

EMERGING ISSUES IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The paper discusses the Emerging Issues in vocational Education in Nigeria. The contemporary problems facing Nigeria could be solved or reduced drastically by the effective utilization of vocational education poverty, unemployment, food security problems, brain drain, etc. the prospects of vocational Education will lead, to national development; self-reliance (employment opportunities), nutrition, globalization, etc. in a nut shell, problems and prospects of vocational education for national development from the philosophy and objectives of vocation education. The National Policy on education (NPE, 1998) was discussed. Ways of making vocational education realizable and solutions to some of its existing problems were discussed.

Introduction

Nigeria, like other developing countries, has been facing problems ranging from poverty, **unemployment**, desertification, health problems, sanitation, to mention but a few. Most of these problems, if not all, could be prevented or reduced to a lower extent with the effective utilization of Vocational Education. The country could also be carried along with other countries in Globalization and Millennium Development Goals, as the contemporary emerging Issues in Vocational Education.

Vocational Education is any programme of specialized education designed to prepare interested individuals for entrance or additional training into specific occupation. It is usually conducted to prepare students for semi-skilled and skilled employment in recognized occupation or prepare them for enrolment in advanced technical education programmes (Zahraddeen in Shifaibu and Abdulmalik, 2007).

With the application of the programme effectively and practical supported by the government, private organizations and individuals, Nigeria will cope up with the emerging issues and challenges in the international arena; like trade, enterprises, information and Communication Technology (I. C. T), education etc. the life of Nigerians and (the prestige of the country will be improved.

Philosophy and Objectives of Vocational Education

The philosophy of Vocational Educational and Technical Educational can be abstracted from the philosophies of education in Nigeria, as contained in National Policy on education (NPE) of 1998. since Vocational Education is a subset of total education, the philosophy of education itself is line with the five main National Objectives of Nigeria, as stated in second National Development Plan.

Vocational Education as a subset of total education is a part of the National Education Objectives No. 4, which refers to the acquisition or appropriates abilities and competencies to enable individuals contribute to the development of this society. An analysis and synthesis of philosophy and aims of education will reveal that education in general, and Vocational Education in particular, is conceived as a tool for achieving self-realization; individual and national efficiency, economic and scientific and technical progress. It is conceived as an instrument for nation building.

Objectives of Vocational and Technical Education

There are five commonly accepted goals of Vocational Education, which are derived from the central tenets of democracy and from a common door appreciation of the value and dignity of work. These goals are:

1. prepare the learner for entry into employment in his/her chosen career.
2. meet the manpower need of the society.
3. increase the option available to each students on different occupation, kinds and levels of education, employment etc.
4. serve as a motivation force to enhance all types of learning,
5. enable the learner to wisely select a career.

Emerging Issues in Vocational Education

Purpose of Vocational Education; Vocational Education in Nigeria aimed at fighting unemployment as well as improving the economic performance of the country through the instrumentation of local technologies. This is manifested in the NPE (1998), which justified the inclusion of vocational Education in the senior secondary curricular on the grounds of immediate employability of school leavers, because if young people have skills on leaving schools, they would

also have jobs.

New Trends in Vocational and Technical Education; Globalization has stimulated a new thrust in our action as it brings us into active competition with other nations of the global village (Okebukola, 2000, in Zahraddeen, 2006), vocational and Technical Education is an area of high impact on globalization. The economic and technical dimensions of globalization are driven largely by Vocational/Technical Education. For instance, Vocational Education is one of the pillars of economic enterprise of nations. Without technical education, the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) hub around which globalization is built will be difficult to sustain.

The world is moving towards information based economy where the effectiveness of enterprise or a country is determined by the quality of its products and services. Production systems based on new technologies that enable greater production and flexibility demand that all workers must constantly up-date their skills and become entrepreneurial.

Problems and Challenges in the Vocational Education in Nigeria

Vocational Education, as already explained in the introduction of this paper, plays one of the major roles in the national development. Nigeria has, or long, been battling with certain problems since independence, the agriculture, health, power and energy, industrialization, education, etc.

These problems were not solved and other issues are emerging globally, which must be tackled, so that the country will be carried along with her counterparts in the world Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) set by the developed countries to help reduce the problems of the under-developed countries. The use of AID to these under-developed countries, helping them to alleviate poverty, unemployment, developing their education, agriculture, trade and industrialization etc. as the western countries claim.

Academicians and other experts had been trying their best to analyze and formulate ways of achieving these dreams in Nigeria. Agriculture has been given the first priority for national development, because no country can be developed or self-relied without maintaining agriculture. Malnutrition saps the intellect; individuals can't be developed without good nutrition. Agriculture serves as the major source of raw materials for the industries in the countries for the production of goods and services and employment opportunities. The Agricultural sector is declining in its share of GDP and in absolute terms. It declined from 60.96% of GDP in 1964 to 48.23 and in 1970, and 18,00% in 1980 (Abba et al, 1985). The problem is even worse today.

In the case of industrialization, the problems are terrible that the country is just the consumer of finished products from abroad. Raw materials are not even enough to meet the local demands of our industries.

Under the health sector, nutrition is the basic foundation of health (Abb, et al 1985). The failure of food production to keep pace with population growth, chronic food price inflation has meant that the foundation for a healthy population is very weak in Nigeria.

Under energy and power, the situation is not beyond the control of our past and present governments, but they were unable to rectify it. The constant power failure, expensive price for fuels are heavy burden to a Nigerian, .

These problems were never solved, but new and dynamic issues are emerging, which needs to be analyzed and necessary action taken. The issue of "Globalization" and the new "Millennium Development goals" is the topic of discussion in the world.

The level and percentage of Computer/Internet literacy in Nigeria is very low compared with the developing countries like China and India. These and other problems are increasing by and large every day. If we are to succeed, we have to catch the bull by its horns, i.e face the two problems at the same time.

Recommendation to Some of the Problem

Vocational Education has to do with enterprise entrepreneur, self-reliance, could be used effectively to solve-the problems and achieve the aims. In the aspects of Agriculture, Agricultural Education could be used to solve the problems of food (nutrition) and some aspects of industrialization, through crop production, livestock and poultry farming, and fish farming, which could play a major role.

In the health aspects. Home Economics could play a major role Good nutrition helps maintain an optimal health of the individual. Energy and body growth of the citizens will be maintained, to have good working and healthy populations. Sanitation and hygiene is also another neglected issues which if maintained, could play a role in promoting health of the populations. Mahalma Gandhi once said: "sanitation was more importance than independence".

Another area where Home Economic as a Vocational course, will help is the child mortality. "Every day 5,000 children die as a result of diarrhea (Development Magazine, 2008). Still births and deaths at birth of both the mother and the child could be minimized to the barest, from well balanced diet is taken by the mother regularly. The international communities, under the United Nations, have set 2008, as the International year of Sanitation aimed at reducing, by half the proportion of people without access to basic sanitation to meet the "Sanitation Millennium Goals (Development, 2008).

Environmental issues like "Global Warming", desert encroachment, bush burning, etc, could be solved or minimized through effective Agricultural Education. Poverty alleviation is one of the Millennium Development Goals and could be solved through the use of Vocational Education. Skill-less people are usually jobless people.

Brain drain could also be reduced. This is because people (Graduates) are looking for higher remunerations and most of the times could not be got except in the developed countries. With the effective Vocational Education, these graduates can be able to exploit the potentialities in the nature, combine with their skills to generate enough money within Nigeria. The result of a research shows that world's poorest countries (and developed countries) are suffering a punishing exodus of their most talented, experienced and educated citizens" a United Nations conference on trade, and Development (UNCTAD) claims.

These and other related problems could be solved through effective Vocational Education in Nigeria. Various countries and to emphasize Vocational Education when faced with economic problems, the development of new technologies and growing youth development. This is true of Tanzania, Britain, U. S. A. Australia and Nigeria (Zaharaddeen, et al 2006).

New Areas of Focus for National Development through Vocational Education

The following are among the new areas of focus to achieve the goals for national development through the Vocational/Technical Education in Nigeria:

- Renewable energy
- Information technology
- Agricultural technology
- Maintenance technology

Suggestions for Effective Vocational and Technical Education for National Development

1. teaching science subjects at primary and secondary school levels (with high emphasis).
2. high remunerations for science and technical teachers.
3. funds to polytechnics, colleges, universities and research institutions.
4. students of Vocational course should undergo a good training in the various careers.
5. teachers should be well equipped and skilled in their areas of specialization

Other solution to the problems are:

- partnership between VTE institutions and enterprises.
- * Information Technology should be integrated into curriculum.
- * VTE teachers should upgrade their knowledge and skills for globalization.
- * Enlightenment on the need-for VTE to solve the economic predicament of the country.

The prospects of Vocational and technical Education in Nigeria:

- a) Increased and better exploitation of natural resources.
- b) Improved skill to modern one.
- c) Increased production.

Solutions

Corruption should be fought and discipline inculcated into the minds of Nigeria. Experts should analyze and formulate good policies to triumph.

Suggestions made above should be implemented carefully with target. Effective implementation of policies to achieve the goals set should be adhered to.

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