

# EMERGING ISSUES AFFECTING VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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## **Abstract**

The problem of financing vocational and technical education in the Nigerian educational system has continued to receive persistent attention. This is important since the survival of vocational/technical education programmes in Nigeria depends largely on its effective financing. Therefore, this paper examines the emerging issues in vocational/technical education and the effects of poor image on the programmes. The paper recommends that, there is need for adequate financing, provision of training materials, equipment, workshop and adequate qualified teachers.

## **Introduction**

Vocational and Technical Education have been identified as vital form of education for the advancement of the status of the nation in a variety of sectors. This is why the National Policy on Education (2004), gave the deserved attention to these aspects of education. A number of problems however, appear to be checking the advancement expected to form a meaningful vocational and technical education programme all to the detriment of the progress of the nation. This paper examines some of the emerging problems of vocational and technical education with a view to identifying possible solutions.

## **Definition of Vocational Education and Technical Education**

Various people have defined vocational technical education in different ways. For example, Okoro in Daudawa (2005), opined that Vocational and Technical Education are often used interchangeable to refer to the same types of education, but since while vocational education includes technical education, the two terms are by no means synonymous. Technical Education is a post secondary vocational training programme whose major purpose is the production of technicians. In Nigeria, the term technical education is used more widely than the vocational education and is exclusively used to refer to secondary vocational and pre-vocational education programmes. Technical education is a special grade of vocational education which can be distinguished from other vocational education programmes because more mathematics and science are recurring in the training programme.

Sani (2000:15), saw vocational and technical education as "a comprehensive term simply referring to the educational process, which involves in addition to general education, the study of technologies and sciences and the acquisition of practical skills and knowledge relating to occupation in various sectors of economic and social life".

Egbekun in Badung (2007:10): defined vocational and technical education as:

a type of education or training designed for preparing the individual learner to earn a living (to be self reliant) or increase his earnings in an occupation where technical information and an understanding of the laws of science and technology as applicable to modern design, production, distribution and services are essential for success.

Despite the slight differences in concepts and interpretations, there is apparently a common element in most of the suggested meanings of vocational/technical education, namely that of providing the individuals with knowledge, skills and attitudes required in the world of work.

## **Objectives of Vocational and Technical Education**

According to Towe (1998), there are five commonly accepted goals of vocational/technical education. These are>

1. to prepare the learner for entry into employment and advancement in his chosen careers;
2. to meet the manpower needs of society;
3. to increase the options available to each student;
4. to serve as motivating force to enhance all types of learning;
5. to enable the learner to wisely select a career.

The objectives of vocational/technical education in Nigeria are to teach the subjects right from the primary school level to tertiary institutions. At primary school level, awareness is created in the students about the meaning of vocational and technical education as it relates to future occupational openings. Vocational and technical courses are taught theoretically and practically at the junior and senior secondary school levels where skill acquisition is mostly emphasized. However, the entire objectives focus on skills, knowledge, interest and awareness on the part of the student to meet up with the desired level of manpower production in the country.

### **State of Vocational/Technical Education in Nigeria**

In Nigeria today, an impressive phenomenon in educational development is the magnificent importance which the government and the people of this country now attach on the development of vocational and technical education. This has been reflected in the establishment of more technical colleges, the enrolment in vocational and technical institutions~and the quality of people attracted to it within the last twenty years. We have witnessed in Nigeria an impressive inflow of good students and teachers.

The Industrial Training Fund (ITF) for example, was established by decree No. 47 in October, in 1971 to promote and encourage the indigenous manpower acquisition sufficient to meet the needs of the economy. The National Boards for Technical Education (NBTE) is responsible, for advising the Federal Government on all aspects of technical education falling outside the universities. The board also advises the Federal Government on general development and expansion of technical and vocational education in the polytechnics. Vocational and Technical Education encourages the growth, and development of local processing industries based on local raw materials for both domestic and. external markets (Badung, 2007). Vocational and Technical Education is no more regarded as a field of learning discriminatorily reserved for the drop-outs and for the children of the under privileged in the society. The comprehensive type of schools these days have provided a common educational opportunities and environments for students of arts, science and technical subjects to grow and learn together.

### **Emerging Issues Affecting Vocational and Technical Education in Nigeria**

A great number of problems are seriously affecting vocational and technical education in Nigeria. The problem of financing vocational and technical education in Nigerian educational system has continued to receive persistent attention. This is important since the survival of the programme depends largely on its effective financing. Some of the emerging issues affecting vocational and technical education in Nigeria are listed below:

#### **1. Poor Image on Vocational and Technical Education Financing**

A critical look in to the poor financing patterns of vocational technical education in Nigeria is a reflection of its image in the society. The perceived importance of this type of education by most Nigerians is still vague and distorted. Though the governments appreciation of the worth of vocational and technical education programmes within the overall education system has risen considerably over the years, yet majority of Nigerians especially the elites whose educational orientations were liberal in the content are still vexed with the whole idea (Nneji in Badung 2007:38). Gyuk (2005), maintained that good funding is the prime-mover of any programme; it guarantees adequate equipment, good workshop and conducive environment. Vocational and technical education requires heavy funds for the procurement of equipment, tools, and consumable materials. Funds can make meaningful impact on the lives of the institutions when they are judiciously utilized.

#### **2. Inadequate Quantity and Quality Teacher**

The success of any educational system depends to an extent, on the availability of well trained, conscientious, efficient and highly motivated teacher. There is a serious problem in the quality of teaching staff in our institutions today.

Okoli, in Daudawa and Hassan (2005). observed this problem when they staled that most of our teachers do not possess the adequate knowledge and skills of the subject matter they teach. To them, this affects the outcome of the students especially in a practical-oriented programme like vocational/technical education.

#### **3. Inadequate Training Materials and Equipment**

There is lack of adequate training materials for the implementation of practical aspect of learning. Where materials may be available, the equipment and other necessary

infrastructure, may be lacking e.g. electricity to operate the machines. Ogunwole in Onazi (2007), asserted that inadequate practical works discourage the fact that theory and practical should go hand in hand. Effective teaching and learning can only take place under a conducive atmosphere with adequate infrastructural facilities, equipment and tools. Instructional materials needed for functional vocational-technical education seems to have long become luxurious items in our institutions.

#### **4. Lack of Properly Organized Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIW'ES)**

The SIWES programme is an integral part of curriculum offered in vocational/technical education. The programme is designed to expose students to the needed experience in handling equipment and machineries that may not be available in many educational institutions (Ogunwole, 1998). Some students are discovered to be sent to sub-standard organizations and at the end, they gain little or non-experience at all.

**5. Inadequate Provision of Technical Workshop:** Many of the vocational and technical education could not boast of adequate functional workshops. There are reports of cases where equipment was purchased but no workshop to install them.

This equipment is there in the crates collecting dust, rusting and some even stolen. This constitutes a serious draw back in the development of vocation/technical education.

To buttress the problems already highlighted, Osofor, cited in Onazi (2007), identifies lack of physical facilities as a major contributor to the problems of vocational/technical education in Nigeria. Yusuf (2001), in his own contribution, noted that hindrances can come from shortage of building accommodation, shortage of tools and equipment, inadequate fund or improper use of funds, inadequate guidance and counselling services and shortage of teaching staff. Oranu (1998), in his own submission identifies importation of technology as one of the problems facing Nigerian vocational/technical education as it is apt to spell doom for the nation through perpetual dependence on foreign technology.

#### **Prospects of Vocational/Technical Education**

In order that the problems of vocational/Technical Education be eradicated or minimized, the following are hereby suggested.

1. There must be adequate funding so that things can go smoothly and accordingly. The lion share of Education Tax Fund (ETF) should be allocated to science, vocational and technical education. In this way, more facilities and equipment will be provided.
2. Parents and private organizations should try to give the government financial support as governments alone cannot finance vocational/technical education. It is extremely important to recognize that government alone cannot adequately fund vocational/technical education. Therefore, private individuals and organizations should be encouraged to contribute their own quota towards building workshops either through endowment or at fund raising occasions organized by the institutions.
3. Teachers of Vocational/Technical education should be made to undertake in-service training programmes so that they would know how to use the modern equipment provided by the Government in their classrooms/laboratories.

4. The government should always recruit qualified and interested teachers who are ready to do the jobs as expected.
5. They should also give them attractive benefits so that efficient teachers would remain in the field.
6. The concept of industrial training for tertiary level students of vocational education needs to be revisited. As a result of the way Industrial Training (IT) is conducted, students often go into jobs which have no direct bearing to their training and Which do not assist them in their occupational goals. The concept of work experience should replace our understanding of industrial training so that person in training can be exposed to practical work situation that are directly relevant to their education and occupational goals.
7. Research on vocational/Technical Education should be encouraged by providing the needed funds and materials. In this case, the private sector should help the government in funding useful research projects on vocational/Technical Education in Nigeria. Such projects if well organized and funded, will certainly help to turn the many scars in the vocational/technical education into stars.
8. The Government should assist the graduates of vocational/technical education to provide capital (money, equipment and tools) with which to start their own business. This could be done through the National Directorate of Employment (NDE).

### **Conclusion**

The aims of vocational/technical education in Nigeria will remain unachievable so long as the problems earlier identified are not adequately addressed. Accountability and minimum competency remain recurring in our vocational/technical education system. In order that the aims of vocational/technical education in Nigeria are met, decisions affecting the system should not be enched solely on economic and political considerations. Due consideration should be taken of the requirements that will provide conducive environments for the optimal achievement of positive results. The paper concluded that, in order to minimize the emerging issues affecting vocational and technical education in Nigeria, there should be adequate funding, adequate provision of technical workshop, facilities and equipments and qualified teachers.

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