

VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION: TOOL FOR ECONOMIC RECOVERY

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ABSTRACT

This paper seeks to view vocational and technical education as a tool for economic recovery. It highlights the importance of vocational and technical education in a nation's development process and the deliberate attempts at ensuring the realization of its national potentials. In the early 50s and 70s, secondary school leavers let alone those of tertiary institutions always had jobs begging for them with all benefits. This phenomenal change in trend in the employment world calls for greater emphasis and expansion of vocational education opportunities to overcome the problems of unemployment which has become a big social challenge in Nigeria. The paper believes that Nigeria as a nation needs to invest more in vocational and technical education if its ambition of joining the technology-driven, global link and realize its millennium development goals are to be realized. The study advocates that government at the federal, state, and local government levels in Nigeria should redirect their energy and interest into vocational education in order to empower graduates for self-relevance and develop the needed employable skills. These three tiers of government should provide funds to build and upgrade facilities, acquire the necessary vocational laboratories, working equipment, and recruit, train, and retrain well-qualified and motivated manpower for quality service at all levels.

Keywords: Vocational, Technical, Education, Economy Recovery.

INTRODUCTION

The foundation of economic growth globally is vocational and technical education and this is cardinal to the socio - economic development of any nation. In Nigeria and indeed all over the world, the importance of technical and vocational education cannot be over-emphasized because it holds the key to pragmatic industrial growth and development of our economy. Vocational and technical education plays a significant role in turning lazy and unbecoming people into productive workman.

Over the years in Nigeria emphasis has been on certificate acquisition due to the type of education the first generation received from the colonial masters who only train them to be clerk and interpreters for them. Owing to civilization and independence the next generation liberated themselves but turned themselves into administrators in offices and companies already established and since then the mindset of every Nigerian has been “go to school, get certificate and get employment in either the government or private establishment already existing” without any proper training on job creation in the school. While this lasts Nigeria economy has been on a reverse gear going towards the rock of famine and total economic meltdown.

Today, the National Policy on Education document in Nigeria attaches great importance to vocational and technical education. This is because it is one of prime movers for achieving the desired technological and economic development of Nigeria. It is no gain saying that societal norms and values are prerequisites for a person to fit into any society, hence the need for the acquisition of vocational skills and competence for self-relevance. It is

on this note that this paper focuses on vocational and technical education as a tool for economic recovery.

VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

According to National Policy on Education (2004), Technical and Vocational Education is used as a comprehensive term referring to those aspects of the educational process involving in addition to general education the study of technology and related sciences and the acquisition of practical skills, attitude, understanding and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of the economic and social life of Nigerians. It further expatiated the concept of vocational and technical education to include: an integral part of general education, a means of preparing for participation in world of work, an aspect of lifelong learning and a preparation for responsible citizenships, and an instrument for promoting environmentally healthy sustainable development.

According to Abdulahi (1994) technical education is that aspect of education that involves the acquisition of techniques and application of the knowledge of the science for the improvement of man's surrounding. Technical and vocational education prepares one for the world of work with which the individual become reliant and can make contributions to the development of the society.

Osayomwanbor & Edokpayi (2008), Oyebolu & Oshin, 2011, and Oranu (1991) in the same way defined vocational and technical education as that type of education that train and help to prepare the individual for employment in a specific occupation or trade. To Thompson (1973) vocational education as the training or retraining which is given in schools or classes under public supervision and control. Vocational education leads to the acquisition of practical and applied skills, as well as basic scientific knowledge that will enable the individual to be prepared for the world of work.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

As it is meet to establish a platform on which vocational and technical education can stand on, the following aims and objectives are established.

- Meet education demands of the population, support professional, career development and social protection of individuals.
- Feed economy with qualified staff competitive both on local and international labor market and to ensure a match between the fast changing labor market and vocational and technical education system.
- Maintain competitiveness of employed be re-training and professional development.
- Foster appropriation of the people's educational capacities with the new social-economic conditions to support self-employment and entrepreneurship.
- Support student mobility.
- Ensure professional development of minority groups and create employment opportunities for them.
- Develop Lifelong Learning.
- Develop School-Business Partnership in vocational and technical education.

CONCEPT OF ECONOMIC RECOVERY

Economic recovery is the phase of the business cycle following a recession, during which an economy regains and exceeds peak employment and output levels achieved prior to downturn. A recovery period is typically characterized by abnormally high levels of growth in real gross domestic product, employment, corporate profits, and other indicators. During

economic recovery, businesses will see an uptick in demand and will start hiring. People will begin going back to work, confidence will start to increase and consumers will open their purses/wallets more. Governments will usually try to bring an economy out of a recession by increasing the money supply (through the lowering of interest rates) and increasing spending (on infrastructure programs, etc.).

IMPORTANCE OF VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION IN ECONOMIC RECOVERY

It is disheartening to know that Nigeria being the giant of Africa still relies on the importation of basic essentials for her populace which has contributed to the backward economic movement of the country. However, it is good to know that through effective vocational and technical education the country can soar high in manpower development leading to sustainability of economic production within her boundaries. It is of the note we say vocational and technical education is a key element in economic recovery in Nigeria. The following highlights the roles it can play in ensuring economic recovery (Trivedi, 2019; Ovbiagele, 2015; Kehinde & Adewuyi, 2015).

- Vocational and technical education helps to solve the problems of unemployment and reduces the number of people who depend on government for job. When the youths and adults are trained vocationally or technically, it would enable them to be self-reliant in different areas such as electrical, plumbing, automobile, vulcanizing, computer engineering, agriculture, cloth weaving and so on which in turn ensure money circulation in the economy (Khatete & Chepkoech, 2018).
- Vocational and technical education is always serving as a motivating force in individuals to work for the nation because it stimulates technological and industrial development through the production of competent and honest workers who are capable of utilizing the abundant natural and human resources available in a country for economy and industrial growth and development.
- It helps to bring about rapid economic development. The survival of individuals will ensure the survival of the country as a nation. To continually meet the needs of the present generation means there must be continued economic growth. The commitment of the Federal Government to place Nigeria amongst the top 20-20-20 economics in the world by the year 2020 can only be realized when the vocational and technical education among others is harnessed to empower Nigerians.
- Through vocational and technical education, local technology can be developed by indigenous technicians and technologists. It should be emphasized here that every society has its own peculiar problems. Therefore, it will take the ingenuity of local artisans, craftsmen, technicians and technologists to design and fabricate tools, equipment and simple or complex machines to solve local problems. This eventually will save the nation billions of Naira or Dollars in foreign currency that would have been used in importing machines, most of which break down shortly on arrival in the country because they were not designed for our peculiar environment (Ojimba, 2012).
- Vocational and technical education is not left out in agriculture. It is needed to direct those in the sector towards making the farmer an intelligent user of our natural resources.
- Vocational and technical education is needed in every aspect of our natural life. The problem of juvenile delinquency and crime can be reduced if the youths are given the necessary vocational training that will keep them busy.
- Vocational and technical education is also needed to prevent waste of human resources. So far Nigeria has given very little attention to conservation of human resources. It is obvious that the waste of labour by improper employment can be largely avoided through vocational and technical training. Such training is the most potent remedy for unemployment.

CONCLUSION

Vocational and technical education (VTE) is the most viable and reliable instrument for economy transformation. This is why vocational and technical education is placing

emphasis on the development of occupational skills needed as preparation for work in order to earn a useful and lawful living through gainful employment. It also involves the application of the brain and manipulation with the hands in order to give an individual the “best assurance in a creative activity.”

Vocational and technical education is also a form of education that promotes and encourages the dignity of labour and the related competences. This is why the clamour for the re-orientation of our educational system in Nigeria with skills, attitude and knowledge has been hinged upon vocational and technical education in order that the teaming youths and adults could achieve self-employment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To make vocational and technical education relevant in Nigeria and also to ensure its successful contribution to economic recovery the following should be adhere to:

- The government should work collaboratively with the private sector to maintain and expand vocational and technical education and training in Nigeria. In particular, the government should draw upon the resources of employers and solicit private sector investment in vocational and technical education.
- Federal, state, and local agencies should provide a clear vision and mission for vocational technical education. In addition, the government should provide effective leadership and incentives to the private sector to encourage partnerships and collaboration with vocational and technical institutions.
- The government, especially the Ministry of Education, should seek input from numerous stakeholders, such as educators, business/industry personnel, parents, students, academicians, and other professionals, before formulating major policy decisions regarding vocational and technical education.
- A balanced approach should be emphasized in the school curriculum through the integration of technical, employability, and generalizable skills in vocational and technical programs. In addition, vocational curricula should be flexible and responsive to the present and future needs of the nation.
- The government should reduce bureaucracy and increase the efficiency and effectiveness of vocational and technical programs. Further, the Ministry of Education should consider decentralizing the management of public vocational institutions and encourage the expansion of private and community-supported vocational and technical schools.
- Policymakers should introduce legislation related to new reform initiatives such as school/business partnerships, school-to-work activities, technology preparation, and workforce development to sustain employer and private sector commitment to education, training, and human resource development.

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