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The Role of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Human Resources Development in Africa

By

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Abstract

The essence of this paper is to get the stage set for meaningful discussion on the role of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in human resources development in Africa. Despite Africa's great geographical, cultural and demographical diversities, it shares the many challenges and issues that are fundamental to improving the quality and relevance of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) as a means of human resources development. Human resources development is something that must exist or happen for the development of Africa. It produces people who to utilize the power of diverse thinking style to achieve holistic best practical solution. It presupposes investment, activities and processes that produce vocational and technical education knowledge, skill, health or values

that are embodied in people. It implies building on appropriate balance and critical mass of human resources to be fully engaged and contribute to the goal of an organization of a nation or continent. TVET should be geared towards production of human resources development in Africa for sustainable development thereby conquering the challenges of prevailing unemployment of TVET graduates in Africa (Oviawe and Anavberokhai 2008). Africa needs human resources development to enable the continent to improve all public needs require by man. It is recommended that African governments should create an enabling environments necessary for the attainment of the production of human resources in Africa.

Africa needs human resources to help improve public access to healthcare, good drinking water, disease prevention, sanitation, nutrition, and other needs (supply and demand) of the continent. Since education is considered the key to effective development strategies, technical and vocational education and training (TVET) is the master key that can alleviate poverty, promote peace, conserve the environment, improve the quality of life for all and help achieve sustainable development. since, education has universal elements (e.g.) human resources development and the transmission of knowledge that are thus unaffected by specific social conditions, and at the same time, as education is meant to nurture members of each particular society, it would be impossible for it to stand independently without any relation to the varieties of social activities, including production activities, taking place in the social realm. Africa has not effectively facilitated the development of human resources suited to her labour market.

A society that cannot transmit knowledge and has no way of perpetuating the societal ideals is definitely moribund (Ekpo, 1996). The value placed on education globally is inestimable and the provision of quality input to the system is the only assurance for quality output. The pace of innovation in the field of education has been kept considerably high especially in the developed nations as a result of remarkable availability and accessibility of learning resources in various formats. Educators and educationists who care about the quality of the products from the school system have realized that effective use of instructional technology principles is prerequisite for high quality education in any continent.

Concept of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Africa

Several views and opinions have been in the past years argued on the meaning and the place of vocational education both at the levels of primary, secondary and university respectively. These development have created moves for the inclusion of some vocational subjects and courses in the curriculum of both pre-primary and even tertiary institutions all with a view to achieve the needed employable skills in the development of the youths and the society at large. The term vocational and technical

education is a comprehensive term referring to the educational process when it involves, in addition to general education, the study of technologies and related sciences and the acquisition of practical skills and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of the economy and social life. The broad educational goals of vocational and technical education distinguish it from “vocational training: which is directed to developing the particular skills and related knowledge required by specific occupations or group of occupations UNESCO, (1978) in Anya and Neukar (2004).

Okoro (1993) used the term vocational education to refer to a form of education whose primary purpose is to prepare persons for employment in recognized occupations. Here, vocational education is seen as a precursor of skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary for effective employment in specific occupations. Nevertheless, Okorie (2001) saw vocational education as that type of education, which develops the mental and physical qualities of people thereby increasing their skills, knowledge and attitudes required for utilizing the natural resources needed for economic development of the nation and for their own self-employment. According to Enyekit and Enyenili (2007). Vocational education includes preparation for employment in any occupation for which specialized education is required, for which there is a social need, which can be most appropriately done in schools. It is concerned with the whole hierarchy of occupation from those requiring relatively short periods of specialized preparations such as clerks, typists to occupations requiring two or more specialized staff such as inhalation therapist: thus it includes the whole spectrum of labour force from semi-skilled to technicians and paraprofessionals. The definitions above shows that vocational education has some peculiar characteristics and features that tend to enable or make a great landmark in the development of the individual citizen in particular and the economy at large. Vocational education as enshrined in the national policy on education (2004) include the following: To

1. provide trained manpower in the applied sciences, technology and business particularly at craft, and advanced craft at technical levels
2. provide the technical knowledge and vocational skills for agricultural, commercial and economic development.
3. give training and impart the necessary skills to individuals who shall be self-reliant economically in consonance to the above assertions and vision of vocational education.

The above achievement will give full employment for the youths, Technological advancement and economic development, International economic and

political independent, Reduction of crime and social vices, effective supervision and administration of vocational programmes and institutions by vocation experts.

Technical and vocational education training is vehicle upon which the skills of workforce are built. Without effective implementation of vocational technical education, we cannot hope for a future self-reliant graduate with the required skills and flexibility for sustainable human capital development in the global age. Vocational and technical education as an instrument for change and development and provider of service oriented skills, which play a significant role in economic revival for sustainable human resources development. This would lead to the much desired human resources development in the economy. Also Amaehule and Enyekit (2010) went further to explain that vocational technical education equips youth with technological skills and managerial skills to manage human and material resources of their own. Joseph (2012) confirmed the above statements with the Chinese proverb to support the TVET policy framework that “what I hear, I forget; what I see I remember, what I do, I understand”.

Vision of the African Union towards TVET for Human Resources Development

The African union (AU) has a vision of “an integrated, peaceful prosperous African, driven by his own people to take his rightful place in the global community and the knowledge economy”. This vision is predicated on the development of the continent’s human resources. Specifically, the AU recommended a TVET system that is based on a solid foundation of a social general education with possibility for specialized technical and credit transfer to further education training.

Assessment should also include and identify skill gaps, to be transparent, and provide a guide to the learner and training provider (teacher). The framework should also include a credible system of certification of skills that are useful across enterprises.

Usefulness of Technical and Vocational Education and Training in Human Resources Development in Africa

Just as in other developing regions of the world, one great policy concern in Africa is cultivating human resources suited to labour demand. However, in order to effectively tackle this problem, human resource development plans must be clearly cast within, and simultaneously linked to, the economic development vision of the government concerned. For example, plans made for developing human resources will differ depending on what industries a government of each African country is inclined to cultivate, and conversely where there are social groups experiencing high unemployment due to the inability of current labour markets to absorb them. Therefore, it may be necessary to reevaluate industrial policy for the sake of stimulating equitable development in society based on the concept of creating employment through vitalization of the aforementioned groups’ productive activities. Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) plays important role in providing highly

skilled workforce (human resources) to fulfill the needs of industries in Africa, it is anticipated that more works are likely to be generated in areas of information processes, usage of computers, control systems.

The new generation of works require highly skilled workforce (Iheonunekwu, 2011). An extract from international labour organization conference (2000) on Human Resources Development and training indicated that “Every person shall have the opportunity to have his or her experiences and skills gained through work, through society or through formal and non-formal training assessed, recognized and certified”. Programmes to compensate for skill deficits by individuals through increased access to education and training should be made available as part of the recognition of prior learning programmes.

Nevertheless, a large number of governments in sub-Sahara Africa have not effectively facilitated rearing of human resources suited to the labour market. One reason for strong desire to place their investment in tertiary education as a means to catch up to advanced industrial nations, even though their chances for introducing private foreign capital and developing high technology industries is not very high at all.

Meanwhile, despite the fact that a majority of Africa’s economy is composed of the informal sector, labour market surveys conducted sporadically only look at the formal sector, which means that governments have been unable to grasp a sizable portion of domestic economic activity and thereby fail to propose effective policy.

Furthermore, too often, the education and industry sectors exist separately from each other and while the importance of the school-to-work transition of students is being advocated, discussion of these matters has failed to probe deeper than the surface, resulting in a lack of realistic policy linking school education to the labour market.

Also, another reason for the low rate of people reaching employment through technical and vocational education is based on the unseasoned trust and collaboration found between governments and employers commonly-held beliefs dictate that technical and vocational education are lower in value than other academic courses.

In this way, direct operation of technical and vocational schools by government are commonly criticized in view of both economic efficacy and public interest. However, the government’s role in technical and vocational education and Training (TVET) sector is not limited to the management of vocational training schools to the contrary, in order that human resource development effectively contributes to industrial development, only the government has the capacity to carry out the establishment of

laws and systems, provide assistance to private human resources development institutions.

Human resources in technical and vocational education and training (TVET) include teachers, learners, curriculum developers, parents, guidance and counselors, professionals and other persons within the educational community. For various reasons, the teacher occupies a focal position wherever human resources in education are mentioned. The teacher plays strategic roles in all instructional situations directly or indirectly. Specifically, a teacher is expected to perform the following functions (Ekpo, 1996):

1. Development and/or selection of tools, equipment and materials to be used,
2. Selection of the presentation strategies;
3. Regulation of the level and extent of learners participation;
4. Preparation and management of the learning environment.
5. Monitoring of the intellectual growth of the learners, and their social-emotional development;
6. Preparation of himself/herself as a role model to the learners.

This multiple function of a teacher single him or her out as a unique component in the system and the need to have him/her properly trained and highly motivated becomes imperative. The society expects an intelligent responsible teacher to exercise a positive influence on the growth and development of the learners under his or her care.

Learners constitute other veritable resources in an education system. A highly motivated learner is crucial to the advancement of knowledge for they are the hub or the educational wheels. Individuals within the communities with special skills or expertise do also serve as important human resources.

The curriculum for teachers should be seed that the aims of the programme should be reflected in the National policy on education (2004), viz:

- 1) To produce highly motivated conscientious and efficient classroom teacher.
- 2) To encourage further spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers
- 3) To help teachers with intellectual and professional background adequate to their assignment.
- 4) To help teachers fit into the social life of the Africa community
- 5) To enhance teachers, commitment to the teaching profession.

Other professionals or community resource persons are often used to fill the gaps created where acute shortage of teachers is experienced. The quality of such persons however, must be ascertained to ensure that they are competent and suitable to provide instruction to the learners. The curriculum developer is yet another important specialist resource person in education. His role in the system is quite crucial because

he/she designs, develops, and produces a curriculum that is appropriate for achieving all stated learning objectives. Parents and guardians support children and wards to choose their vocational education track; reject perception that TVET is for the less academically endowed; lobby politicians in favour of TVET and support activities of training providers.

However crucial the roles of other human resources are, the teacher still occupies a unique position in the system and he or she is the target in this paper.

Summary and Conclusion

Africa needs human resources development to enable the continent to improve public access to health care, good drinking water, disease prevention, sanitation, nutrition, and other needs. It is the study of technical and vocational education and training that can produce the human resources needed for the production of goods and services for the continent. The paper has shown that the teacher is the most valuable human resource needed to transform the African continent. Teachers have the potential to be major contributors in the training and retraining of employees. Teachers are skillful in facilitating the entire instructional process, which include assessing student needs, developing a framework for instruction, creating the appropriate environment and evaluating learning. These skills are important for the development of any continent including Africa.

Recommendations

1. In recognition of the service functions of TVET regarding the production of human resources development for the labour market in Africa and its development elements in TVET, which can address specific questions and demand of the labour market African government should create enabling environment for the production of human resources.
2. Adequate infrastructure services that support the full mobilization of all economic sectors of Africa including electricity production should be put in place to improve TVET for human resources development.

The above should be done to ensure:

3. A vibrant and globally competitive manufacturing sector that contributes significantly to GDP, with a manufacturing value added of not less than 40%.
4. A modern technological advancement to enable agricultural sector that fully exploits the vast agricultural resources of the continent to ensure national food security and contributes significantly to foreign exchange earnings.
5. A health sector that supports and sustains a life expectancy of not less than 70 years and reduces to the barest minimum the burden of infectious diseases, such as malaria, HIV/AIDS and other debilitating diseases.

6. A vibrant and globally competitive manufacturing sector in Africa that would contribute significantly to GDP with a manufacturing value added of not less than 40%.

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