

MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS: THE ROLE OF TECHNICAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

By

J. K. OBARA

*Department of Curriculum and Instruction
Federal College of Education (Technical),
Omoku.*

A. C. ABULOKWE

*Department of Vocational Teacher Education,
University of Nigeria,
Nsukka.*

And

CHARLES BEN ETEH

*Department of Vocational Teacher Education,
University of Nigeria,
Nsukka.*

Abstract

Access to quality basic education for all children, youths and adults are the primary concern of any society that seeks for economic transformation and poverty reduction. To this end, this paper focuses on Millennium Development Goals: Role of Technical Vocational Education and Training. It discusses the concept of Technical Vocational Education and Training, indexes of development, technology teachers' roles in achieving the MDGs in area of poverty and hunger eradication, different components of Technical Vocational Education and Training, its relationship with the various MDGs, and conclusion. Therefore, to achieve this MDG, it is recommended that teacher educators must be sensitive to the emergent needs and problems of the society and tailor their teaching to satisfy such need.

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The 20th century has been characterized with numerous political, economic, religious, and social upheavals which have culminated in global and local wars, economic depression, deprivation and poverty, religious intolerance, disease and ill health, all of which present a picture of a world not conducive for happy and harmonious living. From global and national policy perspectives, the provision of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is viewed as a necessary intervention in attempts to empower people, reduce poverty, and realize the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The logic is that if people, especially the youths, are equipped with employable skills with which they can access labour markets, then the incidence of unemployment, poverty, and other undesirable consequences of social and economic exclusion would be reduced (Bukar and Habib, 2008).

Okonkwo (2009) concerned about the plight of marginalized and vulnerable groups in Nigeria and the slow progress towards the achievement of the MDGs stated that the Millennium Development Goals are eight international goals that one thousand nine hundred and two United Nation Members and twenty three International organizations have agreed to achieve by the year 2015. The MDGs were aimed at assisting impoverished nations by improving their social and economic conditions. The eight goals include: eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, achieving Universal Primary Education, promoting gender equality and empowering women; reducing child mortality; improving marital health; combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other disease; ensuring environmental sustainability; and developing a global partnership for development.

Nigeria as a member of United Nation planned to achieve her goals through systematic educational programme. Among the educational programmes Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) seems to possess the effective tool for achieving the MDGs. Afro (1999) in Okonkwo (2009) saw TVET as the most effective tool and inevitable means by which of extreme poverty and hunger can be eradication through providing the requisite skills needed to be self reliant and sufficient in life because Nigeria has the potential to achieve this. This statement is true because TVET focuses on equipping individuals with vocational and technical skills which makes them gainfully employable at the labour market. It also arms people with the basic theoretical and practical facts, make their economic and commercial activities easy, vibrant, interesting and successful. However, the challenges of TVET are enormous, hence, this paper focused on concept of TVET, indexes for development, technology teachers role in achieving the MDG in area of poverty and hunger eradication, and the relationship between TVET and MDGs.

Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET)

Poverty is not new but at each mention, it stirs a lot of misgiving. This is because it has a very devastating influence on its victims. It reduces the social and psychological prestige of its victims. Poverty is a condition of being poor. This could be evidenced even amidst plenty because there could be reeking poverty as a result of lack of knowledge to translate potentiality into practical creative benefits to actuate well being. Therefore, the key towards translating this potentiality into practical creative benefits is education. Education is any act or experience that has a formative effect on the mind, character (moral) or physical ability of an individual, It is also a process by which society deliberately transmits its accumulated knowledge, skills and values (personal & cultural) from one generation to another. To this end, education is a basic human right and considered by many as a key tool for national development (Anger, 2010).

However, this tenet has been challenged by several economists, especially Pritchett (1996). His empirical analysis suggested that many countries, whilst having a large educated population, remain unable to make significant progress. Consequently, scholars argue that countries need a well-diversified education system in order to gain sustainable development through education. Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) has been an integral part of national development strategies in many societies because of its impact on productivity and economic development. In spite of its contributions, Nigeria as a nation has not given this aspect of education the attention it deserves. This is one of the reasons for the nation's underdevelopment.

Technical Education is a planned program of courses and learning experiences that begins with exploration of career options, supports basic academic and life skills and facilitates achievement of high academic standards, leadership, preparation for industry-defined work, and advanced continuing education while Technical Vocational Education and Training prepares learners for careers that are based on manual or practical activities, traditionally non-academic and totally related specific trade, occupation or vocation. In other words, it is education designed to develop occupational skills. Vocational/technical education gives individuals the skills to live, learn and work as a productive citizens in a global society. Technical & Vocational education has many prospects. It can be used as a catalyst for creating employment opportunities. Thus, it is a panacea for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Indexes of Development

According to UNESCO and UNDP, human development is not just measured in terms of the economy but also in terms of freedom, equity (access to education, health), participation and quality of life (UNDP, 2002). Human development is much more than the raising of national incomes. It is about creating an environment in which people can develop their full potentials and lead productive, creative lives in accordance with their

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needs and interests. People are the real wealth of nations. Development is thus about expanding the choke people have, to lead lives that they value. It is thus, about more than economic growths, which are only a means and an important one of enlarging people's choices.

It is therefore viewed that national development must be a country's development in terms of its economic and social freedom which is interrelated; one cannot succeed without the other (Aquah, 2009). To increase national economic development, a country must have social freedom and, to achieve social development, a country must have economic freedom. The impact of Technical Vocational Education and Training in national development is linked to human resources development; it has significant impact on economic growth, as well as the development of individuals and societies.

According to Abama and Kwaja (2009), the concept of 'human capital' suggests that education and training raises the productivity of workers and increases their earnings over their lifetime. But this is not always true for the high proportion of learners and trainees who have gained education leaving certificates. It is the people with skill education who are most likely to benefit from human capital investment. The efforts of the Universities, Polytechnics, Monotechnics and Colleges of Education have not produced the type and quality of skilled worker that can support the economy in the 21st century. There is a wide gap between the theoretical curriculum taught in tertiary institutions and the practical skill needed by employers of labour. The disconnect between the educational system and the world of work is one of the major challenges facing Nigeria today.

While the dynamics of global labour market have been tilting towards the replacement of physical labour with knowledge and innovation skills, the undisputed fact remains that the knowledgeable and competitive skilled force are in desperate short supply in Nigeria today. Similarly, Technical Vocational Education and Training in Nigeria is fraught with problems, which hamper its ability to produce adequate number and the quality of the skilled technical manpower required to lift the country from the unenviable state of technological irrelevance and economic depression. Worse still, the various Government Technical Colleges which are spread all over the Federation have continued to perform below expectation in terms of the quality and quantity of trainings and trainees. On the issue of inadequate resources, the problems are legion but suffice it to say that the teachers stand clearly out as factors that can make or mar qualitative Technical Vocational Education and Training.

Technology Teachers Role in Achieving the MDG in Area of Poverty and Hunger Eradication in Nigeria

Since teachers are important in education led development, it is important that the curriculum of teacher education should be comprehensive and be continuously updated

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to reflect emergent needs in the society. There is no doubt that the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, especially goals 2 and 3 (Universal Primary Education and Gender Equity) will greatly lead to the realization of the other goals (Goals: 1, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7) which are the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger; reduction of child mortality and the improvement of maternal health; combat HIV /AIDS, malaria and other diseases and ensure environmental suitability (Adawo, 2011).

The achievement of these will only be possible if teachers that implement the policies are adequately informed, knowledgeable and possess the professional skills to infuse learners with the expected knowledge, competences and skills to face the challenges in the society. A situation where these emergent issues like the MDGs are not integrated, it will adversely affect the quality of teachers produced as well as the quality of the educational system. The implications of these trends for TVET at all levels are that teachers and instructors must be transformed from those who impart knowledge to those who facilitate learning. This transformation necessitates a change from the didactic rote-learning heritage of TVET to an experiential and facilitative approach by teachers and instructors (Addisson, Hulme, and Kanbur, 2008). Consequently, teaching and learning in TVET should be transformed from an emphasis upon procedure learning and manipulative practices to knowledge, understanding and application.

The Relationship Between TVET and MDGs

S/N	Components of TVET	Occupations Taught	Economic Goal Served	Related MDGs
1	Agricultural Education	Agricultural products, supplies, ornamental horticulture, and related services.	To maintain a profitable viable and efficient agricultural production sector capable of meeting all food and fibre demands while providing satisfactory income to farmers for factors of production.	Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, and by implication all others.
2	Business and Office Education	Accounting and computer occupations, business data processing, filling, office mechanics general and occupations, keyboarding and related occupations.	Prepares workers for the labour force, offers instruction for economic understanding, and personal economic competencies.	Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, and achieve universal primary education.
3	Computer Education	Computer basis, Microsoft: excel, printing procedures, windows operations, maintenance, etc.	World processing, programming, desktop publishing, printing, and internet operations.	Eradicate poverty, develop global partnership and others.
4	Home Economics	Comprehensive home	Producers of goods and	Poverty eradication

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	Education	making, human development, food and nutrition, family health and shelter, care and guidance of children and elderly, food management, production and services, home furnishings, equipment and services.	services, wiser consumers of goods and services, residential care, and decision makers and producers of knowledge, skills and attitude.	and environmental sustainability.
5	Trade and Industrial Education	Appliances repairs, maintenance of aircraft and business machines, construction and maintenance trades eg: carpentry, electricity, masonry, plumbing and pipe filling and drafting.	Provides manpower with employability skills in the use of functional technology related to the occupation areas.	Eradication of poverty through the skills acquired.

(Aqua, 2009)

Conclusion

Reforming the education sector, therefore, is imperative for this nation to have any chance of meeting the aim of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Therefore, it cannot be overemphasized that technical vocational education and training is the engine for economic growth. No nation can fight a war without an army. In the same token, Nigeria cannot develop without well-equipped technical and vocational institutions. In fact, it is the missing link in Nigeria’s development policy. However, the progress of any society lies in the productivity of its citizens. Higher productivity gives a nation advantage of economies of scale and lowers the costs of production and prices of goods and services. Nigeria should begin now to take very seriously investment in technical vocational education and skill training as no nation can compete effectively in the emerging global market place with poorly educated and unskilled workers. The leading factors of production in the emerging global economy are said to be technology, knowledge, creativity and innovation. Finally, a balanced skilled workforce plays a more holistic role in national development

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Recommendations

Based on the presentation, it is therefore recommended that:

1. Teacher educators must be sensitive to the emergent needs and problems of the society and tailor their teaching to satisfy such needs.
2. Practicing teachers should up-date their knowledge through extensive reading of news- papers and magazines as well as through the use of internet to be able to have a positive impact on the learners
3. Seminars and workshops should be organized for teachers regularly to enlighten them on the Millennium Development Goals and how they will contribute to their achievement.

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