

REVITALIZING TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE YOUTH EMPLOYMENT AND NATIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Technical and vocational education in Nigeria has unfortunate history. Historically, this aspect of education was neglected from the inception of western education in Nigeria, over the years emphasis has been on general education with technical and vocational education at the receiving end. This has resulted in large number of educated people remaining unemployed. This paper focuses on the importance of technical and vocational education towards enhancing sustainable youth employment and national economic development in Nigeria. The concept of sustainable development, challenges, strategies and the role of technical and vocational education as appropriate tools toward development of both individuals and the nation at large are discussed in this paper. This is more so as problems facing the country among others, range from unemployment, high rate of poverty and insecurity of lives and property. The strategies for revitalizing technical and vocational are also discussed. Recommendations were made that would make for sustainable human and national development.

Keywords: Sustainable economic development, Technical and vocational education, Youth employment.

Introduction

Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) has been recognized worldwide as a tool for empowering people especially the youth for sustainable livelihood and social economic development. The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) recommendation of 2002 in Ozoemena (2013) on technical and vocational education and for the twenty-first century, defined TVET as those aspect of education process involving, in addition to general education process the study of technologies and related sciences and the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of economic and social life. TVET is further understood to be:

- An integral part of general education
- A means of preparing for occupational fields and for effective participation in the world of work
- An aspect of lifelong learning and preparation for responsible citizenship
- An instrument for promoting environmentally sound suitable development
- A method for alleviating poverty.

The development of any nation hinges on the social and economic contribution of her citizens Ozoemena,(2013). No nation can advance technologically, industrially and economically without developing a strong partnership initiative in the creation of wealth, poverty reduction and employment generation with required skills Akpomi, (2009). Technical, Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is relevant and internationally competitive in the world market. TVET is also regarded as the most effective means of empowering the citizens to suitable sustainable national development, enhance employment,

improve the quality of life, reduce poverty, limit the incidence of social vices due to joblessness and promote a culture of peace freedom and democracy FME,(2000). It is no gain saying that the developed nations such as Japan China USA and Germany have attained tremendous heights in terms of industrialization as a result of consistent investment in technical and vocational education and training of its citizens. In most of these countries, high schools offer TVET for lifelong trades for youth's empowerment Ibeneme, (2011). Thus, TVET has been an integral part of National development strategies in many societies because of its impacts on productivity and economic development.

According to Okwelle (2013), TVET broadly refers to deliberate interventions to bring about learning which would have make people more productive (or simply adequately productive) in designated areas of economic activity (e.g. economic sector, occupations, specific work task). Uwaifo (2010) described TVET as that training of technically oriented personnel who are to be the initiators, facilitators and implementers of technological development of a nation by building and adequately training its citizens and the need to be technologically literate, leading to self-reliance and sustainability. TVET thus equips people not only with vocational and technical skills but with a broad range of knowledge, skills and attitudes that are now recognized as indispensable for meaningful participation in work and life. It entails the enrichment of the capabilities that influence the effective psychomotor or cognitive domains of individuals in readiness for entry into the world of work in order to satisfy their needs intrinsic and extrinsic needs, values, work and aspiration such that local and national needs would be met.

In the views of Alhasan and Abdulahi (2013), technical and vocational education and training plays an essential role in improving the wellbeing of youths and communities and increases productivity empowers individuals to become self- reliant and stimulate entrepreneurship. Therefore, good quality TVET is an essential tool for achieving a more sustainable empowerment among the youths since it helps to promote the development or skills, knowledge, values and economic growth. To achieve a sustainable empowerment attention should be paid to strengthening the gap between education and schooling and preparations for the work with attention paid by improving technical vocation education and training in Nigeria.

The Aims and Objective of Technical and Vocational Education

The aims and objective of technical and vocational education as contained in the revised national policy on education 2004 includes;

- Provide trained manpower in applied sciences, technology and business particularly of craft, advanced craft and technical levels.
- Provide the technical knowledge of vocational skills necessary for agriculture, commerce and economic development.
- Training and impact the necessary skill to individual who shall be self-reliant economically.

Consequences of Youth Unemployment

The world economic situation is in great danger as a result of youth unemployment, unemployable skills global warming and security challenges. Youth according to

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Osakwe,(2013), are persons between the ages of 18-24. They would normally have completed secondary education, and would either be in tertiary institutions or striving to secure employment, or are already employed. Unemployment on the other hand is the condition or situation where person or group of persons is without jobs Adebayo,(2013) inNdelekwute,(2017).International Labour Organization ILO,(2007) sees unemployment as the number of economically active people who are available but without work and are seeking for work, including people who have lost their jobs and those who have voluntarily left work. Unemployment exist when a fit and eligible individual or group of individuals do not have a job or work to do for some compensation. The root causes of unemployment in Nigeria as identified by Adebayo (2013) include; inappropriate school curricula, rapid population growth, rapid expansion of the educational system, decline in the manufacturing sector and corruption among others. Similarly, unemployment and under employment in a developing country such as Nigeria are largely caused by pressure of rapid growing population of school leaders, defective manpower planning and job seeker selectivity of job availability and location.

Youth unemployment appears to be rising up to the sky because many of them lack “employability” skills that is often acquired from technical and vocational schools. As Edukugho (2004) in Masaruf (2015) noted, youth unemployment rose to 4.3% in 1985 to 5.3% in 1986. The report shows that in 2003 primary school accounted for 14.7% unemployment, secondary school 53.6% and tertiary institutions constituted 12.4%. the nations poverty level was put at 70% and more than 91 Million Nigerians are said to live on less than one dollar per day. Most analysts agree that today’s employers demand more skills than they did in the past Yang, (2008). Oranu (2010) reported the rising demand for skills in the labor market to include technological and organizational change trade, deregulation of key industries, and the decline of unions. Also, national security is fraught with controversy in educational literature as the term is ambiguous and could be viewed from different perspective such as political, legal and military. National security could equally refer to the measurable state of the capability of a nation to overcome the multi-dimensional threats to the apparent well-being of its people and its survival as a nation at any given socio-economic period, by balancing all instruments of state policy through governance Akwara (2013) noted that a broad understanding of what constitutes a national security in Nigeria includes disease, violent crime, political assassinations kidnapping, ethno-religious conflict, civil war, terrorism and environmental degradation. Implicit in these definitions of national security is that when adequate security is provided for the citizens of a nation, a congenial environment for development and self-actualization is achieved. Furthermore, there is a very close relationship between youth unemployment, national security and global economic challenges. According to Adebayo (2013) unemployment in Nigeria poses many social, economic, political and psychological consequences, which directly and indirectly impact on global economic condition. Some of the social consequence is that it encourages the criminal behavior. Unemployment has also contributed to increasing feminization of poverty among young women, which has encouraged prostitution as a means of survival and leads to trafficking of young women, across international borders with transnational security implication, psychologically, the unemployed persons usually experience trauma, anger, frustration, has self-esteem, negative life satisfaction, unhappiness and mental disorder

including depression and acute stress. Other economic consequences of unemployment include flee of youths and able bodied men from the country in search of better opportunities elsewhere, thereby reducing the productive labour force and manpower capacity in Nigeria.

Technical and Vocational Education for Youth Employment and National Development

Education as a discipline/systematic body of knowledge should resolve the issue of what and why do we educate? Fundamentally, our educational content curriculum should be overhauled to make it functional, industry/society driven to reflect the educational and societal philosophy of self-reliance, equalitarianism anchored on economic dynamism/sustainability Adepoju, (2004); Ocho,(2000) in Ifeanacho 2018.Hence the need to adopt a method of educational methodology that will imbue our children/youths with lifelong/employable skill that will transform their lives, other people's lives and impact positively on the entire society, it is pertinent to note that education can be a means to an end if refocused, repositioned strategically to satisfy societal yearnings, needs and aspiration. Technically skilled human capital is pivotal to national development. As Ogunkayode (2012) rightly observed, the inherent factor in the set of ideals of different schools of thought that man (that is skilled manpower is at the centre of development and excellent management of human resources is a panacea to resolving all societal vices as well as the bedrock for overall societal development.In his submission on the significant role technical and vocational education plays in nation building/development,Lawal,(2010), described Technical Vocational Education as that type of education that equips individual with practical skills to make positive changes within the society and affords self-dependent live. This form of education, he further noted has been attested severally as an education that provides self-employment, enhances productivity and self-reliance. It reduces the over dependence of school graduates on public sector employment, equips individuals with the requisite skills to live, learn and work as productive citizen in a global environment.

Technical and vocational skills therefore matter more than ever in today's increasingly competitive global market. Technical and vocational education has endeared phenomenal economic growth in some countries and fallen short of expectation in others due to sheer neglect and lack of vision. Presently, globalization is prompting governments to take a renewed interest in this branch of education still perceived by some as second class (Maclean and La, 2012). Essentially technical and vocation education has been an integral part of national development strategies in many societies because of its impact on productivity and economic development Dike,(2012). The programme is an integral part of the educational system in Austria, Germany, Liechtenstein and Switzerland among others. Technical education has also achieved significant successes in socialist countries for example, in Czechoslovakia, Poland, Bulgaria, it account for up to 40-50 percent of the total number of students Dike,(2005). The systems of technical education meet the requirements for national economy and the special natural characteristics of these countries. In several countries for example in Poland, Hungary and Rumania, two types of engineers are prepared; professional engineers with four years of training are trained manly for practical work, while master engineers with four to five years of training are trained for scientific research of design organizations India possesses a large pool of highly educated and vocationally

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qualified people who are making their mark domestically and globally in science, engineering, information Technology (Silicon Valley) and Research and Development.

The success of countries such as China in achieving higher growth reveals the importance of workforce with a basic education that can be trained technically and vocationally Dahiman and Utz, (2012). Skill development is a potent vehicle for accelerated and sustainable economic development and growth, when technology is charging both the nation and enterprises must invest in diverse skills acquisition through technical and vocational learning to remain globally competitive and continually engage in retooling and up-skilling of the workforce to adapt and adjust quickly to new skills demands generated by changing markets and technologies. Admittedly, Nigeria has persistently suffered from low productivity which negates benefits accruing from economics of scale, that is, benefit inherent in higher productivity. The panacea to the parlous state of our educational sector is massive investment in human capital via technical and vocational education as no nation can compete effectively in the emerging global market with ill-equipped, intellectually barren, demotivated and unskilled work force. Technical and vocational education can be leverage on to effectively combat youth unemployment, alleviate poverty as well as improve the economic performance of our nation Ogunkayode (2012). Globally, governments are doubling their effort in promoting technical and vocational education in tertiary institution with firm/strong belief that skill formation enhances productivity. The above view, Okori (2001) noted that technical and vocational education is basic for rapid technological advancement. He x-rayed the consequences and called on the national leadership to arrest the situation by promoting technical and vocational education. The neglect of technical and vocational education is socially and economically injurious because it is robbing the nation the contribution it would make on national development, for that reason Nigeria is today wearing the toga of a poor state Dike (2008). The society needs competent auto repairers, truck drivers, carpenters, plumbers, electrician vocational nurses etc. and numerous other technicians in all sectors of the economy to operate optimally. Technical education provides the much needed skilled manpower in these various spheres. Above all technical and vocational education holds the key to the achievement of the sustainable development goals (SDG) since it is a catalyst for accelerated economic development and growth. To this end technical and vocational education should be given due recognition because it provide students with “life Skills” Alwasilah (2008), to become productive entrepreneurs as it engender creative and innovative ideals, enlarge the economic pie, and result in total transformation of the individuals concerned and the nation as well most of the so called “expatriate engineers” that are paid millions of dollars to build and construct Nigeria roads and bridges are graduate of technical and vocational colleges yet the leaders of the nation have not yet come to terms with realities. The above underscores the need for Nigeria to adopt “education through recreation” and the opportunity to learn in a seamless fashion through all of its life activities.

Ignorantly, Nigeria is presently preoccupied with university education/certification which reduced opportunities of those who are technical and vocationally oriented. Everybody is not meant to be a degree holder. Some people are gifted in other areas and are destined to make their marks in such areas. They should be encouraged by establishing and equipping the technical and vocational school properly to enable them acquires requisite technical and vocational skills that will empower them for life, instead of encouraging proliferation of

private universities, some of which are glorified secondary schools, yet their fees are unaffordable to many people; while those who can afford the exorbitant fees, after graduating join another compulsory “university on unemployed graduates” for endless number of years probably because of lack of employable skills. Cunningly, the academic programmers of the post-independence universities in Nigeria were tailored toward producing graduates who would work in the public service. The university curriculum was completely devoid of entrepreneurial education that would prepare the product of the tertiary institution for the future challenges. Thus our citizen were not adequately prepared, empowered and imbued with relevant entrepreneurial skills to enable them venture into the unknown. Empowering the people with technical skills would enhance their productivity and national development. Nigeria poverty alleviation programme have been ineffective because of lack of requisite skills, training facilities and social services. Giving money to the poor people devoid of requisite skills who cannot manage their own lives to set up business is like pouring water in a bucket with holes. It is high time we address and redress this ugly situation for a greater tomorrow.

Conclusion

There is no gain saying that no nation can foster beyond the quality of its citizens. Admittedly, a nation level of development depends on the soundness of its educational system. The emerging economies which have recorded unprecedented breakthrough in their critical sector (courtesy of their TVEprogrammes) are typical examples. Job creation, occupational skills and problems of unemployment are achievable if Technical and Vocational Education is revitalize in our educational system. Based on the foregoing, it is observed that Technical and Vocational Education occupies an important position in the sustainable development of the nation.

Recommendations

Sound education is the best legacy a nation can bequeath to its citizen. The need for technical and vocational education therefore cannot be over emphasized because it is result oriented; the bedrock of nation development/growth in Nigeria, the paper however recommends the following:

1. The relevant arms of government should adequately fund, plan, implements, and manage TVET programmes in all educational institutions, especially tertiary institution in Nigeria.
2. Provision of adequate facilities, tools/equipment, and consumable material is very imperative for TVET to be adequately revitalized in Nigeria.
3. Provision of qualified TVET personnel, instructional material, in service training for TVET personnel as well as scholarships/grant for TVET teachers/instructors is very imperative for TVET to be adequately revitalize in Nigeria.
4. Proper supervision and monitoring of the implementation of TVET programmers by government ministries, departments and agencies is very imperative for TVET to be adequately revitalized in Nigeria
5. The introduction of competency based TVET programmes in Nigeria tertiary institution is very important for proper revitalization of TVET in Nigeria

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