
Education and Contemporary Issues in Nigeria: Matters Arising in Vocational and Technical Education (VTE)

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Abstract

This paper discussed definition of Nigerian education, concept and definitions of vocational and technical education. It highlights the contemporary issues in the vocational and technical education. The paper gives the reforms of vocational and technical education to make education meaningful in Nigeria. The paper also concluded that entrepreneurship education should be encouraged by the Nigerian schools and institutions.

Education is seen as a veritable means of bringing about socio-cultural, political and economic growth. All over the world, education is seen and assumed to be the most important instrument of change, as any fundamental change in the intellectual and social outlook of any society has to be preceded by an educational revolution

(Williams and Anekwe, 2010). Nzerem (2000) opined that education is a life-long process which enables an individual to develop his potentials in order to give service not only to himself but to the community at large. Education is expected to inculcate in an individual the right types of values and attitudes for survival, as well as enable him acquire appropriate skills, abilities and competencies, both mental and physical and be an equipment for him to live in and contribute to the development of his society. Jegede (2007) viewed education as the transmission of a society's way of life to the younger generation. It involves the traditions and culture as well as the developments in the society. Education has various dimensions which are temporal and spatial. Temporally, one can have education as a child and also as an adult. Childhood education, therefore becomes the means of initiating a child into the way of life of the society to enable him/her live and function in it. For an adult, education goes on in specific areas and disciplines.

Education can be formal when it takes place in an organized setting and informal when it goes on in the home and the society without specific instructions being given. This can happen in play or work including other spatial dimensions like the home and the school. Whereas formal education takes place mainly in the school setting, the informal one occurs mainly in the home. Non-formal education can happen anytime even after retirement. This can be flexible in terms of content, time and place thus enabling the whole society to be a learning society with the old people learning about new developments and the young learning the culture of the past as well as the present. Thus, the whole society and its members continue to grow and meet new issues and challenges.

Concept of Education

The concept of education has been given different definitions by various authorities. Ukeje (1979) in Akpomedaye (2010) viewed the concept of education from three dimensions of process, product and discipline. The process of education deals with the transmission, preservation, development and advancement of the people's culture. In the same vein education as a product refers to the outcome from the process of education. The discipline aspect of education is seen as a body of knowledge such as what are those things to be taught and learnt why it is worthy to be taught? What ways should it be taught? What group or category of people should it be taught?

Concept and Definition of Vocational and Technical Education (VTE)

The concept of vocational and technical education is rooted in education for work. It is a workshop-based education which essentially focuses on psychomotor skills acquisition for the world of work (Joseph, 2013). The concept is clearly reflected in the definition of vocational education as provided in the National Policy on Education by the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004). This Policy is a comprehensive

term which refers to those aspects of educational process involving, in addition to general education, the study of technologies and related sciences and the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of economic and social life.

Vocational and technical education therefore is part of the general education process that focuses on individual occupation and livelihood. The essential elements of vocational and technical education, provision of knowledge, skills, acquisition and inculcation of attitudes that are necessary for entry and progress in an occupation (Ekong and Williams, 2004b).

Denga (2001) regarded technical education as any form of education which specifically prepares an individual to perform well in a chosen occupation. Vocational/technical education he said, is designed to teach skills, develop attitudes, aptitudes and competencies that are requisite to success in a given occupation. In strict sense therefore, the professional training of engineers, medical doctors, pilots of aircrafts, captains of ships, the military, lawyers, pharmacists, agriculturists, etc which take place in the university is vocational/technical since the purpose is to equip individuals with necessary knowledge and skills to enable them enter specialized occupations. Vocational and Technical Education is further understood to be:

- (a) an integral part of general education (therefore vocational and technical education is for everybody)
- (b) a means of preparing for occupational fields and for effective participation in the world of work.
- (c) an aspect of lifelong learning and a preparation for responsible citizenship
- (d) an instrument for promoting environmentally sound and sustaining development
- (e) a method of facilitating poverty alleviation. Here vocational/technical education is seen as that part of total education process aimed at developing skills and competencies needed for effective functioning in any occupation.

In the light of the above definition, vocational and technical education is an integral part of every one's basic general education in the form of initiation into technology in the world of work and human values and standard of responsible citizenship (UNESCO General Conference, 2001). In compliance with UNESCO recommendations, the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) formulated objectives on vocational and technical education as follows:

- (a) Provide trained manpower in the applied sciences, business and provide the necessary knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, commercial and economic development.
- (b) Give training and impart necessary skills to individuals who shall be self-reliant economically.

Concept of Quality in Vocational and Technical Education

Quality is a qualifying term and it is generally used normatively to mean standard or excellence. In other words, quality is a distinguishing attribute of any given education, we are referring to its content, method and the structure of its system which passes judgment about the standard, worth or excellence of that education (Igbadumhe, 1992). Talk about quality of vocational and technical education is an implicit call to pass a judgment on the consequences of that education on its recipients; kind of competences, the disposition and in short, the immediate and long term effects of that education.

Quality refers to degree of goodness (a higher one) desired by concerned individual or society or for a special purpose (Okebukola, 2002). It is the degree of (expected) performance exhibited by the products from vocational and technical education programme (referred to as outputs). These are the graduates of vocational and technical education (the teachers).

Thus, quality in vocational and technical education can also be referred to criteria such as its contributions to manpower needs, its contributions to the solution of social ills in the society, and by reference, to the general mode of conduct, ethos of the recipients of that education. This measure of that quality of education is essentially product- oriented involving the measurement of output. Another way of assessing the quality of vocational and technical education is the assessment of what goes into the educational system (inputs) and how these are managed to achieve efficiency. Quality in this sense, refers to those attributes, features and characteristics in an education system conducive for optimizing outputs. From the analysis given above, of quality vocational and technical education, it can be summed up to imply that the two broad manifestations of quality in vocational and technical education are inputs or process manifestation and output or product manifestation.

Contemporary Issues and Matters Arising in Vocational and Technical Education

In these age of globalization there are still a lot of contemporary issues of education in Nigeria. Contemporary issues are things or situations at hand. It refers to important problems or subjects which people are arguing or discussing about. For instance contemporary issues in vocational and technical education (VTE) are the most important part of situations for discussions concerning VTE. These include:

1. Poor public opinion
2. Inadequate funding
3. Lack of peaceful teaching and learning environment of VTE
4. Imbalance between theory and practice
5. Brain drain in vocational and teaching education

6. Decline in human capital development
7. Gender imbalance in VTE
8. Information and communication technology
9. Cultism
10. Examination Malpractices
11. Sexual harassment
12. Inadequate attention by government to VTE
13. Evaluation issue in VTE
14. Poor preparation of VTE Teachers
15. Enrolment explosion
16. Effect of unionism
17. Lack of teaching and learning equipment

Issue of Poor Public Opinion in Vocational and Technical Education

The perceived importance of this type of education by most Nigerians is still distorted even though the government appreciation of the worth of vocational and technical programme within the overall educational system is beginning to rise in recent times, the majority of Nigerians, especially, the elites whom their educational orientations were liberal in contents are still with the old idea of this type of education. Many people do not understand what vocational education is all about. They think that vocational education is synonymous with special education. They conceive of vocational and technical education as education for the physically disabled and erroneously conclude that vocational and technical education is for the drop outs, and the never-do-well students. It may be surprising as well as offensive to note that the foregoing views represent that majority of well meaning Nigerians.

Issue of Inadequate Funding

In the issue of the type of Curricular Employed in Nigerian Schools Offorma (2005) stated that functional education is determined by the quality of the curriculum content and its implementation. The curriculum should be valid, significant, learnable and consistent with societal realities, useful and reflect the interest of the learners. Entrepreneurial Education is needed in vocational technical education. While much has been said about the state of schools and institutions in Nigeria and the quality of graduates churned out yearly, one thing that however cannot be over-emphasized is the issue of the curricula employed by these institutions. It is an established fact that the curricula used by most schools and institutions is centered on producing graduates with little entrepreneurial training. This is why majority of them depend so much on working for others and lack the aptitude for job creation.

Studies, opinions and statistics by Kolawale (2013) show that Nigerian schools and institutions at present are not producing the expected high-quality graduates from

diverse disciplines to reduce the already saturated unemployment market. It is therefore with this obvious shortcoming from these educational institutions in the country that education watchers have called for an urgent review of the curricula so that they can achieve both national and international goals geared towards making the products of these schools and institutes nationally relevant and internationally competitive.

Vocational and technical education may facilitate the acquisition of skills and mastery of techniques, it is something larger, deeper of entrepreneurship curriculum is included; as there are other specific activities which can be carried out with a view to creating an entrepreneurship culture in Nigerian schools. Kolowade (2013) observed generally that, for a school graduate to have a fulfilled life, the types of entrepreneurship activity he engages in has an important role to play, noting that there is the need to employee career guidance in giving students who are into various entrepreneurial activities especially in a situation that demands for matching students with the demands of their prospective employment market. To this end, he strongly maintained that the student's schools and institutions need to be accountable to the student's parents, government, stakeholders and the general public. Therefore, the Nigerian educational curricula should be reviewed to include entrepreneurship education as a compulsory course as a measure to address the problem of graduate unemployment and strategically position the economy for leadership.

Ezendu (2013) and Mohammed (2013) pointed out that employers are wary of the products turned out from the Nigerian schools and institutions. They called upon the Nigerian schools and institutions to address their curricula imbalance in the school system for re-positioning the economic development and entrepreneurial drive for job creation, wealth creation and global competitiveness of Nigerian graduates.

Currently the amount of money Nigeria allocates to education is far less than the 26% of government expenditure recommended by United Nations Educational and Cultural Organization (UNESCO 2001) Nigerian allocated about 8% for all forms of education. Inadequate funding has grossly affected vocational and technical education for various projects. Also, the release of such available and approved fund constitutes another contemporary issue.

Issue of Lack of Peaceful Teaching and Learning Environment of VTE

The teaching and learning environment where vocational technical education is practiced must be peaceful and calm. An environment that is devoid of armed robbery, assassination, kidnapping and accident is where vocational and technical education can thrive and be successful (Akpomedaye, 2013).

Issue of Imbalance between Theory and Practice

There is imbalance between theory and practice of vocational and technical education. Teachers can only teach and demonstrate vocational and technical skills if they are properly grounded in the theory and practice of vocational and technical skills. A good vocational and technical education programme ensures a balance between acquisition of relevant knowledge and psycho-productive skill. The teaching and learning process must cover the cognitive, psychomotor (or psycho-productive) and the affective domains (Joseph, 2013). When a teacher concentrates on cognitive skills to the detriment of psycho-productive skills development, then the learning outcome of the learner is without the needed balance between theory and practice. The teacher is responsible for the imbalance.

Issue of Brain Drain in Vocational and Technical Education

The recurrent problems invading the Nigerian education system have also led to a number of teachers and researchers leaving the shores of the country for greener pastures abroad. Olugbile (2006) observed that a gale of brain drain is now blowing away whatever remains of teachers, lecturers, scientists and researchers in Nigeria's schools, institutes and research institutes, and this ill wind portends danger for national development.

Issue of Decline in Human Capital Development

Staff development to update their knowledge and to improve teacher's skills, with stimulus for constant innovation in the curriculum has declined. Ojo (2002) remarked that there is a serious decline in the staff training programme in education in Nigeria. In his views, effective staff training programme is meant to expose teachers and lecturers to a wide range of education research which is a necessary tool for effectiveness in the teaching and learning process through exposure to new ideas, information and techniques. The overall effect of this inadequacy is the production of low quality graduates and a general decline in the standard of education system.

Issue of Gender Imbalance in VTE

Gender imbalance in Nigeria's educational development may have been occasioned by the obvious discrimination in access to education in most parts of the world generally. This situation went into vocational and technical education. Gender discrimination hinders access to education. According to their female counterparts. To him, some people, especially in the rural areas, said that female education ends in the kitchen and therefore do not encourage their female children to have access to education. Tahir (1999) observed that in the analysis of gender inequality, women were unfairly represented at all levels of the educational system. This is supported by Emem (2008), who came to a similar conclusion and outlined the factors militating against women education to include preference given to the education of males; early child and forced

marriages; sex stereotyping in certain responsibilities and career; belief that women do not perpetuate the family nature; poverty; lack of proper education of parents and early and unwanted pregnancies.

Conclusion

Vocational and technical education curricula should be a true reflection of the industrial-technological society with the philosophy of preparing youths for useful living within the society. There should be vocational and technical education in all the courses in the school system.

Recommendation

There should be vocational and technical education in all the courses in the school system. Entrepreneurship education should be encouraged in the Nigerian school system.

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