

Article

Industrializing the Nigerian society through creative skill acquisition vocational and technical education programme

Uwaifo, Victor Oziengbe

Department of Vocational and Technical Education, Faculty of Education, Ambrose Alli University Ekpoma, Edo State, Nigeria. E-mail: vuwaifo@yahoo.com.

Accepted 13 February, 2009

The development of any nation is critical to the economic survival and vibrancy of that nation. This holds particularly true for developing nations like Nigeria, who is still grappling with chronic factors like unemployment and underemployment, which have kept them in the perpetual bondage of economic frustration. Vocational and technical education a multifaceted, multi-disciplinary and pragmatic field of study, is aimed at equipping the individuals with requisite vocational and technical education literacy skills, which will enhance their relevance and functionality in the society. As a result, it plays a vital and indispensable role in the development of the society. This paper therefore examines the future of vocational and technical education in Nigeria, its significance and role with regards to the development in Nigeria, the challenges ahead as well as possible suggestions and recommendations for moving it forward with enhanced effectiveness for the benefit of the nation and incoming generations.

Key words: Industrialization, creative skill acquisition programme.

INTRODUCTION

Vocational and technical education can be described as any form of education whose purpose is to prepare person(s) for employment in an occupation or group of occupations. Throughout the country, there is a growing awareness about the need for vocational and technical education. This improvement in societal perception and interest has culminated in demands for changes in content, organization and delivery of vocational and technical curricular to reflect a new emphasis on technology.

As a matter of fact, vocational and technical education is aimed at developing not only practical skills but also attitudes and habits that makes the recipient a creative, innovative and resourceful person.

The concept of vocational and technical education

Vocational and technical education is the acquisition of skills and techniques in chosen occupation or profession to enable an individual earn a living. The national policy on education (NPE, 2004), viewed vocational education as training or retraining programme, which is given in schools or classes under public supervision and control. Vocational education is a system of education, which is predicted upon the teaching of skills and also demanding

the professional or expert use of hands. The teaching of skills at formal sector existed in 2 types of institution initially established in Nigeria, these are technical colleges and trade centers. Vocational and technical education is a continuous process of adaptation of the worker's training towards acquiring the minimum knowledge required.

Roland (1995) states that vocational and technical education is result oriented. It brings about technological advancement and aims to fit new manpower for employment and provide continuing training for those already qualified, so that they can keep up with modern working methods.

The development of vocational and technical education in Nigeria

The education system of Nigeria has been influenced by the British system of education. This type of education neglects the cultural and vocational interest of the nation. The apprenticeship system was the earliest type of vocational education practiced in Nigeria and it provided employment for youth as they learnt how to use their hands in specific trade (vocation). Extensive development

of vocational education started in Russia in 1888 with the introduction of shop classes in addition to the existing apprenticeship system. Shop classes involved the development of a problem and specially prepared drawings made to tackle the problem. Then the students were made to perform the same exercise individually, until they are proficient in that skill.

In United States of America, vocational and technical education is organized through agencies. These includes public high schools, public and private junior colleges, technical institute, extension services, labour unions and the armed forces. While dozens of programs are organized, specialization in training for 1 type of occupation exists.

The change in educational system in Nigeria came after the enactment of the land grant foundation Morrill's act of 1890. This foundation in the United States of America influenced the educational reforms after the abolition of the slave trade. Simple Job training skills through companies and schools were introduced. Learning of skill in carpentry, tailoring, mechanizing, craft making etc, started in some schools in Nigeria, like the comprehensive high school Aiyetoro and Mubi and the technical college in Yaba, Lagos. Vocational and technical education remained dormant for a long time with the introduction of western education.

The administration of vocational and technical education in Nigeria

Bayode (1994) stated that vocational and technical education is geared towards the production of the educated man who can effectively work with his head, heart and hands. The development of the economy and the crave for self-reliance and self-sustainability is the driving force for acquiring this programme.

The national policy on education (2004) states that the objective of vocational and technical education is expected to be realized. This includes

- i.) To acquire vocational and technical skills.
- ii.) To expose students to career awareness by exploring usable options in the world of work.
- iii.) To enable youths to have an intelligent understanding of the increasing complexity of technology.
- iv.) To stimulate creativity.

The national policy on education highlighted Nigeria's desired to achieve her national goal through education, hence the need for the acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competence both mental and physical as equipment for the individual to life and to also contribute to the development of the society, thus, no society can develop to appreciable extent without relevant functional and technological based vocational and technical education.

The need for vocational and technical education cannot be over emphasized in Nigeria schools. Therefore,

Charles (2000) asserted that full vocational training should be offered in the 6 year programme of the post primary schools students (in addition to their general education courses) to enable them develop sufficient skill in their chosen occupational skill so obtain employment on leaving school. Post secondary vocational education courses in the universities, colleges of technology and polytechnics should be offered to students who took vocational courses in secondary and now need to increase their level of skill through further training. Wenrich (1974) stated that vocational and technical education provides various avenues for discovering and developing the individual's potential for work. It has a broadening effect, which motivates learners to be more exploratory, realize their capabilities and develop their potentials for success in the world of work.

Forshey (1970) opined that there is a very good reason for young people to begin the process of being productive in the world as soon as they are capable of doing so. This is simply what vocational and technical education opt to do.

Teacher's role in the training of vocational and technical education in Nigeria

According to Uwaifo (2005) education unlocks the door of modernization but it is the teacher who holds the key to the door. Drawing a comparative situation, a nation that is in quest of technological development should turn to the schools for solution. Teachers are the hub or pivot on which any successful educational programme revolves and if teachers perform their task dutifully, there will certainly be a myriad of new technologies in the future of vocational education. Most present day teacher in Nigeria will parade antiquated knowledge in science and technology. Consequently, to perform successfully as teacher of vocational and technical education, constant training and re-training programme is recommended to continually keep them abreast with the changing dynamics in teaching and learning modalities. Programme which will involve the participation of agriculture, business, Industrial technical and service sector are imperative, involving these sectors ensure relevance and up dated knowledge and availability of modern equipment and machinery for programmes of vocational education. Further more, it is imperative for industry will have skilled work force to support strong performance in the economy of this country.

Finally, indigenous Nigerian should have skill for able job, and their learning culture should be shared.

The future of vocational and technical education in Nigeria

There is no skepticism about what tomorrow might bring about vocational and technical education in Nigeria. Therefore, it would be possible if we can develop a system that makes learning more interesting, involving and

permanent to the students in the various aspects of our educational programme. A system that,

- i.) Helps the trainee to capitalize his interest and abilities to the highest possible degree.
- ii.) Provide the training that he or she would meet after school.
- iii.) Provide the trainee the manipulative habits and thinking habits required in the occupation itself.
- iv.) Providing training on the actual job and in exercise or pseudo job.
- v.) Ensure that training is carried out to the extent that it gives the trainee a production ability with which he can secure development or hold unemployment.
- vi.) Making sure that training is giving to those who needs it, wants it and can profit by it.
- vii.) Ensure that each member of the group has the opportunity to participate as a tutor and tutee.
- viii.) Helps to properly socialize the entire students and puts them on their toe (academically), so they cannot be ridiculed by their peer.

Therefore the following will justify the brightening of vocational technical education in Nigeria:

Self-employment

Today in Nigeria, the high incidence of school drop out among secondary school students clearly highlights the importance of career development, which is achievable through vocational and technical education. These students who could not fit into the academic oriented curriculum would need practical skill to enable them function profitably in the society. Secondly, the graduates from these existing schools system invariably enter the job market seeking employment that does hardly exist in this country today. To draw the majority of these job seekers out of the unemployment market, vocational and technical training in secondary school become the most potent elixir. This again required the training of the teachers that would impact these skills to students in the primary, post primary and tertiary education levels.

Technological improvement

In the future, it is hoped that vocational and technical education will adequately equip students to be more effective in this age of science and technology and to raise a generation of people who can think for themselves and respect the dignity of labour and propel its citizenry into a blossom economic enderado. What is needed today and tomorrow are workers with good technical skill background, rugged enough to transform Nigeria into a positive technological breakthrough with the ability to meet its immediate demand. A bright future is possible if we are willing and able to re-examine the vocational programme and its value in our educational system. As

the world around us is changing fast there must be an increased emphasis on vocational education.

Higher standard of living

Vocational and technical education aims at helping the society maintain its material civilization by enabling the individual to keep pace with the rapidly changing Industrial and technological development. Vocational education must be seen as an instrument for transforming Nigeria's resources into finished goods and services that will promote higher standard of living. Since Nigeria is a country that is trying to industrialize rapidly, emphasizing vocational and technical education even at the elementary level will only reinforce a solid foundation. In effect training for a vocation is a life long process and must be made part of Nigeria culture if the desired technological and economical growth will be achieved.

Political stability

Vocational and technical education is a marginal enterprise serving the personal interest of a relatively few people in Nigeria today. It is also an essential component of any national policy for coping with pressure of change and improving the quality of life of its people and design a way forward for government prostates. Infact, the future of vocational programme in Nigeria will give room to a dynamic government.

This relates to the idea of the people and the change that has taken place in the political attainment of any nation. The ideology of any nation determines the aim and goals of vocational education. A government with good political ideology and technological improvement and with the focus and stable political institution often witnesses stable educational system.

It is the desire of the present Nigeria government to make Nigeria be amongst the 20 economically developed nation in the world by the year 2020, it then become imperative that new social, economic and technological order be put in place in which every employable citizen is gainfully employed. At that time, there should be a drastic reduction of the gap between the rich and the poor as well as a society near free from corruption and anti-social vices. Nigeria requires a citizenry that is made up to have informed, developed and enlighten minds that is conscious, alert and stable to participate in the developmental process so that we can attain our main goal, which should be an industrialized and self-reliant nation, like Cuba, Brazil and China through their faithful and dogged pursuance of vocational and technical education programme.

The implications of vocational education in Nigeria

The implication of vocational education in Nigeria can be discussed which the following sub-heading.

Psychological implication

Vocational and technical education can bridge the gap between people without job and without hope. If one is able to acquire training in vocational education, employment is guaranteed. On the other hand, a country without enough manpower in vocational and technical area will continually suffer the problem of unemployment.

Sociological implication

Occasional education is a social safety measure to many social problems. Unemployment is a serious social ill, with its numerous remote consequences like hooliganism, unstable homes and other anti social vices. Vocational and technical education helps to eliminate all these through the production of students that are easily employable.

Economic implication

Vocational education is designed to meet the employment needs of particular areas of the economy. The training provided is closely matched with specific job requirement so as to foster immediate production performance by the trainees. Trainees can become wage earners, thereby becoming more useful and productive citizens who will be assets to the society and not liabilities.

Conclusions

Since the form "chalk and talk" school system was clearly not effective in preparing workers for the jobs required by modern industry in Nigeria, government should look toward vocational and technical education as a means of providing for the work force needed in both rural and urban industries. This is being done with the hope of improving the standard of living of the Nigerian citizen.

From the findings in this paper, the following conclusions become clear, that vocational and technical education in Nigeria is the pivot of any national development. It is when the individual in the micro setting are self reliant that the macro economy becomes buoyant and stable. Therefore, vocational and technical education is the live wire of technology. It is no exaggeration to assert that vocational and technical education constitutes the arteries that supply life-sustaining blood through the system of country economy and standard of living. It will be an impossible task to plan and develop any economy in which vocational and technical education is not developed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of this paper, the following suggestions were made,

- i.) Industry, communities, religious organization, labour union and wealthy individual in the society should be encouraged to contribute in cash and kind to the growth and development of vocational and technical education at all level.
- ii.) Vocational and technical education as a matter of urgency should through a comprehensive retraining in services programme and research work improve their quality.
- iii.) The public, employers of labour and the products of vocational and technical education programme should serve as a source of determining the efficacy, efficiency and the effectiveness of vocational and technical education based programme.
- iv.) Workshop and seminars should be jointly organized by government, vocational and technical educators, schools, accrediting bodies and industries regularly.
- v.) The guiding principles to the success of vocational and technical education should be making the best use of all available materials, tools, equipment as well as human resources at all times.

REFERENCES

- Adeogun AA (2007). Organization and Management of Schools in Nigeria. Published by Frank Unity Nigeria Ltd. Ogudu. Ojota Lagos.
- Afetoro JE (1985). Historical Development of Vocational Technical and Education in Nigeria. NERA Publication.
- Akoroda OL (2002). Vocational and Technical Education in Nigeria Tony Press, Agbor Delta State.
- Fafunwa AB (1974). History of Education Nigeria London George Allen and Union.
- Ipaye T (1986). Education and Vocational Guidance. Concept and Approaches. Ile-Ife University of Ife Press.
- Olaitan SO (1996). Vocational and Technical Education in Nigeria: Issues and Analysis Onitsha; Noble Graphic Press.
- Okoro OM (2004). Principle and Method in Vocational Technical Education in Nigeria. Nsukka, University Trust Publishers.
- Osuala EC (2006). Foundation of Vocational Education. Calabar, Centour press Ltd.
- Robert A, Daniel A (1997). Introduction to Vocational and Technical Education: Kris Bec. Publications.
- Uwaifo VO (2001). Vocational Education and General Education, Conflict or Convergence. Nigerian Journal of Education Research. Institute of Education; Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma. Vol. 4.1.
- Uddin PSO, Uwaifo VO (2005). Principles and practice of Vocational & Technical Education in Nigeria: Ever-blessed publishers, Benin City.
- Yoloye EA (1984). "Contemporary Issues in Implementing the New National Policy on Education." J. Nig. Edu. Res. Assoc. (NERA): Benin City.