



Vocational and Technical Education Programmes in Nigerian Schools: Challenges in the Implementation

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Abstract

The success of any education is very imperative, if it is carefully handled and implemented. It would be recalled that in Nigeria vocational education has received a lot of attention at both the Federal and State levels. Different institutions were established to offer vocational education. These include Technical Colleges, Polytechnics, Vocational Centres and schools. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004), through the national policy on education describes technical education as the “aspect of education which leads to the acquisition of practical and applied skills as well as basic scientific knowledge”. Vocational and technical education institutions were designed largely to prepare technicians at occupational levels. Despite these well-articulated objectives, vocational and technical education in Nigeria has been hindered by a lot of problems. In this regards this paper reviews the concepts of vocational and technical education, its place and objectives. The paper also looked at challenges in the wheel of vocational and technical education and lastly makes recommendations for effective handling and implementation of vocational education programmes. Finally, the term “vocational education and vocational and technical education” are used to refer to the same thing.

Introduction

The National Policy on Education (2004) has laid much emphasis on vocational and technical education in view of its important role in technological and industrial advancement of Nigeria. According to Oduma (2008) a well developed and implemented vocational and technical education programmes can enable a developing nation to achieve rapid technological advancement.

However, developing nation like Nigeria exerts great energy and efforts to develop functional system of education, which empowers its graduates with occupational skills and competencies to get fit for living in the society and to contribute towards its economic growth and technological development but her greatest challenges is on its implementation (Ayonmike, 2013). This could be explained by the unprecedented increase in the number of Nigerian graduates without employable skills which could be linked to policy implementation problem.

The purpose of this paper is to describe the challenges of vocational and technical education in Nigerian schools and to make recommendations on the way forward. The paper is set out as

follows; first, the concept of vocational and technical education was discussed; second a discussion of the place of vocational and technical education in Nigeria is highlighted. Thirdly, the objectives of technical and vocational education and challenges confronting the implementation of vocational and technical education in Nigeria were discussed. Finally, recommendations towards ensuring a functional vocational and technical education in Nigeria and conclusions were made.

The Concept of Vocational and Technical Education

Despite the conceptual misrepresentation of vocational education due to differences given to its interpretation by many, some scholars defined the term “vocational” as being restricted to areas like business, agriculture, home economics etc (Patrick et al 2013). The role of vocational education in any country is to prepare people for skilled work. It is a form of education that involves a specialized training or retaining that enables the beneficiary been properly equipped with skills, attitudes, values, and knowledge to become more productive and efficient. Also, UNESCO (2002) defines vocational and technical education as those aspects of educational processes involving in addition to general education, the study of technologies and related sciences and the acquisitions of the economy and social life. The writers define vocational and technical education as learning directed towards developing in young people those skills, competencies, attributes and understanding which equip them to be successfully. Williams (2007) defined vocational and technical education as education designed to prepare skilled personnel at lower levels of qualifications. He maintained that when offered at the higher educational level, it includes career education, practical training for the development of skill and related competencies.

Iheanacho (2006) defined vocational education as that aspect of education that deals with business education, farming, bookkeeping, bricklaying, among others with aims of acquiring vocational skills in these fields. Puyete (2008) opines that vocational and technical education is a form of education whose primary aim is to prepare persons for employment in recognized occupation and this encompasses field of study (Agricultural education, Fine & Applied Arts education, business education and vocational trades in soap making, hair dressing, computer training among others). Osuala (2004) opines vocational education as that area, which emphasizes job competency, career, preparation and work adjustments. Similarly, Oduma (2007) stresses that vocational education aims at supporting peoples understanding, capacities and attitudes.

According to him, the above array of definitions indicates that vocational and technical education enhances self-reliance and promotes national development. The current massive unemployment of both youths and adults as a result of global economic hardship has caused the emphasis need for all Nigerians to strive to be self-reliance through vocational education.

The Place of Vocational and Technical Education in Nigeria

There are arguments in the literature that vocational and technical education can help nations perform better during bad times depending on its severity (Manfred and Jennifer, 2004; FRN, 2004). Vocational education aims at the development of human abilities in terms of knowledge, skills and understanding so efficiently in carrying on the activities in the vocational pursuits of his choice (Thompson, 2002).



In the view of (Lawal, 2010) vocational education is designed to develop skills, abilities, understanding attitudes, work habits and appreciation encompassing knowledge and information needed by workers to enter and make progress in employment on a useful and productive basis. Therefore, vocational technical education is an integrated education programme for knowledge, attitude and skill development of individuals for effectiveness and efficiency in the world of work and functionality in the dynamic technological age.

Vocational and technical education therefore, is a homegrown medium-term development and poverty reduction programme. It is directed towards developing citizens who are versatile, self-reliant and can fit into any situation. Thus, the very essence of vocational education is to assist in laying a solid foundation for a technological take-off. In spite of the fact that vocational education will help prepare Nigeria to meet the demands and challenges of modern society, it will also enable the nation deviate from a subservient type of education system meant only to provide and serve the needs of the colonial administration (Oduma, 2012).

Objectives of Technical and Vocational Education in Nigeria

The objectives of technical and vocational as costive in the National Policy on Education (2013) shall be;

1. To provide trained manpower in the applied science and technology and business particularly at craft, advanced craft and technical level.
2. To provide the technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agriculture, commercial and economic development.
3. To give training and impact the necessary skills to individual who shall be self-reliant economically.

A close look at the above listed objectives of technical and vocational education crystallizes government felt that vocational and technical education is very necessary to make this large scale of youths' self-reliant. This shift from general education to specifically vocational and technical education becomes necessary in the present realities of the need to provide her people with necessary skills and knowledge (Awajobi, 2006).

There is seeming consensus on the importance of vocational and technical education in ameliorating some socio-economic problems especially poverty, unemployment, and all sort of social vices in the society. Thus, the focus of teaching and learning particularly in developing nation like Nigeria where these problems are predominant appear imperative. This clearly indicates the need towards the introduction of vocational and technical education programmes in our schools at various level of education.

Challenges in the Implementation of Vocational Education in Nigeria

Vocational and technical education has been faced with a lot of implementation challenges. This discourse considers a few challenges and suggests specific ways to surmount them.

1. **Inadequate Funding:** This is a serious challenge with circular effect. Government budgetary allocation in the last decade is grossly below UNESCO recommendation. As a result of this poor funding, basic equipments are lacking in our various vocational education system.

For effective implementation of vocational education programmes in our schools in particular technical institutions, basic tools need to be procured, workshops, classrooms, and laboratories built (Agbionu, 2003; Momoh 2012, and Olaitan, 2007). Therefore, if this specialized form of education is considered crucial for our technological and industrial advancement, then the ugly trend must be reversed to give vocational education the place it deserves.

2. **Government Policies:** Some government policies are responsible for the poor performance of vocational and technical education in Nigeria (Osam, 2013). For instance, there is no dignity in opting for vocational education, if it is meant for academic failures (Ojimba, 2012).
3. **Lack of Indigenous textbooks:** This is another factor that is facing the effective implementation of vocational and technical education programmes in Nigerian School system. To handle this factor militating against effective implementation of vocational education, qualified teachers should be encouraged to write textbooks and build a good resource centre.
4. **Lack of facilities:** Facilities requirement of a functional vocational education include; classrooms, equipment, laboratories', workshops, therefore, it is a fact that without suitable facilities in place, the implementation of vocational education would be very difficult if not impossible.
5. **Lack of motivation:** The teachers in the vocational education are ill-motivated as a result of poor service condition in various levels. Odu, (2011) and Ojimba (2012) respectively observe that this affect teachers in their response to request for further education and retraining.
6. **Shortage of qualified vocational Teachers:** Though the vocational education programme is also an education programme. The input from non-education service is still needed for effective implementation of vocational education. These non-vocational education personnel are needed for wholistic functioning of vocational education. This obviously has affected the outcome of services provided in the vocational education programmes. Other challenges include: lack of proper planning, poor public attitude and awareness, poor management and supervision and weak support structure for Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES).

The above array of challenges indicate that vocational and technical education are more than ever before. Government efforts aimed at achieving functional vocational and technical education in Nigeria is left with no other option than professionals (Onweh, 2010).

Recommendations

To guard against these challenges and as well achieve a functional vocational technical education programme in our educational system, the following are recommended:

1. Government at all levels should be more pro-active through her budgetary allocation to vocational education. The 26 percent budgetary allocation recommended by UNESCO should be strictly adhered to.
2. Government should come up with policies that will contribute to achieving functional vocational education.



3. Government at all level as well as the private schools should ensure that adequate vocational education teachers should be employed and constantly retrained to enhance better performance.
4. Adequate infrastructure for vocational education should urgently be made available for the schools by all level of government as well as donor agencies.
5. Adequate implementation of vocational education should be enhanced through proper and effective community engagement.

Conclusion

Vocational and technical education is a specialized type of education. It is therefore, desirable for self-reliance and economic development of a developing nation like Nigeria as it enable the recipients to acquire skills and competence that make them gainfully employed. Vocational education is a system characterized by varied occupational skills and field of specialization. Thus, if properly organized can lead to the emergence of desired technological advancement to lunch Nigeria into the next level of industrial development. In realization of this, the National Policy on Education (2004) emphasized a need for an effective educational programme to improve the system, to enhance both technology education and industrial development in addition. Despite these well-articulated objectives, vocational education in Nigeria today is challenged by numerous problems. The issues of concern include lack of government assistance in form of scholarship, low public image accorded vocational education in Nigeria. Also, neglect of vocational education, counterproductive government policies, lack of facilities equipment and workshop as well as lack of adequate fund. Vocational education is not just the acquisition of knowledge but action. In this thinking, it is obvious that the non-implementation of vocational education programmes can be largely avoided through adequate allocation of resources. Such resources would be the most potent remedy for vocational technical education to worth its place in the society.

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