

Regenerating Technical and Vocational Education for Sustainable Youth Empowerment in Nigeria

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Abstract

Technical and Vocational Education as enshrined in the Nigeria National Policy on Education is used as a comprehensive term referring to those aspects of the educational process involving, in addition to general education, the study of technologies and related sciences and the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of economic and social life. Therefore, in order to cope with the requirements of a sustainable youth empowerment challenges in Nigeria, vocational and technical education should be re-engineered, re-assessed and made compatible with the needs of the society. There is also the need to expand the discipline to accommodate other occupational and professional areas of interest.

Introduction

There is the urgent need to equip the youths with the needed and essential viable knowledge and skills for surviving in a hostile environment. These knowledge and skills are acquired through occupational preparations. Okoro (1993) quoted in Momoh (2012) defines vocational education as a form of education whose primary purpose is to prepare persons for employment in recognized occupations. Technical education facilitates the acquisition of practical and applied skills as well as scientific knowledge. It is therefore a planned program of courses and learning experiences that begins with exploration of career options, supports basic academic and life skills, and enables achievement of high academic standards, leadership, preparation for industry in a defined work, advanced and continuing education (CTE, 2009). According to Amoor (2011) the objectives of technical and vocational education are to prepare the learner for entry into employment in his or her chosen career, meet the manpower need of the society, increase the option available to each student, and to enable the learner to wisely select a career.

Nuru (2007) indicated that change in a country's economy is required to prepare young people for jobs of the future of which technical and vocational education have important roles to play in this process. The professional training of engineers, medical doctors, lawyers, pharmacists, and agriculturists which take place in the university is vocational since the purpose is to equip individuals with necessary knowledge and skills to enable them enter specialized occupations. The essential elements of vocational education include the provision of knowledge, skills acquisition and inculcation of attitudes that are necessary for entry and progress in an occupation ((Momoh, 2012). According to Van Ark (1992) the Dutch system is said to pay attention to "high standards in mathematics and the provision of technical education at ages 14-16 for all pupils, and a widespread of vocational education at 16+. Unfortunately, Nigeria does not seem to give technical and vocational education the attention they deserve and this appears to be one of the reasons for the rising unemployment, poverty and the alarming crime wave in the society. May (2006) also opined that the neglect of technical education in the area of adequate personnel, financial support and facilities to encourage technical and vocational education are robbing the nation of the contributions our graduates would make in the nation's economy. Asogwa and Diogu (2007) maintained that there is an urgent need for the people's attention to be redirected towards self-reliant and sustainable means of livelihood which technical education provides. However, in 1983, the Federal Government of Nigeria directed training institutions in the country to re-orient their programme towards the production of graduates that can employ themselves and be self-reliant (Okafor, 2011). The new approach therefore is to ensure that all youths leave schools as better citizens with skills sufficient to obtain employment, pursue additional career training through further academic education. This means that general education and vocational education should be provided simultaneously to all youth if they are to make maximum contributions to the society. Therefore, emphasis should be on the development of technical/vocational and professional competencies.

Nwolu-Elechi (2013) observed that Nigerian Universities have been slow in establishing departments of vocational education probably due to a belief by some individuals within the academic circle that vocational and technical education should not be the concern of Universities. However, notable Nigerians such as late Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, Chief Obafemi Awolowo and Michael Okpara had spoken of the need for technical and vocational education training of Nigerians long ago. Williams and Offiong (2007) in response to the call by Federal Government urging Nigerian higher institutions to re-orient their programmes towards the graduating of individuals that can be self-employed, Departments of Vocational Teacher Education, Home-Economics Education and Technical Education are currently being established in some Universities for teacher training in these areas. However, Nigerian Universities are yet to establish schools of vocational studies for the training of youths where they could be sustainably empowered with relevant skills for self-employment and being able to

employ others.

Vocational Education and Sustainable Youth Empowerment

Nigeria is assumed as one of the leading industrial countries in Africa. The nation should accept the challenge of a dynamic industrial revolution. Therefore, technical and vocational education should be able to show and articulate new and emerging economic, industrial and social changes of the present day; and be readily available to people of all ages particularly the youths (Osuala, 1987). Vocational and technical education should contribute immensely to sustainable youth empowerment by providing a wider range of skill levels ranging from basic entry skills, semi-skills, technical skills to very highly technical skills requiring a high degree of specialization and competencies. In order to sustainably empower the youths, vocational and technical education have the following roles to play:

Equipping the youths with versatile skills and competencies needed in the world of work.

Assisting the youth make appropriate choice of vocation or occupation early in life.

Promoting effective utilization of available technologies for self and societal development

Enhancing the utilization of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for self-emancipation and development.

Assisting Nigerian Youth to utilize their vocational and technical abilities for increased production.

Exposing the youths to a wide range of occupational opportunities where choice of life-career is made.

Encouraging the youth to make maximum use of available natural resources for job creation, self-employment and gainful-employment for others.

Empowering the youth with essential and versatile technological skills for increased productivity and poverty alleviation.

Enabling the youth to fully make use of their potential in diverse sectors of Computer Technology, Home Economics, Industrial, Agriculture, Business, Commercial and Technical enterprises.

Preparing youth for useful living within the society

Regenerating Technical and Vocational Education for Sustainable Youth Empowerment

There is urgent need to develop, improve and to make vocational and technical education functional as a source of youth empowerment in Nigeria. For the noble objectives of the vocational and technical education to be achieved, there is need for re-engineering, re-assessment and to make it more compatible with the needs of the individuals and that of the society. The course areas should be made to include many disciplines and fields of interest. There is also the need for total amendment of all previous in vocational and technical education courses to ensure expansion of active programmes and the cultivation of new ones that are relevant to youth empowerment. The need for effective research and experimentation in vocational and technical skills are indispensable in today's world of work. Therefore, the following criteria should be met in order to regenerate and revitalize vocational and technical education for sustainable Youth Empowerment:

Innovation and renewal are requirements of a dynamic society. Vocational and technical education status must be effectively upgraded as a specialized programme for the purpose of preparing the youths for remunerative employment.

Vocational and technical education should be a fulcrum of youth's education in Nigeria with the sole objective of developing vocational and technical skills for occupational competencies.

Vocational and technical education must adapt to changes that occur in the society from time to time. It should be adequately regenerated to prepare the youths for effective productive roles in the society.

More emphasis should be placed on job preparation. Vocational and technical education should be accorded the same status as a specialized occupation such as engineering, medicine, pharmacy and law since it requires specialized preparation and skills acquisition.

Vocational and technical education should serve various interest groups along the employment and employability continuum. This is important because of some occupations that need additional preparations for new capabilities and competencies.

Technical and vocational education curricula should take cognizance of the implications it has for career development, useful living, employment, employability and the human qualities needed in the world of work.

Curriculum Trends in Technical and Vocational Education for Youth Empowerment

Technical and vocational education curricula should be a true reflection of the industrial-technological society with the philosophy of preparing youths for useful living within the society. The content should include the concept, organization, occupations, materials, process and products of vocational training (Miller, 1988). Williams and Offiong (2007) opined that the curricula should reflect the technologies that are available to the trainees. The content should be comprehensive enough in nature and applicable in vocational industrial education. Special areas should include the following:

Vocational Construction Technology: Adoption of indigenous construction strategies and technology.

Vocational Agriculture Technology: Application of engineering principles in Technical Agricultural Production.

Vocational Bookmaking Technology: Utilization of cycling and recycling technology in book making enterprise.

Vocational Business Technology: Utilizing modern information technology and communication principles in business.

Vocational Computer Technology: Utilization of technical principles in computer repairs, maintenance and word processing.

Vocational Communication Technology: Technical and professional utilization of communication technology.

Vocational Culinary Technology: Utilization of exotic and indigenous technology in food preparation and preservation.

Vocational Cosmetics Technology: Utilization of local resources in cosmetics production.

Vocational Distribution Technology: Establishing distributive technology for local made goods and services

Vocational Electrical and Electronic Technology: Application and utilization of basic electrical and electronic principles in creating employment.

Vocational Entrepreneurship Technology: Applying entrepreneurial principles in planning and carrying out business.

Vocational Furniture Making Technology: Utilization of indigenous technology in furniture design and construction.

Vocational Graphic Technology: Application and utilization of local resources for graphic production.

Vocational Home Economic Technology: Providing professional and technical skills to learners for livelihood.

Vocational Management Technology: Identification and utilization of basic management principles in business.

Vocational Mechanic Technology: Acquiring competencies on specific mechanical operations

Vocational Metal Work Technology: Effective and efficient utilization of indigenous technology in metal work.

Vocational Plastic Technology: Application of science and technology in cycling and recycling of plastic materials.

Vocational Textile Technology: Adoption and utilization of indigenous textile designs for livelihood.

Vocational Woodwork Technology: Adoption and utilization of indigenous resources and technology in wood production.

Implications of Regenerating Technical and Vocational Education for Sustainable Youth Empowerment

Williams and Offiong (2007) opined that vocational education is designed to make Youths acquire the relevant occupational skills to become wealthy through vocational preparations as well as become self-employed, self-sustaining and self-reliant in the society. A regenerated technical and vocational education will have the following for sustainable youth empowerment:

Preparing youths on occupational choice to which they possess minimum skills and abilities

Promoting youth acquisition of relevant functional experiences that can make them job creators rather than job seekers.

Encouraging positive attitudes towards lifelong occupations in the youths

Creating awareness on self-employment opportunities

Acquainting the youths with demands in the world of work.

Promoting self-initiatives and innovations in a chosen area of vocational technology

Encouraging the utilization of information and communication technology for self-improvement and development through job creation awareness

Ensuring job performance efficiency through the acquisition of necessary and essential skills required in the world of work.

Integrating youths into the society as useful citizens that can contribute effectively and efficiently to the wealth of the nation.

CONCLUSION

Regenerating technical and vocational education is critical for sustainable youth empowerment in Nigeria. There is now the urgent need for a total overhauling of our educational system to be in line with other countries of the world who have succeeded empowering their youths through vocational and technical education. The way and manner TVE Programmes are run in Nigeria often lead to ever rising unemployment, poverty, unabated crimes and misery among the youths (Uwaifo, 2009).

This ugly situation can be curbed if the curricula of TVE is renovated and re-designed to include more courses that can build up the (Self-help Spirit) entrepreneurial spirit among our youths. Technical and vocational education is the most appropriate education where necessary and essential technological and occupational skills are imparted simultaneously. It is a qualitative type of education that can impart cognitive, psycho-productive and effective skills needed for youth self-employment, self-reliance and self-sustenance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of the above discussion on the need to regenerate technical and vocational education for sustainable youth empowerment in Nigeria, the following recommendations are hereby proffered:

1. Technical and vocational education must adapt to changes that occur in the society. It should comprehensively be engineered to adequately prepare the youths for effective productive roles in the society
2. Technical and vocational education should form the fulcrum of youth education with the aim of developing technical and vocational skills for occupational competencies.
3. Technical and vocational education status must be upgraded as a specialized programme for the purpose of preparing the youths for remunerative employment.
4. Technical and vocational education curricula should recognize the importance of career development, useful living, employment and human qualities needed in the world of work.
5. Impressive innovations in the world of work should be vigorously integrated into the training programme for a more skills acquisition and effective job performance by Nigerian youths.

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