
RE-ENGINEERING POLYTECHNIC EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

There is no doubt that the industrial growth of any nation depends on the level of educational advancement and development of its middle level manpower. In a bid to achieve paradigm shift in the country's educational system. The federal government statute enacted decree no; 33 of 1979 as amended by decree no 5 of 1993 to give legal basis for the establishment of polytechnic in Nigeria. The principal aim is to turn out the middle level manpower needed for industrial and technological development of the country. This paper does a general overview of polytechnic education its objectives and functions, challenges faced by Nigeria polytechnics, and offer recommendation on restructuring the polytechnic education towards the realization of its objectives.

Education is a paramount factor in nation building, and technical education provides the tools for meaningful development, because no nation could achieve any meaningful development without a sound and qualitative technical education. Nwuba (2011) posited that "the bedrock of technical emancipation for Nigeria is centered on polytechnic education, because it offers highly technical, scientific as well as research-oriented studies.

It is disheartening to observe today that these citadels of learning which were once cynosure of all eyes in developed economies of the world has been relegated to the background in Nigeria. Nearly all states owned polytechnics are just a little above the secondary school level, infrastructural wise, issues of personnel/staff, lack of fund, accreditation problem, etc. Most Nigeria polytechnics are synonymous with structural decay occasioned by neglect and misplaced priority on the part of the government on one hand and the society on the other.

Constitutional Provision for Polytechnic Education in Nigeria

The higher educational policy was mainly concerned with the development of both higher and middle level man power, thus the higher education policy was stipulated to re-direct polytechnics towards the production of scientist and technologist.

However, according to the federal government statute enacted decree no;33 1979 as amended by decree no;5 1993 on establishing polytechnics as means of refocusing the current Nigeria education system to reflect the present realities towards

self-employment rather than for the vacant position in government or public offices (Aladekomo 2004). This led to the establishment of others institutions offering technical education which include colleges of technical institution, It could be recalled that at this level in Nigeria technical and vocational educations received a lot of attention at both states and federal levels until the early 90's when the government policy on education tagged, National Policy on Education (1989) bequeathed inferior status to vocational technical education. However, the national policy on education (2004) described that technical education should lead to acquisition of practical and applied skills as well as basic scientific knowledge. The fundamental objectives and directive principles of the state policy as provided in the Nigeria constitution No; 16 section

(1) On economic objectives is

- (a) Harness the resources of the nation and promote national prosperity and efficient and dynamic self-reliant economy.
- (b) To ensure the promotion of a planned and balanced economic development, so that materials resources of the nation are harnessed and distributed as best as possible to serve the common good. While the national policy on education section (8) polytechnic shall in addition to those in sub-section(59) have specific goal as follows

- (1) To provide technical and middle level man power needed for industrial development.
- (2) To give training and impart the necessary skills leading to the production of craftsmanship, technicians and other skilled personnel who will be enterprising and self-reliant.
- (3) To provide full-time or part-time courses of instruction and training in
 - (a) Technology, Applied science, commerce and management and other field of applied learning relevant to the needs of development of Nigeria in areas of industrial agriculture, production and distribution, and for research purposes.
 - (b) To organize and arrange conferences, seminars and study groups relative to the field of learning.
 - (c) Engineering, business management, leading to production of trained manpower, and also to train people who can apply scientific knowledge to solve environmental problems for the convenience of man.

Fakea (2005) asserted that “emphases on polytechnic education should be on skills-acquisition and sound scientific knowledge which gives ability to the use of hand and machine for the purpose of production, maintenance and self-reliant”

Despite these well articulated objectives the problems remain very conspicuous, the Nigeria government is very worried on the increase unemployment rate, poverty and generally bad economic condition of the country. Because of the threat of job scarcity and growing unemployment it creates doubt and pessimism on the programmes of vocational technical schools and the education system in general.

Challenges Faced by Nigeria Polytechnics

Polytechnic education plays a vital role in human resources development of the country by creating skilled manpower, enhancing industrial productivity and improving the quality of life. In trying to fulfil this mandates polytechnics are faced with a lot of challenges which includes

- (a) Non availability of courses in the new emerging areas.
- (b) Inadequate infrastructural facilities and obsolete equipment.
- (c) The system is unable to attract quality teachers.
- (d) Inadequate financial resources.
- (e) Lack of adequate industrial institute participation.
- (f) Antiquated curriculum.

Other challenges are the public perception of polytechnic education as inferior to university, which is attributed to the government policies in the country by placing university education far above polytechnic. The second challenge which is not only peculiar to polytechnic is in the provision of facilities for training. Polytechnic education in particular is something that requires the development of skills and if you don't have the equipment to do the practical then the whole essence of curriculum delivery will be defeated, combined with the general Problem on the issue of over population. Because in the early years like the 60's and 70's student population was not as much as the current population and since the delivery is also affected by the contact between students and the lecturers ,this makes difficult to the lecturer to handle students since he cannot afford to keep practical for every student because the number is overwhelming and funding has reduced drastically, so it is a combination of increase in population and instability of the calendar that continue to the general decline in the system.

As Ajayi (year 2004) observed that “we are a certificate crazy nation, so every parent wants his child to go to the university, but the facts remains that polytechnic is what we need to solve the problem of technological development and unemployment”

Re-Positioning Polytechnic Education

However, with the growing number of student coming out from various institutions into the labour market, if measures are not taken there is every tendency that the situation will escalate the rate of poverty, corruption and other social crime especially among the youths. Hence it is hoped that the government should encourage diversification of the economy through adequate support for private establishment and practical acquisition of skills in all higher institution. It is against this back-up that the need to reposition and ensure that the sub-sector is able to fully fulfill its mandates and enhancing the supply of entrepreneurship initiatives and activities .Thus

1. There is a need for the review of laws that set up tertiary education if country. As according to Ayodeji (year 2008) “the reviews should be done with a view to making the polytechnics award degree in technology based program.

The polytechnic should be allowed to award degree but they should continue the ordinary diploma programme so that the national diploma should be used as entry requirement for admission for the bachelor of technology degree in polytechnic.

- (2) The government should address the inconsistencies and continued wage and professional disparity existing between products of polytechnics and their university counterparts.
- (3) There is also a need for the federal government to redesign the post-H.N.D programmes and see to it immediate implementation, and allow polytechnic to be running and awarding higher degrees up to doctorate level.
- (4) The curriculum of polytechnics should be apart from that of the university, as it was in the late 70's. It should be targeted towards acquisition of practical and applied skills in technology and commerce, industrial and agriculture, particularly at the sub-professional grade.
- (5) The National board for technical education (N.B.T.E) to give a mandatory directives for all polytechnic and colleges of technology to establish entrepreneurship centers and it should become one of the conditions for given accreditation to academic programmes.
- (6) The incorporation of entrepreneurship studies and information communication technology in the new curricula for all technical, vocational education in the country.
At the end of the student final session entrepreneurship education should be taught, as opined by the Common Wealth Association of Polytechnic-in Africa (C.A. P.A.)1991.
- (7) The system should allow lecturers in polytechnics to rise up to the professorial rank, so all the features obtainable in the university to also features in polytechnic, to eliminate the discriminatory capacities of generating serious brain-drain.

Conclusion

Without mincing words it is a fact that this country needs polytechnic education because without it our search for technological development will be a mirage. Polytechnic/ technical education provides the hands on skills needed to create self-reliant youth.

This is the way the going is in places like the Asian nation, its discovered that those driving the economy are not necessarily university gradates but skillful youth expose to technical training.

However, if polytechnic education is to produce qualitative man power for the country then the situation calls for a holistic approach through adoption of synergy by all stakeholders and government to implement policies that will remove all barriers against staff and graduates in order to enhance technological growth and development and make polytechnic education more attractive to the general public.

Nigeria as a nation to adequately empower its citizenry, institution and sustain democratic ideals and principles to diversify and strengthen the national economic and ensure peace and security depends largely on the quality, functionality, responsiveness and global competitiveness of its technical education. The need of education in the developmental effort of any nation cannot be underestimated. The development of educational sector is sine-qua non for the development in all sector ,there is a need for the transition to a knowledge based economy with a competitive edge which should be determined by the abilities of its people to create share and use knowledge more effectively by making the labour force more flexible, analytical adaptable and multi – skilled.

Recommendations

Based on the foregoing the following recommendations were made,

- (1) To establish a technical education quality improvement programme so as to improve the quality of education and enhance the capabilities of the technical institutions to become dynamic, demand-driven, quality conscious and comparative at national and international level.
- (2) Re-vocationalised secondary school education to provide for diversification of educational opportunities so as to enhance individual employment, reduce the mismatch between demand and supply of skilled manpower and provide alternative for those pursuing higher education.
- (3) To promote research in education institute and re-design the educational pattern at the school level to facilitate skills development.
- (4) Government should reform and strengthen the polytechnics and make clear policy for facilitating capacity expansion through the private sector participation.
- (5) To promote industrial and academia interaction to narrow the existing gabs between demand and supply of skilled manpower.
- (6) Government should make funds available for the student industrial working experience scheme (SIWES) it should be reorganized in order to reduce the gab between institutions and employers.
- (7) Government as matter of urgency should implement it educational reform of 2006 in its decision to convert some of the polytechnic and encouraging the award of technology degrees in some polytechnics.

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