

# RE-ENGINEERING TECHNICAL EDUCATION FOR SELF-EMPLOYMENT AND PRODUCTIVITY IN NIGERIA

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## **Abstract**

Technical education plays a vital role in human resource development of a country by creating skilled manpower, enhancing industrial productivity and improving the quality of life. One of the most daunting challenges that Nigeria faced in recent times is low economic growth and low per capital income. It is against this backdrop of the nagging development challenges that various goals of development programme have been articulated in the key policy documents by government. Following this, a radical change in development paradigm occurred in 1986 by the strategy, Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP). This paper speaks on re-engineering Technical Education for employment and self productivity in Nigeria. In order to achieve the goal of this paper the researcher used observation and documentary methods in generating information and data. To this end secondary sources of data collection was used because written documents are better in observing and judging accountability.

Technical education is that aspect of the educational process involving in addition to general education that studies of technologies and related science, and acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding, and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of economic and social life (Unesco, 2002).

Technical education is that discipline which provides an opportunity for students to learn about processes and knowledge relating to technology and it covers the human ability to shape and change the physical world to meet needs, through the manipulation of material and tools with techniques. The goal of technological education is to teach the knowledge and techniques to develop technological literacy which is accomplished by bringing laboratory activities to students. On the other hand, technical education is an innovative approach to education in that it is accomplished by situating students in the context of needs of societies, communities and the country at large.

Technical Education covers courses and programmes in engineering, technology, management, architecture, town planning, pharmacy and applied arts and crafts, hotel management and catering Technology.

Re-engineering on the other hand is the fundamental rethinking and redesign of business processes to achieve improvements in critical measures of performance, such as cost, quality, service, speed and customer satisfaction (Hammer and Champy, 1993). Re-engineering also focuses on redesigning business process to improve performance and satisfy customers. This is subsumed in innovation and entrepreneurship.

## **Concept of Development**

According to Todaro (1989), development is conceived of as a multidimensional process involving major changes in social structures, popular attitudes, and natural institutions as well as the acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality, and the eradication of absolute poverty. To him, development in whichever way it may be defined or conceptualized, must not miss any of these three core values: Life sustenance, (ability to provide basic needs), self-esteem and freedom from servitude, which is ability to choose. These three must constitute the objectives of development in all societies.

Development is therefore not only a multi-dimensional process; it is a process of structural change requiring a systemic approach. The UNDP also defined development as a continuous irreversible process of structural change, involving morally acceptable procedures, oriented towards

worthwhile ends, as perceived by its recipients whose awareness and mobilization are a pre-requisite to the achievement of its objectives.

Development therefore is a term with a positive connotation; that is, development is associated with a better future. To this end, technical education will play a major role in the process of transformation by combining technology and soft skills to achieve the economic goals of a society.

### **Concept of Sustainable Development**

The concern for global development process to seek for integration of exploitation of resources and economic growth and physical development will lead us to consider the concept of sustainable development. The need to improve the quality of life of city inhabitants through their production and consumption activities without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their economic, social, cultural, health and political needs remains the focus of sustainable development (Satterthwaite, 1999). Sustainable development therefore implies that the consumption activities should be able to take into consideration effective utilization of available resources and develop environmentally friendly system which would not damage the natural resources and at the same time have some positive effects on the same environment. Sustainable development is the concept of ensuring that all productive sectors of the nation's socio-economic systems make a positive and enduring impact that could stand the test of time (Oyesiku, 2009). Doubt is been cast on sustainable social services and development as a result of increasing demand for better conditions of living and economic crisis in our country. Meeting human needs in the cities is becoming difficult.

However some of the difficulties arise from the deliberate isolation of the concept of sustainable development from the overall development process thus increasing hardship in many sectors of the development process. One can see that the quality of life in the cities is being threatened due to the negative impact of development process and the inability of the production process to support economic and human welfare. Sustainable development could also be seen as a development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This suggests the need to balance intra-generational needs with inter-generational needs, the former having to do with present needs and the later, future needs. Technically, sustainable development is defined as a development path along which the maximization of human well-being for today's generations does not lead to decline in future well-being of the citizens. To attain this requires eliminating those negative externalities that are responsible for natural resource depletion and environmental degradation. It also requires securing those public goods that are essential for economic development to last such as those provided by well-functioning ecosystems, a healthy environment and cohesive society (Oyesiku, 2009). Sustainable development therefore is development that can be continued into the indefinite future. It is then very clear that time dimension is crucial in sustainable development, thus it is a dynamic concept.

The challenge of sustainable development is then on how can today's needs be met without diminishing the capacity of future generations to meet their own.

### **The Concept of Economic Development**

It is common knowledge that the thrust of government activities is not driven by profit but by the provision of social goods, hence the size of government funds, political expediency; and its access to credit facilities determined the quantum of economic activities that it can undertake. All its activities are aimed at increasing the quality and quantity of the national wealth which are the crux of economic development. Economic development is very fundamental and it must manifest in increased standard of living for the citizens. Economic development is not just a matter of growth in per capita income, because it is possible to record a high growth rate in per capita income while the masses of the people continue to be in abject poverty and lacking in the basic necessities of life. The concept of economic developments has to do with improvement in the quality of life of a people which will manifest in the quality and access to the good things of life, water, food health facilities, good roads, electricity etc. A common characteristics of under-developed countries, which does not

constitute economic development are abject poverty, illiteracy, disease, low life expectancy rate which are made complex by high population growth rate. By implication, poverty is anti-development while the alleviation of poverty can advance human development and create opportunities for sustainable growth and better future. From the foregoing the ultimate rationale of development must be to improve living standard and welfare of the citizenry. Therefore economic development can better be defined in terms of the reduction or elimination of poverty, inequality and unemployment (Todaro, 1980). The main goal of economic development is improving the economic well-being of a country through efforts that entail job creation, job retention, tax base enhancement and quality of life (Adegite, 2010). The quality of life of the average Nigerian is appalling. There are great deprivations and poverty in the development process. As a result many do not have access to the basic things of life while only a few experience blissful lives. There is great sense of insecurity among the citizens as they cannot afford any meal, no matter the shape, square or round. The privileged few cannot graciously go to sleep with their eyes closed because the poor are awake and angry (Izedomi, 2006). Economic development must manifest in improved standard of living for the citizens and it must be a sustained secular rise in real income accompanied by changes in social attitudes and customs which have in the past impeded economic advancement (Thirwall, 1980). Economic development implies more output and changes in the technical and institutional arrangements by which it is produced. It is simply growth plus structural change and transformation.

### **Entrepreneur**

Employment and self productivity could be conceptualized into entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial vision for this paper to be relevant to its theme.

In the words of Izedomi (2007), entrepreneur is an agent of economic revolution and source of rural and urban transformation and wealth creation. Who then really is an entrepreneur? According to Say. (1800), the entrepreneur was describe as one that shifts economic resources out of an area of lower into an area of higher productivity and greater yield.

In the United States the entrepreneur is describe as one who starts his own new and small business; as a result, courses in entrepreneurship were popular in business schools which were designed on how one can start his small business.

According to Robert Heller, an entrepreneur is the hero of capitalism, the object of envy and administration. The entrepreneur is the mainspring for the private sector and staff of commercial legend. But not every small business is entrepreneurial or represents entrepreneurship. For this reason, entrepreneurship was defined as “people who have the ability to see and evaluate business opportunities to gather the necessary resources to take advantage of them and to initiate appropriate actions to ensure success:

To perform his economic function, the entrepreneur requires the existence of technical knowledge in order to produce new products and also the power of disposal over the factors of production in the form of credit. According to Schumpeter (2003), a reservoir of untapped technical knowledge exists which he can make use of. No wonder the title of this paper is re-engineering technical education. Development is spontaneous and discontinuous changes in economic life are not forced upon it from without but arise by is own initiative from within the economy and appear in the sphere of industrial and commercial life (ibid). Development comes about in the form of innovations. The products of innovation are as follows:

- The introduction of new product
- The introduction of a new method of production
- The opening up of new market
- The conquest of supply of raw materials or semi-manufactured goods.
- The carrying out of the new organization of any industry like the creation of a monopoly

According to Schumpeter, it is the introduction of a new product and the continual improvements in the existing ones that leads to development. The role of the innovator therefore is

assigned to the entrepreneur. The entrepreneur is not a man of ordinary managerial ability but one who introduces something entirely new. He does not provide funds but directs their use.

Technical education therefore will bring out the entrepreneur and motivate the entrepreneur in the desire to find a private commercial kingdom, which will conquer and prove his superiority and exercise his energy and ingenuity by getting things done. His nature and activities depend on his socio-cultural environment. The entrepreneur is thus an individual who launches a venture or significantly improves an old business innovatively and creativity. It is believed that all businesses, whatever the stage of their growth need the challenge and vision of the entrepreneur who usually understands instinctively what the customer wants (Odion and Ihimekpen, 2006).

### **Technical Education and National Development**

It is obvious that education is a key agent of National Development. Education is the potent tool for change and social transformation. It is a way, perhaps the only way, of developing human capacity, increasing skilled workforce required for modernization, acquiring individual and personal freedom, developing capabilities and a sure means of economic empowerment (Aina 2010). Education is to a nation as the mind is to the body. As the body is handicapped in its ability to coordinate the body if the mind is sick so education is to a nation if education process fails to achieve its rightful place in a nation. Thus education is that process by which an individual acquires the many physical and social capacities to function and turn the society around. On this note, the individual is expected to cultivate the interest and potentialities to act and think accurately as demanded by every situations.

Human development is progressive, unfolding of potentialities of a given reality which is expected to be acquired through a formal or informal education.

Idemudia, an actor of "Hotel De-Jordan" a Sunday programme on Bendel Television in 90s use to say, "it is the work you learn that will feed you in your lifetime". This is also what Fagerlind and Shah (1989) expressed that the concept of human capital suggests that education and training raises the productivity of workers, and increase their lifetime earning capacity. Technical education is an investment which yields both social and private returns. Alam (2007), also stated that investment in Education and training will produce benefit both to the individual and the society at large. The return on investment for the society will be a skilled work force that will enable global competitiveness and economic growth, while the return to the individual will be a better career path, increased earning and a better quality of life.

### **Conclusion**

Technological value involves advanced basic sciences and new development in products, processes and materials. The level of technology available for businesses determine to a large extent what products and services will be produced, the type of equipment that will be used and how the operations will be managed. Technology is changing rapidly and it appears that this accelerated change is reflected in the value and ideas of the society. The effect of such changes is the creation of enabling environment in which strategies based on assumption about societal values need to be monitored. To this end foreign technology is a drain on the economy.

The entrepreneur must determine in time the technological process he wants to employ to produce his goods and services.

From the foregoing, it is clear that national development requires education which is intended to meet a range of different national needs from economic, social and political angles. The purpose of education is therefore to provide adequate knowledge to enable the citizens cope with various professions, which provide social value so that people can achieve developmental goals.

**Recommendation**

- To get the maximum benefit of technical education to National development, well-timed modern courses linked to local and global demand should be taught at all levels in tertiary institutions for example high information penetration measured by quality of ICT infrastructure.
- With regard to the type of technology, the entrepreneur must take into consideration the growth level, personnel and the market.
- Giving Nigerians level of technological development, it will be more advisable for the entrepreneur to employ a technology that can have both automated and manual operation in periods of emergencies.
- Functional and effective professional discipline to enforce code of conduct and professional ethics.
- Environmentally friendly society should be available for meaningful development to take place.

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