

VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

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Abstract

Vocational and technical education like any other system needs to be managed for it to achieve its predetermined goals, [t]he system is beset with many contemporary problems, which must critically be examined to find a solution to them as far as importance of VTE is concern in Nigeria's educational system today. Base on this, the paper studies some of (lie general problems facing VTE in Nigeria and examines the future prospects of the ailing system. Recommendations were proposed to achieve the desired goals and objectives of the (VTE) in Nigeria.

Introduction

Vocational and technical education have specific goals, objectives and visions when it is properly implemented. As stated in the national policy on education (revised in 1Q98), it is that type of education, which provides relevant practical and applied skills as well as basic scientific knowledge for individual to live and contribute to the development of the society. Like any other form of education, vocational and technical education is the most potent instrument for positive economic and technological change. Ikwukam (2004), in Osuala (1981) sees it as preparation of (he learner for entry into employment and advancement in his chosen career, and meeting manpower needs of society.

The objective of vocational and technical education as contained in the National Policy on Education (revised, 1998) includes:

- a. to provide trained manpower in applied science, technology and commerce particularly at sub-professional grades;
- b. to provide the technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, industrial, commercial and economic development;
- c. to provide people who can apply scientific knowledge to the improvement and solution of environmental problems for the use and convenience of man;
- d. to give an introduction (o professional studies in engineering and other technologies;
- e. to give training and impart the necessary skills leading to the production of craftsmen, technicians, and other skilled personnel who will be enterprising and self—reliant; and
- f. to enable our young men and women to have an intelligent understanding of the increasing complexity of technology.

Despite the quality objectives of the national policy on education as stated above it is unfortunate to note that, vocational and technical education has numerous problems, such as: planning and implementation, funding, provision of adequate teaching/practical facilities, lack of political will and lack of adequate trained and qualified technical teachers to maintain and mange the facilities required in vocational and technical schools.

The development of vocational and technical education in Nigeria rests on government and stakeholders' efforts in providing adequate funding. It is only through adequate funding that the needed resources for the proper implementation of vocational and technical education policies and programmes could be realized to meet the optimal objectives of NPE in Nigeria.

Problems in the Nigerian Educational System

Nigerian educational system is facing a lot of problems. According to Ogundipo (1997), Nigerian educational system is in influenced by a number of factors and circumstances, which notably include historical, political, economic, social and environmental factors. It is based on these facts that, RuQayyatu (2006), outlined four maladjustment factors responsible for the set off crisis in the Nigerian educational system which include:

The gap between educational demand and supply is a common phenomenon, as majority of qualified students cannot have space at various levels of schooling especially tertiary or higher levels of education. The policy of government on education and UBE is free and compulsory education from primary to the JSS. This brought about the proliferation of school without adequate provision of teaching facilities. Currently, many of such schools had been established, while government funding to educational sector reduced drastically.

1. Lack of qualitative and quantitative staffing and poor management of educational system. Majority of schools and institutions are facing acute shortage of staff and the numbers available are mostly not qualified. This leads to poor management and administration allowing for vices in the system.
2. The misfit between the content of education and the real educational needs of students and society is revealing that the content of education is not relevant to the needs of the students. School curriculum must be relevant to the learners and the society to be able to improve the society, as such there has to be machinery for constant review of the school curriculum to reflect the needs of both the learners and the society at a particular point in time.
3. The menacing gap between educational resources requirements and resources available is a common factor in all the schools at all levels of the educational system in the country; thus, majority of schools have inadequate facilities only few manage with meager resources. RuQayyatu (2006), asserts that other problems in the vocational and technical education include:
lack of political will from the government, inadequate release of fund, inadequate enrolment of qualified teaching staff and teaching facilities.

Misplaced Priority on Vocational and Technical Education

Adequate funding is required in vocational and technical schools. For effective training and retraining of technical teachers, craftsman and technicians in particular, there must be enough funds. According to Saidu (2004), funds for vocational and technical institutions often get to them late, this factor jeopardize the academic activities of many vocational and technical schools. Okerie (2000), also, said that, Nigeria has a misplaced priority when it comes to allocation of funds and actual release of funds to vocational and technical education schools. These problems resulted in inadequacy in the supply of related infrastructural facilities for vocational and technical school. According to RuQayyatu (2006), in the year 1995, the budgetary allocation was 7%, in 1996, 12% which increased to 18% in 1997. The sector saw a decreased to 11% in the year 1999, 8% in the year 2000 and only 7% in the year 2001, the allocation has been reducing from 2002 to 2004. This explains the reason why here is a serious problem of decline in the standard of education in Nigeria.

Comparing the spending of Nigeria with some of the African countries further reveals the lack of commitment of those in the position of power towards educational sector today in Nigeria (RuQayyatu, 2006).

As opined by Agun and Imogie (1998), finance is one of the crucial factors that determine the range of equipment, materials and services that can be provided. It is unfortunate to note that, despite the huge resources Nigeria has compared to other African countries, RuQayyatu (2006) said that, other African countries are spending higher than Nigeria in education. For example, Ghana is spending 4.4% GNP, Kenya 6.5% and South Africa 7.9% GNP. In fact, in a pool of African countries, Uganda spends the least percentage GNP of 2.6, which is much higher than Nigeria's 0.7% GNP. Inadequate funding of vocational and technical education constitutes a serious problem to the successful implementation of the programme in Nigeria.

Factors responsible for Poor Planning of Vocational and Technical Education

The policy and administrative guidelines of vocational and technical education in Nigeria appeared to be quite ambitions, laudable and promising, but it is a common knowledge that many policies and implementation strategies for vocational and technical education have failed because of the poor planning and implementation problems. Ogundipo (1997), outlined two factors responsible for the poor planning and implementation of vocational and technical education in Nigeria:

1. Lack of adequate planning: A follow - up from the pupils enrolment explosion was the shortage of infrastructures and materials such as classrooms and teaching aids. In some states classes were held under stress and also in dilapidated structures and in other substandard buildings.
2. Lack of good will and commitment from those in government: This problem has a resultant negative effect of acute shortage of right caliber of trained and experienced teachers in vocational and technical schools. It is for this that, Ikwukam (2004), in Aminu (1987), revealed that, out of 109, .000 vocational and technical teachers needed for effective policy implementation for the Secondary and technical college levels, only 8, 000 were available.

It should be recalled that, the NPE and its implementation documents provide for primary and post primary education. According to Aina (2000), the NPE and its implementation documents provide for secondary schools 60% technical college 20%, vocational training centers 10% Apprenticeship 10%.

The above ratios suggested that, there should be as many technical college as one - third of the number of secondary schools. The reality on the ground today reveals that, here are about 5, 000 secondary schools with only 138 vocational and technical schools. The sole responsibility of this phenomenon is the poor planning and implementation policies of our leaders on vocational and technical education in Nigeria.

Again, on poor planning and implementation problems in the Nigerian educational system Ogundipo (1997), in Ajayi (1985), highlighted that unreliable statistical base, lack of information flow, inaccessibility to official documents, politics, lack of human and financial resources and other problems attendant upon the ongoing economic recession are obstacles to vocational and technical education.

Future Prospects of Vocational and Technical Education in Nigeria

Solution to the future prospects of the Nigerian educational system requires the approach of addressing the main functional areas of educational management namely, the control, organization, staffing, motivation, information flow, planning and proper coordination of VTE in Nigeria (Ogundipo, 1997). Owawepo (1997), suggested that, good leadership styles should take into cognizance of the staff and students in VTE and integrate them into work and learning situation in a manner to motivate them to work together, cooperatively and with economic, psychological and social satisfaction towards the achievement of VTE in Nigeria.

Adequate funding must be provided for VTE because finance is the key of any educational system especially the VTE which requires teaching facilities, structures etc. it is therefore, necessary to have alternative means of funding (VTE) education. Towards meeting the prospects of VTE in Nigeria, Ogundipo (1997), suggested to following strategies to be considered for reviving ailing VTE in Nigeria:

- i. Advancing loans to students to finance their education though the newly established education bank.
- ii. Utilizing corporate companies' participation in funding education,
- iii. Charging of differential fees in favour of more proffered courses e.g. VTE courses,
- iv. Educational institutions should engage in services consultancy services, agricultural projects, guest houses, bookshops, charging batteries etc. such revenue will help in the successful implementation of VTE.

Towards achieving future prospects of VTE in Nigeria, Osofor (2004), suggested the following factors to consider; adequate provision of vocational technical workers, adequate funding, adequate facilities and equipment; and provision for entrepreneurship for students after graduation.

Recommendations

Based on the discussed contemporary problems on VTE and the needs for its future prospects, the following recommendations are hereby suggested:

- (i) Adequate funds should be provided for VTE.
- (ii) Sufficient and detailed plans and preparation should be made before the take off of any VTE school,
- (iii) Vocational and Technical trust fund should be established into which all monies meant for the institute be collected and equally disbursed,
- (iv) Government should establish educational development bank for the VTE sector to be charged with responsibilities, in funding and financing the VTE programmes under soft loans.
- (v) Vocational and technical education should be headed by experts. These cadres of people are competent enough to harness the funding, control and prosper supervising strategies of VE for national development.
- (vi) Entrepreneurship education training should be included in the curriculum of VTE in Nigeria, (vii) Selection of teachers for VTE programs should be based on merit, interest and attitudes to the

teaching profession and selection techniques. The use of teacher competency test (TCT) for recruiting staff be strictly employed to select the competent VTE teachers.

Conclusion

Base on the studies of VTE and its future prospects in Nigeria it indicated that, some of the problems of the VTE are historically or epistemologically neglected, while some are purely administrative and lack of adequate proper planning implementation strategies ether by school administrators and /or authorities.

The need for productivity in VTE demands that, competent teachers must be recruited. However., adequate Provision for facilities, structures, must be provided and above all adequate funding and supervision of VTE must be enhanced to meet the optimal goals and objectives of the NPE programmes for the nation's technical/technological development in the new millennium.

To achieve the development of VTE in Nigeria, it is expected that government, individuals and professionals should improve the content of Nigeria's educational system through proper adequate planning, staffing, control and funding. Adequate funding is the prime mover of any (VTE) programme; it guarantees adequate equipment, good workshop and conducive learning atmosphere.

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