

REFLECTION ON THE ROLES AND CHALLENGES OF TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF NIGERIA IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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Abstract

Development is not hinged on exploitation of natural resources but a good system of technical and vocational education aimed at providing solid manpower as foundation for the technological and industrial growth. Technical and vocational educational has been an integral part of national development strategies in many societies because of its impact on productivity and economic development. The awareness of the fact that skills are critical to growth is what is really critical, this fact is what has helped Asian countries and Scandinavians excel above other countries, with Finland regularly fielding more qualifying competitors than any other country. Technical and vocational education is an occupational and multi-disciplinary field of study which yields value returns by equipping its recipients with requisite knowledge and skills that will make them employable and able to employ. This paper examines the concept of technical and vocational education, its challenges and contributions to the development of Nigeria in the 21st century, roles and the way forward.

There is the inherent expectation in every society that each citizen should discover, develop and direct his or her energies, interests and talents toward making a constructive, valuable and useful contribution to the society and National economy. The need for youths and adults to participate effectively in economic development becomes greater per day as they strive to move towards a period of sustained economic growth. Denga (2010) Vocational and technical education is therefore a means towards

achieving this feat. Vocational and technical education according to Uwaifo (2009) is any form education whose purpose is to prepared person(s)/ citizens for employment in an occupation or group of occupations and the national policy for education (NPE 2004) put it as that form of education, which gives learners both scientific knowledge and practical skills required for a trade or profession which includes craftsman, technician, technologist, scientist and other related fields such as agriculture, home economics and business education.

Education on the other hand is a process of systematic experiences by which the individual learns to live, determined by the beliefs, aspirations, values and affluence of culture in which the individual finds himself (Valett, 1977 in Loho 2001). This particular characteristic differentiate vocational education from general education, which lies with the specific, practical, technological and directed workplace, hence general education emphasizes academic and abstract forms of knowledge. Its acquisition irrespective of the uses to which it will subsequently be put to, leads to a particular knowledge whether utilized or not.

The problem of unqualified / unskilled graduates' employees in different companies and organizations are both current and chronic as can be traced to poor technical knowledge foundation in our society. This is in accordance with (Eble 1974 as cited by Ede & Oglebaen 2005) while Maiwada (2001) maintained that the inability of Educational stakeholders to evaluate the standard of classroom teaching and practical lessons, has

contributed to the falling standard of education in Nigeria.

Nigeria as a nation is still grappling with chronic factors like unemployment and underdevelopment which have kept us in the perpetual bondage of economic frustration (Uwaifo, 2009). Effective training of students into experts and professionals will indeed, improved our industries, small scale business and propel the engine of development in our country. Nyityo (2010) noted that technical and vocational education is a continuous process of adaptation. It is good for workers to train towards acquiring the required minimum knowledge required as Roland (1995) in Uwaifo (2009) stated that such results oriented, and that should brings about technological advancement as well as aims at standardizing new manpower that are employed and retraining for experts.

Nigeria cannot be left out in the advancement and development of the world, as it is a known fact that science and technology, rules the world. This has its roots from the colonial days, as Maghi (2005) in Nyityo (2010) observed that technical and vocational education in Nigeria dates back to the 1920s when it was taught at the elementary schools. In 1950s vocational education was obtainable in secondary schools, with the establishment of trade centres, which were later upgraded to polytechnics. This operated on apprenticeship systems of family businesses and provides means of survival for members of the family. And today technical and vocational education should be structured to provide us with the means to meet with the today's survival.

Our workforce should have basic skills (Reading, writing, mathematics, listening, speaking), Thinking ability (creative ability, decision making, problem solving, reasoning), and personal quality (responsibility, self-esteem, sociability, self management) etc, for jobs such as bricklayer, carpentry, painting, auto

mechanics laboratory technicians, electrical/electronic technicians, pharmacy etc.

Objectives of Technical and Vocational Education

Vocational education stresses the acquisition of knowledge relevant to employment; it emphasized the demonstrable of specific skills and competencies in individuals. Their main objective is to provide students with the skills and knowledge necessary for vocational capabilities and entry into job content. According Sithole (2009), students acquire job specific and employable skills through work related trainings and experiential teaching methodologies. Lankard (1991) and Lynch (2000) argue that such has always been dedicated to preparing its graduates for employment in the workplace, typically in existing business and technical enterprises.

Technical and vocational education is a planned programme of courses and learning experience that begin with the exploration of career options to support basic academic and life skills and enables the achievement of high academic standard, good enough for quality leadership, preparation for industry defined work etc, (Victor 2009).

Denga (2010) emphasized the main objective to be; to provide students with salable skills and knowledge, necessary for vocational competencies. Technical and vocational education in schools fall under the broad sections of: Agricultural education, business education (comprising of business studies, accounting, commerce, management, computer, economics etc), Technical education (comprising of art, woodwork, metalwork, design technology, technical graphics) and home economics education (such as fashion and fabric, food and nutrition, and home management). According to Sithole (2009), these are secondary schools subjects that relate to particular occupational areas. Students are taught in the use of traditional

teaching methods as well as practical methodologies in the hope of building a qualified and enterprising workforce in the future.

Unemployment and poverty is ravaging the society, it is widely documented that more than 80 per cent of Nigerians lives on less than one dollar a day. Unemployment of youth is as high as 80 per cent while 10 per cent under employment in Nigeria. Technical and vocational education has the solution to this problem, if only we can embrace it, a change will be possible. To inculcate these skills, appropriate teaching methodologies need to be applied using traditional teaching methods to develop manpower that are needed for development. (Gibb 1993 in Garavan & O'cinneide 1994:8 in Sithole 2009).

Technical and Vocational Education for Sustainable Development

Education in whatever form is aimed at modeling a child or an individual into a better person, relevant to his immediate environment. Sustainable development cannot be achieved without education (Balogun, Idogho & Otti 2010). Acholonu (2001) on the other hand, he maintained that Development is a process whereby an economy undergoes social and economic transformation leading to a rise in the standard of living, in order to able to access the basic amenities of life

Skill training enhance productivity and sustains competitiveness in the globe arena, many countries are renewing efforts daily to promote technical and vocational education and training, hence this is the only way to prepare young people for work and enterprise.

Balogun, Idogho & others (2010), asserted that technical and vocational education and training plays a vital role in improving the wellbeing of rural settlers and communities, this increases productivities, empowers individuals to become self-reliant and stimulate entrepreneurship.

The Role of Technical and Vocational Education towards Sustainable Development

Despite the contribution of technical and vocational education to many countries all over the world, some National leaders have not given this aspect of education, the attention it deserves. This is the singular reason for our slow pace development and unemployment in the country. The role of Technical and Vocational Education towards sustainable development includes: which is

Earn Livelihood: This type of education gives the individuals the skills to live, learn and work as independent and productive citizens of the country. Children who are not academically oriented can equally and easily benefit from the knowhow of others. This role enhances the eagerness and relevance as well as the functionality of an individual in an economic society, thereby leading us closer to the national goals on vocational training stated in the national policy on education.

Foster Political, Social and Economic Stability: the various training programmes available to the youth are vital to our institutions as well as the stability of the Nation, Nwokoye (2009) asserted, that Technical and vocational education equips the citizenry with the requisite skills to makes necessary political and economic adjustments as competent workers/ useful citizens, vibrant producers and as informs persons.

Encouraging Technological Breakthrough: The increase in technical and vocational education / training in the country will encourage more production, distribution and reasonable consumption of goods and services. Our citizens will be position to effectively engage in invention and discoveries that will or can unlock our problems as a country, giving way our greatness.

Checking Social Malaise: when the citizens are equipped with the requisite knowledge and

skills, they will be self-reliant, thereby reducing armed robbery, kidnapping, political assassination and cultism and other vices in the society.

The Challenges in Delivery of Technical and Vocational Education

This role notwithstanding; technical and vocational educational education is faced with a lot of challenges which must be given serious attention if it will assist the nation in its attainment of sustainable development. The economic turbulence of the 1980s and the consequential crisis of youth unemployment led to the belief that if young people were properly prepared for work, they would have gotten jobs or at least become self-employed. (Smith & Keating 1977, Thomas 1997 in Sithole 2009). Many hindrances come to intervene in the effective structuring, operation and development of concrete / vibrant Technical and Vocational curricula and education in Nigeria, amongst which are;

Poor Public Perception of Technical and Vocational Education: This aspect of education has been generally regarded as of lower status, as many Nigerians take pride in numerous titles, degrees / awards etc without the requisite practical abilities and skills to back it. Many parents' want their wards to study abstract courses, as they regard vocational training as non-academic meant for less privileged students, who are destined for employment into manual and physical labour.

Inadequate Support System: Studies in some African countries especially in Nigeria and Kenya indicated that there is widespread reluctance; skepticism or negative attitudes to self-employment among school leavers, poor finance and lack of support are some of the factors that affect vocational education graduates from becoming self-employed.

(Farstad, 2002, Namuli- Tamale 2003 in Sithole 2009). It is expected that certain government and non-governmental organizations should be made to seriously encourage youths and support them financially in this area.

The Dearth of Professional and Qualified Teachers in the Field:

Most teachers in schools these days are not adequately prepared for delivery of technical and vocational education as well as the needs for methodological upgrading (Uwaifo, 2009). Teachers of vocational subjects have little or no training in to teach the subject- especially in the practical aspects, while Kerre & Kwende (1996) stressed that efforts to provide effective vocational education and training in Africa have generally not succeeded and one of the reasons for failure is the shortages and / or absence of professionally trained teachers.

Inadequate School Facilities: The provision of technical and vocational education must be facilitated necessary equipment to ease effective teaching and learning of practicals. The absence of standard or well equipped workshops in schools makes it difficult to provide learners with adequate and sound opportunities to engage in real world tasks that characterize some particular occupation due to the inability of schools to provide appropriate teaching on same. In a study, carried out by Oriade (2008) in Denga (2010) discovered that most laboratory equipment were scarcely available. This made teachers' results to teaching technical and vocational subjects conventionally.

Corruption in the Country: The statutory bodies responsible for the effective training and operation of technical and vocational education in Nigeria has failed owing to corruption. The Ministry of Education (MOE), Ministry of Science and Technology (MOSCI&TECH), the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE)

and the various schools (Polytechnics and Technical College of Education) are not left out in this charade mismanagement and embezzlement of public funds meant for the upgrading and maintenance of public schools and training centres for vocational subjects across the country.

Conclusion

Technical education will adequately equip students to be more effective in the age of science and technology and to raise a generation of people who can think for themselves and respect the dignity of labour and prosper its citizen into a blossom economic enderado. According to Dike (2009) as cited by Kadijhatu (2010) Nigeria needs technical experts from today in order to transforms tomorrow.

Nigeria should drive into a positive technical breakthrough with the ability to meet its immediate needs that are really very numerous. Kadijhatu (2010) Technical education graduates should be helped to become self reliance or at least employed as Teacher/lecturer, technician, technologist etc as that will reduce unemployment in the country. This remedies will grossly reduce unemployment and underemployment in our country Nigeria.

The Way Forward

Manpower is not just the number but the quality in the number as well(Yabuku 2008, cited by Balogun & et al) hence manpower base of any nation is the stock of trained skilled or semi-skilled persons available for the production of goods and services toward the infrastructural edge needed for attaining self-reliant, growth and development. In order to move forward, the following needs to be observed;

- (1) The rush for academic qualification should be substituted for pride in trade and vocational skills, abilities and competencies, for an effective industrial

development of our beloved country. This will increase the employability skills not just literacy, numeracy, customer services, team work but a result oriented intermediate and technical skills (Curling 2011).

- (2), Increased funding for technical schools and technical tertiary institutions for an effective turnover of highly skilled manpower and subsequently employment. Our schools should be empowered, monitored and struggle to meet the labour needs consistent with industrial economic base.
- (3) There should be adequate enlightenment campaigns in the society generally about the importance of Technical and vocational education, to change the perception of this aspect of education. Increase in the number of enlighten / skilled Nigerians will lead to increases capacity building.
- (4) The Ministries of Education, Science and Technology, the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE), Education Tax Fund (ETF), National University Commission (NUC), and Industrial Training Fund (ITF) etc should reconsider their statutory roles and functions in the country toward the raising of needed experts. Corruptions and mismanagement of funds should give way for technological advancement and industrial development. All corrupt people should be sanction to discourage other interested.

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