

## LET NIGERIA INVEST MORE ON TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION FOR INDUSTRIALIZATION AND REDUCTION IN UNEMPLOYMENT

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### **Abstract**

The paper defined Technical and Vocational Education and examined the need for investment in manpower development through technical and vocational education, emphasizing the objectives to strengthen the programme of technical and vocational education in the educational system of the country. It noted what would be achieved in boosting Nigerian's economy, if proper investment is made in Technical and Vocational Education. The paper highlighted the importance of technical and vocational education in the industrialization of some developed countries in the world and hoped that Nigeria could also benefit in its quest for reduction of unemployment through industrialization if Nigeria invests in Technical and Vocational Education.

### **Introduction**

The term Vocational Education in the broadest sense is that part of education which makes an individual more employable in one group of occupation (Evans & Herr: (1978 P3). Although some people would attempt to differentiate it from general education but it is wrong to do so because general education is of equal value regardless of the occupation one is pursuing.

What makes education vocational is the intention of the individual pursuing the course. Therefore, students' intentions have a lot to do with determining whether or not a particular subject is vocational

education. Therefore the call for investment in vocational/technical education is to increase the employable skills of the Nigerian youths for the world of work.

### **What is Vocational and Technical Education?**

A clear understanding of what vocational and technical education is would help to give deeper thought towards the impact this area of study would make in the industrialization and development of the Nigerian economy.

The National Policy on Education (2004 section 7 Pg 29 paragraph 40) defined Technical and Vocational Education as 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 skills, attitudes, understanding and knowledge relating to occupation in various sectors of economic and social life.

The government of Nigeria faced with the problem of school-leaver unemployment and the shortage of skilled vocational and technical manpower, adopted the 1981 National Policy on Education. The government no doubt, recognized the importance of vocational and technical education in the development of the economy of the country and have been embarking on strategies to improve the situation. The government in the policy then declared that the inclusion of technical, commercial and other vocational courses in the senior secondary school leavers immediately employable. The National Policy on education (1981) included as the aims of technical education:

- a. To provide trained manpower in applied science and technology and commerce particularly in a sub-professional grades.
- b. To provide technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, industrial, vocational 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 training and impart the necessary skills leading to the production of craftsmen, artisans, technicians and other skilled personnel who will be enterprising and self-reliant; and
- e. To enable our young men and women to have an intelligent understanding of technical education.

These are well thought aims and the problems lie in their implementation. These aims and others were further highlighted in the National Policy on Education (2004) in section 7 Science, Technical and Vocational Education to show the importance which the government attached to this area of education.

Paragraph 40 of section 7 of the National Policy on Education (2004) has it that technical and vocational education is used as 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 skills, attitudes, understanding and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors economic and social life of the people.

The National Policy on Education (2004) added that technical and vocational education is further understood to be:

- a. An integral part of general education.
- b. A means of preparing for occupational fields and effective participation in the world of work.

- c. An aspect of lifelong learning and a preparation for responsible citizenship
- d. An instrument for promoting environmentally sound sustainable development and
- e. A method of alleviating poverty.

### **Goals of Technical and Vocational Education**

Paragraph 42 of the National Policy on education (2004) stated what it termed the goals of technical and vocational education to be:

- a. To provide trained manpower in the applied sciences, technology and business particularly at craft, advanced craft and technical levels.
- b. To provide the technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, commercial and economic development, and
- c. To give training and impart the necessary skills to individuals who shall be self-reliant economically.

### **The Need for More Investment in Technical and Vocational Education**

From the foregoing, the Nigerian programmes for Technical and Vocational Education focus on raising the productive capacity of individuals. Because of this commitment to human development technical and vocational education is a resource that can help solve many of the pressing economic problems facing the nation.

### **Conclusion**

Nigeria is in a very good position to become an industrialized nation like

America, Germany, Japan, Britain, and France among others. The countries in a past programmes for industrialization and economic development. Nigeria can follow the footsteps of these countries to improve her manpower development. For example, Striner (1982) explained that in Germany investment in the labour force had been one of the major factors in Germany's economic success. Germany has a law which established the right of every adult whether employed or unemployed to up to two years of full time training or retaining. The idea is to develop a pool of skilled vocational and technical manpower for industrialization.

Another example Striner mentioned is how America adopted and adapted to the Japanese pattern. He explained that American industry had seen in the economics of Japan, West Germany and France has catalyzed a major shift in US management styles and philosophy. So industrial giants like IBM, General Motors, Westinghouse and General electric began to adopt and adapt to the productivity practices of their counterparts abroad. Nigeria can no doubt operate like these countries who view their human resources as assets in which they invest in order to achieve the development programmes of the nation.

### **Suggestions and Recommendation**

An investment proper on Technical and Vocational Education will be a very viable means of boosting Nigeria's economy and industrialization. It will help the nation to achieve:

- a. Increase Productivity

- b. Supply of Qualified Workers
- c. Increase Earning Power of Worker
- d. Stimulate Economic Growth
- e. Reduction in Youth Unemployment and
- f. Increase in credibility

**Increase in Productivity:** The productivity of a worker goes up when individuals have the necessary skills to get the job done. These skills according to Boltoms (1980) include basic skills, specific occupational competencies and good work habits and attitudes which we lack in this country Nigeria. They are in fact according Boltoms (1980) the very skills that are at the heart of Technical and Vocational Education. Boltom referring to America, confirmed that much of the economic well-being of that country depends upon the ability of the work force to continue to produce even more goods and services in an hour of work which he said the economists call productivity.

**Supply of Qualified Workers:** The demand for skilled workers remains high. The complaint about lack of Nigerian content in the oil and gas industry that is having more Nigerians employed in these sectors. And there has also been the defence by the oil companies there is a critical mismatch between the skills of persons available for employment and the types of skills needed in these industries. Educational and job training programmes will guide the Nigerian youth toward occupations and industries in the private sector where there are good prospects for long term growth. Investment in Technical

and Vocational Education can provide training in areas for which the future of industrialization of this country Nigeria lies. Such areas include the emerging technological and service oriented industry small business management and ownership.

**Increase in Earning Power of Workers:** Boltoms (1980) quoted a study conducted in America by the National Center for Research in Vocational Education which revealed that family incomes were higher in families where the primary wages-earner had vocational training than in families where the primary wage-earner had such training. I do not need to go far in this comparison. For example, take the earning of an average motorcycle rider who has no skill training and a trained technician. I may ask, who is in a better position to earn higher, is it not the skilled technician?

**Stimulate Economic Growth:** Boltom (1980) talking about his country America explained that the focus of vocational and technical education is on the development of individuals and this can actually have an enormous impact on the economic growth of the nation. He quoted John D. Rockefeller IV, then governor of West Virginia who said “vocational education provide the skills needed by the people of our state to become productively employed, and provides the training essential for business and industry to remain competitive. Vocational education to Boltoms provides the assurance to

industry that the skilled workers needed for the new industry will be available.

**Increase in credibility:** It seems that the public is embracing technical and vocational education with the spread of vocational and skill acquisition centers. Technical and vocational education is a popular programme and there is now strong support for an emphasis on career preparation in the nation's schools.

The minister of Education Dr. Sam Egwu was quoted as saying, that Nigeria had made TVET one of the fewer primary areas in its road map for the education sector. Dr. Egwu made the statement at the opening of a workshop on revitalizing technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in the ECOWAS sub-region (Daily Champion, Thursday August 20<sup>th</sup> 2009).

**Reduction in youth unemployment:**

The government should invest massively in the provision of technical and vocational education. Let the goal be to reduce the disastrously high rates of youth unemployment by tailoring educational and work programmes to the needs of these youths.

**Problems facing the country and solution:** The economy of the country is in a precarious situation adding to the global economic meltdown. Nigeria is facing serious youth unemployment and the government has two projections. One of the projections is that of becoming one of the most industrialized nations of the world in the year 2020. The second is that of the Millennium Development goals. Are

the set goals achievable? Yes if as suggested there is massive investment in manpower development which if embarked upon training the workforce in technical and vocational education, and "no" if the well thought programmes are poorly implemented.

Opportunity should be given to experts who know what it makes to initiate and implement educational training programmes. These should be round pegs in round holes and not square pegs in round holes.

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