Abstract

The principal problem of attaining the noble objectives of establishing and sustaining vocational/technical education in Nigeria is that of inadequate finance to meet the huge financial requirement. This paper attempted to carefully outline the area of funding requirements and to proffer alternative strategies to be adapted to source for new areas of funding and the introduction of cost reducing innovative measures. Such alternative strategies include: funds from consolidated funds, annual budgetary provision by Federal and State Governments, internally generated funds from business ventures, increased use and improvisation of local materials, reduction of unwarranted institutional expenses on student maintenance, seeking more parental/community involvement, stimulation of Alumni Associations, donations, and other sources as, public levies, surcharge on company profits, minimum school fees charge, educational tax on sale of certain goods, and property value lax among others. The adoption of such strategies is expected to enhance the growth and development of vocational/technical education in Nigeria.

Introduction

The Republic of Nigeria (1998) placed a high premium on vocational/technical education; with the primary objective of re-directing the Nigeria vocational, technical and technological education. In order to achieve this anticipated objective, the scarce resources of government and private individuals are allocated yearly for the provision of science and technology education, alongside the general education. The amount invested by the Nigerian governments, individuals and; firms to educational development; generally, continue to increase yearly with the governments lending to provide the larger proportion. The Nigerian economic and educational situation require that the government cannot afford to shy away from contributing the lion share of the requirements for vocational and general education.

According to Akangbo (1985), the problems facing vocational/technical education in Nigeria may be multi-dimensional but principally is the issue of inadequate funding resulting from the high cost of establishing and maintaining technical/vocational institutions. Adequate fund is required for institutional buildings, equipment and expensive machinery for the workshops and laboratories and the high cost of running such institutions. The adequate funding resulting from large sums of money required for developing vocational/technical institutions inhibit the realization of the laudable objectives of the government in developing science, technical, vocational and technology education for social and economic development of Nigeria. The provision of infrastructure such as relevant data, statistics, engineering services and related inputs and facilities for vocational/technical education are also grossly inadequate due to inadequate financing.

Concept of Vocational/Technical Education

The acquisition of vocational/technical education for the production of persons with the basic applied science, technical, vocational and technology education can be received from formal education centres, institution training centres, technical colleges, polytechnics and some colleges of education and universities. The acquisition of these basic vocational/technical skills or the applied science and technology education is well documented in the National Policy on Education (1998). It described vocational and technical education as "that aspect of education, which leads to the acquisition of practical and applied skills as well as basic scientific knowledge".

Olaitan (1996) also defines vocational education as that part of the total experience of the individual whereby he learnt successfully to carry on a gainful occupation. In the same vein, Osuala (1987) identifies vocational education, as; vocational or technical training, which is given in schools or classes under public supervision and control. He went further to define it as "systematic learning experience which are designed to fit individuals for gainful employment in recognized occupations
as semi-skilled workers or technicians or sub-professionals. It includes guidance and counselling in connection with the training and other instructions directly related to an occupation. He classified the major occupational areas of vocational education thus:

a. Agriculture  
b. Distributive Education  
c. Home Economics Education  
d. Health Education  
e. Trade and Industrial Education  
f. Business Education  
g. Technical Education  

The Federal Republic of Nigeria (1998) restructured the aims of technical/vocational educational thus: fi) The provision of trained manpower in applied science, technology and commerce with specific reference to professional grades. (ii) The provision of technological and vocational skills required for agricultural, industrial, commercial and economic development; (iii) The provision of persons with basic skills of scientific knowledge application to improve and sort solutions to environmental problems for the use and convenience of humanity; (iv) The training and imparting of necessary skills for the production of craftsmen, technicians and other skilled personnel for the development of environmental capacity and self reliant persons;  
The provision of introductory training in engineering and other technologies and;  
The provision of national young men and women with an intelligent understanding of the increasing complexity of technology.

The national policy therefore was a bold step taken by the Federal Government of Nigeria towards a complete overhauling of the national education system for the development of persons with scientific and technological skills to enhance the growth and development of the country's socio-economic sectors.

Funding of Vocational/Technical Education in Nigeria  

Vocational/technical education entails high cost of establishing and maintenance. On the recognition of the high cost of education generally, it was clearly stated in the National Policy on Education that education is an expensive social service and requires adequate financial provision from all tiers of government for a successful implementation of educational programmes and regardless of the aspect of education in question.  

Akangbo, (1985) categorized the basic methods of financial educational institutions into five sub-sections, namely: Tuition fees, government subventions (grants), donations and endowment fund(s), loans and the revenue yielding projects. The major sources of funds for the provision of educational services in Nigeria over the years include government, individuals or their parents, firms, and external aid. The funding of vocational/technical education like all aspects of education in Nigeria by (he governments continues to increase over the years. This feature can be traced from the introduction of the free primary education by the former Western and Eastern Regions in the 1950s; the introduction of free Universal Primary Education (UPE) programmes and the abolition of tuition fees in schools and colleges by the Federal Government. More recently, there is the implementation of the National Policy on Education which ushered in the adoption of the 6-3-3-4 system of education; the building of many technical/vocational institutions; the procurement of introductory technology tools and machines from East European countries for supplies to schools and colleges all-over the country, the introduction of Education Tax Fund and the introduction of Universal Basic Education by the present civilian administration.

In spite of the ever-increasing financial investment by governments towards the growth and development of education generally in Nigeria, it is important to note that not until the introduction of the 6-3-3-4 systems of education, the relative government support, encouragement and contribution to the growth and development of vocational/technical education was quite insignificant given the relevance and financial requirement of this aspect of education.

The continued reliance on the government funding and on the meager tuition fees charged
by schools and colleges as the principal sources of financing the growth and development of vocational/technical education in Nigeria will not lead to the achievement of the national objective and it will create more frustrations and reduce the anticipated benefits from (his aspect of education.

Sofolahan (1989) supported the sourcing of other sources of funding vocational/technical education outside the government thus:

Experience of the past (wo decades has shown that government cannot on
its own shoulder tie entire financial responsibility for the
development of Nigerian education system. Statistics reveal that
private sector consumes about 60% of (he products of our educational
system and those engaged in commercial settings arc utilized in
generating profits for their establishments. U is therefore just
natural to expect an increase in participation and a well-defined
involvement for the private sector in the present and future development
of education in Nigeria.

There is therefore an urgent need to properly re-evaluate the potential sources of funding vocational/technical education in Nigeria to make it more vibrant and result oriented.

**Strategies For Funding**

Despite the huge government investment in vocational/technical education in Nigeria it is
known that there exist an acute shortage of needed funds to finance this aspect of education.

On shortage of funds (o general education in Nigeria, Taiwo (1983) stated that the causes of this
shortage can be accounted for by massive public demand for education and the ever growing
manpower requirements of the economy. lie emphasized that since education cannot be fully
provided for, all avenues must be sought and explored in providing adequate fund for
education. In the face of the growing national manpower requirement s and demand for skilled
middle level manpower, sufficient efforts should be geared towards private/community
participation in establishing/financing of vocational/technical institutions to supplement the
Federal, State and Local authorities' contributions. There is the need (o re-evaluate the roles of
the Federal, State cum Local Governments in issues relating to financial contributions to
vocational/technical education in Nigeria and with the primary target of reducing the over
dependence and over burden of the Federal to the advantage of both (he states and local
governments. Furthermore, the present allocation formula of 47% for Federal Government, 33%
for the States and 20% for the local governments, is to be re-designed to enhance the position of
each tier of government (o continue to play such roles effectively. The contribution of each tier of
government should be clearly defined and the relevant deductions made at source of proper
appropriation by the Federal Government.

In addition to the need to clearly re-define the benefits and contributions of each tier of
governments, the Federal Government should adequately revitalize efforts towards diversifying
her sources of revenue such as in the area of import substitution and export promotion, iron and
steel development and the liquefied natural gas project. These measures will enhance the revenue
base of the nation and reduce the over dependence of the economy. Savings from these measures
could be redirected towards the stimulation of (he growth and development of vocational
education.

The present global economic depression occasioned by structural defects in the economy
with its hyper inflationary trends has adversely affected the costs of running education generally
and vocational/technical education specifically because of the increasing costs of services,
materials and facilities. Specifically, this paper is the opinion that full adherence to Long Report
(FRN, 1991) on sources of funding for higher education is equally a necessary alternative source
of funds for technical/vocational education in Nigeria. Such alternative sources of funds include:
1) Encouraging and providing improvisation of materials as much as are technically possible.
We should encourage and stimulate the use of locally produced materials to reduce building and
other related costs. Indiscriminate award of contracts for projects which would have cost less if
executed by direct labour should be minimized as much as possible. Purchasing of needed
materials should be done by direct purchasing as against heavy reliance on contractors for
their supplies. All these measures are expected to reduce costs and make more
funds available for other projects.

2) Sufficient efforts should be geared towards reducing unwarranted huge institutional
expenditure on students' maintenance such as in the area of boarding systems and savings arising from the cost reduction measures could be more judiciously used in providing more classrooms, workshops, laboratories, equipment and other facilities for the institutions. Where it becomes very necessary that boarding facilities should be provided the parents should be made to bear the entire cost. The day school can be made more effective if adequate effort is made for a long-term plan for the establishment of vocational/technical institutions close to people's homes all over the country.

3 More parental/community involvement should be sought in funding certain areas of vocational/technical education with the primary objective or reducing government/proprietary burden that savings arising from this strategy could be directed towards the expansion of institutional programmes and facilities. In doing this parents could be made to provide their children with basic institutional requirements such as tools necessary for their learning/practical. The community could also contribute direct labour in the building and maintenance of schools and college in their areas. Parent/Teacher Association (PTA) in schools should be made more vibrant and result oriented especially in the area of relevant projects and provision of facilities.

4 Alumni Associations could be stimulated and relied upon by vocational/technical institutions in generating substantial funds to help reduce the funding problems of the alma mater. This could be done by imposition and effective collection of levies and dues on members and making same available to the schools and colleges for the procurement of the needed services and facilities.

5) Efforts should be made at generating more funds from international bodies in the form of financial aid from such international bodies as the Ford Foundation of New York, World Bank and the European Union for the provision of needed services and materials in vocational/technical education.

The administration of vocational/technical education funds by general education administrators should be minimized because of the implied tendency of continuing the old trend of giving more attention to general education to the disfavour of vocational/technical education. This measure will ensure expert handling, and create more focus on the needed areas of vocational/technical education that require special attention.

6) Other sources of funds for vocational/technical education in Nigeria may include public levies, surcharge on company profits, minimum school fees charges, introduction of inevitable profit oriented endowment fund, educational tax on sale of certain goods, property value tax etc. Revenue, from these areas could be directed at providing needed services and facilities in vocational/technical institutions in Nigeria.

7) Additional strategy for reducing the shortage of fund problem of vocational/technical education in Nigeria can be done by the introduction of cost effective innovative learning situations without adverse effect on the existing quality of teaching/learning.

**Conclusion**

The increasing costs of establishing and running vocational/technical education in Nigeria, due to high cost of materials and facilities, require that urgent measures be taken to source for new areas of funding and the introduction of cost reducing innovative measures. This call becomes imperative because despite the huge investment by the Federal, States, and Local Governments in this aspect of education there still exist an alarming shortage of needed funds for the provision of required services, and facilities to enhance growth and development.
References


