

THE ROLE OF VOCATIONAL TECHNICAL EDUCATION IN MANPOWER DEVELOPMENT FOR NATIONAL INTEGRATION AND TRANSFORMATION.

BY

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Abstract

No nation can experience a meaningful transformation, unless the citizenry, most especially the youth, are highly skilled in vocational and technical fields. The technical strength of any nation helps to equip the nation so that it can be able to face the challenges of modern technology globally. Part of the mission of the National Board for Technical Education, (NBTE), is to promote the production of skilled/semi-skilled technical and professional manpower to revitalize and sustain national economy among others. And the establishment of adequate linkages between technical and vocational education institutions and industries. There is a great disconnect between educational institutions and the industries, due to the fact that much emphasis has been placed on paper qualification rather than competency. This paper discussed the prospects of vocational technical education and its challenges. Conclusion was drawn and some recommendations were made which includes: emphasis on competency rather than paper qualification. And that, existing technical institutions that are dilapidated should be given a face lift.

Introduction

The millennium development goals (MDGS), the transformation agenda of the present administration and other reforms that have been placed to speed-up the transformation process will not achieve the desired results if human resources are not properly harnessed. According to Okoroin Apagu and Simon, (2007), 75% of secondary school leavers in Nigeria do not go further in higher academic pursuit. It is therefore, disturbing to have a situation where many youths who are mostly physically strong to render services towards national development are highly unemployed

Kazaure in Ujunwa, (2013), observed that, challenges associated with skilled development started in the country immediately after the third national development plan, when emphasis shifted from competency to paper qualifications. He further stated that, this however left majority of people in the non formal sector that have adequate practical skills without qualifications stagnant, that is, why the industries are been involved in the development of occupational skills with work base verification and continuous assessment trainees.

Rhodes in Apagu and Simon (2007) opined that, public education does not have the right to throw its rejects into the ranks of the unemployed in the community. It is pertinent that our public school system should find a way of integrating all its

citizens so that they will be able to contribute to the economy of the nation. The Nigeria system of education is more interested in sieving the academically talented youths from the non-academically talented ones, and then allowing the non talented human resources to waste away. This situation is not healthy for national development. There is need for all stake-holders to come together to put up the necessary ideas on how to integrate the unprecedented talents of the non-formal educated candidates alongside with their talented counterparts to speed-up the process of transformation of the nation.

Ujunwa, (2013), states that, the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE), in collaboration with the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation, (UNESCO), International Labour Organisation, (ILO), National Business and Technical Examinations Board, (NABTEB), Lagos State Technical and Vocational Education Board, (LASTVEB), and other agencies and Industrial sector are working out the modalities for the National Institutionalization of National Vocational Qualifications Framework, (NVQF). In addition, the Federal Government through NBTE is working to establish the NVQF; so that those with non-formal training could have their skills measured and awarded certificates that would be equivalent to various levels of higher education. The development and institutionalization of this framework will have a major change or impact on

the life and work of many individuals, employers and the nation in general.

Vocational and technical education is definitely the pivot for a sustainable national development. Its impact on productivity, human development, etc, is unquantifiable. Ruqquat in Olusegun (2013) disclosed that the Ministry of Education in Nigeria has developed a 4-Year Strategic Plan for the Development of the Education Sector that will run from 2011 to 2015. She mentioned Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) as a key issue to be addressed. Olusegun (2013) also disclosed that the President, Goodluck Jonathan is in support of the opinion that qualitative education is the bedrock of every development, hence its importance in the transformation agenda.

Aims and Objectives of Vocational and Technical Education in Nigeria.

The Federal Republic of Nigeria summarizes the aims and objectives of technical and vocational education in the National Policy of Education (2004) as follows:

- To provide trained manpower in applied science, technology and commerce, particularly at sub – professional grades;
- To provide the technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, industrial, commerce and economic development;
- To provide people who can apply specific knowledge to the improvement and solution of environmental problems for the use and convenience of man;
- To give introduction of professional studies in engineering and other technologies;
- To give training and impart the skill leading to the production of
- Craftsmen, technicians and other skilled personal who will be enterprising and self reliant; and
- To enable our young men and women to have an intelligent understanding of the increasing complexity of technology

In line with the above stated objectives Okoh and Attah (2013) asserted that, the National Technical Certificate (NTC) and National Business Certificate (NBC) are now equivalent to Senior School Certificate (SSC). This policy encourage students of Technical and Vocational Education, who wish to sit for NTC and NBC examinations

to register for subjects from three groups called general education (core) subjects, the trade related (cognate) subjects and main trades.

Vocational and Technical Education for Manpower Development.

Vocational education deals with the training and retraining designed to prepare individuals to enter into a paid employment in any recognized occupation. On the other hand technical education deals with the training of technical personnel for the purposes of initiating, facilitating and implementing the technological development of a nation and creates the basic awareness of technological literacy to our youths. Ugwuja (2010) asserted that, vocational technical education is an aspect of education designed to prepare students for industry, agriculture, commerce, home economics.

According to the National Policy on Education (2004), vocational and technical education is defined as that aspect of education that leads to the acquisition of practical and applied skills as well as basic scientific knowledge. Gomper (2013) asserted that, the national policy on education defines vocational and technical education as: those aspects of educational process including in addition to general education, the study of technologies and related sciences and the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of the economic and social life.

Presently Nigeria is offering education in general subjects, but to achieve development, it must offer a variety of courses for disciplines such as technical, vocational, professional, agricultural, and so on, because the country needs a balanced distribution of manpower for all professions Alam in Okafor (2011). This is necessary, so that the vast population of Nigeria can contribute to the economic growth by participating in different professions. Ultimately, the effectiveness and responsiveness of a VTE system would be measured by its impact on the social and economic development of the nation.

Challenges of Vocational and Technical Education.

Nigeria has been under the influence of corruption, uneven level of civilization, ethnic diversity, etc, and all these have negative influence on our educational sector. The good

agencies of VTE will be able to make reasonable impact if all the challenges confronting VTE are well under control. Alliin Okoh (2013) listed the problems of vocational and technical education as discussed by the Federal Ministry of Education. The problems are graded in three – broad category statement as follows:

- Structural imbalance and system configuration.
- Inadequate resources input and consequent low output and
- Poor societal attitude towards and acceptance of TVE as an alternative form of Education

Inadequate resources input and consequent low output

Okolocha (2012) asserted that the success of vocational technical education programme in Nigeria hinges on proper planning, efficient implementation, adequate funding and motivation. Babaguruwa in Arinze, Uche, and Nwosu, (2009) opined that the low pace of technical education in the country is due to the fact that it is expensive to develop and sustain partly because of the high resources required.

Structural imbalance and system configuration

Attah and Giwain Bamidele, Attah and Adzande (2013), observed that some vocational technical education oriented institutions are being administered by people who have no knowledge of technology education as they specialized in general education. Apart from the fact that our educational system is faced with the challenge of inadequate national resources, it is important to note the links between industry education and work place.

There is need for all stakeholders to come up quickly with the National Vocational Qualifications Framework, (NVQF), for active coordination and integration of the industry, education and workplace. Randhawa and Paulson in Okolocha (2012), stated that education and training programmes cannot meet National post industrial strategies with invisible hands, but required the consensus effort of government, industry and labour. From his words, to avert much challenges, it is necessary for all the three tiers of government to work together in order to create the enabling environment for vocational technical education.

Poor societal attitude towards and acceptance of TVE as an alternative form of Education
Vocational and technical education has experienced a lot of setbacks. The wrong perception people have on VTE, relegated it to the background. It was considered as education for the mediocre etc. Olusegun (2013) asserted that, it is sad that many parents do not see the advantage of sending their children to technical school over the training institutions with emphasis on academics, where the apprentice learns a trade under the boss. It is unfortunate that over time, Nigerian Universities, Polytechnics, Monotechnics, Colleges of Education and other educational institutions have shifted their focus to academic qualifications rather than skill acquisition and problem solving activities.

Conclusion

Based on the findings highlighted in this paper the following conclusions are made:

Vocational and technical education will help to provide employment for the citizenry of the nation. This type of education will help Nigeria to develop the human resources sector, which has been a total neglect. Excessive waste of manpower in the labour market can be avoided through vocational and technical training. Nigerian society requires vocational and technical education at all levels of our education system which is the most potent remedy for unemployment. Adequate funding becomes a prerequisite for success in vocational and technical education. Efforts should also be made by the government to see that there is full implementation of VTE policies. The leaders must recognise the relevance of technical and vocational education in national development and adopt and adapt what works in developed nations. The three tiers of government need to be coordinated so that vocational and technical educational policies will be implemented properly. Vocational and Technical Education if properly implemented will serve as a panacea for national integration and transformation.

Recommendations

Based on the findings highlighted in this paper the following recommendations were made:

- Government should pay serious attention to issues of vocational and technical education and provide practical support which is a necessary panacea for the improvement of VTE in Nigeria.

- NBTE and teachers in vocational and technical education should be involved in more campaign for VTE in the society.
- vocational and technical education should be refocused so as to meet the changing needs of the people and society.
- There should be more emphasis on competency rather than paper qualifications
- Vocational and Technical Education programme should be well funded by the government. All existing technical institutions should be given a facelift
- Government should provide welfare schemes and incentives for the students and for the teachers in order to encourage the students and it will also help to prevent brain- drain of the teachers
- Curriculum of vocational and technical education should be reviewed for sustainable development of the nation
- Entrepreneurship education should be encouraged in vocational and technical education.

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