

THE IMPORTANCE OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN SUSTAINING DEMOCRACY IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

There is an inherent expectation in every society that citizens should discover, develop and direct their energies, interest and talents towards making a constructive contribution to the society and the economy. The present social, economic and technological changes in Nigeria have posed great challenges for occupational competence. There is evidence throughout Nigeria that the labour market for the unskilled is slow indeed. This paper, therefore is highlighting the importance of vocational education/training therefore provides a common tenet in providing potential ability to afford each individual a maximum opportunity for the discovery, development and direction of his/her potential for making economic and social contribution through the world of work thereby help in sustaining our country's democracy.

KEY WORDS: vocational/technical education, sustainable democracy, activities, development, public opinion, way forward

INTRODUCTION

Every citizen in Nigeria should be equipped with necessary skills to contribute effectively to the economics development of the nation. If a country is developed economically, democracy will be sustained. In view of this, the necessity of preparing each individual for some occupation is a fact that even the most primitive society is recognized.

Furthermore, the economics and social wellbeing of any society is dependent upon the abundant of goods and services available to its people.

In Nigeria, with increase population and an abundance of natural resources, the country is still incapable of meeting its manpower needs due to lack of enough vocational/technical training. In order to meet the immediate and future needs of the society, the available manpower must be given vocational training in terms of development in technology and mechanization.

MEANING OF VOCATIONAL/TECHNICAL EDUCATION

The term vocational/technical education is a comprehensive term referring to the educational process when it involved in addition to general education, the study technologies and related sciences and the acquisition of practical skills and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of the economy and social life. The broad educational goals of vocational and technical education distinguish it from vocational training. Vocational training which is directed

to developing the particular skills and related knowledge required by a specific occupation or groups of specifications.

According to Okeke (1993) saw vocational education as the type of education which developed the mental and physical qualities of people thereby increasing their skills, knowledge and attitudes required for utilizing the natural resources needed for economic development of the nation and for their own self-employment.

SUSTAINABLE DEMOCRACY: is the ability of the system to maintain the freedom of choice, participation and sustainability in the process of governance and social order in an organized political setting.

TYPES OF VOCATIONAL/TECHNICAL EDUCATION

Vocational/technical education can be formal or informal. Formal will be normally begotten in school ranging from the primary to the tertiary institutions. It follows an accepted syllabus and it is generalized in all schools. The informal is gotten principally from apprenticeship to established institutions. The choice belongs to the individuals and again the availability and non-availability of money will determine the type to enroll in.

Akpan (1997), classification technical and vocational education into:

1. Business Education-Emphasis here is on the general operations of a typical business ranging from the job of a secretary, general administration and accounting procedures
2. Technical Education-The emphasis here is on repairs and installation of equipment, machines, cars, electricity and electronics.
3. Agricultural education: It has to do with administration of animal husbandry, horticulture, fishery, and provision of extension services
4. Computer Education: This repairs and operation of the computer in the form of Microsoft Word, Excel and Internet operation are embedded in computer education.
5. Distributive Education: The entire spectrum of marketing is kept under review in distributive education. Osuala (1998). Opined them to include advertisement, sales, transportation occupation, wholesaling occupations, finances and credit.
6. Home Economics Education-It has to do with Home Management, Food and Nutrition and clothing and textile

NEEDS FOR VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION IN SUSTAINING DEMOCRACY

Vocational and technical education is a vehicle upon which the skills of the workforce are built, without effective implementation of vocational and technical education, we cannot hope

for a future self reliance graduate with the required skills and flexibility for sustainable human resources development in this global age, vocational and technical education is an instrument for change and development and a provider of service oriented skills, which plays a significant roles in economic revival for sustainable democracy. It is on the recognition of this needs that the National Policy on Education Places on Vocational and Technical Skills at the secondary and tertiary institution. The needs for proper vocational and technical education are diverse and could be viewed from the following perspectives;

- a. The necessity to be self reliant-Nigeria as a nation should be self reliant in the production of these things that makes for proper living. The days of import and deficit balance is post coming to an end with the recent bon on importation of certain goods into the country, more efforts should be made toward the provision to this essentials of life, through the applications of the right technology. This could only be possible through technical and vocational education that is the leeway to technological development
- b. Employment of labours: This is common feature today to see thousand chasing just a couple of openings in the employment market. A graduate of proper vocational and technical education is not easily opened to this type of embarrassing situation. He has the skills to turn himself into a respectable entrepreneur. He has the capability to; use his hands and brain to take out a living for himself and thereby help in the reduction of unemployment rate.
- c. Contributes to the growth of Growth Domestic Product- The human development report of the United Nations defines Gross Domestic Product as the total output of goods and services for final use produced by an economy. The higher the figure, the better for the economy in question. Nigeria as the third world country ranks among the least developing country as reported by the Human Development reports of the United Nations. The situation can be improved up through the entrepreneurs that are pushed into the economy on graduation from the vocational and technical based courses. The more entrepreneurs, the better for the economy.
- d. Eradication of Crime-Vocational/technical education is one source way of getting the youth busy in producing one thing or the other for the betterment of the economy which in turn reduces the rate of crime and social vices in the society. This is in terms of making discoveries and innovations that will upgrade the social status with the society. With the vocational and technical education, technology manipulations are made using the existing local technologies especially in a nation like Nigeria where we have various gifted and talented individuals.

ACTIVITIES OF VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

According to Osuala (1981) the basic objectives of vocational education are:

- a. To satisfy the man-power needs of the society
- b. To prepare the trainee for entry into employment
- c. To motivate all types of learning experiences

- d. To encourage the explosion and maintenance of programmes and services to meet the occupational desire of people
- e. To supply occupation planners with demand information
- f. To encourage programme and services for advantages of handicapped individuals.
- g. To provide leadership for future development and growth of programme of vocational education

DEVELOPMENT OF VOCATIONAL/TECHNICAL EDUCATION AND SUSTAINBLE DEMOCRACY

The effort to provide basic education and literacy for all children and adults will underpin the economic and social development of countries by ensuring the capacity of people to learn and provide the foundation for the employability and access to decent work.

Vocational and technical education training at both secondary and tertiary education levels is mainly focused producing readily employable skilled personnel for the labour market. This is why many people, both in the developed and developing world recognized the importance role that vocational and technical education played in equipping individuals with relevant skills and hence enabling people to effectively participate in social, economic and technological innovation processes.

Vocational technological education implies lifelong learning and preparation for responsible citizenship. It is importance to note that vocational technology education in its broadcast definition includes vocational education, technical education, vocational training on the job training or apprenticeship training, delivered in a formal and non formal way (Nether land Organized for Internation Cooperation in Higher Education (NICHE), 2010). A basic requirement for driving the engine of industrial and economic growth is a skilled workforce and VTE holds the key to building this type of entrepreneurial workforce. (Yomada and Matsuda 2007).

Quality VTE helps to develop the individual's knowledge of science and technology in a broad occupational area requiring technical and professional competencies and specific occupational skills. National VTE system needs to develop the knowledge and skills that will help the workforce becomes more flexibility and responsive to the needs of local labour marketers while competing in the global economy. Some countries like India, Korea and Japan have TVET reforms that endeavour to integrate work-place-base learning and training into vocational education curriculum. VTE or TVET system must also be opened and all inclusive to give even the most underprivileged access to training and learning. The opportunity for people in Urban and Rural communities to Equipped themselves to lead productive and satisfying life will undoubtedly be critical to the posterity and well being of the community. (Frank, 2000.)

In a time of continuous economic, social and technological change, skills and knowledge become quickly out of date. People who have not being able to benefit from formal education and training must be given opportunity to acquire skills and knowledge that will give them a second chance in life and at work. Providing all individuals with learning opportunities

throughout their life is an ambitious but necessary undertaking. The world today is witnessing an accelerated growth in technology allied and semi professional occupations. A large number of other occupations also called for considerable technical education training.

The labour market depends on the production of higher education which in various sectors and sub sectors help to create wealth to enhance individual and national development plans and National Policy on Education. Moreover, the quality of professional education depends on level and quality of skills offered by vocational programmes.

PUBLIC OPINION OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The perceived importance of this type of education by most Nigerian is still distorted. Even though the government appreciate of the worth of vocational education programme within the overall, educational system is beginning to rise in recent times, the majority of Nigerian, especially the elites whom educational orientation were liberal in content and are still vexed with the whole idea of this type of education.

Many people do not understand what vocational education is all about. They think vocational education is synonymous with special education, they conceived of vocational education as education for the physically disabled and erroneously conclude that vocational education is education for the drop-outs, and the never-do-well students (Akpan, 1997). It may be surprising as well as offensive to note that the foregoing views represent those majorities of well meaning Nigerians.

The renewed educationalist were of the opinion that the objective of vocational education would be to produced only “craftsmen” with skills for the attainment of technological advancement of Nigeria. There exist situations in which parents, students, teachers and often the public look down upon vocational education as educational activities for the second class citizens. (Akpan, 1998). It may be shocking too to observe that even the front line advocators finds it extremely difficult to allow their own children opt for vocational education courses.

The poor image of vocational education though apparent, has serious effect on the financing and administrative patterns of the programme. Some of the government financial policy makers who falls into the group of Nigerians lacking the understanding of what vocational education stands for may deliberately underfinanced the programme, as against when an enlightened policy makers or that has interest for vocational education in there.

WAY FORWARD OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND SUSTAINABLE DEMOCRACY

According to Akpan and Akpan (2010), had proffered recommendations as well as strategies for ensuring attainment of quality in the product of vocational education programme. This includes the following:

1. The school administration should ensure that the schemes of their educational programmes are lined with the national goals and objectives of vocational education.
2. The standard of admission in vocational education programme should be maintained.
3. Provision of adequate facilities for effective teaching and learning must be of utmost priority.
4. Ensuring prudent management and leadership of vocational education at national and local levels.
5. Ensuring that the curriculum and assessment methods are relevant and comprehensive.
6. There should be proper assessment of student learning, the result of the assessment published and the information properly utilized.
7. Government should provide adequate funds for payment of wages and purchase of equipment and facilities for learning.
8. There should be balance of course content with assessment. Emphasis should be laid on the development of psychomotor skills to facilitate all round development of student for greater quality.
9. Innovation from researches should be emphasized by encouraging lecturers, students' technicians, to develop techniques for solving persistent economic, technological, agricultural, scientific and educational problems.
10. Adequate numbers of qualified staffs should be recruited and properly motivated to give their best. This will help to reduce excess workload and ensure pedagogic efficiency and attainment of high quality products.
11. Take corrective actions against deviation from the focus so as to achieve the desired goals.
12. Education should be given top priority in the resources allocation (better funding) in order to help in the attainment of overall development of the nation.
13. Safety and security of the staff, students and equipment should be stepped up through high powered vigilant and surveillance teams, enhance peaceful learning environment to achieve high quality.

14. Follow-up studies are required in the administration of vocational education. These studies help the training programmes to seek and obtain employer's reports about the quality of job performance by the programme products.

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