

THE CHALLENGES OF VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION PROGRAMME IN NIGERIAN COLLEGES OF EDUCATION

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Abstract

In recent times, the debate on knowledge economy has drawn more attention of governments to Vocational and Technical Education programme in Nigerian colleges of education. This is basically to combat unemployment and poverty in the society as well as improve the economic performance of the nation. This paper looks at the concept of Vocational and Technical Education programme in Nigerian colleges of education, the historical development, its importance to national development, society and individual and the challenges it faces to deliver the desired results. It recommends among others that the federal government should create more awareness of its existence(Nigerian colleges of education) on the television, newspapers, conferences, workshops and seminars to educate the public of the significance and potential role it plays toward national development and provides adequate funds for planning, implementing and coordinating Vocational and Technical Education Programme in colleges of education.

Key Words: Challenges, Vocational and Technical Education.

World wide, governments are doubling their efforts in promoting vocational and technical education in colleges of education, with a very firm and strong belief that skill formation enhances productivity and sustains competitiveness in the global economy. According to Atchoarena 2004, in recent years, the debate on the knowledge economy has drawn more attention of governments to vocational and technical education. This, of course, has made the governments of South Africa and Philippines to reshape their vocational institutions in order to make them more efficient and effective (Holmes) 2004. This was done by merging technical and vocational education together as a means of rationalizing resources and concentrating management capacity with the intention of improving institutional efficiency and effectiveness. This was also done in the spirit of developing appropriate skills and competencies to combat youth unemployment, poverty and further contribute to social transformation. Vocational and Technical education according to Danko (2006), is the core of both the individual's and the society's economy. He stressed further that through acquisition of skills, individuals could explore their environment and harnesses the resources within it, which could serve them and the society since the wealth of the society determines to a large extent, the development of that society. Okorie (2001) said that Vocational and Technical

Education is basic for rapid technological advancement. In Nigeria, there has been emphasis in recent times on improving vocational and technical education in colleges of education basically for combating unemployment and poverty, as well as to improve the economic performance of the nation . According to Usioboh (2007), successive governments have over-emphasized other colleges of education programmes above the equally important technical and vocational education. He said further that, what is needed is for the government to give adequate and equal attention to all the various levels of education of the citizenry, in the overall best interest of the country and the growth of the national economy but unfortunately, the government's emphasis on Vocational and Technical Education programme in Nigerian colleges of education is merely on the pages of newspapers and television. Successful Nigerian governments have not found it needful to promote and adequately finance both the planning and implementing a befitting vocational and technical education programme in Nigerian colleges of education to produce the desired result rather the government finds it easier to give more attention to general and science education. The society, which would have been on the neck of the government to finance the planning and implementation of vocational and technical education programme in Nigerian colleges of education, according to Amoor (2009) has a misconception that vocational and technical education is an education that is meant for the dropout, unintelligent and under-achievers. This misconception has in no small measure frustrated the enrolment of candidates into the vocational and technical education programme in Nigerian colleges of education. This paper examines the concept of Vocational and Technical education, brief historical

development, its importance to national development and the challenges it faces to make visible impact on national development.

The Concept of Vocational Education

Vocational education, according to Danko (2006) is an education programme that prepares students mainly for occupations requiring manipulative skills or non-technical occupations in such fields as Agriculture, Business Education, Home Economics, Painting, Decorating, Technical Education and others, organized to secure confidence and experience by the individual students. It is also designed to develop skills, abilities, understanding, attitudes, work habits and appreciation encompassing knowledge and information needed by a worker to enter and make progress in employment on a useful and productive basis. Technical Education on the other hand, is designed to prepare the learner to enter an understanding of the laws of science and technology as applied to modern design and production. It also stresses the engineering aspects of vocational education, such as electrical/electronics, mechanical and automobile, woodwork, and building trade.

It involves understanding and practical application of the basic principle of mathematics and science. Olaitan (1999) said that the task of technical education is, the transmission of ideas, skills, values of work and environment and what an Individual can do with his or her life.

Historical Development of Vocational and Technical Education

In the course of history, according to Hernes (2004) “most education came about through participation, preparation for work and adult life happened by interaction, not through training in separate specific institutions”. The reason, according to him was that young people took on the tasks of their parents when production remained stable over generations. All they needed to know was what their parents knew i.e. how to till and irrigate the soil, how to stitch a dress, where to fish and hunt, how to feed the herd. He stressed further that in every society, knowledge is power, but as long as the knowledge needed remained local and specific, it could be transferred directly from parent to child. In many countries, the so called “on the job” training is still a predominant method for educating the young.

The fundamental change in mode of education has come about as a result of fundamental changes in modes of production. As population diversity increased further, division of labour became beneficial. Rather than inheriting skills, it became more valuable to specialize and learn a particular trade. Such skills could only be learned from masters of that trade, who were not always parents.

Craftsmen and artisans gained professional control through the mastery of their trade, which they could then translate into a form of social control. Hernes (2004) stated that in Europe, guilds were the results such re-organization. They also provided the modes for academic institutions – schools and later university. In this process, training for work became increasingly separated from work and often took place in institutions specialized in vocational and technical education. The instruction began to take the form of preparation rather than of participation.

Objectives of Vocational and Technical Education

According to Danko (2006), the objectives of vocational education are to prepare the learner for entry into employment in his or her chosen career, meet the manpower need for the society, increase the option available to each student, motivating force to enhance all types of learning and enable the learner to wisely select a career. Based on these objectives, one could derive the importance of vocational and technical education as the provider of employment and poverty alleviation.

Challenges of Vocational and Technical Education Programme

Vocational and technical Education programme in Nigerian colleges of education would have been more than what it is today, but due to some challenges it faces, it has not attained the height it desires as compared to its counterpart in other countries of the world. Among the challenges it faces are:-

1. Federal Government Lukewarm Attitude towards Vocational and Technical Education Programme in Nigerian colleges of Education.

Federal Government of Nigerian has not come out to appreciate the contribution of Vocational and Technical Education programme to national and economic development even though it is a tool to combat unemployment and poverty in our societies. This is because successful governments have not found it necessary to adequately finance both the planning and implementation of standard and sustainable vocational and technical education programme in Nigerian colleges of education. In support of this statement, Okolo (20013) was in view that insufficient finance is a realistic and practical factor inhibiting the implementation of vocational and technical education programme in Nigeria. The priority of the Federal Government of Nigerian in the education sector is holistically on science education. Too much noise is made on the pages of papers and television about vocational and technical education, but little is done to improve the teaching/learning of vocational and technical education programmes in Nigerian colleges of education.

2. The Perception of the Society towards Vocational and Technical Education

The society does not accord respect or recognition to the graduates of Vocational and Technical Education. The impression is that this type of education is

meant for the unintelligent and under-achievers. According to Amoor (2009), most parents do not encourage or guide their wards to take a course in Vocational and Technical Education programme in Nigerian colleges of education; this is because the society does not place any significant value or dignity on the programme. This subsequently affects the enrolment of candidates into vocational and technical education programme in Nigerian colleges of education.

3. Lack of candidates' Interest

Many candidates aspiring to acquire tertiary education do not have interest in vocational and technical education programme. An interaction with prospective colleges of education candidates revealed that the nomenclature of the N.C.E (Tech) in most of the Nigerian colleges of education that offer vocational and technical education programme accounts for their indifference since most of them do not want to end up in the class-room as teachers.

Conclusion

It is therefore, concluded that Vocational and Technical Education Programme in Nigerian colleges of education has not attained the maximum level of performance of its potential role of national economic development. This is due to neglect by the Federal Government, outlook of the society and other variables that hinder its development and contribution to growth.

Recommendations

In line with the conclusion, the recommendations were made:

1. The Federal Government through National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) should create more awareness on the Television, Newspapers, organize conferences and seminars to educate the public of the significance and potential role vocational and technical education plays toward national economic development;
2. Adequate funds for planning, implementing and coordinating Vocational and Technical Education Programme should be made available by the Federal government. Philanthropists and commercial houses should be contacted by the colleges of education management to sponsor the programmes of vocational and technical education programme in Nigerian colleges of education.
3. The Federal Government should as well give scholarship to the candidates wishing to take a career in Vocational and Technical education as a bait to attract more candidates' interest and enrolment into the programme. Once this is done, it will take care of the society and candidates' interests for the programme.
4. The curriculum designers should harmonize the course content of vocational and technical education programme in Nigerian colleges of education and change the nomenclature of the NCE ordinary and NCE (Tech). This will go a long way

to standardize the programme to make it more efficient and effective, and also entice the youth to enroll for the programme.

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