwachokor (2002) when he opined that there is a societal belief that vocational and technical education (VTE) is meant for dropouts. He went further to say that parental attitude towards vocational education is negative

To add to this, most parents see vocational education as for those who never do well in our society, therefore they prefer their children to read course such as medicine, law, engineering, accounting etc. This attest to the reason why the youths are not benefiting from vocational education that would have prepared them for gainful self employment.

- Inadequate Funding Of Vocational Education

The present funding system is plagued with problems which have led to the slow pace of development of vocational education in Nigeria.

The over dependent on government for finding of VTE is bad, as industries and chambers of commerce, industrialist and other private business men should be involved.

- Inadequate Physical Facilities School facilities, in terms of equipment and workshops are grossly inadequate, as has been observed that some of the important equipment are not available and where available, they are already obsolete and inadequate.
- Lack of Qualified and Experienced Staff.

Idih (2002) averred that, many teachers of vocational education have little or no knowledge of modern equipment; some of the teachers have never seen some of the equipment they are required to teach with; hence they lack the necessary ICT skills to impact to students. In other words, there is insufficient trained manpower to disseminate the necessary knowledge to the students.

- Irregular Review of the Curriculum for Vocational Education.

Vocational education must adjust its curriculum to changing business and industrial conditions, technological change, the requirement of the labour market and local needs. There is lack of active advisory committee in close and regular contact with the programme at the operating level. The NUC, NBTE and NCE syllabi, which have the

specifications for vocational training, must also be revisited to accommodate the current demand of the society technologically.

- Education Standard and Examination Malpractice

It is understatement to say the standard of education has fallen. Imogie (2001) stated that examination malpractice constitute one of the biggest problems confronting vocational and technical education in Nigeria. Examination malpractice is the order of the day in some schools of learning. The governments in Nigeria at various levels are however squaring up to the task of conducting credible examinations in Nigeria.

- Language Barrier

It is discovered that English language is used in the teaching of vocational courses instead of the use of local languages for easy understanding. This has adversely affected the youths that are trained in vocational skills towards proper grasping or coaching in the subject matter.

Vocational Education and National Development

Well trained graduates of vocational education will be employers of labour. Nwanoruo and Oporum (2008), Mfon (2007) Omotosho (2000), Okteruolagbegi (1995), have stated that vocational and technical education is a gateway to real growth and development of Nigeria as a nation.

Sokyes, and zakka (2009) posited that vocational and technical education is skilled- oriented and employment motivated; as it is very obvious that vocational education in the era of ICT is an indescribable means of reducing unemployment in our society.

To alleviate the age long problem of graduate without employment, vocational and technical education plays the role of training the Nigeria youths in the definite skills such that the gap between the labour market and the preparatory courses is bridged. Individuals would then possess the relevant skills in the jobs that exist in the society. Economically it is observed that times are shifting to stages of graduates not being employees only but becoming employers in the job market. Vocational education therefore provides an increase in the skill options available to the learner for an effective survival in the economy.

Vocational education if given serious attention will produce graduate who will be self employed and can produce goods that are of export quality thereby increasing our foreign earnings.

If the youths are given the proper training in vocational education, it will create jobs for our teeming youths that are roaming in the street and this will consequently lead to reduction in social vices such as robbery, stealing, prostitution, rapping, drug addition etc.

According to Ihimekpen and Olise (2004), they pointed out that vocational education is based on an analysis of each occupation to determine what is required to perform as a successful worker in that occupation. It is not enough to make an occupational analysis once; the analysis must be constantly updated. More than knowledge and skills is involved responsibility, good working habits, and relationships with fellow workers and employees must also be taught.

Emphasis on vocational education will lead to a shift from over reliance on oil driven economy to that of industry, commerce and agriculture. In the early 60's and 70's agriculture was the main stay of Nigeria economy, but with the advent of oil, there was a drastic shift from agriculture to oil driven economy. If vocational education is will reduce over reliance on oil and ultimately the diversification of our economy that will lead to national development.

Conclusion

From the foregoing is very lucid that the position of vocational education is a prerequisite in the development of any nation, Nigeria inclusive. This can be advised through the acquisition of relevant vocational skills, knowledge and abilities for self employment or paid employment.

Productivity today line in technology for work as well as the rate of changes in the technology world of work, so that the overall quality and reliability of vocational education in Nigeria can be improved upon if the inhibiting factors are to a great extent, if not totally removed. To achieve national development.

Recommendations

In order to have a way forward, this paper therefore recommends the followings:

- ❖ Public enlightenment campaign on the bad effect of examination malpractice in schools, colleges, mass media, church, mosques etc. equally, conducive teaching and learning environments should be provided by government.
- ❖ School programme should be relevant, practical and wholeistic.
- ❖ Vocational guidance and counselling service should be made compulsory
- ❖ Use of local language as a medium of instruction to enable indigent vocational education students understand clearly and select their career path.
- ❖ Technical training and retraining for vocational education teachers/instructors.
- ❖ Government and other stakeholders should invest heavily in the provision of modern facilities for vocational education.
- ❖ Reinvention of vocational education in Nigeria in order to empower youths for self reliance and self-employment
- ❖ Government to encourage youths in science and technology based course in schools.

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