

# THE PLACE OF VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION (VTE) IN NATION BUILDING

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## **Abstract**

Vocational and technical education (VTE), is a term currently being used to include any or all aspects of vocational education. It is an education intended to prepare the student to earn a living in an occupation in which success is dependent largely on technical information and on understanding of the laws of science and technology as applied to modern design, production distribution and services. The advocates of technical and vocational subjects have always hoped or believed that they would create attitudes favourable to technical and manual occupations. However, vocational and technical education has over the years been seen as a means for those who cannot cope with intellectual work. Government and society have looked it down upon at large. This paper attempts to discuss the vocational and technical education, its origin, objectives and place in Nation building. Lastly recommendations were made.

## **Introduction**

Vocational and Technical Education is of vital importance to individuals and the Nigeria-nation at large. The 21<sup>st</sup> century here with us and the population of individuals is constantly changing as (they pass through the various stages of social economic development.

It has been amply demonstrated that the number of jobless adults in this country is increasing daily by leaps and bounds. Majority of our people are without any meaningfully skill to sustain a living. The solution to these problems demands the attention of good vocational and technical education programmes. This is because the acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and the competencies, both mental and physical, are equipment for the individual to live and contribute to the" development of his society. There is great urgency for the development of effective and functional workers.

The survival of Nigeria as a self-reliant, economically, sufficient and technologically advanced nation largely depends on the production of practical men and women i.e. a knowledge and skilled work force, right attitude to live in and contribute to the development of the society must be responsive to these changes.

## **Origin of Vocational Education**

Vocational education is as old as the human race. Man, since the beginning of time has worked for his livelihood and this necessitated that man should learn how to work. For example, the boys followed their father to the farm where they taught method of farming, while the girls usually stayed at home where they learnt the home making jobs. This gradually led to the evolution of what is today known as the "apprenticeship system". Later, men knew ways of working and later discovered that some individual have the ability to perform certain skills or tasks than others. Some individuals developed special skills and practiced such trades as pottery, metal work, stone and wood carving, gardening and home keeping to mention but a few. This was the evolution of the present day apprenticeship system, which was the first unorganized form of vocational education.

## **Vocational and Technical Education (VTE)**

Vocational and Technical Education (VTE) refers to all types and levels of education and training which, in-addition-to providing general education, involves the study of applied science and the acquisition of practical skills and knowledge with an occupation. In other words, vocational and technical education is expected to produce the range in quality and quantity the technical manpower required for the transformation of Nigeria into a technological society.

Technical education is defined as "(hat aspect of education which leads to the acquisition of skills as well as basic scientific knowledge" (FRN, 1998). Vocational education is the training or retraining which is given in school or classes under public supervision and the earliest forms of vocational education therefore, centred around such problems as securing food, providing shelter and making clothing materials for protection. Gradually, man learnt how to make tools and weapons for hunting as well as for protection. He developed language, invented the social institutions such as family and tribes and came to discover that his individual welfare was related to the welfare of his family and tribe. Thus, through the unconscious imitations and observation, as a result of people living together and doing everything together, people learnt many skills from one another.

In passing on this accumulated knowledge and skills, the fathers or mothers in the cl-an act as instructors. The

methods employed by the instructors then, were that of demonstration and practice on the job and control, and was conducted as part of a programme designed to prepare individuals for gainful employment as semi-skilled workers or technicians or sub-professionals in recognized occupations (FRN, 1998). Vocational education is used to apply specifically to useful employment in trades and industry such as agriculture, home - making, technical and business areas.

Vocational and technical education can be defined as the acquisition of practical and applied skills as well as basic scientific knowledge, which prepares individuals for gainful employment as semi-skilled workers or technicians. One of the aims of vocational and technical education is to give training or impart the necessary skills leading to the production of craftsmen, technicians and other skills personal who will be enterprising and self-reliant (FRN, 1998).

### **Objectives of Vocational Technical and Education**

The important of vocational technical and education programme, thus leading providing skilled manpower to modernized production is recognized in Nigeria and finds expression in the National Policy on Education 4<sup>th</sup> edition (FRN, 2004, P.30), which has its broad objectives as follows:

1. To provide trained manpower in applied sciences, technology and commerce, particularly at sub-professional grades.
2. To provide the technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agriculture, industrial, commerce and economic development;
3. To provide people who can apply scientific knowledge to the improvement and solution of environmental problems for the use of convenience of man;
4. To give an introduction to professional studies in engineering and other technologies;
5. To give training and impart necessary skills leading to the production of craftsmen, technicians and other skilled personnel who will be enterprising and self-reliant;
6. To enable our young men and women to have an intelligent understanding of the increasing complexity of technology;
7. To provide the student with good general education enable him/her communicate fluently and also have an understanding of various sectors of economic and social life.

### **Curriculum**

Vocational technical curriculum should be able to integrate school knowledge to community knowledge. The real development of any developing society hinges on the combination of valuable elements of school knowledge and community realities. The curriculum should have relevance; it should be useful and matching realities in terms of conformity with existing circumstances.

The vocational and technical curriculum should be based on the needs of the different urban and rural areas, of different cultural and historical groups and must reflect national priorities as contained in the country's national goals and development plans. It must be functional, clear, practicable and acceptable by the people concerned.

A core vocational and technical curriculum is not necessarily a compulsory curriculum. What is relevant and essential today and needs to be integrated into the school core curriculum may not be relevant in ten years time. The needs of society are often at odds with the needs of the individuals; similarly, the needs of the urban areas may contrast sharply with those of rural areas. Community based curriculum, asserts Leiby and Lutz (1982, P.3), aim to transform the villages into economically viable communities, and at the heart of such transformation is the willingness of the people to respect the dignity of manual labour.

The issue here is whether programmes are to be somewhat individual based on progressive mastery of vocational and technical developmental tasks with differences in career maturity or they are to be based on goals of occupational choice and marketable skills for all by the end of junior or senior secondary school. In either case, a career-oriented curriculum should aim at exposing students to a broad spectrum of occupations in relation to himself, his interest, aspirations and abilities, (Finch and Crunkilton, 1979). In a fast developing and changing society like Nigeria when: some occupations are obsolete and others are emerging, work may have a different place in life and society and so the need for flexibility and diversity is obvious, (Alaezi, 1989).

The vocational and technical curriculum should be such that Nigeria youths will be prepared for what Alaezi (1989), calls "post-industrial society". Cottage industries and craft based economies . it? equally honoured. Technological improvement may be sought but new technologies would have to be considered in terms of their humanistic values. The curriculum of vocational and technical education in all its ramifications should normally foster the achievement of these goals.

## **The Place of Vocational and Technical Education in Nation Building**

Nigeria is a country in natural resources, some of which are not utilized because of lack of technical manpower. Vocational and technical education is greatly needed in conserving and developing these resources. It can also help the Nigerian youth to acquire training in relevant fields, since most of them are underdeveloped and under-utilized. Nigerian adults could also be trained or retrained as the case may be, to fit into new vocations that are emerging due to technological changes that can move the nation forward.

No nation can become self-reliant or indeed survive if it continues to rely on the importation of foreign consumer goods for its population. Time has come for Nigerians to encourage the innovation, creative and industrious.

Vocational and technical Education is of great importance to the economy of the nation. This is necessary because the nation's ability to provide its own indigenous manpower for future industrial and economic development depends on vocational technical education.

Indeed, Nigeria is in dire need of vocational and technical education that should be designed to prepare workers for common education that should be designed to prepare for workers for common occupations in which a number of people can find useful employment. Education for self-reliance requires a positive identification with the societal values and ways of life especially during the process of change. Vocation education is the key to Nigeria's future. It will open the door of her business to greater frontiers and boost the economy. In order to build the great and dynamic economy, vocational and technical education must inculcate in its products (the necessary skills knowledge and attitude necessary for economic development).

The curriculum as earlier stated must be vibrant, that is to say, it must be able to meet that changing profile of the society. With technological advancement, new jobs are emerging while some old ones are fading away, due to their incompatibility with technological changes, (Ahukannah, Ndinaechi and Arukwe, 2000).

Vocational and technical education must serve as an instrument for transforming Nigeria's natural resources into goods and services, builds the nation through job creation, being self-reliant, reducing the rate of unemployment that will promote higher standard of living.

### **Job Creation**

There are many careers in vocational and technical education fields that prepare individuals for self-reliance. These includes, occupations in social welfare and public health, family and child development, food specialist, interior decorations, home economics in journalism, agricultural product supplies, horticulture, fishery, poultry production, animal husbandry, soil scientist, farm management distribution, business management, occupations in advertisement, sculpture, business management, occupations in advertisement, sculpture, ceramics, textiles, painting, graphics, photography, printing. Others are wood and metal construction, electrical and electronic services and repairs, building and automobile services and repairs, (Siachino and Sallington, 1987).. There are many others that the young graduate of vocational and technical education can select from if he or she wants to be self-reliant and reduce unemployment in the country. There is need to develop a wide variety of ways of in which a person's work can become a meaningful and rewarding part of his total life experience. Similarly, our educational system should be made to help all individuals acquire a personal and desirable meaning of work that holds value for both personal and national development since technology rules the world and nation can be better than its educational system, the educators of vocational and technical education own this nation the role for produce well trained and competent personnel for various specific jobs.

### **Recommendations**

It is necessary to examine and adopt the following recommendations:

1. There is need to establish more vocational and technical schools and Colleges of Education (offering vocational and technical courses), polytechnics to actually develop our indigenous technologies through the use of our local raw materials.
2. Vocational and technical curriculum should be developed to incorporate the use of suitable local tradesman (carpenters, welders, fabricators, tailor, etc).
3. Vocational and technical education should be adequately funded.
4. The government's policy should address the issue of under developed technology and focus on the technical know-how.
5. Both Federal and state governments should be providing adequate facilities for vocational and technical programmes.
6. The National Policy on Education should be re framed to address the present technological need of Nigeria and should be balanced up with appropriate implementation measures.
7. Poor staffing. There should be enough qualified trained staff to handle vocational and

technical education courses.

### **Conclusion**

This paper has viewed various aspects of vocational and technical education, how it has contributed in building the nation. One can safely say that looking inward and the use of local raw materials will be better achieved with harmony between the indigenous crafts and the research of colleges of education, colleges of technology/polytechnics, universities rather than calling on the big industrial outfits (industries).

The technologists, craftsmen and technicians will be able to use the raw materials to make intermediate products that will feed the big industries. That way, we shall be establishing the Nigerian world of work. There is no doubt that vocational and technical education will obviously be most rewarding and pave the way for the much needed technological advancement of Nigeria.

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