

REPOSITIONING TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION (TVE) FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Technical and Vocational Education has been accepted as a sure means of solving the unemployment problem in Nigeria and thus set her on the part of true economic growth. This paper reviews the concepts of vocational and technical education and identified the major problems facing the realization of its full potentials which include ignorance, limited access to VTE and insufficient teachers. The training and retraining of teachers in this area as well as providing them with all the necessary tools will guarantee the unlocking of VTE potentials in Nigeria. It is recommended that government should establish technical and vocational training centres in all local government areas to ease the problem of accessibility and so quicken the urgent need to get people self-employed.

Introduction

Education is a very powerful tool for the liberation and enhancement of human potentials. An educated person can analyse situations effectively, define strategies, and plan programmes of action and opt for a better deal on any socio-economic and political matters. Education is what makes individuals to function and be relevant not only to themselves but to their society irrespective of place, time and circumstances. Technical and vocational education and training are the major means of self-development and empowerment (Okolo, 2010). Thus, the importance of functional education including technical and vocational education in any society cannot be overemphasised. Technical and vocational education is any form of education (formal, informal, or non formal) given to individuals based on their felt social, economic, political and cultural needs to enable them adjust fully to life challenges (Nzeneri, 2008).

Technical and vocational education occupies a pivotal portion in the societal scheme of affairs. It centres on individuals, group and societal needs, interest and aspirations. These educational needs and purposes border on the areas liberating people from ignorance, restraints, poverty, malnutrition, poor health, idleness, social and economic ills and assist the individual to advance towards improvement of self and others. The purpose of technical and vocational education is to encourage the development of three things in each citizen namely, an inquiring mind, an ability to learn from what others do, and basic confidence in one's own position as a free and equal member of a society, who value others and is valued by them, for what he does and not what he obtains (Onwuadi, 2014).

Repositioning technical and vocational education programme for enhancement of skills of learners/students in Nigeria will not only make technical and vocational education programme culturally relevant, but will also equip the learners with employable skills with which to improve their living standard.

According to Mole and Dim (2010) Technical and vocational education is a planned instruction and training that equips an individual with relevant knowledge and skills in a particular occupation or vocation. Technical and vocational education is therefore pathway to empowerment while empowerment forms the central part to sustainable development. Thus, the goal of sustainable development cannot be achieved without effective technical and vocational education which will equip the students who constitute the active population of the nation with requisite employable skills. Sustainable development according to United Nations (1987) is the development that meets the need of the present society without compromising the ability of future generation to meet their own needs. Sustainable development requires the reconciliation of environmental, social and economic demands, which constitutes the three pillars of sustainability.

Consequently, a society like Nigeria that needs to survive on knowledge creation and innovations in the real sense of it does not simply need institutionalized periods of instruction but foster on Technical

and vocational Education programme to raise the general skill level of the working population. Thus, Technical and vocational Education has to be well incorporated in the national Education programme and policy, so that through it individuals will acquire skills of initiating and managing self-employment projects.

Singh (1996) identified creativity skills, flexibility skills, ability to grasp situation quickly, readiness to cooperate, ability to put up Technical and Vocational Education programmes as sure ingredients of attaining sustainable development in any nation. Learners/students are not generally in desperate need for the skills of reading, writing and calculation in their state of want. Rather, they are desperately in need for practical inscriptive skills that will make them to earn money to meet family and societal financial obligations. Obi and Okide (2010) noted that the present Technical vocational Education programmes in Nigeria is narrow in focus and content which is an indication that practical aspect is not included in Technical and vocational Education programme. This therefore, calls for repositioning Technical and vocational Education programme for enhancement of economic development of the nation.

Concept of Technical Education

Technical Education is a post –secondary vocational training programme whose major purpose is the production of technicians. Technical Education is a special grade of vocational Education which can be distinguished from other vocational Education programmes because more mathematics and sciences are required in the training programme. The graduates of technical education are called craftsmen. It is more often found in trade and industrial education. Technical Education therefore, is often to referred as a vocational training programme that demands high scientific knowledge, calculative skills and practical manipulative ability, (Okorie 2001). It is the type of vocational Education that produces technicians in various fields of specialization such as woodwork, building, metalwork, electrical and electronics.

Concept of vocational Education

Vocational Education is that aspect of total education process that focuses on individual occupations. Its function is to provide knowledge, skills, and the attitudes that are necessary for entry and progress in an occupation (Olaitan, 1982). The central focus of Vocational Education, therefore, is to prepare individuals for jobs that require specialised training. The Federal Republic of Nigeria National Policy on Education (NPC) (2004) revised, defines Vocational Education as ‘‘that form of education which is obtainable at the technical colleges; It further states that Vocational Education is designed to prepare individuals to acquire practical skills, basic scientific knowledge and attitudes required as craftsmen and technicians at sub-professional levels.

In a nutshell, Vocational Education is regarded as the type of education that equips an individual with skills, knowledge and attitudes or understanding necessary for industrialization and self-reliance. It is a functional training for skill acquisition that enables a person to efficiently work in a chosen specialized area or trade either as an employee or as a self-reliant individual.

Role of teachers in the training and acquisition of technical education skills

A teacher is an individual that guides and manages the resource available for teaching and learning. According to Uwaifo (2005), education is a closed door of modernization and the teacher holds the key to door. A nation that is in quest of technological development should turn to the school for solution. Teachers are the hub or pivot on which any successful educational programme revolves and if teachers perform their task dutifully, there will be a myriad of new technologies in the future of Technical Education. Consequently, to become successful as a teacher of technical Education constant training and retraining programmes are indispensable to continually keep them abreast with the innovations in teaching and learning. Model programmes which will involve the participation of people from agriculture, business, industrial technical service sector are imperative. The involvement of these sectors ensures relevance and updated knowledge and availability of modern equipments and machinery for programme of technical education. Furthermore, it is imperative for industry to have skilled work force to support strong performance in the economy of this country. Finally, repositioning Technical and Vocational programmes for teaching and learning will encourage success in Technical Education and teacher development.

Contributions of Technical and Vocational Education

The contributions of Technical and Vocational Education are enormous. Eneyoh, Okon and Ekon [2012] identified the following;

Youth Empowerment; Through technical vocational education the youth are sensitized, mobilized, and motivated to acquire skills for paid employment and self reliance. Effective acquisition of vocational and technical skills will inculcate entrepreneurial skills that would help the individual to be self reliant.

Consumer education; Vocational Technical Education develops in the individual rational consumer and socio-economic competencies. It therefore equips the individual to be intelligent consumers of goods and services. Consumer education promote better understanding of business, and product in our socio-economic life. Manpower development; Technical, vocational education provides lightly trained and skilled workers for different levels and sectors of the economy. In this regards, Okolo (2006) asserted that vocational and technical education must aim at producing students with saleable and employable skills.

Production of craft men: Technical and vocational education provides training and empowerment in the necessary skills leading to the production of craftsmen, technicians and other skill personnel who will assist in promoting economic activities.

Support service to engineering; Technical and vocational education provides professional students in engineering and technology the bedrock for economic development. It also engenders human capital development that enhances empowerment of people and strengthening of economic prosperity of the society. Danko (2006) also submitted that technical vocational education can be used to promote economic development of both the individual and the society. He argued that through acquisition of technical and vocational skills, individuals could explore their environment and harness the resources within it, which could benefit both themselves and society.

Challenges and Prospects of Technical and Vocational Education

Technical and Vocational Education in this new world order of knowledge based economy, particularly in Nigeria is facing a lot of challenges. This ranges from increasing demand, relevance, quality, excellence, governance and resource insufficiency. These issues cut across many nations of which Nigeria is not exempted. Therefore to be competitive at global level we need a sizeable number of vocationally sound and technically educated individuals.

In Nigeria, there is increasing demand for vocational technical education. Students' access to technical and vocational education in Nigeria it is still low. This must be increased to include many more individuals by making the training attractive so that the full potentials can be realised in the areas of reducing unemployment, guaranteeing industrial growth and development, accelerating economic rejuvenation.

Conclusion

Technical and Vocational Education plays very important role in national development. However, the challenges must be taken seriously so that the potentials can be unveiled in the country. All these can be realised through the instrumentality of educational policies and political willingness. The teacher remains the key holder in putting these things into practice and so the training and retraining of teachers as well as providing them with all materials with conducive environment to perform optimally is indisputable. This is the first step in repositioning technical and vocational education in Nigeria.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are advanced for further action:

- Federal governments and private institutions offering technical and vocational education should always make enough budgetary allocation for the procurement and maintenance of infrastructural facilities and equipment.
- Government should establish technical and vocational training centres in all local governments to solve the problem of accessibility.
- Instructors and teachers should be trained from time to time to update their knowledge to educate those that are ignorant about the importance and benefits inherent in technical and vocational education.

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