

## TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION FOR SUSTENANCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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### Abstract

*Unemployment, poverty and state of hopelessness have worsened amongst our school leavers and graduates of tertiary institutions as most of them are not gainfully employed after graduation. The reason is that they lack the necessary occupational skills that would enable them to be self reliant and effectively function in today's world of work. Nigeria government does not seem to give vocational and technical education the desired attention. This paper therefore is an attempt to explore some issues, challenges and what Nigeria stands to benefit as they effectively adopt vocational and technical education program for a sustainable development for individuals and the nation at large.*

**Keywords:** *Technical education, skill acquisition, employment, sustenance, poverty alleviation, economic development*

### Introduction

The development of Nigeria as a nation to a large extent depends on the social and economic contributions of the citizens. Education, vocational and technical training plays a major role at promoting community and national development. Vocational and technical education is the type of education that prepares people to work in various jobs, such as craft, trade and 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 enable the achievement of high academic standards, leadership preparation for industry and continuing education (CTE, 2009). A vocational school is an educational institute specially designed to provide vocational education. Vocational education can take place at the post secondary, higher educational level and can be through interaction with the apprenticeship system. At the post secondary level, vocational education is often provided by highly specialized trade, technical schools, community colleges, colleges of further education such as universities, institute of technology/polytechnics institutes. Until recently, almost all vocational education took place in the classroom or on the job site with students learning trade skills and trade theory from accredited professors or established professionals in the industry (Wikipedia, 2018). Vocational education and training (VET) is an important tool for a country's social and economic advancement. It offers an alternative educational path for youths and adults who wish to grow professionally and at the same time provides qualified manpower, needed across the all sectors of the economy.

Abduld Abdulhai (1994) maintained that technical and vocational education involves the acquisition of techniques and the application of the knowledge of science for the improvement of man's surroundings. This includes dealing with manpower training in professional areas as engineering, agriculture, business, home

economics etc. The skills involve practical works and application that leads to particular occupation. It is important to note that vocational education can be a means to an end. It can be a tool for securing employment and sustainable development in Nigeria. The world Bank's 2019 world development report on the future work suggests that flexibility between general and vocational education particularly in higher education is imperative to enable workers to compete in changing labor markets where technology plays an increasing important role. Vocational and technical education has historically been known as "education for work". It has focused on providing learners with the skills and knowledge needed for a successfully transition to workplace.

### **Statement of Problem**

Unemployment, poverty, hopelessness and political instability is currently a national concern. Youths and graduates from various institutions looking for employment opportunities which are never there. Nigeria educational curriculum was tailored towards acquisition of so called white collar job after graduation. These so called jobs are no longer there and have not also led us anywhere in the development of our nation. Nigeria does not seem to give technical vocational education the attention it deserves and this appears to be one of the reasons for rising rate of unemployment and poverty in the society, the growing problem of employment in the country has contributed largely to the worsening problem of poverty among the populace. This is because youths and graduates from tertiary institutions are not equipped with adequate skills that will enable them exploit the national resources that are abound in Nigeria. Lack of awareness about vocational education programmes at various levels of school curricula as other shortcomings has been a major problem, it has taken the educationist working for government more than twenty years to develop the national policy and curriculum, yet the general public do not seem to understand the implication or effect of technical education in the development of the economy Ayodele (2006). Technical and vocational education (TVE) has been an integral part of national development strategies in many societies because of its impact on productivity and economic development. Despite its contributions, the leaders of Nigeria have not given this aspect of education the attention it deserves. And this is one of the reasons for the nations underdevelopment and rising rate of unemployment and poverty in the society.

Like unemployment, poverty is ravaging the society. It has been documented that more than 80 percent of Nigerians live on less than one dollar per day. There should be some firm of school-work based learning incorporated in schools in Nigeria as integral part of national development strategy (Dike, 2006). Nigeria poverty alleviation programme have been ineffective because of lack of skills training facilities and inadequate funding. This paper is therefore an attempt to explore some issues, challenges, what Nigeria stand to gain as they effectively adopt vocational and technical education program for a sustainable development for both individuals and the nation at large.

### **Theoretical Issues**

Vocational education is the acquisition of necessary occupation and technical skills and their application in solving practical problems. It is education that prepares people to work as technicians in various jobs such as trade or a craft. It involves personnel's who are technically oriented to be involved in the planned implementation and teaching of various technical programs geared towards production. This form of education has been attested severally as an education that provides self employment, enhance productivity and self reliance. It reduces the over dependence of school graduates on government own jobs and gives individual the skills to live, learn and work as productive citizen in a global society. Its various courses are career oriented and arm its products with skills to work the chosen trade or profession. Adele and Olakayode (2007) described technical and vocational education as a programme with various branches that can transform Nigeria into a producer/manufacturer nation from its present status of a consumer/importer nation. Its various courses are career oriented that arms its graduates with skills to work and thrive in the chosen trade or profession. One of the goals of vocational education as stated in the national policy on education (2004) is to give training and impart the necessary skills to individuals who shall be self reliant. If this goal is adequately achieved it will go a long way in boasting self confidence, reduce overdependence of school

graduates on government own jobs, generate employment, alleviate poverty, lead to a sustainable technological development, enhance productivity and self reliance. These leading factors of production in the emerging global economy are said to be technology knowledge, creativity and innovation.

The Nigerian National Policy on education (NPE, 2004) stipulated that aspects of vocational education as:

- a. An integral part of general education
- b. A means of preparing for occupational fields and effective participation in the world of work
- c. An aspect of lifelong learning and preparation for responsible citizenship
- d. A method of facilitating poverty alleviation. These are consistent with those found in UNESCO (2002) reports. Vocational and technical education, therefore give individuals the skills to “live, learn and work” as productive citizen in the global economy.

Vocational and technical education is as old as human history, for thousand of years students have been training for specific vocations. Women have learned domestic skills from their mothers and young men trained on how to manufacture farm implement like hoes, cutlasses of different shapes from local blacksmiths. This type of hands-on, skills based learning has lasted throughout human history. As we metamorphised, so has it.

The provision of vocational and technical schools have a long history. Before the industrial revolution (between 1750 and 1830) the home and the apprenticeship system were the principal sources of vocational education. But, later the societies were forced by the decline of handwork and specialization of occupational functions to develop institutions of vocational education (Duffy 1967). Manual training that involves general instructions on the use of hard tools was said to have developed initially in Scandinavia (C. 1866). Vocational training became popular in the elementary schools in the United States after 1880 and developed into courses in industrial training book-keeping, stenography, and allied commercial work in both public and private institutions. According to the Colombia Encyclopedia (2001), some of the early private trade schools in the United States include cooper union (1859) and Pratt Institute (1887), the Hamptin Institute (1868) and Tuskegee institute (1881). The agricultural high school (1888) of the University of Minnesota was the first regularly established vocational secondary school that introduced extensive public instruction in agriculture. The number of public and private vocational schools has greatly increased in the United States since 1900. The United States is not the only society that appreciates skill acquired through vocational and technical education. The history of vocational and technical education programme in Nigeria can be traced as far back as the country came in contact with missionaries and foreign merchandise. At the moment it seems as if Nigeria is gradually neglecting the vocational and technical education

#### Challenges of Vocational Education in Nigeria

It is of note on the sad side that technical and vocational education in Nigeria has suffered from years of neglect, mismanagement and inadequacy of resources commensurate with the needs, population growth and demand of the Nigerian society. The death of skilled labour in Nigeria is worrisome as it is common to find lots of people who passed through vocational and technical education and they are not proud entrepreneurs, on the other hand, products of higher institutions, many of them lack the technical know-how that can make them scale through in life. To this extent, therefore, vocational and technical education cannot contribute meaningfully to the reduction of abject poverty, hopelessness unemployment because of so any challenges within it's spices. Amongst the challenges are

- a. Vocational and technical degrees are regarded as inferior to regular academic degrees. There has been a very major dichotomy between university degrees and polytechnics in Nigeria. This type of discrepancy is glaring in terms of employment and career development. The dicotomy is even extended between the lecturers in polytechnic and universities. Most of them received their degrees in the university but due to employment opportunities are discriminated because of the institutions they teach. Certificates from polytechnics and other vocational institutions are treated as inferior to that of degree holders from conventional universities. However, this practice in Nigeria discourages both students and lecturers in the polytechnic and other vocational institutions. All our policy makers and government are all propagating and championing the course of technical/vocational

education on lip- service. Government policies by structural design relegated technical education to ridiculous state both by definition and reference. These derogatory references by the government dampers the moral of technical educators and their students. To reposition technical education, the government should as a matter of urgency change the career nomenclature of these lecturers in the polytechnics and the likes. They should be allowed to climb the ladder to a position of a professor instead of that of a chief lecturer like their university counterparts. Most of the lecturers obtained the same degrees from the same universities with the university lecturers only to be discriminated because they are lecturers in a polytechnic or other vocational institutions. Also they should allow the graduands of technical schools to progress from vocational school through technical colleges to polytechnics to higher degrees, if they so choose. A situation whereby a HND holder is not given admission to higher degree just as his B.ENG/BSC counterpart is appealing and should be discouraged as a matter of urgency.

Another factor is the wrong perception of the technical and vocational education programme whereby Nigerians and the government attach greater importance to literary education and that is the reason university education are seen as prestigious and as such more well funded at the expense of vocational education. The wrong societal perception is disheartening as the society views technical vocational programme as a program meant for the never do well students or indigent members of the society or school dropouts. This has made intending students to develop apathy towards vocational education and training. Because of this wrong perception, this noble programme has witnessed as decline in students enrollment. This has lead to a dearth in skilled manpower which has to a large extent affected productivity and economic growth and development in Nigeria. Vocational and technical education programme to a large extent is poorly funded in Nigeria. The allocation to education and as a share of the GDP is quite minimal; Okeke and Eze (2010), reported that sufficient fund has not been channeled to vocational education which is a major problem plaguing the system. Similarly Ugiagbe in Okeke (2010) observed that poor funding causes acute shortage of the necessary facilities needed for effective implementation of the programme.

Inadequate funding of vocational institutions have lead to the turning out of half baked graduates because there is no fund to build and maintain workshops, laboratories or even purchase modern equipments (Aghenta 1985). Staffing of vocational technical education is generally inadequate because of poor funding. Experienced and skilled teachers are not employed. Those that are employed, because of poor remuneration and policy discrimination do not stay long in the teaching profession, but duft to some other more lucrative jobs or travel abroad. This leaves most vocational and tertiary institutions in Nigeria in a sorry state. Because of this factor, the products of these institutions lack employability skills. Another factor is the lack or inadequate facilities and teaching materials. Apart from the fact that basic facilities are lacking, there is also lack of teaching materials especially textbooks, good learning environment, laboratory equipments and skilled manpower. Akamobi (2002) stated that, vocational/technical education cannot achieve much in producing qualified skilled manpower when human-physical facilities necessary for the training are inadequate. Such facilities are in the areas of infrastructure, number of qualified technical teachers, funding, remuneration/condition of service, equipment and consumable materials etc.

Okorie (2002) advanced that, if stratified measures such as improved funding improving human resources development, proper management of available infrastructure and regular maintenance among others are adopted and implemented the situation which is approaching crisis state would be improved.

Another issues that is a challenge to the development of technical and vocational education is the programs lack of popularity around the young people and their families. The perceived this program as leading to less successful careers than general secondary education or academic tertiary education.

#### Roles of Vocational and Technical Education in Nigeria's Development

Vocational and technical education is the education that is all about doing things with hands, limbs and brain in order to produce something or add value to something that has been produced. However, economically

survival of any nation cannot unilaterally realize its goals without the supportive role of technical and vocational education. It has played so many roles in a nation's development

- a. This program has gone a long way in creating employment amongst the youths. It has made so many youths to keep off the streets and reduced the rate of drop outs and unemployment in the society. If more emphasis has been placed by the government on this type of program unemployment will gradually become a thing of the past.
- b. This program has also gone a long way in promoting industrial development in the nation. Technical and vocational training helps a nation to develop industrially by producing technically skilled manpower that fits in the labor force that is required for industrial and economic development.
- c. It develops the youths to be self reliant, to be job creators instead of job seekers and to be employers of labour
- d. Poverty alleviation. The major aim of technical and vocational education is to produce entrepreneurs who are capable of using their acquired skill to provide for themselves and for those that depend on them. These acquired skill they utilize on daily basis to put good food on their tables and that of their dependants.

This virtue of course alleviates the wide spread poverty on Nigerians. They also generate income based on the skills acquired. However, if technical and vocational education is properly harnessed, it will reduce the gap between the rich and the poor. The nation will be peaceful and more habitable to live in.

### **Summary and Conclusion**

Technical and vocational education has been an integral part of Nigeria's national development strategies because of its impact on the development of the most volatile part of the population and its contribution on economic growth and development.

However, despite its contributions the leaders of Nigeria have not given this aspect of education the attentive it deserves. The design of Nigeria's educational system is flawed. The neglect of technical education is an obstacle to national growth and development. Nigeria's current preoccupation with University education reduces economic opportunities of those who are more oriented towards work than academic. The emphasis on University education is too much and it has reduced the economic opportunities for those who are more work oriented. Not everybody can afford a University education and not everybody is academically inclined. Nigeria must learn to blend theory and practice in its education because theories alone cannot serve any useful purpose. The nation's technical schools should be brought to international standard by employing teachers with field experience in the subject. Empowering people with technical skills would to a large extent keep the youths off the streets, keep on check unemployment, hunger, poverty, kidnapping, armed robbery and other social vices that has been bothering the nation. A key purpose of vocational and technical education is the preparation of youths for work. This takes the form of learning and developing work-related skills and crafts. Work is broadly defined and supposes to include both formal employment and self-employment. To support self-employment, government must encourage vocational and technical education and develop a contemporary curriculum that will include entrepreneurship training.

### **Recommendation**

However, this paper has discussed the meaning of vocational education, principles problems challenges and roles it has played in Nigeria and therefore posits the following.

1. The government and academic lords championing the course of technical/vocational education should stop playing lip-service to the profession they should be more sincere and serious.
2. Technical certificates should not be discriminated or disregarded but should be recognized for both admission and employment and should not have a limit for career progression.
3. The dicotomy between conventional school and technical schools should be removed and the lecturers of both institution treated on equal levels and opportunities.
4. Staff training of the technical teachers must be given a priority often, since skills and crafts change overtime.

5. Technical schools should be equipped with modern facilities and laboratory equipments, funded and staffed with qualified technical instructors.
6. Parents and students should change their derogatory mindset towards technical education. Though this depends on the policies and programmes of the government on the certificates issued by the vocational schools.

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