

FUNDAMENTAL ROLES OF VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Since the pre-colonial era in Nigeria, Vocational Education has been in existence. It has always been geared towards skill acquisition with a view to fighting unemployment and enhancing the economic well-being of the recipients. This will help to know how the work that each individual does may contribute technologically to the development of this country to be a better place for living. This paper also examined the nature and content of vocational education and goes a long way to find out the procedures adopted by teachers of technology in recreating technical education for nation building. The paper also highlights the contribution of vocation / technical education to national development in such areas like Agriculture, Medical, commerce and industry, Education, Production etc. The conclusion is that investment in vocational / technical education is paramount for recreating education for national development.

Vocational technical education may be regarded as that aspect of the total education process that focuses on individual occupation or to prepare person for self-employment.

The central purpose of vocational education to equip people with specialized training; Okoro (1998) observed that the main purpose of vocational education is not to give certificate, but to train skilled workers who can actually function well in their places of employment. Vocational education is the training designed to advance an individual's general

proficiency especially in relation to his present or future occupations.

It is also termed to be training or retraining which is given in schools or classes under public supervision and control.

From the above definitions, Vocational education has been a type of education designed to prepare skilled workers for industry, agriculture, commerce etc which is usually provided at the upper secondary level. Programmes of vocational education include general studies, practical training for the development of skills required in a chosen occupation and related theory. In recreating education for national development, the emphasis is usually on practical training. Vocational training program may be conducted full-time in schools and other educational institutions or part-time as supplementary education for apprentices (UNESCO, 2002).

However, the fundamental role of vocational and technical education for recreating education in a school curriculum for nation building also helps to train persons who suffer from such handicaps as blindness, deafness, polio and disabling diseases mental illness and mental retardation in useful skills in special class, school or privately support institution.

The National Policy on Education in Nigeria provides for vocational training in trade skills to school dropouts who may not be academically sound will still need to possess some occupational ability to earn a living, as well a unemployed youth handicapped by poor social or economic background.

General education teaches those values, attitude, skills and experience, which each learner should possess in order to understand the working of the society in which he resides, it is a form of education, which seeks to raise a generation of people who can think for themselves, respect the view and feelings of others. Technical education on the other hand; develops occupational competences and teaches those skills and attitudes which would enable an individual to enter and advance in a given occupation. The ultimate aim is to develop people who are equipped with appropriate skills, abilities, attitudes and competencies needed to live and effectively contribute to the development of the society in which they live.

Technical education program is aimed at aligning curriculum with actual business practices and keep the workforce current. There is a great need to implement the current technical education curriculum if the programme must survive the on-going technological revolution. Vocational education practitioners must accept a serious leadership role and provide more programme of higher quality in business and industry today and in the future. This is for recreating education for patriotism, self-reliance and productivity.

Nature and Content of Vocational Education

The philosophy of education in recognition for self-reliance, unemployment alleviation and man-power development has shifted emphases from purely academic and preparation for white – collar job to vocational and technical education which prepares the recipients with skills, abilities and competencies that will make them useful in industry, commerce, agriculture etc.

In order to achieve this laudable philosophy, the new system of education has been planned to incorporate in its curriculum both academic and vocational subjects for the development of students potentials towards self-

realization and sustainable national development (Udoh, 2004).

The National policy on education (2008) defined vocational education as an aspect of education which leads to the acquisition of practical and applied skills as well as scientific knowledge. The policy spelt out the following objectives for vocational education.

1. To provide trained manpower in applied science technology and commerce particularly at sub-professional grades.
2. To provide the technical knowledge and vocational skill necessary for agriculture, industrial, commerce and economic development.
3. To provide people who can apply scientific knowledge to the improvement and solution of environmental problem for the use and convenience for the society.
4. To give an introduction of professional studies in engineering and other technologies.
5. To give training and impart the necessary skills teaching 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.

The scope of vocational education is limited to the teaching and practicing of vocational skills, abilities and economic understandings as well as development of aptitude, work habits and competencies that are requisite to success in a given occupation. Osuala (1987) ascertained that the above points imply that each individual has certain abilities, interest, personality traits, and other qualities which their potential values, will make him a happier person, a more effective worker and a more useful citizen, Denga (1983), Okoro (1991) and Osuala (1995) all agree that vocational education

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provides skills, abilities economic understanding and develop aptitudes, attitudes, work habits and competencies that help an individual enter and make progress in employment on a useful and productive basis.

In recreating vocational education for productivity, Osuala (1987) gave the content of vocational education as: vocational agriculture, business and office education, distributions education, Home economics education, trade and industrial education, computer studies, Fine and Applied Arts and Textile Design.

In line with the above contents, part of an individual's education consists of helping him to gain a better understanding of his aptitude for various skills, his adaptability to alter situations and his interest in the numerous activities in which he might become engaged. Although less generally recognized, as such, the self realization as will as objective of education gives understanding of the world in which the individual lives.

Vocational Education for National Development

Vocational education has been part of our national development as far back as the pre-colonial time. Fafunwa (1980) and Taiwo (1985) declared that vocational education has existed in Nigeria long before the advent of Western Education. The vocational education then include among others, wood work, blacksmith, metal work and fishing, etc.

According to James and Udoh (2004), the unemployment, armed robbery, prostitution and other social vices prevalent in our society today were unheard of in the pre-colonial days as individuals were engaged in one form to trade or the other which made them self-reliant, but with the advent of colonization, our type of vocational education was side-lined and "bookish" system of education was introduced which tailored the recipients towards white collar jobs which are not always there.

It is necessary that every Nigerian should have the economic understanding as every citizen faces the economic problem of deciding how he can utilize and allocate scarce resources available. Vocational education provides such understanding as it will equip individuals with vocational skill, knowledge aptitude and abilities that can make him function in the society.

For any nation to develop and progress, its citizens must be developed, progressed and empowered to contend with the challenges that come with development. This type of empowerment come through enlightenment or education that can make an individual to be self-reliant and self sustaining. Ibritam (1997) emphasized the need to invest in human capital; this means investing in the society. Most nations in the present time are development-minded without minding the need to produce citizens that are capable of bringing about such development.

Vocational Education in School Curriculum

It is arguable that there is still much to be done to make our vocational and technical programme really functional. This is why most if not all its graduates still find it difficult to be self-reliant or fit in properly in certain job situations. Literature has shown that it is not always the case that those who possess the necessary skills are employed, that the employment or jobless are not always skill-less.

In any curriculum contents, no one would suggest that a particular subject be include without serious sense of need. Therefore the curriculum of vocational / technical schools have to provide solution to the need of students offering vocational subjects and the society. In addition, a school, societal and individual problems should also reflect in the curriculum to economic development of the nation and education for self-reliance, therefore, deep emphasis, should be plaid on certain factors such as social economic, political, health etc in school curriculum. In a school curriculum of Technical

education, deep emphasize should be placed on the following curriculum of studies for the training of learners.

Contribution of Vocational Education to National Development

The contribution of vocational education to recreating education for national development cannot be over emphasized. James and Udoh (2004) observed that a nation with skilled manpower can be said to be on her own or can be said to have the ability to use somebody's knowledge effectively and readily in a way or habit of doing any particular thing competently.

Therefore, they highlighted the ways involved in the contribution of Vocational Education to National Development as follows:-

1. Productivity - Vocational education contributes to sustainable and recreating education for nation building by the production of skilled technologist who can fabricate various local parts and machines for domestic and industrial purpose. It contributes immensely to the development of our industries. The industrial artist is involved in the production of such things like plastics, furniture, etc.

Zainab (1999) observed that technological industries owe their model to art. This implies that most industrial product are in one way or the other designed by artists. Agricultural products also contribute the most basic, the most essential ingredient for the sustenance of life. This is so because vocational education enhances Agriculture. Farm tools and machines are developed and used on form thereby making food available for Nigerians.

2. Self-Reliance – Vocational and technical education prepares individuals for gainful employment as semi-skilled

or skilled workers. It offers instruction in appropriate occupational skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary for effective employment in specific occupation. Okoro (1991) stated that vocational education is education for occupational preparation. Vocational education also equips recipients with business, knowledge and skills that can make him highly functions in the society where he belongs. Self-reliance connotes self direction which is the ability to propel oneself toward a particular direction. Therefore, it goes with notion of independence and self-sufficiency which is a state of not requiring any outside aid, support, or interaction, for survival.

3. Patriotism – Vocational education enhances political stability in Nigeria. This is because any nation that has an efficient work force that can produce, create and recreate or invent whatever she wants will be strong and cannot be shaken by other nations or countries. This is by expressing a great love of the individual's nation and willingness to defend it.

Finally, to understand the sensitive role of education in National development, there is need to highlight its relationship with in terms of manpower requirement and development. In this way, it would be seen that education is the critical foundation upon which a nation's development rests. Based on these consideration we are covered with a lot of problem because the keys to nation-building revolve round patriotism, self-reliance and productivity which leads to unpatriotic and in unproductively society.

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However, a society that is highly skilled can become a foundation for development and nation building.

Problems of the Development of Vocational Education in Nigeria

Vocational education has not been able to achieve most of the laudable objectives earlier mentioned as result of the following problems.

- (1) Lack of political will by the government in promoting vocation education
- (2) Inadequate funding
- (3) Poor societal perception
- (4) Lack of vocational workshop and machines
- (5) Shortage of vocational education textbooks, Magazines and Journals.
- (6) Inadequate security and maintenance of equipments
- (7) Inadequate supply of equipment and instructional materials
- (8) Lack of qualified teachers/instructors.

Conclusion

Vocational education is a veritable tool for the technological and industrial development of the nation. If this opinion is upheld, then the problem mentioned above will be adequately addressed. It has become clear that investing in vocational education is paramount for recreating technical education for national development. For education in Nigeria to move away from dilapidated state, there is need to recreate and re-invent education in the country. This calls for investment by the government, individual, organization, industries and the general public to assist educational endeavours in the country. The various tiers of government should make sure vocational / technical education is adequately catered for by making fund available for vocational education programmes. Vocational educations should be given adequate

encouragement through incentives to keep them in the classroom.

Recommendations

Based on the problems highlighted above, the following recommendations are hereby made

1. Vocational education specialists stand up to the challenges of writing text books, organizing and attending conferences and seminars where journals in current issues on vocational education can emanate.
2. To keep vocational teachers in the classroom, the government should put in place incentives in form of special allowances that will make teaching attractive and challenging.
3. The Federal Government through the Ministry of Education should ensure that the Vocational Education curricular of the post providing and higher institution (vocational schools) embodies more of skill acquisition activities in order to enable the vocational education teachers maximize professional satisfaction through training.
4. Technical teacher training institutions should emphasis in their curriculum i.e aspect of study that, would recreate students competences in practical skills.
5. The government should make vocational education a priority in the allocation of fund and implementation of policies since we cannot run away from the fact that no nation can think of recreating education for technological development without thinking of vocational and technical education.
6. Above all, vocational / technical education graduates should manifest efficiently in their respective work place. The strategies would current the low

profile impressions about vocational and technical education.

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