

CERAMICS: A PANACEA FOR ACHIEVING THE SEVEN POINT AGENDA

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Abstract

Worldwide, it is acknowledged that an essential accelerated development of Vocational Education is a pre-condition for attaining a faster economic growth, building economic competence and the development of production sectors of the economy. In the struggle for national development, therefore, there is need to place emphasizes on Vocational education. However, vocational education with all its attendant areas has continued to be recognized as an area that requires intensive capital investment and its consequent developmental potentials are left untapped. In this paper, ceramics will be x-rayed as an instrument for achieving the country's target of rebuilding physical infrastructure and human capital as outlined in the Seven Point Agenda of the Federal Government.

Introduction

History has it that vocational education dates back to the traditional society of pre-colonial era. Each society had her specialized Arts and crafts. Some of the products of arts and crafts are still relevant today. History even has it that some of these works were taken away by the colonial masters. The various skills taught as part of the education in the Nigerian society include weaving, sculpturing, blacksmithing, carving, farming, fishing, cattle rearing, hair-plaiting, dress-making, leather working, glass and lead working, catering, dyeing and pottery-making, (Fafunwa, 2004). In the traditional apprenticeship scheme, no specified time was given for any particular training in any Art nor craft. However, as speedily as the learner acquires the skills, the master graduates such a learner.

Pottery-making or ceramic technology is one of man's oldest crafts. The products of this craft have played numerous important roles that bettered the life of the early man. These roles include among others, food storage, cooking, keeping of liquids and other items of human needs. Nevertheless, pottery products have been and are still produced using traditional methods in very small scale but in almost every settlement in Nigeria. In spite of these, contemporary ceramics has remained a new baby in the same Nigerian nation. This according to Tuhemba (2007) is because others feel it's a woman's craft and that its products are either decorative or are utilized for ritual purposes only.

It is with the hope that ceramics technology will become more recognized, understood, properly learnt and properly financed to expand/improve its production, employ more, alleviate poverty and achieve the seven point agenda in Nigeria for national development.

Ceramics in Vocational Education

Vocational Education is that form of education which emphasizes the development of occupational skills needed as a preparation for work. According to Section 7, subsection 40 of the revised National Policy on Education (2004);

Vocational Education is used as a comprehensive term, referring to those aspects of the 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 economics and social life (p. 29).

The policy document further explained that Vocational education is:

- i. an integral part of general education;
- ii. a means of preparing for occupational fields and for effective participation in the world of work;
- iii. an aspect of life long learning and a preparation for responsible citizenship;
- iv. an instrument to promote environmentally sound sustainable development and;

v. a method of alleviating poverty.

From the above, vocational education may be viewed as any form of education, which emphasizes the acquisition of occupational skills, abilities, knowledge and attitudes, a preparation for the world of work. It is also, a form of education geared towards promoting the dignity of labour by emphasizing the use of hands in making or doing things as the goal of education. The development of requisite skills, knowledge, abilities and attitudes is what ceramics education is aimed at. These are features that make ceramics a vocational activity.

Ceramics according to Uzoagba (2000) belongs to the Applied Arts and so is a functional Art. The word ceramics is derived from a Greek word KERAMOS meaning burnt clay objects'. Ceramics is the Art of making useful objects which are made permanent with the aid of heat treatment of earthy materials. The term refers to both the process and the products. It is in agreement to this that Ahula and Akaa (2001) wrote that ceramics is a very wide term which covers a very wide field of human activities. These include cement making, glass and other areas of human activities where clay and other related raw materials are used in producing other products. Products so produced include automobile spark plugs, louvers, floor and wall tiles, marbles, both tubes and toilet seats, electronics, electrical insulators, refractory bricks which are used in the construction of kilns and furnaces. These kilns and furnaces are used in smelting iron metals in metallurgical industries apart from firing and glazing clay works in ceramic industries and schools.

This art of pottery is a common sight in villages as well as towns, and cities in Nigeria. One needs to acquire the technology in the use of the materials as well as adequate skill development which is indispensable for effective execution of ceramic works. For these to be achieved, a qualitative and functional education need to be in place.

Ceramics and the Seven-Point Agenda

May 29, 2007, the present administration of Nigeria made known to Nigerians an economic blueprint tagged seven point agenda. The seven points according to Ochiama (2008), include; power and energy, food security and agriculture, wealth creation and employment, mass transportation, land reforms; security; qualitative and functional education and pursuance of the rule of law.

Ceramics as an arm of vocational education, has much to contribute to the achievement of the seven point agenda if only ceramics education is taken with all seriousness. Ceramics education which teaches the production of spark plugs, electrical insulators, kiln and furnaces, if properly inculcated using the appropriate instructional/materials, appropriate equipment, appropriate learning environment will help in providing qualitative and functional education. The qualitative and functional education will provide for hands that will produce the basics needed to achieve power and energy.

Functional ceramic education if provided in its realistic nature will produce graduates that will be self-employed. The self employed graduates will even employ others. The self-employment will result to wealth creation, employment and poverty alleviation. These will remove the over dependence on white collar jobs. Tuhemba and Amokaha (2009) agreed with this when they wrote that vocational education promotes the training of manpower/personnel in a variety of fields. This singular role of ceramics education helps to meet the occupational needs of the people in the country. It encourages human capital development, through well-trained manpower for effective discharge of duties in the work-place for effective productivity.

However, until the training environments are made as those of the industries with all the functional equipment, effective source of power, valuable consumables, the education will never be qualitative nor functional. Practical training plus provision of necessary facilities for practical training for skill acquisition will certainly create jobs and wealth.

Ceramics: A Panacea For Achieving The Seven Point Agenda

Tuhemba, and Amokaha (2009) asserted that vocational education aids employment. This can only be achieved through the provision of practical training requirements. This will also make for qualitative and functional education. Once individuals are given quality and functional education, the citizens will cease to be security threat. Absolute security will then be a reality. The citizens will be lawful and the rule of law will prevail.

The only way to successfully develop a nation is through the development of individuals to be able to solve their socio-economic and productive problems of the nation. Tuhemba and Amokaha (2009) agreed with this when they wrote that any nation that fails to acknowledge the important roles of vocational education, is at the risk of remaining backward in today's technologically fast developing world.

The Way Forward

The economic blue print (the seven point agenda) is targeted at reviving the floundering state of key sectors of the nation's economy. But for these enumerated plans to achieve the purpose for which they are set, the under listed suggestions need to be practically effected.

For practical skill acquisition programmes like ceramics to succeed, it requires some basic training equipment, facilities and realistic source of power. This can only be achieved through adequate funding. Ceramics should be adequately funded to ensure that the training environment is exactly that of the work place. This will ensure qualitative and functional education that Nigeria need to move forward.

As capital intensive as the training is, so also is the actual work place. For each graduate to be able to be self-employed, he/she needs a work place that is practically capable of being productive. Such graduates should be given grants to start. Loan might even be granted using certificates and skills as collateral. Once this is done, graduates in the field will be self-employed, they will create jobs for others. Consequently, wealth would be created for both the employers and the employees.

Entrepreneurship education that is included in the curricula of vocational courses can only be practiced if graduates are given the full opportunity to exhibit what has been imparted to them. Loans may be granted to graduates of vocational education through their institution of study with a condition that certificates will be issued to such graduants only after the loan is repaid. This will make successful practice entrepreneurship a criterion for award of certificates.

Patronage is the next requirement for successful and continuous productivity. It is therefore necessary for local industries to be protected. It should be mandatory for executors of both government and private works to make use of home made goods. This will provide patronage to items produced by graduants who are given either grants or loans. In this way, loan repayment, continuous production, job creation, wealth creation will be a sure way to economic advancement through human capital development.

Conclusion

Qualitative, functional education is the tap root for national socio-economic upliftment. Quality education will provide citizens with skills required for effective productivity in the key sectors of the economy. Consequently, there will be skills to ensure effective power and energy supply, maintain food security and agricultural productivity, enhance wealth creation, job creation, guarantee security and so on. It is important therefore, for government's institutions, individuals and organizations to join hands in funding ceramic education in Nigeria for better results.

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