

Vocational Education and Security Challenges in Nigeria: The Way Forward.

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Abstract

Vocational education in Nigeria has gone through the trials and thrills of a developing concept in a developing society, from its glorious heights when it simply followed the traditional system in training the very few persons enrolled in the early stage, to the present, when lecture auditoriums are bursting with pressure from an ever-increasing enrolment. While it may be difficult to pass an absolute lecture, given facilities, class size and the environment of the modern vocational faculties and school, one indubitable fact is that standards have fallen and are continuing to fall. This paper explores the remote and immediate causes of this crash in standard of vocational training in Nigeria, identifies key factors leading to this condition, and recommends a wide range of measures through which vocational education in Nigeria can be revamped, restructured and restored to achieve its glory.

Keywords: Vocational Education, Security Challenges, Way Forwards, Nigeria

Introduction:

Several views and opinions have been in the past years argued on the meaning and the place of vocational education both at the levels of primary, secondary and university respectively. These developments have created moves in the inclusion of some vocational subjects and courses in the curriculum of both pre-primary, post-primary and even tertiary institutions all with a view to achieve the needed employable skills in the development of the youths and the society at large. The term business education is a comprehensive term referring to the educational process when it involves, in addition to general education, the study of technologies and the acquisition of practical skills and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of economy and social life. The broad educational goals of vocational and technical education distinguish it from “vocational training: which is directed to developing the particular skills and related knowledge required by a specific occupation or group of occupations in Anya and Neukar (2004).

According to Enyekit and Enyenili (2007), business education includes preparation for employment in any occupation for which specialized education is required, for which there is a societal need, which can be most appropriately done in schools. It is concerned with the whole hierarchy of occupations from those requiring relatively short periods of specialized preparations such as clerks, typists to occupations requiring two or more of specialized such as in halation therapist: thus it includes the whole spectrum of labour force from semi-skilled to technicians and paraprofessionals. The definitions above exposed that vocational education have some peculiar characteristics and features that tend to enable or make a great landmarks in the development of the individual citizens in particular and the economy at large.

Vocational education is a vehicle upon which the skills of workforce are built. Without effective implementation of business education, we cannot hope for a future self-reliant, graduate with the required skills and flexibility for sustainable human capital development in the global age. Vocational education as an instrument for change and development and a provider of service oriented skills, which play a significant role in economic revival for sustainable human capital development. It is on the recognition of these needs that the National policy on education places on vocational and technical skills at the secondary and tertiary institution (Awotunde, 2004). Effective utilization of business education and implementation of the programme will inculcate the necessary skills and competencies that would help the youth to be self-reliant. This would lead to the much desired development in the economy to build our nation. Also Amaehule and Enyekit (2010) went further to explain that vocational education equips youth with managerial skills to manage human and material resources of their own business through the acquisition of skills and competencies in areas of vocational education.

Vocational education is also ensured in the national policy on education (2004) include the followings: [a] Provide trained manpower in the applied sciences, technology and business particularly at craft, and advanced craft and technical levels. [b] Provide the technical knowledge and vocational skills for agricultural, commercial and economic development. [c] Give trained and impacts the necessary skills to individual who shall be self-reliant economically.

Youth Unemployment

Unemployment is one socio-security challenge that successive governments over the years have identified and acknowledged. Unfortunately, government's efforts appear not to be making the desired positive impact. The engagement of these unemployed into criminality is a matter of concern for the government. In Nigeria, on many occasions many youths have been used as thugs during political campaigns and in time of crisis.

Government is very concerned about this problem and had taken several steps in the past, and currently, to train youths in relevant skills in order to generate employment. To solve the youth unemployment issue, the FG has initiated the Youth Enterprise with Innovation in Nigeria (You WIN) programme. The programme is a collaboration of the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Communications Technology, the Ministry of Youth Development and the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development that will launch an annual Business Plan Competition for aspiring young entrepreneurs in Nigeria. This is in line with the FG drive to create more jobs for the Nigerian youths particularly. The programme will be implemented in partnership with Nigeria's private sector, which will be requested to provide funding, support and mentoring for the aspiring young entrepreneurs.

In consonance to the above assertions and visions, vocational education will achieve the full employment for the youths; Reduction of crime and social vices; International economic and political independent; Effective supervision and administration of vocational programmers and institutions by vocational experts.

The Challenges of Vocational Education in Nigeria

The Nigerian education sector has fallen into crises in a general sense. All sections of the sector have taken the development of character and learning for granted, and the result has been a resounding crash of education from the primary to tertiary levels. The vocational student is a product of the failed secondary schools, which in the first place admitted unequipped students under the pressure of corruption, favoritism, cronyism and other vices associated with the spread of corruption. The challenges of vocational education may be broadly divided into six. These are:

- Students
- College Management and
- The Government
- Dearth of Books and Curriculum
- *Quality of Education*
- *Institutional rivalry*

The Students: What manner of students gets admitted into the Nigerian vocational school these days? How mentally prepared are they for vocational education and how intellectually equipped are they for the task of learning? These are questions that have posed great challenges to vocational education in Nigeria.

It is sometimes difficult to tell what the true ambitions of students are on matriculation day. The general expectation, as in the past, is that they should be ambitious and determined gentlemen eager to learn and become learned. That is still true for a vast number of vocational matriculants, but can hardly be so for quite a few others who are already kingpins of one nature or the other already, busy calling the shots.

It can be argued that to a large extent, the blame of falling standards of academic culture on campus squarely rests on the students, when it is considered that the problems in the college system are intricately woven around the quality of those who have found themselves in the system. If colleges admit a student with solid academic history then lecturers would stop exploiting their academic foibles to sell outdated and knowledge-less handouts that flood the four walls of the colleges. And awards of unmerited marks by lecturers would be challenged with great success. Such students would be bold enough to contest any perceived ill-treatments that have become the trademarks of irascible college lecturers.

The College Management: The management of our colleges has done little to help the increasing challenges of vocational education, through over-admission and an inability to discipline erring students and staff, largely due to ethnicity, cronyism and other forms of social vices. Staffing in many departments has been undertaken at the pleasure of the college management, in many cases with or without the input of the Head of the Department. In some extreme cases, this has been used to "*help our people*" as management have been known to collude with their Deans of school to flood the department with their ethnic kin (whether or not they are qualified according to the college law), to the detriment of the quality of knowledge they imparts to students.

The Government: Needless to say even the Government has added to the challenges of vocational education at this level. Key among its contributions here has included:

- Embargo on employment leading to short staffing in many vocational schools.
- Chronic under- funding of the College making it difficult for them to meet the barest of their

responsibilities.

- Some times from the appointment of provost, over- admission and sundry matters like graduation of particular students, purchase of stationeries for the use of the institution, elections into staff unions on campus and leadership of the students union.

These interferences besmear the hallowed grounds of academia with unhealthy politics and eventually corrupt the intents, objective and ambition of vocational students.

Dearth of Equipments/ Books: The equipment is an indispensable component of a school that must teach vocational programmes. Good and up to date text books are indispensable materials for training of students (Babalola and Tihamiyu 2012). It is an indubitable fact that to be learned, a student must be well-read, versed in research and ever alert about vocational development in his environment. The dearth of books, in particular new and revised editions, has threatened to relegate vocational education in Nigeria to the study of modern aid in vocational programmes, as both students and under-paid lecturers strive to make do with what is available. As is common knowledge, a student must be well read and access to the internet has long become a necessity. Research that does not share the benefit of the information highway risks arriving upon redundant conclusions. The absence of cyber information in the Nigerian vocational schools is a threat to the currency of the knowledge imparted thereat.

Quality of Education: The quality of Nigerian education is poor due to poor leadership and corruption. Babalola and Tihamiyu (2012) said lack of teacher motivation, recognition and reward lead to poor quality of education. Nigeria government does not value education and that reflect in their budget every year. They gave very small allocation to education as compared to security forgetting that education is capital intensive. They make insufficient fund available to buy and maintained laboratories and workshop equipment. Babalola and Tihamiyu (2012) observed lack of funds to procure required spare parts to maintain the equipment for technical education. The difficulties of our government according to Adedibu (2001) in formulating sound objectives and best solutions to our problems have resulted in the mismanagement of resources, wrong planning and misplaced of developmental priorities; this has badly affected our educational system in recent decades.

Institutional rivalry: Another challenge to the development of science and technology in Nigeria is rivalry between various institutions especially between university, colleges and polytechnics. Where these institutions supposed to work together as partners in progress to develop science and technology they are concentrating on which one is superior in certification. If the polytechnic, college, university, government and other stakeholders work together towards research goals, our march to technological and scientific breakthrough will be at sight.

The Way Forward

The discovery of a problem they say is half way to its solution. Finding the way forward for vocational education in Nigeria entails the correction of the anomalies highlighted in this paper, and this in effect will mean a practical and determined confrontation of the above challenges. Towards this approach, we recommend the following:

- Reorientation of the students to begin to consider their vocational education with the seriousness that its nobility requires. Students must be made to realise that at the end of the day, it is not the worthless designed paper (certificate) which they cheat or bribe to obtain that matters, but the amount of learning they have acquired, the degree of knowledge that is reposed in their head that counts.
- There is an urgent need to create and enrich existing vocational laboratory, if Nigerian Lecturers and students must teach and learn modern programme and undertake socially relevant researches. As has been suggested, Nigerian colleges can fill this lacuna by interacting with foreign funding agencies, use of UNESCO book purchase coupons, reprinting relevant books that are out of stock, encouraging new book projects and launching endowment funds for new libraries and books inter.
- Internet facilities may be expensive, but not as much as the social cost of teaching and learning archaic vocation in a closed myopic environment detached from an increasingly cyber- globalised world. The impact of research without the internet, on quality of research in Nigerian colleges is of course better imagined. Stakeholders must therefore seek cyber information to ensure current, effective and relevant vocational education and commentary from Nigerian institutions of vocational education.
- The schools must similarly take its role in the recommendation and screening of Staff and admitted students seriously, and ensure that only the qualified are taken. They must also ensure standards by ensuring that those who fall below the benchmark must be rejected and or weeded out where already admitted. It is the responsibility of the faculty to convince or correct the College Managements that intake of students must match available facilities and quota allocation by the Nigerian council of

vocational Education.

- Government at all relevant levels must fund and allow the institutions management to take academic decisions in the Nigerian education system. The current scenario that confuses politics with academics at the institutions corrupts the Education system and endangers the society by the increasingly poor quality that is annually turned in by the Nigerian institutions.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the challenges of vocational education in today's Nigeria are not insurmountable. They are closely related to the crises in the education sector in Nigeria, and can be tackled as soon as all stakeholders pay closer attention and devote greater energy towards its self preservation. The dangers of ignoring the decline are too costly.

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