



Revitalizing Technical and Vocational Education for Wealth Creation and Economic Development

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ABSTRACT

While Education is the key to National Development, Technical Education is the master key to National Development and therefore should be given pride of place in policy formulation and implementation. In Nigeria, the number of children completing the basic education as a result of Universal Basic Education (UBE) program has increased but the majority of the graduates are not selected for further studies. These graduates, who are still young, need life skills to enable them to engage in income generating livelihood. Vocational and technical education assist to build local capacity needed for socio-economic development through the provision of the required skills. To effectively embark on this, the Government requires a substantial education policy reform; so that technical and vocational education program developed provides the required knowledge, competencies, skills and attitudes in current formal and informal workplace. It is the view of this paper that these innovations in education policy reform will change the attitude of students towards career selection and also encourage a convergence between vocational and general education.

Keywords: Technical and Vocational Education, Wealth Creation, Economic Development

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1. INTRODUCTION

In 2006, the population figure of Nigeria was reported as been over 140 million people (FRN, 2006). This suggests over 11.7% population increase every year from 1991 when the population figure of Nigeria was 88 million people. The unfortunate fact now is that this teeming population does not present prospects for an appropriate labour force mix that will favour a corresponding a 1d viable technological base. If the country remains without skilled manpower or workforce, it implies that unfriendly economic period may be predictable in years to come. Nigeria's economy is 95% dominated by the oil production and export revenues. This monopoly renders all other sectors of economic development such as agriculture, manufacturing and industry (small and medium) production apparently redundant. The unfavourable side of it is that the oil exploration and investment thereof in Nigeria are mostly dominated by expatriates. This indicates that the country is seriously lacking the skilled labour force.



As a result, domestication of innovation in skills and practices is very LA difficult while indigenization of investments in the country is almost impossible. Worse still, could you imagine that govds produced in Nigeria are sometimes labelled by indigenous manufacturers as goods produced in other countries? This could be for the fear that consumers might react negatively against assumed unskilled professionals in the act and thus affecting the market strategy and saleability (Okoye, 1998). The low-skill formation in the country has placed it in a disadvantage to the extent that it lack international competitiveness in the world market, the years ahead may not be brighter unless much efforts are directed towards human resources development through technical and vocational education (TVE) in the country. It is then the duty of Nigerian government to ensure the continued production of skilled workers through a well structured and organized vocational and technical education programme.

1.1 What is TVE

The National Policy on Education (1998) explains Technical and Vocational Education as a form of education which prepares individuals to acquire practical and applied skills as well as basic scientific knowledge required as craftsmen and technicians. Technical and Vocational Education is seen as the key to knowledge and skills acquisition. This then underscores the role of Technical and Vocational Education in production of new workforce who must be provided 1yith skills for new jobs in a technologically advanced and changing society. In Nigeria, Technical and Vocational Education (TVE) is a comprehensive term referring to the educational process that involves, in addition to general education, the study of technologies and related sciences and the acquisition of competences and practical skills and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of economic and social life. The broad educational goals of Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET) distinguish it from 'vocational training' only, which is directed to developing particular skills and related knowledge required by a specific occupation or group of occupations.

TVET includes general education, theoretical, scientific and technical studies and related skill training. The proportion of technical aspects however, varies depending on the type of personnel to be prepared and the education level. For example, Vocational training is designed to produce skilled personnel at lower levels of qualification for some occupations, trades or jobs. Vocational education usually provided at upper secondary level. It includes some general education, practical training for the development of skills required by the chosen occupation, and related theory. The proportions of these components may vary considerably. At the higher Polytechnic level emphasis is now being placed on more competences within 1 the context of lifelong learning. Thus the system is being reoriented towards acquisition of core competences as well as life competences.

1.2 The Major Objective of TVE

The specific objectives of TVE commonly shared by most African countries according to Aina (2007) are to:

1. Expose pupils at the basic education level to a wide range of practical activities in order to make them familiar with and to stimulate their interests in vocational subjects so as to give them opportunities to choose their future careers.
2. Facilitate the interpretation, application and translation of basic knowledge and understanding of fundamental facts and principles of scientific processes and techniques to be able to produce and use tools and labour-saving devices for productive work.
3. inculcate an appreciation of the dignity of human labour as an invaluable resource base.



4. equip students with relevant productive entrepreneurial skills that will prepare them for gainful employment or self employment.
5. provide skilled labour to match the demand for manpower in the scientific, technological and commercial sectors of the nation's economy.
6. refine and consolidate indigenous artistic and technological skills in order to produce products of aesthetic and cultural value.
7. impart skills necessary for the protection, utilization and conservation of environmental heritage.
8. Increase scientific and technological literacy among youth thus fostering a proper understanding of the intricacies of modern technological advancement.
9. encourage equal access and participation of girls and women in technical and vocational education.
10. provide a sound foundation for further education and training in the spirit of lifelong learning.

2. HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATIONAL IN NIGERIA

A socio-psychological effect of western education on technical and vocational education was the prominence accorded white collar jobs which relegated it to the background. Education was focused on the training of clerks to be used as interpreters and administrative officers. This to me was the genesis of poor attitude towards technical /vocational education in Nigeria. However, attempts to boost TVE in Nigeria emanated from the results of four commissions / panels; Elliot commission (1943), the Ashby commission (1959) and Skapski report (1962) and the Aina report (2000). The recommendations from Elliot commission led to the establishment of Yaba technical Institute Kaduna Technical Institute (1956), Technical Institute, Enugu (1958, Technical Institute, Ibadan (1960) and Mid-West Technical College (1964). The recommendation of the Ashby Commission resulted in the upgrading of existing technical institutes to the polytechnics / colleges of technology as follows: Yaba College of Technology (1963), Kaduna Polytechnic (1968), College of Technology Enugu, (IMT) (1965) and Auchu Polytechnic (1972).

The Skapski Report resulted in the establishment of the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) in 197 and the general increase in students' environment of over 208,000 in the 1980's. Today there are 58 polytechnics and 50 monotechnics in Nigeria (Olu Aina, 2006), Hope in the effective implementation of TVE was re-kindled through the work of Olu Aina panel (2000) which had made the recommendation to the government on the production, certification, remuneration and general condition of service of TVE teachers (Aina, 2006)

3. TVE AND EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

Following from the brief history above it is clear that, Technical and Vocational Education has variously and consistently been recommended for Nigerian educational system, it being a major key element for promoting economic and social development. The Ashby Commission of 1959 noted that the greatest problem of education in Nigeria was the strong bias in favour of literary and academic subjects. It is this pattern of interest among Nigerians in education that has retrogressively caused the people to have low regard for manual and technical skills achievement.



The Ashby Commission hence recommended that technical institutions should be established to ensure sustainability of the country's economy in 1980s and beyond. Thus if Nigeria should succeed in her pursuit for formidable technological base and thence improved economic development, vocational and technical education in all ramifications, should be pursued with vigour. Technical and Vocational Education increases students achievement and earnings, their academic standard and also provides them with viable choices for profitable careers. The introduction of the 6-3-3-4 educational system in Nigeria - that is 6 years of primary, 3 years of junior secondary, 3 years of senior secondary and 4 years of tertiary level - was a direct response to the National Policy on Education.

The emphasis was to gradually introduce Technical Vocational Education at the junior and senior secondary school levels. However this effort did not produce the desired impact because of several problems which include; lack of technical workshop s, equipment and the experienced technical teachers as well as appropriate bureaucracy to operate the system, although this effort has now been replaced by a new education initiative, (9-3-4) there is no guarantee that the problems that militated against the success of the 6-3-3-4 has been sufficiently addressed such that they will not re-surface to shallow the new educational initiative.

4. REASONS WHY MOST NIGERIANS PREFER ACADEMIC TO TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

1. This background knowledge is necessary for the packaging of an effective implementation strategy for TVE programmes.

The reasons according to Amaraegbu (2007) include:

- a) An educational historical background packaged after the policy of English colonialism. This form of education was to serve the purpose of the colonial master who needed clerks to be used as interpreters and not for the development of the Nigerian society. It is anti-productivity. This is a case of being held back by our past.
- b) Consequently, we have become victims of negative mental conditioning. A long period of colonialization forced us to become conditioned to the structured meager but tantalizing monthly salaries and perquisites of the colonial master. Instead of using our skills for maximum production, we were taught to work only eight hours for five days. Not long after the daily eight hours reduced to effective seven, six, five four... hours pay day. Yet the structured meagre salary was paid by month end. Our definition of work and productive living was "office" while the meagre salary was the symbol of our labour. What a poor way to live. Yet, this evil cycle is yet to be destroyed in the lives of n any Nigerians.
- c) We are caught in a false hope of job security. In spite of the fact that the salary is meagre, many Nigerians who benefit from only academic training lack the courage to try our hands on something; else. There is a strong fear of failure as well as fear of survival. Without a saving 10 fall back on and much uncertainty looming ahead, most Nigerians prefer to hole tight to the source of their daily bread (the salary from office work) than take the risk of exploring the power of vocational or commercial potentials in us.



- d) The power of reinforcement is at work. Both in the public and private sectors, the Nigerian society send a clear message that academic qualification is superior to TVE. The principle of reinforcement operates both in negative and positive situations.
- e) The law of least resistance is at work in our educational system. TVE is more demanding than academic education. On the side of parents who pay the fees, it will cost less to sponsor the education of their children and wards, on the side of government that provide exert teachers and equipments, they will spend less and on the side of the students, lesser periods, energy and intellectual efforts will be required to pursue academic 1ualification than TVE.
- f) This least is none the less exhaustive. Others include, class consciousness; the drive to maintain the status quo, and societal pressures.

5. THE CHALLENGES OF TVE TO NIGERIA

The National Policy on education (1998) outlines the objective of TVE as 'equipping every individual with the skill and job competences for gainful employment. The Nigeria Government has introduced an intervention programme of National economic Emancipation Development Strategies (NEEDS) which focuses on poverty alleviation through job creation for 7 million people. The African continent had been able to wake up from slumber and had put in place the Millennium Development Goals Project. This focuses on among other things poverty alleviation and elimination of gender disparity by 2015. Obviously, this should be the focus of our Technical and Vocational Education.

5.1 The Way Forward

- A globally acceptable technical and vocational education in today's setting is one in which:
- i. The training must be industry focused through partnerships (links) between the training providers, the industries and enterprises they serve;
 - ii. The training must be provided where it is needed, whether on the job, at home, or in a formal training institution;
 - iii. The curriculum must be flexible and be able to be delivered in a range of settings, presented in modular form so as to provide close direction to the student and teacher;
 - iv. The training is competency based so that employers are clear about what people can do, and;
 - v. There is a consistent system of certification, which guarantees quality, as well as transportability of skill.

6. CONCLUSION

Improved and sustainable economic development depends on a strong technological base. A technological base in which both men and women are vocationally equipped with adequate skills, knowledge and desirable work attitude to enhance the quality and efficiency of product development, production and maintenance. In view of the proceeding discussions, if the Educational sector is to contribute it quota towards national development, it is of vital importance to reorder the implementation of the TVE programmes to make the graduates job creators rather than job seekers. Finally, we must always evaluate our training programmes to ensure effectiveness in fulfilling the needs of the individuals and the goals of the society.



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