

VOCATIONAL TECHNICAL EDUCATION IN MANPOWER DEVELOPMENT AND ECONOMIC STABILITY IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The paper focused on the production of craftsmen, technicians and other skilled personnel who would be enterprising and self-reliant. This type of education is concerned with the development of the skill, knowledge and attitudes needed for success in any given occupation. Skill acquisition improves standard of living as well as the economic stability, industrial harmony and technological advancement of the nation. The need for vocational and technical education and the effects on employment are discussed. Efforts made by both Federal and State governments to reduce economic crunch through different educational industrial programmes are discussed and recommendations made.

Keyword: Vocational, Education, Economic, Stability

INTRODUCTION

The development of a nation is to a large extent determined by the wealth of that nation. A nation economic stability if it is industrially buoyant, agriculturally sufficient and technically up-to-date. A country that manufactures its own good using indigenous skills and exports some of those goods to other countries is usually economically stable.

Vocational and Technical Education determines to achieve the economic stability of a nation by training and imparting the necessary skills that lead to the production of craftsmen, technicians and other skilled personnel to be enterprising and self-reliant. The continued survival of Nigeria as a sovereign nation (*Olaitan, (1993)*) depends on the skills her people possess and the effectiveness with which these skills are passed on from one generation to the next.

NEED FOR VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

Nigeria is now suffering from economic depression and should need her own industrial revolution through sound and efficient Vocational and Technical Education based on an independent indigenous technology. *Oranu (1990)* described economic depression as the suppression of economic advancement due to lack of adequate economic activities which results in poverty and unemployment. He also described unemployment in

itself as "a state of affairs where a good amount of labour in a country is not used and hence results in a waste of manpower."

Vocational and Technical Education should emphasize quality by providing for the learning of skills employed in using tools, machines and materials of an occupation for self-reliance. Self-reliance in this regard implies relying on one's own facilities, forces, and capabilities etc to achieve genuine development individually and collectively through indigenous effort(s), indigenous institutions and programmes designed and operated by the people themselves. *Okorie and Ezeji (1988)* advocated for vocational type of education which concerns itself with the development of the skill, knowledge and attitudes needed for success in any given occupation. *Osioma (1993)* defined Vocational Education as "that aspect of education which is mainly concerned with the preparation of individual for skilled performance on tasks." According to him, the central objective of Vocational Education resolves on the achievement of socio-economic, industrial and technological objectives that will eventually manifest themselves in improved standard of living for the citizens as well as in economic stability, industrial harmony and technological advancement.

The National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1981) defined technical education as "that aspect of education which leads to the acquisition of practical and applied skills as well as basic scientific knowledge." The aims of technical education include training and imparting of necessary skills leading to the production of craftsmen, technicians, and other skilled personnel who will be enterprising and self-reliant. *Okoro (1990)* classified the aim of technical education into these three major objectives.

1. To remove the attitude that technical education is inferior to academic or grammar: education - affective objective.
2. To introduce technical and vocational courses into secondary schools so that pupil acquires practical skills and learns to use their hands in making, repairing and assembling things - cognitive and psychomotor objectives.
3. To increase the employability of school leavers by improving students' technical vocational skills and to train craftsmen, technicians and other skilled personnel-cognitive and Psychomotor Objectives.

The policy as classified by *Okoro (1990)* has attempted to solve the following problems which

hindered the development of technical and vocational education over the years.

1. Lack of technical and vocational courses in most secondary schools.
2. Unfavourable public attitude towards technical education.
3. Inadequate institutions and facilities for the training of technical teachers.
4. Insufficient number of technical colleges for the training of craftsmen, and
5. Poor salary structure for technical personnel.

The NPE (1981) has generally acclaimed to have an increased emphasis to Vocational and Technical education by attempting to remove the bias that Vocational/Technical Education has been relegated to an insignificant value. According to Ozoro (1982) the NPE aims removing this bias against Vocational and Technical Education by the inclusion of technical courses, notably, technical drawing, wood-Metal work, and electricity/electronics into the secondary school syllabus. He stressed that the inclusion of those courses could not be adequate remedy. Okoro (1990) explained: that one major fault of the NPE is that it still gives lower status to vocational and technical education and places unnecessary obstacles in the way of students who choose to pursue a vocational technical programme at the secondary school level

According to the FRN (1981) "trade centres and similar Vocational Centre" would be established to absorb junior secondary school leavers who could not proceed to senior secondary school. This can be interpreted to mean that after the junior secondary school, students would be separated into groups for example, the privileged who would go to senior secondary school for admission into universities, polytechnics and colleges of education and the under-privileged who would go to centres and technical colleges and who would have eventually no prospects of furthering their education beyond the technical college or trade centre level. *Okola (1993) stated that Vocational Education is stereo-typed, designed for preparing individuals for various occupations as craftsmen, technicians of professional levels and that in Nigeria individuals have held an equal false notion that Vocational Education was for those who could not cope with academic pursuit; that doing work with one's hands is less cognitive and therefore was meant for the less intelligent people.*

In attempting to correct this false notion Osuala (1990) called for the need to redefine the mind of Vocational Technical Education in contemporary Nigeria when he stated that "what is particularly called into question is our ability to adapt rapidly to new situations, to apply knowledge and skills upon changing conditions, and skills through our own efforts." He cited Angola, Yemen, Ethiopia, India and Zimbabwe as some of the developing countries which have introduced Vocational Technical Education that emphasize the acquisition of abilities and skills in craftsmanship.

EFFECTS OF UNEMPLOYMENT

With the new National Policy on Education (FRN, 1981) secondary education was divided into phases aimed at two main objectives:

1. Preparing and selecting pupils for the next stage of education.
2. Preparing those who will not proceed to the next stage of education for employment and useful living within the society. The changes and expansion at all levels of education according to *Izundu (1990)* created the following reasons for the problems of unemployment:

- i) the shortfall in the provision of admissions for secondary school leavers to higher institutions;
- ii) the worldwide economic depression of the early 80's that caused rapid deterioration in Nigeria's economy;
- iii) inadequate training efforts in relation to the enormous manpower requirements, especially the technical manpower. She also emphasized that unemployment could cause lots of frustration among youths which could in effect lead to high crime rates, alcoholism and drug addition. Unemployment according to her could also have an adverse effect on the psychological well being of those who experience it. Such people stand the risk of minor psychiatric disorder, low self-esteem and depression and emotional and social maladjustment.

Izundu (1990) also listed the following factors to be responsible for unemployment in Nigeria:

1. The economic down turn that did not encourage no investments.
2. The restriction on import that exposed the weakness of the country's industrial process which has very little domestic inputs except manpower.
3. The manufacturing establishment with high import dependency that operated far below their installed capacity or was closed down completely,
4. The slash in government expenditure particularly on capital projects that reduced the level of activities in the construction industry apart from the massive retrenchment of workers in the public sector itself.
5. The number of unemployed graduates and fresh school leavers that increased rapidly as the recession deepened in all sectors of the economy.

These potential problems caused by the unemployed youths have created a great concern to the Federal and State governments. Most manufacturers in Nigeria today experience extreme difficulties in securing raw materials. Many industries including Automobile Assembly Plants, Food Processing and Electronics industries have resulted in folding up or drastically curtailing their production capacity. This has automatically effected the employment atmosphere hence most youths in the country are not able to secure employment and many others working are being retrenched.

EFFORTS TO REDUCE ECONOMIC CRUNCH

The Federal and State Governments have formulated the following three approaches to alleviate economic hardship in order to provide gainful employment to Nigeria youths:

1. Educational Programmes which include Poly-and monotronics and colleges of technologies with the aim of providing the youths with skills to be employed or to develop then- own industries and business.
2. Institutional Programmes such as the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) which has the responsibility of developing national

technical syllabuses in Polytechnics and technical colleges and setting minimum standards of performance in the institutions.

3. Employment Programmes such as Industrial Training Fund (ITF), Employment Exchange Programme, the National Directorate of Employment etc are all aimed at reducing unemployment among Nigerian youths. The NDE (1986) for example was charged to formulate policies and work out strategies for dealing with the problems of mass unemployment in the country especially among school leavers and graduates of universities, and polytechnics.

The NDE has four practical programmes nationwide as follows:

1. National Youth Employment and Vocational Skills Development Programme.
2. Small Scale Industries and graduate employment programme
3. Agricultural Sector Employment Project.
4. Special Public Works Programme.

NDE (1986) Listed and Described the functions of such schemes as follows:

1. National Open Apprenticeship Scheme aimed at providing unemployed youths with basic skills that are needed in the economy in different technical fields.
2. Waste-to-Wealth Scheme created to encourage the conversion of hitherto neglected raw materials and other scrap and waste materials into useful and marketable products.
3. Schools-on-Wheels Scheme which involves taking fully equipped mobile vocational training facilities to the rural areas in order to dissuade urban migration for the open apprenticeship scheme.
4. Small Scale Industries and graduate Employment Programme designed to encourage and aid unemployed Nigerians to set up and run their own business.
5. Job Creative Guarantee Scheme to enable applicant get loans from banks to establish business after the feasibility studies must have been approved.
6. Mature People Scheme targeted at those who are either retired or are preparing to retire from paid employment and willing to maintain an economically productive life.
7. Entrepreneurship Development Programme involves recognizing a business opportunity mobilizing resources and persisting to exploit that opportunity.

VOLUNTEER SERVICE AGENCY

Volunteer Service Agency (VSA) (1990) is a body set up by the former Anambra State Government (now Anambra and Enugu States governments) to formulate policy and work out strategies for dealing with the problems of mass unemployment in the states especially among school leavers and graduates of universities and polytechnics:

1. To reduce the number of persons in the States who are unemployed.

2. To prepare participants for a self-employment so that they may become self-employed after they have ceased to be participants.
3. To provide gainful employment for such persons as may be admitted into the scheme.
4. To inculcate in the youth the spirit of team work in industry, business and other ventures.
5. To help bring out improved agriculture in the state and
6. To encourage the populace to adopt in all things the spirit of self-reliance rather than one of the scope of the activities are involved in agriculture, indigenous technology and acquisition of skills.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATION

Nigeria needs full employment for sustainable and efficient economy where everyone who is willing and able to work at the prevailing wage rate can find a job in the line of work for which he is qualified.

The society should without any bias support the Federal and State governments efforts on the establishments of policies and programme for the development of relevant skills and appropriate technical and vocational knowledge for self-reliance. Self-reliance in technology as pointed out by *Ukeje (1989)* can be and has been achieved in some countries of the world through a variety of policy options for example:

1. China achieved her through shutting out the rest of the world and mobilizing its materials and human resources.
2. Japan, specially achieved self-reliance in technology through the reformation of her education system.

In the manner, Nigeria could also achieve her own technological aims and goals in her industrial revolution through sound and efficient Technical Vocational Education and Policy options based on an independent indigenous technology guided by the concept of self-reliance.

The derogatory phrase “Aba or Igbo-made” being associated to goods made in Nigeria is a very unpatriotic attitude and should be discouraged and the bias attached to certain jobs that have been labeled “blue-collar jobs” or “black-coated” should also be eliminated for Nigeria to have a technological break-through for economic development.

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