
The Relevance and Contribution of Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) to National Development and Self-Reliance: The Need for Educational Regeneration

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Abstract

Education is designed to guide the youth (children inclusive) in the learning of culture, molding their behaviors and directing them towards their eventual role in society. It has been described as a key agent to national development. Nigeria with the highest number of tertiary institutions in sub-Saharan countries churning out thousands of graduates in various disciplines of human endeavour is still grappling with some of its primordial problems. This could be attributed to the system of education the country has adopted over the period of time. For any meaningful development to be witnessed in the various sectors of the economy, and the country at large; it therefore, means that the nation needs the kind of education that is functional and geared towards self-reliance. This paper therefore, looks into the nature of educational programme that is needful to the country in this highly competitive globalized world which calls for a total overhaul or regeneration of the country's educational system through curriculum modification from primary to tertiary levels. Recommendations are also proffered.

Many adjectives are being used to qualify the concept 'education' whose literal meaning is the transmission of the values and accumulation of knowledge of a society.

Journal of Resourcefulness and Distinction, Volume 4 No. 1, November, 2012

Metaphorically, education has been seen as a catalyst of social mobilization; a ladder of social mobility, a liberator from social vices such as diseases, poverty, ignorance and the likes.

Singh (2007) saw education as a purposive, conscious or unconscious psychological, sociological, scientific and philosophical process, which brings about the development of the individual to the fullest extent and also the maximum development of society in such a way that both enjoy maximum happiness and prosperity. Lewin (2003) viewed education as the process of development which consists of a passage of human being from infancy to maturity; the process hereby he adapts himself gradually in various ways to his physical, social and spiritual environment.

Etymologically, the word education is derived from the Latin word 'Eductum' which means to draw out, to foster growth and to develop, hence, the modern concept of education means to develop the inherent capacities of a learner in the social environment. Education therefore, is a process which draws out from the learners the inherent powers and develops them to the full (Little and Leach, 2009). Education is needful in the life of every human being. Worswick (2001) noted that "as a child grows older, he is influenced by the informal and formal agencies of education. In this way, he develops his physical, mental and emotional self and social feelings also develop in him. By and by, he is able to develop a sense of responsibility like his siblings and solve the problems of life successfully". Education is able to instill in the learner a sense of maturity and responsibility by bringing in him the desired changes according to his needs and demands of every changing society, of which he is an integral part.

A well educated person is able to meet the conflicting challenges and tide over all the difficulties which confront him in day to day living. Education *culturises* the individual and helps him in his needs. Education is that conducive process which translates a person from darkness, poverty and misery to light by developing his individuality in all aspects. With this type of all-round development, he becomes a responsible, dynamic, resourceful and enterprising citizen of strong good moral character who uses his capacities to develop himself, his society and his nation to the highest extent by contributing his best to national honour, glory, culture and civilization of the nation of which he is an integral part (Moenjak, 2007). It is only through education that those moral ideals and spiritual values, the aspiration of the nation and its cultural heritage is transferred from one generation to another for higher achievements. In other words, with the growth and development of the individual, society also develops to higher and higher level of attainment; so education is greatly essential for the growth and development of individual as well as society. Therefore, the sole aim of education is total development of an individual which enables him/her

The Relevance and Contribution of Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) to National Development and Self-reliance: The Need for Educational Regeneration

to attain social efficiency and dynamism (Nikiko, 2001). Education is therefore, the only means by which an individual or nation can attain to any desired height, be it political, economical and developmental.

With about 103 degree awarding institutions in Nigeria (Wikipedia, 2012) churning out thousands of graduates in various disciplines of human endeavour, one expects that the country should have outgrown some of its primordial problems by now and matches towards the path of greatness in all ramifications of life. The reverse appears to be the case. The trend seems to be suggesting that the type of education Nigeria has adopted is not the type that will bring it out of social and economic predicaments the country has found itself, hence the need for a proactive and functional Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), which should be geared towards social and economic emancipation and self-reliance in this highly competitive globalized world.

The Concept of National Development

Thomas and Potter (1992) contended that “all definitions of development contain the central notion of a process of change from a less desirable to a more desirable kind of society. They further stated that there have been at least, three main schools of thought on the definition and approaches to development since 1950s. The first school of thought is that of the economists. Economists such as Bernstein, Shultz and Psacharapolors view development primarily in terms of a nation’s relative prosperity. A nation’s development is thus assessed by measuring any increase in its Gross National Product (GNP) (Thomas and Potters, 1992). Development here is seen as achieved through investing in human capital, and “raising the productivity capacity of societies”.

The second school of thought is that of the sociologists such as McClelland, Weber, Inkeles, and Smith. They proposed that modernizing a country leads to economic development and a modern society with modernization as the main goal. Emphasis is placed on education; while technology and industrialization are seen as the agents of transformation.

In the 1960s and 1970s, another group of theorists such as Seer, Sen and Edwards began to consider development from a human needs perspective. The emphasis here was not so much on economic growth as the primary indicator of development, but more on assessing the needs of individuals; their freedom, equity, participation and empowerment to fulfill their potential capabilities (Sen, 2009). Sen further argued that if the focus is ultimately on the expansion of human freedom to live the kind of lives that people have reason to value, the role of economic growth in expanding these opportunities has to be integrated into that more foundational

understanding of the process of development as expansion of human capabilities to lead more worthwhile and more free lives. Alam (2006) contended that before the 1990s, the economists carried the strongest voice. The argument for investing in human capital through investment in education was considered to lead to higher rates of return (both private and social) that would far outweigh the initial investment. Education policies in both developing and underdeveloped countries reacted to this by implementing programmes which led to massive expansion in the provision of education. In some countries, this approach seemed to work (e.g., in East Asia), resulting in industrialization and, to some degree, modernization (World Bank, 1995). But in some other countries, like Nigeria, the results in terms of economic indicators have been a colossal disappointment (World Bank, 2002).

By the 1990s, a more holistic view of development was beginning to take centre stage, especially organizations such as The United Nation Agency for Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and The United Nation Development Programme (UNDP). From this perspective, 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. The UNDP (2002) asserted this wider meaning thus; “Human Development is about much more than raising of national income. It is about creating an environment in which people can develop their full potential and lead productive, creative lives in accordance with their needs and interests – people are the real wealth of nations. Development is thus about expanding the choices people have to lead lives they value, and it is thus more than economic growths, which is only a means of enlarging people’s choices.

In the view of Thomson (2001) national development must be a country’s development in terms of its economic and social freedom. Thomson also contended that economic freedom and social freedom are interrelated; one cannot succeed without the other. To increase national economic development, a country must have social freedom and to achieve social development, a country must have economic freedom.

The Role of Education in National Development

Education has been described a key agent to national development, either as a way of developing human capacity, increasing the skilled workforce for modernization, or as a matter of personal freedom, developing capacity and empowerment (Thomas and Potter2002). They further stated that education provides the requisite manpower, which the country needs as an investment and which would yield both public and private rates of return. However, the World Conference on Education for All (WCEFA) (1990) noted that there was a general realization that education was not only the key to economic development and human capacity/productivity building, but that it was also a basic human right. The world body further argued that education should not

The Relevance and Contribution of Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) to National Development and Self-reliance: The Need for Educational Regeneration

only be seen as fundamental to the economic development, but also to the social and political development within nations and for individuals. Education is also linked to human resources development, and that this has an impact on more than just economic growth, but also on the wider development of individuals and societies (Hallak, 1990).

Hallak further posited that education contributes to individual creativity, improved participation in the economic, social and cultural roles in society. He further stated that education improves understanding of an individual and their respect for others, thus promoting social cohesion and material understanding among others. Alam (2007) observe that education not only benefits those who gain it through increased income, but also helps overall social development. The return on investment for society will be a skilled workforce that will enable global competitiveness and economic growth, while the return for the individual will be an improved career path, increased earning power and a better quality of life.

In the view of Fagerlind and Saha (2009), the concept 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”, noted Pritchelt (2006), who observed that many countries while having a large educated population, remain unable to make any significant progress. He further noted that third world development is sluggish, and while education increased globally, what exactly is it that hinders a country’s progression? The answer is not farfetched; the type and quality of education available in the country. Scholars argue that underdeveloped countries need a well diversified education system in order to gain sustainable development through education. This, therefore, calls for a functional Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) to replace Nigeria’s present educational system which is a general form of education with little or no skill acquisition to offer to its recipients (Iloputaefo, 2012).

The Concept of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)

Technical and Vocational Education and Training is seen as a deliberate intervention for bringing about learning which would make people more productive (or simply adequately productive), in designated areas of economic activities. This is the distinctive purpose of TVET (Hyland 2009). TVET is also said to be a comprehensive term referring to those aspects of educational process involving, in addition to general education, the study of technologies and related sciences and the acquisitions of practical skills, attitude, understanding and knowledge related to occupations in various sectors of economic and social life (UNESCO, 2002).

However, many scholars have the opinion that the concept TVET posses difficulty in defining and that it means different things to different people, depending

on the perception they hold of education development and employment. The ambiguous nature of the concept TVET is further accentuated because it has overlapped with certain other related concepts such as non-formal education, continuing education, adult education and distance education at various times (Jeong, 2009)

TVET is a concept that encompasses a diverse array of programmes and activities. It emphasizes both education and training and extends beyond schools, post-school institutions and work-place enterprises to community-based non-formal education system. There is also variety in its target clientele who not only represent a diverse age range-child to adult, but also have different response capacities and socio-economic and cultural background (Night and Sabot, 2009). In order to address the diverse needs of these clients, TVET offers a considerable range of programmes across countries as well as within. The extreme diversity of TVET programme is reflected in their forms, structures, educational technologies, curricula, pedagogy, management and funding.

The Nature of TVET

Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programme is conducted in a variety of institutions. The choice of location depends mainly on the goals that the programmes are intended to achieve. Osinen and Nwoji (2010) posited that there are at least three distinct institutional settings. First, is the school based TVET programme. These include initiatives such as the diversification of the whole secondary school system; the *vocationalization* of the school curriculum and instruction of TVET stream and schools parallel to the dominant academic models. Secondly, there are post-school TVET institutional programme. These provide pre-vocational market orientated training courses to secondary school graduates. Thirdly, there is the work-based TVET programme, epitomized historically in apprenticeship system and undergoing transformation in the post industrial era. This type of TVET is found in many countries, but is particularly popular in western nations where there is substantial degree of industrial economy).

The Role of TVET in Economic and National Development

Technical Vocational Education and Training in most developing countries stemmed from the realization that not all children respond favourably to the formal and academic types of education. It is the minority of the secondary school-leavers who find either employment or place in tertiary institutions while the majority struggle to find opportunities for work.

Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is orientated towards the following:

The Relevance and Contribution of Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) to National Development and Self-reliance: The Need for Educational Regeneration

- 1 To facilitate economic development by transmitting to local citizens certain values, knowledge and attitude that are necessary to perform certain skills in the modern sector of the economy.
- 2 to provide young people with skills needed for employment in a wide range of job categories including self-employment and wage employment.
- 3 To promote a work ethic and sensitize learners to the importance of practical work skills and the dignity of manual labour.
- 4 To promote sustainable development, save the environment and improve the quality of living.
- 5 To alleviate unemployment as well as poverty.
- 6 To reduce the mass movement of school-leavers from rural to urban areas.
- 7 To provide alternative routes to higher academic education for early secondary school-leavers (Ekpeyoung, 2008).

However, its specific objective as spelt out in the National Policy on Education (NPE) (2004), include:

- 1 To provide trained manpower in the applied sciences, technology and business particularly of crafts, advanced crafts and technical level.
- 2 To provide the technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agriculture, commerce and economic development.
- 3 Give training and impart the necessary skills to individual who shall be self reliant economically.

The Relevance of TVET to National Development

Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is relevant to national development. This is because it equips its recipients with knowledge, skills and attitude with which to be empowered economically, thereby alleviating poverty, enhances youth empowerment, promotes rural development; offers continuing adult education; it serves as a means of economic growth, capacity building, technological development, economic innovation and eventually self-reliant nation among others (Osuala, 2004)

Despite her huge deposits of natural resources, Nigeria is rated among the poorest nations of the world (Ugwu 2012). A United Nations report confirms Nigeria as “having the second highest number of maternal deaths in the world after India”, (UNDP: Human Development Report 2001:22); while A 2003 United Nation

Development Programme (UNDP) review of Sub-Saharan African social indicators provides a bleak picture of the region's progress towards MDGs. The report further added that "with an annual per capita income of \$300, Nigeria is one of the 20 poorest countries in the world...., and that currently; about 70% of Nigerians live in absolute poverty (about 84 million people). The report went on to assert that the Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) in Nigeria is still scandalously high. Nigeria still occupies an unenviable position in the "league table" of the countries with those living with HIV/AIDS. The various Human Development Index (HDI) reports continue to place Nigeria among the last rung of the global development ladder. Real income of most families has woefully reduced; unemployment has gone overboard. Nigeria is topping the list of countries with malnourished children; Nigeria is ranked as the 20th hungriest country on the Global Hunger Index (GHI); among others. (This-Day 2010).

There is a general consensus among scholars that the present Nigerian school system is operating with outdated curricula and lack of employable skills (Okafor (2002), (Ilopuaefo, 2012) & (Obioma, 2012). They further contended that as far as the formal sector is concerned, the average Nigerian graduate is not employable and, therefore, does not possess the skills needed by the employers of labour for the formal employment. Often, this is attributed to the Nigeria's education system with its liberal bias. The course contents of most tertiary education in Nigeria lack entrepreneurial contents that would have enabled graduates to become job creators rather than job seekers. The vocational needs of Nigeria require not only that unskilled labour be reduced to a minimum, but also that adequate engineering and science technicians be produced so that they can provide leadership in their respective occupational fields. Entrepreneurial activity is essential to a strong economic base and the much talked about self-reliant which Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) should foster (Osinem and Nwoji, 2010). The large number of unemployed youths in society is an indication that presently Nigerian educational system has failed to solve socio-economic problems. The only solution Nigeria has to turn things around is to *Vocationalize* all levels of educational system namely; primary, secondary, and tertiary through curriculum transformation and modification.

In a lead paper presented at the International Conference of the Faculty of Education (ICFE), Iloputaife (2012) noted that "It is no secret that we have sick society and sick generation despite our scientific and technological development. Therefore, the schools and education system can be saddled with the onerous tasks and challenges of finding the best cure or remedy for the replacement".

He further observed that "a close look at the graduate teachers that are produced by teacher education arrangement raises a number of fundamental questions

The Relevance and Contribution of Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) to National Development and Self-reliance: The Need for Educational Regeneration

about the institutions charged with the responsibility of training teachers”. Iloputaife further asserted that “there are veritable indicators to accept the assertion that our educational system is not achieving the objectives of the society as a nation”, and blamed the system of education available for the people which has made the Nigerian society sick. He noted that the only way children and students can become global citizens is through their education. “This”, he asserted “can only be possible through an integration of the moral, scientific and technical skills as well as traditional academic discipline”. He therefore, called for functional education.

Functional education is an educational system which produces the critical human capital that could build and promote knowledge management in a globally competitive world; devise and deploy relevant technologies, and skill to address developmental challenges and sustain progress (Obioma, 2012). A functional educational system guided with a workable policy framework can perhaps, bail Nigeria out of her socio-economic maladies.

Summary /Conclusion

This paper has examined the issue of education as a key agent of national development. Education is seen as a tool by which human capacity can be developed and empowered; thus providing the requisite manpower which the country needs as investment, and which would yield both societal and private rates of return.

It was discovered that the system of education as presently operated in Nigeria has failed to achieve the noble objectives of education which among other things is to improve the understanding of an individual and their respect for other, thus promoting social cohesion and material understanding as well as social development.

The paper therefore, recommends that:

- i Educational regeneration through curriculum modification and reengineering to suit the present reality of time be embarked upon.
- ii In order to improve human capital to respond to social and cultural issues, national development needs, global competition and the rapidly changing world of work, high quality teacher education programme is needed to improve and shape technical vocational education and training, as well as further training of teachers who are already in service.
- iii There should be robust TVET system development which should begin with adequate policy provisions which often is not the case in the national policy on education.
- iv Also the amorphous merger situation called science and technology education where issues of pure sciences overshadow most educational

considerations; disregarding occupational orientations of every TVET subject area should be given a second thought by the Federal Government and the process of de-merging commences.

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The Relevance and Contribution of Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) to National Development and Self-reliance: The Need for Educational Regeneration

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Bernard Obioma Onyenwe and Ngozichukwuka C. Obi

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The Relevance and Contribution of Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) to National Development and Self-reliance: The Need for Educational Regeneration

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