

The Role of Vocational and Technical Education in Skill Acquisition in Nigeria

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Abstract

The paper discussed the role played by vocational technical education in relation to skill acquisition. It clearly described it as an education that emphasised the acquisition of practical and manipulative skills in addition to the moral training for building a useful citizen. It continued with a step backward to the development of vocational education during the colonial and pre colonial era, during that time the type of skill acquired was not as systematic as that of today but was effective because it save the purpose it was meant for. Our formal system of skill acquisition today is criticised for ineffectiveness. And was among the factors that were responsible for the failure of most government programmes aimed at either poverty reduction, job creation, wealth and employment generation etc. Lastly the paper discussed the problems that lead to the ineffectiveness of the skills acquired, that was tied around poor funding, and finally possible solutions to the problems was also discussed.

Key words: skill acquisition, vocational technical education.

1. Introduction

Education in recent times has lost its meaning to some extent, while we have so many educational bodies that are saddle with the planning and administration of functional education. In Nigeria the level of youth restiveness has gone beyond controlled Levels, for example quite a number of school dropout with no defined skills or occupation to enable them earn their living. These have to an extent resulted in the larger part of the country optimum population being left unemployed or unutilized due to lack of skills that would make them take up gainful employment which make them to be self reliance, due to high level of unemployment rate in the country, the youth have sought for themselves some means of earning their lives in an illegal ways; the youth are being used by hiding leaders to create problems in the oil producing communities, others are being used by politicians to achieve their goals and the rampant causes of robbery in the Banks, in our residence and on the high ways, the issue of bomb blast is on the increased in Nigeria today. The solutions to these problems could be, by means of functional vocational and technology education right from the secondary school stage. UNESCO (1984) defined vocational and technical education as an educational Process which involves, in addition to general education the study of technologies and related sciences and acquisition of practical skills and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of the economy and social life. We can equally look at another definition of vocational and technical education, as the education that leads to acquisition of practical and manipulative skills desired to produces and retain manpower,(Nyanabo and Ahukannah, 2008). The National policy on education (2004) which came into existence as a result of the National curriculum conference of (1969) defined vocational and technical education as those aspects of the educational process involving, in addition to general education the study of technologies and related sciences and acquisition of practical skills, attitude, understanding and knowledge occupation in various sectors of the economy and social life.

Government initiatives on skill acquisition

Going by these definitions we would without doubt state that, Government programmes like the National Directorate of Employments (NDE), entrepreneurship education and some other programmes aimed at skills acquisition can only be possible with the proper embarrassing and enhancement of vocational and technology education. The extent to which the government lay emphasis to the development and enhancement of vocational and technology education right from secondary to tertiary levels is something that is debatable. However the writers of this paper have the believe that some of the outlined social and economic problems prevalent in the

country can be mitigated through proper administration and funding of vocational and technical education. Skill acquisition in vocational and technical education has been in existence since time Immemorial before the advent of the western education, children learn the trade of their parents through the apprenticeship system, they become farmers, blacksmiths, woodcarvers, fishermen, cattle rearers etc (Anyanduba, 2001). The Director General of the NYSC Brigadier General Maharazo Tsiga announced the current enrolment of 70 serving corps members on skill acquisition training in Germany and USA respectively, (June 2011).

Development of Vocational Technical Education in Nigeria

Around 14th century, during the pre colonial era skill acquisition in vocational and technical education was still an informal way, where the learner lives with his master through out the period of training. The instructional method was through observation and imitation of the master. Non indigenous companies like the Shell BP and the UAC started training artisans among their employees, but the training acquired was to save the skill needed by that particular company at that particular time. There was no arrangement for examination neither issuances of any certificate or any means to improve the learners ability to accomplish more complex task.

The first technical institute established in Nigeria was the Hope Waddell institute in Calabar (1885) with the aim of providing education in rudiments training in the Technical trades and teacher education. The first vocational and technical institute to be established in Nigeria was the Yaba higher college (1948) as seen in Aina (2009). With the motive to train Artisans, Craftsmen and Technicians, together with teachers of technical education to teach in the trade centres. Skills acquired during the pre independent period should have gone beyond technicians level.

In Nigeria today we have over 40 federal and state technical colleges, federal college of education, state college of education, federal polytechnics, state polytechnics, federal and state University of technology and a number of colleges of Agriculture and forestry. Various skills have been acquired at various levels and in various fields from these institutions, Thousand of students graduate annually with vast technical knowledge as to man different sectors of our economy .

Therefore what happens to the skill acquired previously that is termed as unsystematic but seems to be more effective and efficient, since during the pre-colonial era vocational and technical education skills hold the axis of the countries economy which cut across the extractive, manufacturing and commercial sectors of the economy .(Nyanabo and Ahukannah, 2008). Why did the present systematised type of skills acquisitions a point on the list of major contributors of the country depressed economy? Why do people assume that the skills acquired informally (in the previous years) is more functional than the ones acquired presently in our institutions.

Problems of Vocational Technical Education in Nigeria

The issue of Vocational and technical education has not been considered in Nigeria today, it has not been given the attention it deserves unlike the other sector of the economy for example health and this negligence by the Nigerian government leads to some obstacles in national development. Emphasis in Nigerian educational institutions has been on academic qualification instead of skill acquisition and problem solving activities. According to Aworonti (2007) there is a wide gap between the curriculum content being taught in the tertiary institutions that is the theoretical aspect and the practical skills needed by the employees of labour and the world of work.

Lack of resources, poor funding of vocational and technical education which resulted in the problems such as inadequate teachers, low quality of students, epileptic power supply as observed by Aina (2009) lead to short supply of knowledgeable and competitive workforce, In the same vein Adesina (2006) highlight on the quantity and quality of teacher. UNESCO as reported by Aina (2009), concluded that the aims of various government to combat poverty through the establishment of different programme aimed at job creation and poverty reduction have failed and many have continue to fail because graduates of our previous higher institutions lack the necessary practical skills. Value re-orientation, poverty reduction, wealth creation and employment generation commonly known in as Nigeria as NEEDS (National Economic Empowerment and Developments Strategy) can hardly be accomplished without developing Technical and Vocational education.

Suggestions

As elaborated by Aliyu (2006), one of the qualities of good leadership in a nation is to ensure that its citizens acquired quality education, since the productivity of a nation depends on the citizen level of education involve in productive activities. Education improve the understanding and inculcate respect for other, socio cultural changes and create awareness of their environment, democracy and equality investment in education does not ends as a means for earning alone its help the overall societal development, therefore human development should

be enhanced through sound education. According to Oliver in Aliyu (2006) there are three (3) major component in any curriculum in vocational and technical education, which are classified as follows; i) The programme of study; at any school level include the subject as reflected in the school syllabus; ii) Programme of activities; this entitles all the activities capable of enhancing the academic experience of the students; and iii) programme of guidance; which assist the students acquire the capability for self-direction and self guidance.

As we can see that point two (2) shows that in vocational and technical education the issue of skill acquisition has been in existence but the problems lies with its implementation due to lack of training facilities(Aina, 2009). Equal emphases should be laid both on education as well as on skill acquisition activities laboratories and workshops should be well equip to trained the student on what they have learned theoretically and translate them to the practical aspect. All these problems were encountered as a result of in adequate funding, in reality vocational and technical education is an expensive project but yet received funds only from the government through external aid, special funds and internally generated revenue which is highly insufficient, there is a great need for the involvement of individual and organization,(Ahukannah and Nyanabo, 2008). This issue of inadequate funding leads to low quality of students, unprepared teachers due to short supply of required knowledge and competitive skill force. Aina (2009) highlight the following recommendation based on the laid down problem of vocational and technical education; thus there should be: i)A sustainable technical teacher formation scheme, should be put in place so as to ensure the availability of good quantity and specialize staff in the institutions; and ii) Practical allowance known as technical teacher allowance (TTA) of at least 10% of basic salary to be introduce as incentives for technical teachers.

The former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo (2000) as reported by Aina (2009) stated that technical and vocational education with it relevant practical training component hold the key in the society becoming technologically relevant and internationally competitive in the world market. The acquisition of relevant and appropriate technology accomplished by a well trained manpower is the most effective means of empowerment to the citizens to stimulate and sustain national development, enhance employment, improve the quality of life, reduce poverty, limit the incidence of social vices due to joblessness and promote a culture of peace, freedom and democracy. Technical and vocational education will be popularized embraced and elevated above. The present mediocre level if we are to experience genuine development. Nigeria Should as a matter of genuine attempt to achieve a sustainable development, achieve. The UNESCO recommended 5% enrolment into technical education.

Strategies for Skill Acquisition in Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET)

The researchers outlined the following strategies on TVET : 1 - Establishment of more skill acquisition centres, where by primary school levers and secondary school drop-out should acquire skills like carpentry, fashion design, beauty saloon, cleaning ventures, laundry services, photography services, soap making Others are engineering workshop, motor mechanic workshop, shoe manufacturing panel beating, book binding, welding etc. Should all be included at the various skill acquisition centres.

2- All facilities required for the trades are to be put in place in order to enhanced training in all trades in the skill acquisition centres.

3-Guidance and counselling units should be put in place in all the skill acquisition centres and technical colleges so as to create career awareness to the trainees.

4- Teachers at all levels of learning in vocational technical education institutes should be retrained so that they will update their training to fill the gap between school training and the industries.

5-Establishment of functional skill acquisition centres at all institutions of learning (from primary schools to higher institutions) so that each and every student will learn at least a trade before graduation.

6- Establishment of a special scheme whereby interested graduates will be supplied with take up equipment on non interest basis.

Summary

This paper introduce the importance of skill acquisition and how its ineffectiveness made our youth to develop certain deviant behaviours. Skill acquisition through vocational and technical education is the solution to most of the countries social and economic problems. The development of vocational and technology education since pre-colonial to the colonial era was highlighted. Vocational and technical education at that time save it purpose by providing required skilled man power to man various sectors of the economy as well as social stability. Problems of vocational technical education as regards to technical education were discussed. The writers agreed that poor funding is the root of all the problems faced by skill acquisition both in the formal and informal vocational technical education.

Conclusion

Improving skill acquisition in vocational technical education will no doubt solve Nigerians tripartite problems. That is the educational, social as well as economic problems. It is obvious that no nation will achieve any meaningful development with larger percentage of its youth rendered unemployed. That's why today all developing nations are striving hard to overcome problem of unemployment especially among its youth and Nigeria is not in isolation. Because a lots of Programmes were introduced to tackle the issue (unemployment). And the easiest way to achieved that goal is by improving skill acquisition through vocational technical education.

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