



Research Article

REPOSITIONING TECHNICAL & VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN NIGERIA FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

The paper X-rayed the importance of vocational and technical education as a means of national development. It discusses the place of VTE in national development and the various challenges faced by VTE in Nigeria due to government attitude in implementing programmes that will be of direct benefits to Nigerians and thus hinders Nigeria's development agenda. The place of technical and vocational education programme in national development was appraised and concluded that if proper attention is given to VTE, it will reduce unemployment and increase domestic product (GDP) among others. It recommends among others that the Federal Government should create more awareness and interest on candidates, on the need to enroll in TVE programmes in institutions and also to link the country's educational system, to the needs of the economy in order to meet current economic needs to enable Nigeria achieve reasonable standard in the nations development drive.

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INTRODUCTION

Technical and Vocational Education has been an integral part of national strategies in many societies to combat unemployment and to assist in poverty reduction because of its impact on productivity and economic development. Despite its contributions, those saddled with responsibilities of governance in Nigeria have not given this aspect of education the attention it deserves. Robberts (1971) stated that technical education is a type of education or training designed for preparing the individual learner to earn a living (to be self reliant) or increase his earnings in an occupation where technical information and an understanding of the laws of science and technology as applicable to modern design production, distribution and services are essential for success. Osalor (2012), viewed technical and vocational education as that aspect of education that involves the acquisition of techniques and application of knowledge of the science for the improvement of men's surrounding, it is the kind of education that prepares one for the world of work with which the individual become reliant and can make contributions to the development of the society.

Development according to Hornby (2015), is the gradual growth of something so that it becomes more advance. It is a process of development directed towards change. Technical and vocational education must be centered on vocational development and repositioning, this is because in our modern society, frequent changes are inevitable, employment

opportunities are shifting, new occupation are established, and employers may revise their expectations of workers. It is therefore necessary to reposition technical and vocation education in Nigeria by focusing on its development thereby developing the society. Nwaokolo, (1991) stated that it is with the realization of the important roles of technical and vocational education that emphasis is placed on vocationalization when there is a decline in an economy or when unemployment is high. However, this can also be done in the spirit of developing appropriate skills and competencies to combat youth unemployment, poverty reduction and further contribute to social transformation. Technical and vocational education according to Danko in Amor (2011) is the core of both the individual's and the society's economy. He further that, through acquisition of skills, individuals could explore their environment and harness the resources within it, which could serve them and the society since wealth of the society determines to a large extent, the development of that society.

According to Usioboh (2007), successive governments in Nigeria have over-emphasized University education programme above the equally important technical and vocational education. He further said that, what is needed is for the government to give adequate and equal attention to all the various levels of education of our citizenry in the overall best interest of the country and the growth of our national economy but unfortunately, the government emphasis on vocational and technical education programme in institutions of learning is merely on pages of newspapers and television. Successive governments have not found it needful to promote and adequately finance both the planning and implementation of befitting vocational and technical education programmes to

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produce the desired result, rather the government find it easier to give more attention to general and science education.

Amor in Ikelegbe (2013) noted that the society which would have been on the neck of the government to finance the planning and implementation of vocational and technical education programme in institutions of higher learning has a misconception that vocational and technical education is an education that is meant for drop out, unintelligent and under achievers. This misconception is a challenge and has in no small measure frustrated the enrolment of candidates into the vocational and technical education programme in institutions of higher learning. This paper therefore examines the concept of technical and vocational education, the place of technical and vocational education in national development, prospects and challenges of technical and vocational education programmes in Nigeria.

The Concept of Technical and Vocational Education

The Federal Government of Nigeria through the National Policy on Education (2012) stated that technical and vocational education is used as a comprehensive term referring to those aspects of a educational processes involving, in addition to general education, the study of technologies and related sciences and the acquisition of practical skills, attitude, understanding and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of economic and social life. Technical and vocational education is further understood to be;

- a. An integral part of general education.
- b. A means of preparing for occupational fields and for effective participation in the world of work.
- c. An aspect of lifetime learning and preparation for responsible citizenship.
- d. An instrument for promoting environmentally sound sustainable development.
- e. A method of alleviating poverty.

Danko (2006) gave a distinction between vocational education and technical education thus, vocational education is an education programme that prepares students mainly for occupations requiring manipulative skills or non-technical occupations in such fields as agriculture, business, home economics, painting, decorating and others, organized to secure confidence and experience by the individual students. It is also designed to develop skills, abilities, understanding, attitudes, work habits and appreciation encompassing knowledge and information needed by a worker to enter and make progress in employment on a useful productive basis.

Technical education on the other hand, is designed to prepare the learner to enter an understanding of the laws of science and technology as applied to modern design and production. It also stresses the engineering aspects of vocational education, such as electrical/electronic, mechanical and automobile trade. According to career and technical education (2009), technical education facilitates the acquisition of practical and applied skills as well as basic scientific knowledge, it is therefore a planned programme of courses and learning experiences that begins with exploration of career options that supports basic academic and life skills and enables achievement of high academic standards, leadership, preparation for industry-defined work, and advanced and continuing education. Amor (2011) said that, the task of technical education is the transmission of ideas, skills, values of work and environment

and what individuals can do with his or her life. If the individual can uphold positive values towards society, this will not only benefit the individual but the society as well.

The Place of Technical and Vocational Education Programme in Nigeria Development

Vocational and technical education, if given proper attention should reduce unemployment, increase Gross domestic product (GDP) of the nation and above all improve the much canvassed science and technology base of the country. This will bring complete change or transformation of Nigeria. Transformation is all about change. Okafor (2011) indicates that changes in a country's economy is required to prepare young people for jobs of the future and TVE has been an integral part of national development in countries that genuinely embraces it. Danko in Amoor (2011) stated that, the objective of technical and vocational education are to prepare the learner for entry into employment in his or her chosen career, meet the manpower need for the society, increase the option available to each student, motivate force to enhance all types of learning and enable the learner to wisely select a career. Based on these objectives, it could be said that the importance of technical and vocational education is to provide employment and poverty alleviation thereby transforming any nation from underdeveloped to developed nation. 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, agriculture and so on, because the country needs a balanced distribution of manpower for all profession. This could enable the vast population of Nigerians contribute to economic growth by participating in different profession.

Many able bodied and highly qualified persons could not secure gainful employment because they lack the necessary occupational skills to be self employed and to effectively function in today's world of work. These occupational skills can be provided by technical and vocational education thereby improving our technological base. Vocational and technical education systems play a crucial role in the social and economic development of a nation owing to their dynamic nature; they are continuously subjected to the force of growth as they aid the employability of the graduates, become self-employed, and creators of jobs instead of job seekers. Others include personal development, opportunities for further education and career development.

Prospects of Technical and Vocational Education

In a research conducted by NBTE (2011) to ascertain technical manpower needs in Nigeria, it was reported that technical manpower shortage exists in virtually all sphere of Nigeria's economic activities. But the most prominent are electrical engineering technicians, mechanical engineers, welders, frame cutters and building construction occupations. The study also revealed that critical technical manpower shortage is highest in the national diploma (ND) category (34%) followed by HND (25%). Technical manpower shortage in Bachelor of Science (B.Sc) categories is 18.7%. From the analysis, this highlights the need to place emphasis on vocational technical education as the prospect of job placement after graduation is high. Unemployment will also be reduced to the barest minimum since the graduates will be self employed and therefore add to the overall productive capacity of the country.

If proper attention is given to training individuals to acquire the necessary skills, and the qualifications acquired can be made equivalent to international ones, it will assist in improving the employment prospects of Nigeria labour force not only at home but also abroad, which is an important source of foreign exchange for the country. It is a fact that, through industrial linkages and growth supporting interventions for skill development, TVE can contribute towards poverty alleviation in any country (Okafor 2011). It can provide adequate access to TVE facilities and cater for deficient areas and target groups such as women, workers of the formal sector and the destitute sections of society. It has an important role to play for economic development, industrial growth, employment generation and poverty alleviation.

Challenges of Technical and Vocational Education Programmes

The concept of challenge with regard to this write up is difficulty faced in achieving set objectives. Technical and vocational education in Nigeria faced some challenges due to the levels of preparation and attitude of society towards achieving the desire objectives. This has made it impossible to attain the height TVE desired in Nigeria when compared to its counterpart in other countries of the world. The challenges include;

Inadequate Funding of Government towards Vocational and Technical Education Programme in Nigeria.

History has shown that the Federal Government of Nigeria do not appreciate the contributions of technical and vocational education programmes to national economic development even though is a tool to combat unemployment and poverty in our society. Insufficient finance to TVE programmes is a realistic and practical factor inhibiting the implementation of vocational and technical education programmes in Nigeria. Okafor (2011) pointed out that successive Nigerian governments have not found it necessary to adequately finance both the planning and implementation of standard and sustainable vocational and technical education programmes. While so much noise is made on the pages of news print and television about vocational and technical education, little is done to improve the teaching and learning of TVE programmes in Nigeria.

Academic Drift into Non-Vocational and Technical Courses

The policy recommendation which required that polytechnic enrolment ratio should be 70:30 for technical and non-technical programmes has been neglected for several years. This has made it impossible to focus on the provision of necessary facilities to train the desired technologist that will transform the country.

Lack of Candidate's Interest

Many candidates' aspiring to acquire education does not have interest in Technical and vocational education programmes. The supremacy tussle between polytechnic HND certificate and University Bachelor Degree is a serious bane on the nation. Even candidates whose interests are to enroll in technical and vocational programmes sometimes change their mind from studying TVE programmes due to the nomenclature of the degree (B.Ed) in most Nigerian Universities and HND in Polytechnics. This has most of the time account for candidate's indifference.

Perception of Society towards Technical and Vocational Education

The society does not accord recognition to graduates of vocational and technical education. Amoor (2009 and 2011) stated that the impression is that this type of education is meant for the unintelligent and under achievers. Most parents do not or guide their wards to take a course in technical and vocational education programmes either in the universities or polytechnics; this is because the society does not place any significant value or dignity on TVE programmes.

Inadequate Equipment, Facilities and Workshops

Technical and Vocational education requires equipment and workshops to train students. But because of insufficient fund in providing the needed laboratories, workshops and even lack of electricity to keep available workshops running through the training periods, has made training uninteresting and thereby acquisition of the needed skills is unattained by many students. The need for facilities was stressed by Norman (1975) and Nwaokolo (2003), when they pointed out that certain facilities are specially designed to enhance the teaching of certain skills, but such facilities are not readily available. The contention is in order because with the increasing complexities of our system, the need for provision of adequate equipment and workshops is necessary in order to achieve the desired training purposes.

Brain Drain

Uwaifo (2009), describe academic brain drain as the movement of lecturer's from institutions to other institutions e.g from one university to another university or from the polytechnic to the university or to other professional (including politics) due to better conditions of service. Basil (2004) reported that brain drain in Nigeria is noticeable, and states as follows.

- i. About 45% of all Nigerian professionals including technical educators have left the Nigerian shores over the decades since colonization.
- ii. Between 1997 and 2007 alone, Nigerian lost over 10,000 middle level and high-level managers to the western economies and the figure may be higher as of today.
- iii. About 500 lecturers from Nigerian higher institutions continue to emigrate each year, particularly to Europe, America and other African economy. This no doubt has adverse effect on Nigerian economy.

Staff Situation

According to Uwaifo (2009), many universities across the country are inadequately staffed both qualitatively. In most departments especially in technical education programmes, the proportion of staff without Ph.D out numbers those with Ph.D., the polytechnic system is even more worrisome, as some departments may not have one Ph.D holder. In some cases, immediately staff acquired a Ph.D especially in the polytechnic, he will quickly move from the polytechnic to the university or to other countries because of the unattractive nature of the lecturing profession.

Absence of a Clear Technological Vision

This is seen from the implementation of policies made. The policies may be fine but at implementation stage there has

always been a shift, or politics sets in and visions for TVE is never achieved.

CONCLUSION

Technical and vocational education holds the key to rapid economic growth of any nation. However, Nigeria institutions have not attained the maximum level of performance of technical and vocational education due to government attitude towards TVE programmes. The challenges confronting technical and vocational education must be recognized and fought vigorously.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made as follows

Federal Government of Nigeria should create awareness on candidates on the need to enroll in TVE Programmes in institutions and to link the country's educational system to the needs of the economy in order to meet current economic needs in the society, and to enable Nigeria achieve reasonable standard in the nations development

Adequate resources should be allocated to TVE programmes in order to achieve positive outcomes and to achieve self sustainability also institutions should recognize and adhere to policy recommendations of enrolment of students in the ratio of 70:30 for technical and non technical programmes. This policy if adhered to will assist in building our technological base.

A comprehensive reform towards technical and vocational education and a deliberate attempt to uplift the TVE programmes is required in order to encourage both students and Lecturers. This will not only enhance teaching but will aid in acquiring better skills by the students. It is the only panacea to a technological transformation Nigeria.

Government should involve stakeholders and bring about policies that will encourage the youth in enrolling in the TVE programm.

Parents and concern stakeholders should encourage their wards/children to enroll in TVE programmes. This will not only enable for better skills but enhance job creation and be self employed.

Recognition should be accorded graduates of vocational and technical education. They should be seen as the engine room we need, to drive our country Nigeria, to national transformation which we desired. If this is done and achieved, the negative perception society has on VTE will change and more hands will be trained to achieve better skills with which to transform Nigeria.

The Federal Government should give scholarship to candidates wishing to take career in vocational and technical education as bait to attract more candidates' interest and enrolment into the programmes.

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