

## PROMOTING TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN NIGERIAN SCHOOLS: A STRATEGY FOR JOB CREATION

*Dr. Fidelia N. Iwuamadi*

*Curriculum Department,  
Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education,  
Owerri.*

*Princess Ijeoma Obilo*

*Curriculum Department,  
Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education,  
Owerri.*

### **Abstract**

The issue of unemployment has been a source of concern to all well meaning and right thinking Nigerians. A lot is being done by the governments of Nigeria both past and present to curb the menacing trend because of the negative side effects and one of the strategies is through job creation. That is why the paper sees it as important that the promotion of technical and vocational education in Nigerian schools is a panacea for job creation. In order to have an indebt look at the topic, these issues will be discussed; skills in Vocational and Technical education, strategies for promoting Vocational and Technical skill acquisition in students, challenges of Vocational and Technical Education in Nigeria. Strategies for promoting Vocational and Technical skill acquisition in students were also identified and conclusion reached.

### **Introduction**

A nation that is desirous of a stable economy from enhanced national development and indigenous technology must invest tremendously in functional education. Nigeria as a nation, introduced Technical and Vocational Education in her school system to improve the quality of her educational system and make education functional.

Vocational and Technical Education, according to Umunadi (2008), is that aspect of education which leads to the acquisition of practical and applied

skills as well as basic scientific, knowledge. It is a programme of specialized studies designed to prepare the learner for employment in a particular occupation or groups of occupations. Usoro (2008) is of the view that Vocational and Technical Education, is designed to develop skills, abilities, understanding, attitudes, work habits and appreciations encompassing knowledge and information needed by workers, to enter and make progress in employment on a useful and productive basis.

The introduction of elementary technology and pre-vocational subjects into the junior and senior secondary levels of education is a boost to Vocational and Technical Education in Nigeria. The reason for this is to make education functional and help students who cannot proceed further in education to be meaningfully engaged in one vocational training scheme or the other while those who wish to further their education in the Vocational and Technical disciplines, have been provided opportunity in other Nigerian educational institutions for Vocational and Technical education such as Colleges of Education (technical), Polytechnics and Universities of technology.

The practice of Vocational and Technical Education in Nigeria is in line with the United Nations Decade on Education for Sustainable Development which advocated for four pillars of education namely: learning to know (knowledge), learning to do (skill) learning to live together (peace) learning to be personal (self fulfillment). However, the concern of this paper is the aspect of education which is advocated as learning to do.

The issue of unemployment has been a worrisome one to every right thinking Nigerian but up till this time, the problem still lingers unabated because nothing tangible has been done towards it's amelioration. In the bid to reduce the rate of unemployment, technical and vocational skills should be provided for youths, who could not further their education after the secondary educational level to enable them

be meaningfully engaged and progress in one skills after graduation. This will make them job creators rather than job seekers. The benefit of this is enormous as the reduction in unemployment will subsequently reduce crime rate in the society. It will also lead to the technological and economical development of the nation as the fund which would have been used for paying expatriates technicians will be saved.

### **Skills in Technical and Vocational Education**

The concept 'skill' is a relative term that has been defined in several ways. Okoro (1991) defined skill as ease, rapidity and precision usually of muscular action. He further explained that skill here is referred to as expertness, practice, ability, dexterity, proficiency and organized sequence of actions. Umunadi (2008) explains that skill development is the ability to do or to perform an activity that is related to some meaningful exercise, work or job.

Planning in the Vocational and Technical Education follows concrete and realistic guidelines. The idea is to ensure that training is on real job. It is a big misconception for anybody to think that Technical and Vocational Education is for lazy and unintelligent people because it is education concretized by viable experiences in the work of society. It is also important to note that Vocational and Technical Education is life-long and self – sustaining and does not believe in protracted theories and forecasts. For this reason, the curriculum should be planed

for work and its programmes should be carried out using real materials on real jobs.

The National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) oversees the effective implementation of Technical Education in Nigerian Secondary schools. They organize workshops and seminars for the inspectors of schools and all technical staff of secondary schools to familiarize them with the technical education curriculum and to work out details of implementation strategies to ensure that effective teaching and learning goes on in schools.

Students at the secondary school level are exposed to these vocational electives, Agriculture, Applied Electricity, Auto – Mechanics, Book- keeping and Accounting, Building Construction, Commerce Computer Education Electronics, Clothing and Textiles, Food and Nutrition, Home Management, Metal Work, Technical Drawing, Woodwork and Shorthand.

Nwachukwu (2001) suggested that training should follow systematic guidelines and instructors must ensure that the instructional process is systematically planned and executed.

Nwachukwu further categorized tools and equipments for Technical and Vocational subjects thus:

1. Hand tools include: scribes, steel rules screw drivers, T-squares spring dividers, spring calipers, sliding bend, scribing back, ferula height, gauges, files and many others.
2. Force work tools and equipment such as: cavit stands, swages,

black -smith hearths, flatters, forging hammers, pinches, electric soldering iron, furnace for heat treatment, trowels thermometers, spoon stools and so no.

3. Woodwork technology tools and equipments: planes and saws, chisels, hits, driving and striking, clamps, machines, powered hand tools, maintenance equipment, gauges and knives.
4. Electrical and electronic tools and equipment: radio and television test meters, soldering iron and testers.
5. Building Technology tools and equipment: This area requires the general tools and equipment that can be utilized in concrete works, plumping, painting, decoration and glazing as well as those for utilities and dressing.
6. Automobile Technology tools and equipments: These include those for maintaining vehicles and machinery hand tools and equipment engine reconditioning and testing and those for electrical operations, screw drivers, vices, clamps, jacks, pincers etc
7. Technical Drawing tools and equipment: This category comprises the tools for classroom drawing practice and demonstrations, including drawing boards, T-square, pencils and drawing sheet.

There is need to train and retrain vocational and Technical education

teachers in the knowledge and use of these tools to enable them teach effectively with the tools. This is because a teacher cannot give what he does not have. Therefore the teachers' adequate knowledge of these tools will help him impart the knowledge to learners who will, in the long run utilize the knowledge for his benefit and that of the nation.

### **Technical and Vocational Education and Job Creation**

Unemployment has remained a plague to the Nigerian society and has resulted to several ills among which are: armed robbery, kidnapping, rape, assassination, thugery, militancy etc. Ikwuakam (2004) opined that vocational skills acquisition is the most potent instrument for positive socio-economic transformation because it has problem-solving abilities that are capable of improving people's standard of living by making them self-reliant.

Students who are mainstreamed into Technical and Vocational Education and additional general education will acquire competency in theory and practice in related courses such as: workshop practice, industrial training/production work, small business management and entrepreneurial training. Amadi (2005) further added that at the successful completion of the technical, and vocational schooling, the students can further their studies by gaining admission into polytechnics, universities of technology or colleges of education (conventional or technical).

The progress of the vocational and technical students into higher educational institutions makes them professionals and self-reliant after graduation. This is so because with a little financial support, they should be able to establish their own small scale industries and also offer job opportunities to others. The benefits of this include, among others, reduction in unemployment rate, reduction in crime rate, economic development of the nation etc. This is in consonance with the aims of the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) established by the National Planning Committee (NPC) which is aimed at enabling people overcome the deep pervasive obstacles, focus on re-orienting values, reducing poverty, creating wealth and generating employment. (Umunadi, 2008).

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

Like any other educational programme, Vocational and Technical Education in Nigeria is faced with some challenges. In the National Policy on Education (2004), it is stipulated that on completion of the junior secondary level, students will be mainstreamed into senior secondary schools, technical schools, out of school vocational training centres or apprenticeship scheme, but observations reveal otherwise as almost all the JSS graduates enroll into senior secondary level neglecting technical schools and vocational training centers. Some reasons for these negative development as adduced by Amadi and Obiefuna (2008) is that most

Nigerian parents assume that it is only children from poor families that are engaged in technical and vocational skill acquisition. This has left the technical schools with small number of students and the existence of few government owned technical schools. Even private schools that purport to run vocational programmes still run a combination of general secondary school and vocational subjects because many students do not like technical and vocational education.

Another challenge is the value system of the society which needs reorientation to counter the get-rich-quick syndrome that the youths of today are orientated into. There is no longer dignity in honest labour. People respect, honour and adore rich people irrespective of the source of the wealth. As a result of this youths want to get jobs in oil companies, banks and other institutions where they can make quick money.

Other challenges as identified by Egele (2005) include,

**Unavailability of Places for Students Industrial Work Experience (SIWES);** This is a programme organized for students to expose them to the practical experience in industries relevant to their areas of specialization before they are awarded diplomas, degrees or NCE in their relevant fields. Presently, the industries find it difficult to absorb these students. Even when they are absorbed, they do not given the adequate supervision.

**Poor Funding and Poor Management of Fund:** Adequate fund is required for the implementation of Vocational and

Technical Education and the absence of fund hampers the achievement of the objectives of such programmes and can also lead to inadequate provision of infrastructural facilities, equipment and tools needed for the implementation of the programme.

**Teachers' Recruitment and Retention:** Adequate number of well trained teachers is required for effective teaching and learning. The inadequacy in Vocational and Technical Education teachers leads to learners' loss of interest in the discipline.

**Inadequate Guidance and Counseling In Vocational Education:** Guidance and counseling is a learning process that assists a person to make his own choice and decisions wisely. When learners are not properly guided, they might make wrong choices.

**Poor Public Image:** As noted earlier Vocational and Technical Education is viewed as a specialty for dropouts and unintelligent people. This impression need to be corrected through proper orientation of the populace.

These challenges may seem enormous but they are not totally insurmountable as what is required is the total commitment of all stake holders in education to move the programme forward.

### **Strategies for Promoting Vocational and Technical Skill Acquisition in Students**

It is pertinent to ensure the promotion of vocational and technical skill acquisition owing to its importance to job

creation. Some of the strategies for promoting vocational and technical skill acquisition as outlined by Okoro (1991) include;

- the development of a vocational curriculum whose implementation strategies should be that:
  - i. Curriculum planners should ensure that teachers give room for demonstration and practices
  - ii. Local experts such as farmers, cobblers, motor mechanics, technical, engineers etc should be involved in the implementation of curriculum. They can serve as resource persons in teaching and learning process
  - iii. Curriculum developers should incorporate vocational and skill training that can take place on site in form of field trips.
    - Government should not fail in her role to regulate the establishment of schools, supervise and inspect schools regularly and ensure that all schools follow approved curricula and conform to the National Policy on Education.
    - Government should not fail in her duty to provide necessary infrastructure for the implementation of the Vocational and Technical Education curriculum.
    - Additionally, Vocational and Technical equipment required for the programmes should be supplied to schools in large quantities to cater for the increasing population of students

which arose due to the implementation of U.B.E.

- More vocational and technical teachers should be recruited to cater for the increase in student enrolment.
- Vocational and Technical education teachers should be re-trained from time to time through workshops, seminars, and conferences to enable them learn to handle and operate the equipment and machines.
- Students should be taken on field trips to institutions and organizations related to the skills they are being exposed to.
- Therefore the government should not pay lip service to the promotion of Vocational Technical Education
- Vigorous awareness *and orientation should be given to the students and the general public to enlighten them on the benefits of acquiring vocational and technical skills.*

### **Conclusion**

It is not a gain saying that Vocational and Technical Education is one the keys to the solution of unemployment problem in Nigeria. Hitherto, people look down on it as an area for lazy and unintelligent people. Some even term it to be for the poor and less privileged in the society, but today, nations of the world, including Nigeria, have realized the potentials of Vocational and Technical Education in bringing about the much

needed self-reliance and technological development. That is why Nigerian governments have made policies geared towards promoting Vocational and Technical Education in schools. The benefit is enormous as it gives learners the opportunity to acquire skills that will make them automatically self-employed, independent and job creators not job seekers. It will also go a long way in reducing the rate of unemployment and its subsequent negative effects in Nigeria.

### References

- Omole, D.O.K. (2008). The implication of students' transition pattern from junior secondary education to senior secondary institutions for quality Assurance. *Journals of Curriculum Studies*, Vol. 15 (3)
- Usoro, A.D. UKO, E.D. & Udofia, A.G. (2008). Educational reforms in vocational technical education via innovative strategies constructivism in B.G. Nwogu (Ed.) *Educational reforms and the attainment of the millennium development goals: The Nigerian experience*. Nsukka: University Trust Publishers.
- Amadi, R.N. & Obiefena, C.A. (2005). *An overview of curriculum studies*. Owerri : Joe Mankpa publishers.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004). *National policy on education* Lagos: NERDC Press.
- Umunadi, E.K. (2008) The promotion of vocational and technical education curriculum for the Attainment of MDGS in Nigerian B.G – Nworgu (Ed) *Educational reforms and attainment of MSGS: The Nigerian experience* Nsukka – University Trust Publishers
- Okoro, O.M. (1991) *Programme evaluation in education*. Obosi practice correspondence Collage Press
- Ikwuakam, O.T. (2004) Achieving the vision of vocational and technical education for national development in Nigeria. BAHF Vol . 2 (II)
- Nwachukwu, C.E (2001) *Designing appropriate methodology in vocational and technical education for Nigeria*. Nsukka: Fulladu Publishing Company