

ENHANCING VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION IN NIGERIAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS FOR MANPOWER AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Vocational and Technical Education is vital for entrepreneurial skill, economic transformation, high productivity and national development. Enhancing vocational education in Nigerian secondary schools is the bedrock for manpower development, self-reliance and employment creation hence, students have early exposure that will take care of their immediate problems and the future. This paper therefore, focused on the meaning of vocational and technical education as well as the status of vocational education in secondary schools. It was recommended among other things that government should employ professional teachers for the teaching of subjects within vocational and technical education in secondary schools as the growth and development of the country depend on the workforces who are ready to manage the technical, technological and other sectors of the economy.

Keywords: Enhancing, Vocational, Technical, Education, Manpower And Economic Empowerment.

Education in all countries of the world is seen as the cornerstone of development. It forms the basis for literacy, skill acquisition, technological advancement as well as the ability to harness the natural resources of the environment (Obikeze & Ofojebe, 2000). In whatever form literatures define education it is very relevant in the development of skills for manpower development and effective services.

Skill manipulation and knowledge for a particular job is of great importance for development of any nation. A country that cannot do things herself but depends on foreign expatriates has no hope for future development. Manipulating skills are knowledge needed for commerce and industries; thus, educating young ones in secondary school to acquire skills offered by vocational and technical education is as good as sowing seed in good soil and having good harvest. It is amazing that Nigeria depends on other nations for certain product such as fabric production (textile) ceramic ware, tools and equipment for agriculture among other vocational and technical areas. Obama (2008) asserted that countries like India and china that once lagged behind have leapt ahead to provide goods and services to companies and consumers all over the world.

In the same vein, Durojaiye (2012) lamented that Nigeria loses an incredible amount of money annually to other countries recruited by Nigeria companies to take care of their firms' technical needs. Durojaiye (2012) further mentioned that, each year, Nigeria transfers an inconceivable sum of ₦960 billion to the accounts of foreign nationals who troop to Nigeria to help tackle the nation's technical needs. This trend is no doubt denying millions of artisans in Nigeria job opportunities. Vocational and technical education no doubt is designed to help people acquire skills that will make them useful individuals that will be capable of rendering services to the global society.

In order to put Nigeria on course to lead in the global economy beyond 2020, vocational and technical education should hold firmly as an integral part of every individual in the country. Regrettably, it has been revealed that as at 2012, 11.1 million Nigerian youth between 15 to 34 years are unemployed and this trend seems to be on the increase every year (Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research, 2013). This may have accounted for high trends in social vices which is the major cause of insecurity that leads to economic down turn. All these are happening as a result of unemployment caused by lack of vocational and technical skills.

Based on this the authors wish to create an avenue for the enhancement of vocational and technical education in secondary schools to facilitate effective manpower development, economic transformation and nation building.

Concept of Vocational and Technical Education

Ewere (2011) defined vocational and technical education as an aspect of learning which leads to the acquisition of practical and applied skills as well as basic scientific knowledge. It is a form of education designed to prepare students for agriculture, commerce and industry among others. It is usually provided at the Senior Secondary school and should equally be offered fresh students at the tertiary level of education. Vocational and technical education give individuals the skill to live, learn and work as a productive citizens in a global society.

Umundu (2007) in Biose, Chukwurah and Attah (2014) also defined vocational and technical Education as the study that deals with technology and related sciences and acquisition of practical skills and knowledge relating to occupation in various sectors of the economic and social life. Its target is to provide societies with human agents of development needed to act as spring board for technological growth and development of the nation.

Consequently, it is more distinctive that vocational and technical education is designed to inculcate in individual dexterity in technical skill for professional services, self-reliance and manpower development.

Concept of Manpower Development

Manpower according to Hornby (2010) can be defined as the number of workers needed or available to do a particular job. People refer to workers as manpower when considering them as a means of producing goods. Longman (2009) defined development as the process of gradually becoming bigger, better, stronger, or more advanced. Thus, Manpower development can be described as either personnel development or human resource development. Human resource development refers to the process of building the knowledge, skills and working abilities of all people in a given society and the society ensuring its own survival.

Human resources are developed in order to ensure that personnel are produced to manage and oversee all aspects of national development through education and training (Torrington, 2005; Armstrong, 2006). Oke (2003:101) further captures manpower development or human resources as “an organizational activity which is concerned with equipping individuals in and outside the active workforce with specific skills and knowledge for productive work and services”.

In line with this, manpower development in vocational education is very crucial for development of the nation. A country that has no adequate workforce is dependent and may not experience rapid economic development.

Aspects of Vocational and Technical Education

The three board areas of vocational education are:

- i. Fine and Applied Arts Education,
- ii. Home Economics Education and
- iii. Agricultural science Education

Fine and Applied Arts Education has to do with emotion and forms of art that serve commercial and industrial purposes. It comprises painting, drawing, sculpture, graphics, textile, ceramics, industrial design, photography, carpentry, metal work among others. It helps students to develop high level of creativity, entrepreneurial skills and inventive minds that will assist them in making a living later in life.

Home Economics according to Ogbene (2015) has six distinct areas of study. They include:

- i. Food and Nutrition
- ii. Child Development
- iii. Family Relations
- iv. Home Management
- v. Clothing and Textiles
- vi. Extension Education

She further broke down the areas of study into topics. They include consumer education, institutional management, interior design, home furnishing, handicraft, clothing and textiles, nutrition, food preservation, hygiene, child development, managing money and family relationship. Sex education and drug awareness, fire prevention and safety procedures are also covered in the teaching of Home Economics. These she retreated teach students how to run a family properly and make the world a better place for generations yet to come.

Agricultural education on the other hand has to do with:

- i. Farming
- ii. Fishing
- iii. Veterinary science (animal care and rearing) (Fafunwa, 2004). Agriculture is a sector that provides food and resources for living creatures and may produce more revenue than oil if well handled.

Technical Education has Various Field of Study. They Include:

- i. Metal work
- ii. Automobile
- iii. Building
- iv. Electrical and Electronics
- v. Wood work.

According to Ewere (2011), technical education is a planned programme of instruction with exploration of career options, supports basic academic, life skills, and enables the achievement of high academic standards, leadership preparation for industry-defined work, and advanced continuing education. Following the scope outlined above, it is obvious that vocational and technical education relate to all aspect of human endeavour. The fields therefore, need to be enhanced for manpower and economic development. In relation to this, Foshola (2012) noted that the country should pay more attention to technical and vocational education since it is a major way of developing the economy, both at national and state level.

Importance of Vocational and Technical Education in Nigerian Secondary Schools

The importance of education to human life cannot be over emphasized since education and development are seen as two sides of a coin whereby one cannot stand without the other. Schooling enhances productivity, wisdom and creativity. However, if manpower is developed via vocational and technical education in secondary schools, a good number of intellectuals will be produced for competence and effective services both in commercial industries and society at large. Based on this Borgas (2013) opined that we acquire most of our human capital in school.

The skills we acquire in school make up an increasingly important stock of our knowledge. This is why Obama (2008) noted that he will invest in childhood education so that more children will have the best start they can at learning and life. However, secondary school children are regarded as those who are still in the period of adolescence. Dorn and Biro (2011) affirmed that adolescence which is a derivative from Latin meaning “grow up” is a transitional stage of physical and psychological human development that occurs from the period of puberty to legal adulthood (age of maturity). It mostly associated with the teenage years. As a result, children of this age are naturally curious and inquisitive about life issues.

A child at this stage knows what he/she wants in terms of vocation or career. Thus, exposing them to vocational and technical education at this early stage will help them acquire skills in relevant areas of specialty that will take care of the future.

Conclusion

This paper discussed vocational and technical education and how it could be enhanced in secondary school for economic development. The technical skill acquired through manipulation of tools and equipment in this field of study can tackle joblessness, insecurity and enhance manpower for national development. Vocational and technical education is a vital instrument for economic transformation in terms of wealth, employment creation and useful members of the society. Early exposure to

vocational and technical education in secondary school helps acquire technical skills that will take care of the future development in Nigeria beyond 2020.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made in line with the finding of this paper.

1. Students need vocational and technical exposure to maximize their talent and have a better chance for life chosen career. This will reduce crime rate and joblessness for economic development.
2. Government should be committed to waging a lasting war against the inability of Nigerians to provide the needed technical services in the country through provision of necessary infrastructure for the teaching and learning of vocational and technical education to enable them compete with foreign expatriates.
3. Epileptic power supply is the most challenging set back to certain practical work. Students are sent to school to learn, but when the little facilities provided cannot be used because of power inconsistency this affecting the students' competence in the field of vocational and technical education.
4. Parent should encourage their children to develop their creative potential. Most parents want their child to become a lawyer or doctor, thereby discouraging the child from acquiring manipulative skills.
5. Exhibitions and excursion are highly encouraged in this area of academic study for enhancement of knowledge and national unity.
6. Government should train and employ more professional for the teaching of vocational and technical education in secondary schools.
7. Secondary school curriculum should make provision for manipulating skills. This could be achieved through practical homework in art, craft and technical areas.

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