

REAPPRAISING VOCATIONAL EDUCATION FOR SKILL ACQUISITION IN NIGERIAN SECONDARY SCHOOL

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Abstract

The paper focus on reappraisal Vocational education for acquisition of skill in secondary schools. It looked into the traditional ways of Vocational education before the advent of formal education. The role of Vocational education was also discussed, problems militating against realizing the objectives and the ways to solve the problems were highlighted. Recommendations were made that government both Federal and State should join hands to raise fund needed to move vocational forward. Also course like entrepreneurship to be introduced into senior secondary school curricula to motivate the interest of the students and also since vocational is job oriented.

Introduction

Vocational education was one of the non-formal education which started as an apprenticeship in our traditional societies. Fafunwa (1974) opined that traditional vocational training was run as an apprenticeship scheme and it was a time-honoured device for educating millions of African youths and adults. Children were trained traditional to take occupation of their parents or other relations who are the master craftsman. It was common in those days to see children taking to be apprentice in different occupations, like carpentry, smithing, building, tailoring etc. This is in line with Ajayi and Awoyele (1985) who reported that it was a common feature of the traditional setting to see people engage in vocation such as farming, fishing, carving, carpentry etc. The training involved observation of the master craftsmen is doing the work. In those days the training of perfection took a long period of time and had no curriculum. An agreement is reached between the

master craftsman, the apprentice and the relationship of the apprentice. This form of training was properly organized or formulated. Akoroda (2004) reported that traditional vocational, training was basically uncontrolled unorganized, unstructured.

The objective of the informal system which include training a child to acquire the skill/or skills that will help him to earn a living and contribute the well being of the society was not documented. The children learn by emulating the master craftsman.

With the advent of formal education Nigeria neglected the vocational entirely. Even when efforts were made to give it attention, nothing was achieved. Uka (1974) made a case for vocationalisation of the entire secondary school curricula. After all the criticisms and case made for the system of education to change, came the conference of 1969 for change in educational system. It was not until 1981 when the National Policy on Education herald the 6:3:3:4 system of education which came into existence in 1982 that gave prominence to vocational education. According to Uwaneiye (2000) the emphasis of the National Policy on Education centres on self-employment, good citizenship, moral development and self actualization. While assessing the policy, Okeke (1989) reported that the 6:3:3:4 education system seeks to equip its clientele with the capacity for self-reliance in the economic, occupation and other related spheres of human endeavours National Policy on Education (FRN, 1981) stated two broad aims of secondary education which are:

1. equipping students to live effectively in our modern age of science and technology, and
2. raising a generation of people who can think for themselves, respect the views and feelings of others, respect the dignity of labour.

An examination of the policy on education clearly spells that two levels of technical education in secondary schools.

1. The pre-vocational level at JSS level and
2. The vocational education level at SSS level.

Uwameiye stated that at the JSS level emphasis is placed on exploratory experience for general education purposes. Also Okeke (1989) reported that the philosophy of pre-vocationalism presupposes that the products of JSS should be equipped with the capacity to be familiar with the world to work, career options and choices. He further said that students at the JSS level should be exposed to various opportunities available in the world of work. Properly oriented in many occupational areas to enable them see the need for continuity at the SSS level and beyond and consumer skill for everyday living. Among the technical education subjects at this level are Home Economics, Agriculture, Introductory Technology and Business Studies from which students are expected to choose two. The senior secondary school vocational education is geared towards skill orientation and acquisition for job entry and preparation for further education in technology.

At the secondary school level, a broad approach in the learning and teaching of vocational education subject which ensures general employability skills is advocated. This helps the recipients horizontal mobility within occupation clusters and prevents skills obsolescence in its clientele. Therefore, specific skills training should be left to the employers or be acquired at the post secondary school level.

The Role of Vocational and Technical Education in National Development

Vocational education leads to acquisition of practical and applied skill as well as basic scientific knowledge (National Policy on Education, 1981). Osuala (1999) noted that the term, Vocational or Technical education has no single universally accepted definition but what is common among the various definition is that the basic goal and its objectives still remain the same. Banjo (1974) refers to Technical education as essentially Vocational education, which addresses the performance aspect workers' role. Uka (1974) opined that it falls into four field – Agriculture, Home Making, Business and Mechanics. Vocational and Technical education is expected to play a role which involves the preparation of students for practical skills. Osa-Edoh (2008) observed that students on completion of his Technical and Vocational education programme is expected to have acquired basic expertise in a particular branch of industrial arts or applied science in which he shows special aptitude and interest. According to the definition of Vocational and Technical education by FGN (1998) that it leads to acquisition of practical and applied skills, Vocational and Technical education major purpose is to assist individuals in acquiring and developing skills which would be eventually transferred to jobs opportunity in the society.

Vocational and Technical education embraces the means by which manpower development of a nation can be controlled and modified to meet societal needs and to alleviate poverty. Agbobu and Oladokun (2000) noted that Vocational and Technical education is instrumental to modern economic development and skilled manpower, it is capable of providing workers with the skills acquired to support a developing modern economy.

Problems of Vocational Education

The introduction of Vocational education into secondary school system since 1982 has not been without problems. Compared with other types of education, vocational education never received adequate attention.

Apathy Towards Vocational Education

The Federal Republic of Nigeria (1981) stated that the government deplores the general public attitude which regard technical education as some what inferior to other types of education. Uwameiye (2000) complained that it is sad to note that government has never done anything to improve the status of vocational education in Nigeria beyond the acknowledgement of this problem. Afe (1992) noted that this teaching can stem to a number of reasons that Vocational education is for people who are not intelligent enough to do academic work. Secondly, the poor salaries paid to technical workers helps to buttress the thinking that it is not as lucrative as other professions. Thirdly, many Nigerians find it difficult to work with hands and fourthly, people think that the skills habits which vocational education is meant to teach could be acquired through mere apprenticeship.

Problem of Adequate Funding

Vocational education is capital intensive (Afe, 1992). Money is needed to purchase equipment for practical work in the laboratories. No meaningful learning can take place in the laboratories if the laboratories are not well equipped for practical work to take place. Student cannot be made to be carrying their own equipment as it is in Home Economics department. Students come to the laboratory with their own equipment during practical work.

Inadequate Supply of Equipment and Instructional Methods

Vocational and Technical education as skill oriented demands a lot of equipment and

structural material for proper acquisition of skills. Ekpenyong (1995) noted that for proper skill acquisition in Home Economics, there has to be enough sewing machine, cooking appliances and other household equipments. These materials are not supplied to most secondary schools where Home Economics is offered. The students go about bringing their own equipment when there is practical work.

Inadequate Staffing

Lack of technical teachers are seriously affecting the vocational subjects in secondary schools. Most technicians because of the attractive condition of service offered in industries prefer to go there than taking to teaching. This made it difficult for most schools to have adequate technical teachers.

Way Forward for Vocational Education

- **Funds:** Salaries of technical teachers should be regular and motivating. Other forms of incentives should be given the vocational teacher. Funding should also be made adequate for the purchase of equipment.
- **Awareness:** There should be proper awareness by the government to enlighten the public on the importance of Vocational education on their children. This could be done through the mass media to enhance understanding of the subject.

Conclusion

Vocational education exposes students to the world of work culture which ensures that they acquire skills that will help them and the society in which they live. There is need for skill acquisition by secondary school student through the vocational programme introduced into secondary school system.

Recommendations

Considering all the issues raised in this paper, the following recommendations are made towards the alleviating the problems.

1. It is noted that Vocational education is capital intensive, for secondary schools to meet up the financial requirement, both Federal and State government should join hands to raise the finance needed for the programme.
2. The public are bias of vocational subject. The government should made it a duty to remove this bias and give Vocational education a higher priority. This is because vocational education is important in depressed economy such as ours.
3. In senior secondary school level, vocational education is geared towards job opportunity to increase the interest of students towards vocational subject course like entrepreneurship should be introduced into senior secondary school curricula.

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