

## IMPROVING TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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### **Abstract**

A nation is termed developed or under-developed due to its level of technology. In order to be part of the move towards globalization, the creation of a national programme on technical and vocational education will be of great importance since this will in turn reduce the level of unemployment and poverty in the society. This paper presents a way forward for the smooth implementation of technical and vocational education in three tertiary institutions of Delta State with attention to the benefits, problems and a way of improving the situation. The paper recommended, among other things, that there should be increase in funding and an improved public awareness of the technical and vocational programmes to accelerate socio-economic growth.

### **Introduction**

Nigeria's educational system is patterned after the British system and the product obtained from the educational system have not been encouraging. This is due to the fact that they don't seem to possess the required marketable skill. In order to have a more functional educational system, a new curriculum for primary and secondary schools was designed. The curriculum caters for the majority of the population and satisfies only a few privileged individuals. Technical and vocational education according to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) recommendations, is 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 skill, attitudes, understanding and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of economic and social life.

Technical and Vocational Education is a type of education which involves the preparing of human resources for development, productivity and economic growth. It has been shown that this branch of education have not been given the utmost attention it deserves in Nigeria. Until technical and vocational education is taken seriously, the problem of un-employment and poverty in Nigeria will be on the increase.

The government should increase the amount of fund allocated to technical and vocational education as part of the general educational policy. This will yield higher productivity, low unemployment, poverty and crime rate in our society and be able to utilize the increasing number of dropouts of both primary and secondary school level.

Technical and vocational education is designed to train and develop individuals in relation to their occupations. As mentioned earlier, Technical and Vocational Education has come to stay in many countries but Nigeria is not

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taking it seriously. Vocational education equip students with the required skills and ability to become productive, creative and innovative which will go a long way to improved the nations economic status and increase personal liberty.

The emergence of the national policy on education, which is the present (6-3-3-4) system of education in Nigeria, is to make education functional. To realize this goal, it gives considerable attention to technical education and one of the avenues through which this can be achieved is the polytechnic.

### **The Implication of the Educational System**

The (6-3-3-4) education system is an effort of achieve socio-economic growth. It is to produce individuals who are skilled and to enable them derive maximum benefits and bring students closer to the working environment which will lead to a fulfilling life and contribute to the welfare of the community and the society at large. This means the students must not attend the university first before he or she would be able to acquire skills, abilities and knowledge necessary for him to function in the work place. Therefore, it is necessary to utilize dropout of schools on basic skills of their choice by making them choose any discipline in vocational and technical education.

### **The Objectives of Vocational and Technical Education in Nigeria**

As contained in the National Policy on Education the broad objectives of technical and vocational education in Nigeria are as follows:

- 1) To improve trained manpower in applied science, technology and commerce particularly at sub-professional level.
- 2) To provide people who can apply scientific knowledge to the improvement and solution of environmental problems for the use and convenience of man.
- 3) To give an introduction to professional studies in engineering and other technologies.
- 4) To enable our young men and women to have an intelligent understanding of the increasing complexity of technology.
- 5) To improve the technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, industrial, commercial and economic development.
- 6) To give training and impart necessary skills leading to the production of craftsmen, technicians and other skilled personnel who will be enterprising and self-reliance.

### **Benefits of Technical and Vocational Education in Nigeria**

The inclusion of technical and vocational education in our school curriculum will provide most school leavers the required knowledge and skill for self-reliance which will make life more meaningful. Technical vocational education will provide Nigeria the skilled manpower she needs to run the economic activities. According to Osuala (1981), the basic skills the Nigerian youths (school leavers) need to function well in the present society can only be acquired through a well-planned programme of vocational and technical

education. He also stated that the largest proportion of school dropouts are normally at the age 15, a period when they cannot be absorbed into the labour force due to lack of marketable skills.

According to Datol and Lucy (2000), the predicament which faces the youngster are two-fold:

1. There are increasingly fewer occupation opportunities for the unfortunate youth who lack basic skills because of their poor educational background, that is to say, lack of vocational and technical education. Dropouts are more on the disadvantage.
2. Workers are being displaced faster than new jobs are being created, which is also the lack of basic inculcation of basic knowledge of self-reliant education (vocational and technical education). Gallington (1972), noted that, technical and vocational education is needed to equip youths and adults for useful employment in trades and industries such as agriculture, home-making and business areas.

Technical and vocational education will meet essential need for knowledge and skills not met in the general education curriculum.

Going by the important role technical and vocational education play in our society, its usefulness cannot be over-emphasized.

### **Possible Ways of Improving Vocational and Technical Education in Nigeria**

In order to improve technical and vocational education in Nigeria, it must be adequately financed while youngsters are guided based on need and interest together with the society's need. According to Dike (2006), there should be some form of school-work-based learning incorporated in studies in higher institution across the land as an integral part of national development strategy as this could reduce the burden of unemployment and poverty on the people. Also the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has noted that, revitalizing the technical and vocational education sector is among the ways to improve economic opportunities for the youths. Dike (2006), also opined that the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) and the affiliated unions could also help in this regard by setting up vocational training centres in Local Government Areas from where the people could acquire some skills. Also, upgrading the workers' skills would improve their productivity and advance their values (wages/salaries and benefits) and voices on the job.

Therefore, every educator especially those with functional skills should be encouraged in an attempt to improve the general quality of the training situation.

Effort should be made to design the curriculum to fit the rapid growth of technology education and training in order to be current about the new technology and training comprising of general and specialized education.

### **Recommendations**

1. Government and educational planners in Nigeria should make technical and vocational education compulsory at all school levels. Emphasis must be placed on technical and vocational education in order to revamp the lost ability of every individual.
2. The schools should be better funded to meet up with or regular needs, provide teaching aids, laboratories and workshops for effective delivery.
3. The management of the institutions should ensure the frequent organization of seminars to keep staff members abreast of past and present development about its implementation.
4. Efforts should be made to get communities involved in formulating programmes for technical and vocational educational development especially the local crafts.

### **Conclusion**

This study has made it clear that technical and vocational education is a thing of great importance. The implementation in our schools is ongoing and gaining more grounds. But this is not without problems that hinder its delivery. Therefore, drastic action should be taken to improve on its poor implementation in Nigeria.

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