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# VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION: A TOOL FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA BEYOND 2020

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By

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## **Abstract**

*Vocational and technical education is an educational programme for the production of skilled manpower. The philosophy, goals and objectives of vocational and technical education were designed towards entrepreneurship development and poverty alleviation to achieve present and future national development plans in Nigeria. However, vocational and technical education has suffered enormous set back and has long being far from achieving its objectives. This is partly due the low status accorded to it in general and from the various interpretations of vocational and technical education by policy makers as well as implementers of policies on vocational and technical education. This paper discussed on the concept of vocational and technical education and its relevance in national development in Nigeria. The paper attempted to outline careers in vocational and technical education and potentials for national economic growth to achieve sustainable development in any nation. The paper concluded with sounding recommendations for human resource development, productivity and economic growth to poster national development in Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** Vocational Education, Technical education and Development.

National development relies on economic and educational development of the nation and social advancement of its citizen. Nigerian economy at present is not encouraging. Foreign reserve has fallen and external debt accumulates. Inflation rate is on the increase and exchange rate of the Naira to the U.S dollar has reached an unimaginable point of above N200 per \$1; an increase of 3.9% in a single year. Above all, there is rapid and fast growing external debt (Rediscover, 2013). The Nigeria's educational sector is not an exception in terms of neglect. The sector is still facing challenges ranging from infrastructural decay at all level to haphazard implementation of various policies on education. This may be the reason why Nigeria has not yet maximized her full potentials. Thus, nothing can be achieved in form of national development without adequate and viable education. The seven key areas of education that requires proper and adequate attention for national development are:

- Funding
- Access and equity

- Standard and quality assurance
- Teacher education and development
- Partnership in education and resource utilization
- Technical and Vocational education and Training (TVET)

Vocational and technical education occupy a strategic position in the overall development of any society. It has been considered by many as the necessary tool and the major instrument in pursuing national development due to its enormous impact on human development, productivity and economic growth. Vocational and technical education prepares one for the world of work with which to become self-reliant and can make contributions to the development of the society, thereby contributing significantly to poverty eradication, job creation, sustainable development. Recognising the impact of vocational and technical education by the Nigerian government in the overall national development efforts were made at widening access to Technical and Vocational Education through the establishment of relevant agencies and institutions, such include Vocational Enterprise Institutes (VEIs), and Innovation Enterprise Institutions (IEIs).

### **Concept of Vocational and Technical Education**

Vocational and technical education system can be traced to apprenticeship. It is a practically illustrated and job or career skill instruction. According to UNESCO (2009), quality vocational and technical education develops the individual's knowledge of science and technology in abroad occupational area requiring technical and professional competence. Thus, vocational and technical education system comprises of such component as agricultural education, business education, marketing education, computer education; and trade and industrial education. It is that aspect of education which involves the acquisition of techniques and application of the knowledge of the science for the improvement of man's surrounding. Vocational and technical education was established by act No. 9 of 11<sup>th</sup> January, 1977. The aim is to promote the production of skilled technical manpower to reduce unemployment and poverty, also to revitalise and sustains the national economy to poster national development. According to Hogan (2012), the objectives of vocational and technical education among others include:

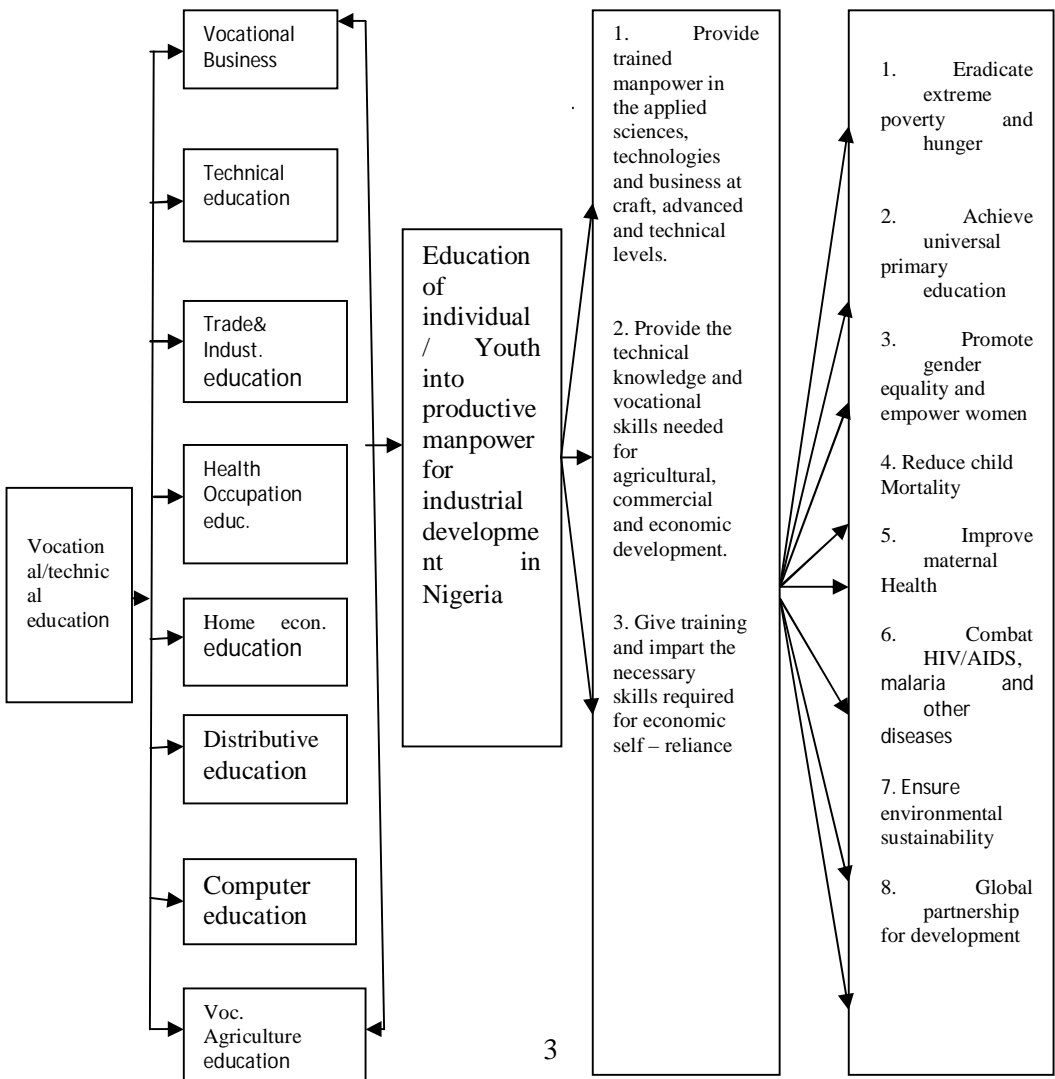
- Gainful employment sequel to training.
- Skilled craftsmanship.
- Creative tendencies and problem solving ability.

From its inception, vocational and technical education has been interpreted by many, as education for work. Vocational and technical education is more than an education for survival, it is a very comprehensive form of education characterized by responsiveness to emerging technologies which have become the order of the day (Rao, 2008). Hogan (2012) pointed out that, vocational and technical education in the Nigerian system of education refers to those aspects of the education process involving,

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in addition to general education, the study of technologies and related science and the acquisition of practical skills relating to occupations in various sector of the economic and social life. This definition is based on United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization’s (UNESCO) recommendation and contained in the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013). This clearly indicates the comprehensive nature of vocational and technical education system. There are various manpower development areas in vocational and technical education. These include the eight service areas that produce over 1000 careers. Vocational education careers for manpower development to attain the millennium development goals (MGDs) in Nigeria are presented in the figure as illustrated by Hogan (2012)

**Service areas Philosophy Goals/Objectives 2015:MDGS**



**Figure I.** Role of Vocational Education in Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

### **Vocational Technical Education and National Development**

Vocational and technical education is a planned programme of courses and learning experience that begins with exploration of career options, support basic academic and life skills and preparation for industrial – defined work, while Vocational education prepares learners for career that practical based activities which are totally related to a specific trade or occupation. Thus, Technical and Vocational education refers to those aspect of educational process that involve the acquisition of understanding and knowledge, attitudes and practical skills that gives an individual the skills to live on, learn and work as a productive citizen in a global society (Victor, 2009). This is the reason technical and vocational education been made an integral part of national development strategies in many societies. It has a tremendous impact on productivity and economic development, as such it is a necessary ingredient in any effort towards excellence in management and development human capital resources which is the bed rock of the development of other sectors and brings about National development. Vocational and Technical education is believed to be the necessary tool for preparing an individual to be productive in his society.

Vocational and technical education is therefore, considered as the major instrument in pursuing national development. The importance of vocational and technical education to Nigeria’s development cannot be over emphasized. Among the significant roles vocational and technical education played in National development are:

- **Produce Skilled Manpower:** Vocational and technical education produce individuals with professional skill to avoid the death of skilled workers needed to satisfy the country’s developmental needs. It promote the production of skilled / semi skilled technical and professional manpower, for the revitalization and sustenance of the national economy (Nwankwo, 2013).  
According to Ogunkayode (2012), the half baked auto repairer or repairs by trial and error basis and often causes more damage to vehicles and machineries. Therefore, large amount of the country’s resources are expended on foreign technical professionals. This undesirable situation can be reversed by giving the aspect of technical education the much attention it needed for national transformation processes.
- **Reduce High Rate of Unemployment:** Vocational and technical education involves the acquisition of techniques and application of the knowledge of the science for the benefit of an individual and his society. Therefore, employability

skills are easily acquired through vocational and technical education. The neglect of this aspect of education has worsened the problem of unemployment. In Nigeria, millions of youths and graduates lack vocational or technical skills for useful and occupational life at adult hood. They remain dependant as cannot be self employed and cannot effectively contribute to National development. Nwankwo (2013), pointed out that “it is apparent occupational skills for employment are provided by Vocational and technical education”. Thus, provide employment in the manual labour to the teeming youth.

- **Enhance Productivity and Self – Reliance** Higher productivity gives a nation advantage of economies of scales and lower the cost of production and prices of goods and services. Technical and vocational education has a great impact on productivity and economic development for national transformation.

Today, the highest demand for national development is competent technicians and craftsmen to carry out work and services, repair and maintain equipments and carry out productive activities in the manufacturing industry. This clearly indicated that the progress of any society lies in the productivity of its citizens (Victor, 2009).

Technical education produces competent technicians in various areas needed by the society. Graduates of technical education are professionals in different areas. Among them are welders, electricians, designers, artist and auto mechanics. They engaged in manual labour to became financially independent and self – reliant hence contribute to national development. It is therefore, only in technical and vocational education that lies economic strength for national transformation.

- **Promotes Creativity and Innovation** Technical and vocational education possess the economic strength for technological development and national prosperity. Technology, creativity and innovation are the major products of technical education and today they are the leading factors of production in the emerging global economy.

According to Nwankwo (2013), technical education provides individuals with life skill and engenders creative and innovative ideas for the betterment of the society. Thus, it remains the necessary ingredient for achieving goals of the transformation agenda in Nigeria.

## **Conclusions**

National transformation in any society begins with human capital development. Nigeria’s transformation to greatness can be achieved if proper attention is given to

education and technological development, promotes creativity and direct human resources to productive use.

Vocational and technical education has very broad and impressive areas of training manpower for national development. These areas as outlined by Hogan (2012) include: vocational business, technical education, trade and industrial education, health occupations, distributive education, home economics education, vocational agriculture and computer education which he considered as a recent member in the family of vocational education. Vocational and technical education embraces various service areas capable of training skilled manpower for sustainable national development. Thus, has a crucial role in entrepreneurial development, poverty eradication, job creation and sustainable security.

### **Recommendations**

1. Federal Government of Nigeria should exercise its political will to accord vocational and technical education the adequate attention it deserve and to reduce or eliminate the challenges to this aspect of education programme for full inclusion in development strategies of the country.
2. The Government should utilize vocational and technical education in the nation's poverty eradication programme to tackle the developmental challenges facing the nation.

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