

VOCATIONAL TECHNICAL EDUCATION (VTE) AS A PANACEA FOR ECONOMY EMPOWERMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study was designed to highlight the importance of Vocational Technical Education as education that prepared trainees to acquire practical skills, attitudes and knowledge competent enough to perform determine tasks for employment. The philosophy and objectives, challenges of Vocational Technical Education, functions of Vocational Technical Education were explained and some recommendations were made which include, among others that Government at all level should provide standard and adequate instructional materials, tools, equipment and consumable material, seminar, workshops and conferences should always be organized for teachers to update their knowledge and skills., adequate fund should be provided for vocational and technical institutions for practical skills acquisition and adequate and qualified manpower should always be employ for vocational and technical education institutions.

Keywords: Vocational Technical Education, Panacea, Economy Empowerment.

INTRODUCTION

The aim of teaching and learning is to change the attitude or behavior of individuals or group of people in the society especially to improve their standard of living. One of the goal of education as stipulated in National Policy on Education, (FRN,2013) is the development of appropriate skills, mental, physical, and social abilities and competencies to empower the individual to live in and contribute positively to the society. Most occupations require the use of some manipulative skills and the application of some technical knowledge. The quality and quantity vary with the specific occupations. Some occupation especially those concerned with design, manufacture, installation and servicing of wide variety of products, require more manipulative skills and less technical knowledge. The demand of manipulative skills and technical knowledge of such occupations according to Obioma (2010) are more than what can be provided in the trade centres.

All attempts towards the definition of Vocational Technical Education (VTE) emphasized on a general theme of preparing trainees to acquire practical skills, attitudes and knowledge competent enough to perform determined tasks for employment to the benefit of the individual involved and the society at large. VTE is seen as acquisition and application of skill, knowledge and attitude for self-reliance. Archibong (2004) viewed VTE as the aspect of education which prepared people academically to be engaged in the acquisition and application of science and modern technology by focusing both on the theoretical and practical application of basic scientific principles. Enemali (2010) state that the principal purpose of VTE is to assist individuals in acquiring knowledge and developing skills transferable to jobs available in the local labour market. The development of any nation hinges on the socials and economic contributions of her citizens Education, vocational and technical training play a major role at promoting community and national development. Oguntuyi (2013) explained that VTE promotes and facilitates the acquisition of applied skills and basic scientific knowledge. It is planned programme of courses and learning experiences that begin with the exploration of career options, supports basic academic and life skills and enables the achievement of high academic standards, leadership, preparation for industry and continuing education. It cannot be over emphasized that technical education is the engine of economic growth.

Therefore, VTE is seen an instrument and mechanism that enables individuals to develop knowledge, skills and adopt new behaviours as well as to become empowered economically to be able to survive in the society. VTE enables people to be better and more useful and productive citizen of the society for a sustainable development in Nigeria.

Concept of Vocational Technical Education

The VTE provides skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary for effective employment in the specific occupation. VTE has been identified as one of the most effective human resource development that needs to be embraced for rapid industrialization and sustainable technological development of any nation. It has been an integral part of national development in many societies because of its impact on productivity and a panacea for economic development in Nigeria. The importance of VTE is to prepare person(s) for employment or job in an occupation. According to Uwaifo (2008) throughout the country, there is growing awareness about the need of VTE, this improvement societal perception and interest has culminated in demands for changes in content, organization and delivery of VTE curriculum to reflect an emphasis on technology.

Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013) describes VTE as comprehensive term, referring to those aspects of the educational process involving, related sciences and the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of economic and social life.

VTE is an academic programme offered at institutions/schools with various branches of courses that can transform Nigeria economy and social services into production/manufacturing nation. Its various courses are career oriented which prepared trainees with knowledge and skills to work in chosen trade or profession. According to Ekpenyong (2011) VTE refers to education which is career oriented, with career specific courses offered in institutions such as Secondary Schools, Technical Colleges, Business School, College of Education (Technical), Polytechnics and Universities, which are meant to equip the learner with knowledge, understanding and skills of different occupational area in the industry. With this definition, technical and vocational education are geared towards the development of careers occupations of various courses to include but not limited to:

- i. Auto Technology
- ii. Building Technology
- iii. Electrical/Electronics Technology
- iv. Metal Work Technology
- v. Wood Work Technology
- vi. Drafting Technology/Technical Drawing.
- vii. Agricultural education
- viii. Business Education
- ix. Fine and applied art Education
- x. Home economic Education

Source: National Commission for Colleges of Education.
(NCCE, 2012)

Philosophy and Objectives of Vocational Technical Education in Nigeria

Philosophy is referred to as a particular set or system of beliefs resulting from the search for knowledge about life and norms. The major philosophy of Vocational Technical Education according to NCCE (2012) the philosophy of VTE is to provide Vocational Technical manpower with intellectual and professional background adequately and to make them adaptable to any changing situation in technological development not only in the country but also in the world at large. However, Okorie (2001), noted that philosophy of Vocational/Technical Education includes:

- The occupational choice of individuals should be based on the orientation of the individual such as interests, aptitude, ability
- All honorable and honest occupations are worthy of considerations in making the decision about life's work.
- Each individual should have the opportunity to select an occupation in harmony with his orientation and the opportunities for employment in that occupation.
- The worth of an individual to society grows out of his contribution of skills, knowledge and applied productive capacity to tasks that need to be completed, rather than out of artificial status connotation attached to some glamorous jobs.
- Resources for education must be provided to develop all human resources otherwise; some individuals may possibly menace other individuals.
- Allocation of resources must reflect the needs of people. Priorities must be adjusted to provide resources in direct proportion to the cost of the investment required.

However, FRN (2013) observed that the objectives of Vocational Technical Education shall

be to:

- Provide trained manpower in the applied sciences and technology and business particularly at craft, advanced craft and technical levels.
- Provide the technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, commercial and economic development.
- Give training and impart the necessary skills to individual who shall be self-reliant economically. Similarly, NCCE (2012) also supported the above assertion that the objectives of VTE include but not limited to
 1. To produce qualified and competent vocational technical education teachers and skills practitioners.
 2. To produce technical teachers who will be able to inculcate scientific and technological attitudes and values into the society.
 3. To produce qualified vocational and technical teachers motivated to start the so much desired revolution of technical development right from the Nigerian schools.
 4. To prepare NCE graduate with the right attitude and knowledge/professional competence in vocational technical education.
 5. To equip NCE graduate with the right skills that will enable them to engage in a work to be self-employ.

Challenges of Vocational Technical Education in Nigeria

In Nigeria, there are many indicators of failure in some aspects of human endeavour especially in vocational technical education without adequate attention. The education problems are many with our schools been poorly equipped, inadequate basic tools, equipment, instructional materials, qualified teachers and other relevant apparatus needed to facilitate teaching and learning. (Alenoghena, 2010). Similarly, Kaseem, Gazali, & Mohammed (2012) observed that youth are educated under very harsh conditions and environment. Often basic infrastructure is lacking to support emphasis placed on vocational technical education and more students were admitted to in the institutions where there is no adequate teaching and learning facilities. They furthermore noted that use of obsolete machines and equipment is common in the institutions. This attributed to inability of the institutions to quickly procure modern machines and equipment due to meager resources. Consequently, the graduates produce is not suited to labour market requirements. UNESCO (2000) noted with regret that less than 1% of secondary education in Nigeria is oriented towards vocational and technical skills. Workshops at tertiary institution level are in this bracket which showcase the dumps of outdated and obsolete machines, equipment and tools. These ugly situations could be attributed to inadequate funding of education by the government at all levels in Nigeria. In the same vein Okolocha (2006) maintained that Nigeria educational system has been witnessing an explosion in the context of declining resources particularly from the government in terms of technological teaching and learning facilities.

According to Majumdar (2015) the excessive pace of technological changes makes 50 percent (50%) of computer knowledge irrelevant within one year, technological knowledge in three years, specialized vocational knowledge in five years and higher education knowledge in ten years. Another serious challenge is the increasing complexities at work, which lead to the growing need to adapt to new innovations in the market and adopt the technologies that provide utmost efficiency in machine operations. As a result, complex procedures are borne. An example of this is the transformation of automobile repair and operations manual from simple to complex piece of multiple document that require skills cluster and know-how to perform them.

Wapmuk (2011) explained that the public sector has been the dominant financier of VTE scheme in Nigeria. Out of the 286 institutions under the National Board for Technical Education, only 19 (7%) are privately owned with majority, 267 (93%) run by the public sector. This no doubt contributes to a situation where many qualified students seeking admission are not able to secure one because of number of public institutions that are sufficient to take them all. Resultantly, there is shortage of adequately skilled workforce. Even the skilled workforces produced are not suited for labour market requirements. to African Union (2007). The challenges of VTE in Nigeria can be summarized as follows:

As it is the case in education sector in general, the VTE lacks effectiveness and relevance to the reality of the workplace. Even in those occupational fields that show high demand for skilled

workforce, like the construction sector, graduates remain unemployed because they have not acquired the practical hands-on competencies, Young people annually leave schools without sufficient vocational preparation and continuing capacities are not capable to prepare them for the labor market, Teacher's performance is inadequate because their practical competencies, pedagogical preparation and motivation are underdeveloped. African Union (2007) added that Inappropriate management of institutions, the lack of school monitoring and performance evaluation are the main reasons for the Schools' insufficient contribution to the development of much needed human capital. In VTE, the shortage of qualified teachers and instructors also represents a severe constraint to the quality improvement. Equally Under-funding is a structural problem in the sector. The budget allocated is still relatively low compared to needs and priorities required to effectively implement the VTE policy. In addition, insufficient workshops and teaching materials are common in most schools that the learners cannot have sufficient hands-on skills for their future occupation. The lack of pro-activity to involve private sector players in curriculum development leads to implementation of curricula that is not very responsive to the labor market needs.

Functions of Vocational Technical Education

Functional education is referred to as the type of education that is designed to showcase practical for people to be useful for national development (Kudu, 2015). Therefore, functional education can be regarded as the principal foundation for any modern society that exists in the world today. As stipulated in the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013), there is need for functional education for the promotion of a progressive, united Nigeria. To this end, school programmes need to be relevant, practical and comprehensive; while interest and ability should determine the individual's direction in education.

Vocational Technical Education can facilitate the transition to a sustainable economy by inculcating sustainable environmental values and the application of environmentally appropriate knowledge and skills. Sustainable development can increase productivity, competitiveness, employment growth and living standards.

According to Bulus (2010), functions of technical education in national development include the followings but not limited to: Creation of Job Opportunities, Industrial Development, Alleviation of Poverty, Entrepreneurship Strategy, Promotion of the Nigeria Economy, Promotion of Nigerian Culture and Value,

1. **Creation of Job Opportunities:** VTE helps to reduce the rate of drop-outs or unemployment in the society. Technical Education could be used to develop marketable skills in students/youths so that they can become easily employable. It makes an individual to become an asset to himself and the nation and also prevents being a liability to the society.
2. **Industrial Development:** VTE helps a nation to develop technologically and industrially by producing people competent and capable of developing and utilizing technologies for industrial and economic development. It is a tool that can be used to develop and sustain the manpower needs of any nation.
3. **Alleviation of Poverty:** Those who are fortunate to graduate in a regular school system and excel in various fields of learning fall back to the skills acquired in technical-vocational education in time of "emergency". This has been proven right in recent time when workers of various categories were retrenched in both public and private sectors due to the deteriorating state of the economy. Such workers who possessed skills other than for which they are previously employed had something else to fall back on and become better off financially than those who had no other skills.
4. **Entrepreneurship Strategy:** VTE offers the beneficiaries the ability to be self-reliant and to be employers of labour.
5. **Promotion of the Nigeria Economy:** It promotes the Nigerian economy through foreign exchange by exporting the products. The knowledge of Technical/Vocation Education helps in the conversion of local raw materials, which reduces the importation of foreign goods, thereby minimizing import dependency syndrome.
6. **Promotion of Nigerian Culture and Values:** VTE helps to promote the Nigerian culture and inherent values so that we can be train and train others

Conclusion

It is believed that the promotion of vocational technical education would enable an individual to be self-reliance, more useful and productive citizen of the society for sustainable development in Nigeria. skills and attitudes learnt provide benefits to individuals and the society at large. Vocational technical education is a functional education that provides job opportunity, alleviation of poverty, wealth creation and self-reliant.

Recommendations

From the literature reviewed, the need for Vocational Technical Education cannot be over emphasized because it is the bedrock of a sustainable development of any nation and therefore, it is recommended that:

- i. Government at all level should provide standard and adequate instructional materials, tools, equipment and consumable material
- ii. Seminar, workshops and conferences should always be organized for teachers to update their knowledge and skills.
- iii. Adequate fund should be provided for vocational technical institutions for practical skills
- iv. Adequate and qualified manpower should always be employ for vocational and technical education institutions

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