

## Towards Boosting Vocational and Technical Education for Self-reliance; Issues and Panorama

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### Abstract

The Target date is 2015 when Education shall be for All (EFA). This is one of the anticipated outcomes of educational reforms of the present administration. Other aspects of the reforms that permeate the entire sectors of the economy include health, transport, housing and finance, just to mention a few, all of which are aimed at meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). This paper identifies some of the implementation problems of And Technical Education which range from inadequate facilities, curriculum defect, use of incompetent (non-professional) teachers, dearth of qualified and Technical education teachers, etc. Consequent upon this, the paper posited that, as an aspect of education, the And Technical Education programmes should be re-strategized through Repositioning and re-engineering in the area of curriculum restructuring, engagement of professionally qualified and competent teachers, government release of adequate funds for equipment procurements, among others, towards overcoming the inherent implementation problems. This strategy would not only ensure the economic empowerment of Nigeria, but also facilitate rapid national economic development. Anything short of this shall make "Education for AH" become "Education for None".

**Keywords:** Repositioning, Vocational, Technical, Education, Strategy and Developing.

### I. INTRODUCTION

According to Sadiq, (2001) "No education system can rise above the quality of its teachers", this is a popular saying. This paper dare that "no National Economic Empowerment and Development strategy can rise above the level of Vocational And Technical Education." Perhaps this expresses the view of Kwairanga (1999) in Sadiq, Kire and Kwairanga (2006) where he said: "National development is the sustained upliftment of the well<sup>being</sup> of an entire society towards a better human life". It connotes and involves complete re-organization of the entire system of a society, be it economic, political, social or educational, with a view to improving the quality of its members. The above expectant expression can best be rooted in a well Repositioning and re-engineered Vocational And Technical Education programme towards realizing the national education objectives, which aspires functionalism or vocationalism, as contained in the National Policy on Education (1989). This is premised on the believe that the And Technical Education programme, if well repositioned, is a gate-way towards enhancing the economic empowerment and development of both individuals and the nation. Doubtlessly, Umannah (1992) lends credence to this assertion when he opined that "the focus of education, specifically And Technical Education, is the social and economic welfare of the individual students and the society at large".

Vocational and Technical Education is expectedly functional which should bestow on its reupiens the wherewithals that will make them contribute positively to the development of the nation. Thus, while education is the key to development (Ukeje, 1996) in Omenkeukwu (1998:67), Vocational and Technical Education is an engine that generates the creativity and skillfulness desirable for such development.

It is rather unfortunate that for a long time our school system has been permeated by fear of vocationalism and uncreativity (Lawal 1984) and only succeeded in producing job-seekers rather than job-makers (Sadiq 1998:69). This does not guarantee individual economic empowerment nor its attendant national development. The poor implementation and consequent positioning of Vocational and technical Education only worsens the dwindling situation. As a result, the poverty and unemployment rates in Nigeria remain on the high side (FGN, 2004:6). After all, the success or failure of any economy depends on the functionality of its vocational education system, (Osuala, 1992).

It is in recognition of the desire to create job-makers out of Nigeria, through Vocational And Technical Education, which makes them acquire employable and saleable skills, that this paper intends to stress the urgent need to reposition the Vocational And Technical Education through its implementation. In particular, the paper

periscopes vaqpus Repositioning strategies for this phase of education which will not only help in curbing the poverty and unemployment rates in Nigeria but also guarantees the economic empowerment of individuals for the effectiveness of NEEDS.

## 2. CONCEPTS OF VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

It is pertinent to mention here that the change from liberal to Technical/Vocational Education, of which Technical education is part, was due to felt-need as a result of awareness and reports by various Commissions like the Phelps-stokes and Ashby, (Sadiq 1998:69). The overall aim was to make education relevant and useful to the people.

Nigeria are talented people who are good at policy formulation. The country has for long witnessed the formulation of laudable policies affecting the lives of her citizens. It is rather sad to note that most of the policies were either not implemented or poorly implemented due to the problems inherent in the policy itself or in our system as a nation. The Nigeria educational policy is not an exception in this regard. (Sadiq, 1998:70).

As laudable a programme the Vocational and Technical Education is, its poor implementation has made its desired objective seemingly unrealizable. Thus, this has necessitated its Repositioning, re-engineering and reinvigorating. This is in consonance with the observation of Okeke (1991) in Ode (2002) that "Vocational Education at all levels in Nigeria are un-coordinated, unplanned and inadequate".

From the study on The Role of Vocational and Technical Education in a Developing Economy, (Anao, 1987) reported in Anene (1992), that Vocational and Technical Education is seen as an educational process or context which has the roles of preparing people for the enterprises as employees, entrepreneur/employer and/or self-employed. The preoccupation is how to develop labour through investment in education so that it can contribute maximally to individual, societal and national development. It is unarguable that the various aspects of vocational and Technical education prepare skillful employees whose utility reduces considerably the army of unemployed and improperly employed individuals in the country. Vocational and Technical Education is one of the tools helping the government to curb unemployment problems and reduce poverty level in Nigeria. This is so, as the recipients of this specialized form of education easily find a passage into paid-or self-employment, or even both. In relation to the concepts of vocational and Technical education, Osuala (1995) asserts that "it provides skills, abilities, economic understanding and develop aptitudes, attitudes, work habits and competence that help an individual enter and/or make progress in employment on a useful and productive basis".

## 3. OBJECTIVES OF VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

The focus of vocational and technical Education orientation of recipients which enhances wealth creation, employment generation and poverty reduction are very important in people life. All of which reduce and indeed, capable of eliminating, youth restiveness, promote societal peaceful co-existence and cohesion and unmolding responsible citizenry. All these are indices of development of a nation's economy and the absence of which portend under-development of the economy. This is necessarily so because with responsible citizenry, less restive youths and peaceful societal coexistence, nationalism and the desire for higher productivity are embraced by all and sundry. Hence, The aims/objectives of And Technical education which is part of Vocational and Technical Education, as contained in section 6, sub-section 49 of the National Policy on Education (FRN, 1989) are as follows:

- To provide the technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, industrial, commercial and economic development.
- To provide trained manpower in applied science, technology and commerce, particularly at sub-professional grades.
- To provide people who can apply scientific knowledge to the improvement and solution of economic and environmental problems for the use and convenience of man.
- To enable our young men and women to have an intelligent understanding of the increasing complexity of technology.

Furthermore, Aina (1984) posited that the objectives of Vocational and technical Education broadly includes:

- To contribute to goal attainment of the total educational programme.
- To provide basic and Technical for all students to develop their economic understanding, personal consumer competency and personal-use competency.
- To provide vocational skills for persons preparing for a Technical occupation, i.e. vocational competency.

It is in realization of And Technical Education as the engine room of the nation's economy and its laudable objectives that it has become expedient to reposition and re - engineer it for the effectiveness of NEEDS.

#### **4. VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION AS A CATALYST FOR THE REALIZATION OF NIGERIA NEEDS.**

Vocational And Technical Education can be regarded as the most important bridge to the future and a powerful instrument of empowerment. The present educational system, with its emphasis on vocational and Technical education, if firmly rooted in its implementation can be perceived as the most potent instrument that can be used to bring about desirable changes or development of the nation's economy in this ever global world. The dispensation therefore, would enable the recipients to be better, more useful and more productive citizens of the nation.

Vocational And Technical Education would bring about the following development changes as envisaged in the National Policy on Education (FRN, 1989) which emphasized "the equipment of individual with appropriate skills, abilities and competencies as necessary for them to live in and contribute to the development of the society".

- An increase in employability and higher job mobility of an individual; (Olaitan, 1996:18). This also reduces the rate of unemployment in the country.
- It enables individuals to be trained for and hold productive employment.
- Aside enabling individuals develop better entrepreneurial skills and become more innovative workers, Uwadae (1992) in Olaitan (1996:18) asserts that it increases the productivity and earning capacity of the recipients. All the above, one cannot but agree, would lead to an increase in the level of productivity, Gross Domestic product (GDP) per capita income and, ultimately, 3 rise in the standard of living of the people. The effect of this is the enhancement of National development through the economic empowerment of individuals through vocational and Technical education.

#### **5. ISSUES OF VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION PROGRAMME: THE NEED FOR REPOSITION**

Having highlighted the concepts and objectives of vocational and technical Education and the developmental changes it bring along with it, is expedient to state that such may be far from being realizable given the present constraints in the implementation of Vocational And Technical Education Programme. There are myriad of such constraints some of which include:

##### **5.1 Organisational Problem:**

Vocational Education is meant to prepare an individual for gainful employment. To do this, the necessary subjects with the right amount of instructional ^ materials or facilities like typewriters, adding machines, filing cabinets, perforators, guillotines, etc. need to be in place. Unfortunately, there is gross inadequacy or decay of same in our schools. The result is to make the recipients become half-baked and render them unemployable since they have not been adequately empowered.

##### **5.2 Lack of Adequate Qualified and Committed Teachers:**

There is a gross inadequacy of qualified and Technical teachers. As such the few available ones are always overloaded with teaching tasks which render them inefficient and non-committed to the goals of teaching. In some cases, untrained or unqualified teachers are mobilized to teach and Technical courses. Of course, the result is obvious of the kind of graduates produced out of the programme course; the result is obvious of the kind of graduates produced out of the programme.

##### **5.3 Government Discriminatory Attitude in Funding:**

There are so many new sophisticated office equipments that have appeared in the market such as electric typewriters, dictating machines, computers, etc. Are conspicuously absent in our schools due to inadequate funds for their acquisition. Ironically, government seemed to be funding heavily science and science-related education programmes at the detriment of Vocational and Technical Education. This does not augur well for the intended empowerment of Vocational and Technical Education graduates for them to play their roles in national development

##### **5.4 Curriculum Defect:**

The vocational and technical education curriculum at the secondary school is defective to the extent that and Technical studies is taught as a single integrated subject like social studies and integrated science. This is not practicable. For instance, there is no way Shorthand and Accounting can be integrated. Besides, it is not always possible to get a single teacher who can effectively teach the two subjects. Where it is enforced, it is doubtful if the subjects can be taught so authoritatively that the students can acquire the basic skill necessary for their contribution to the national economic development. The curriculum is also deficient in content due to non-incorporation of some and Technical courses which will adequately prepare the graduates for the challenges of the complex and Technical world.

##### **5.6 Non-use of Appropriate and Approved Methodology:**

One other outstanding constraint in the teaching of vocational and Technical education is the non-use of appropriate and approved methodology. In addition to normal lectures, the teaching of vocational subjects

require the use of variety of teaching methods and techniques some of which are simulation, discussions, role playing, demonstrations, study trips (Field trips) etc. it is sadly noticeable that while some teachers adhere faithfully to these professional practices, a number of others do not. It is either that they are unaware of ' these methods or are indifferent to their use.

Having highlighted some of the implementation constraints of vocational Education programme, the need for its Repositioning appropriately amplified by Aina (1984) with a position that, as a result of complexities in economic and political development, there is a call for better trained office employees even though the schools were poorly organized and grossly inadequate in terms of curriculum, equipment and instructors; they paved the way for today's and Technical education programme.

### **5.7 Social Appraisal of Vocational and Technical Education**

It is unfortunate fate of vocational and technical education in Nigeria that its products are held in low esteem by both individual and society. There is no denying the fact that many parents do not prefer their children to go into technical education except when they are not able to secure admission into universities.

### **5.8 Textbooks production**

Relevant locally developed vocational and technical education textbooks are scarce. This is mainly because book publication is expensive and companies do not consider it, a profitable venture for the size of the sector.

## **6. Prospects of Vocational and Technical Education**

Despite the challenges facing most African countries today, some hold measures have been undertaken to bring technical vocational education into the mainstream of education and to bring it closer to the world work. This is being carried out through a wide range of educational reforms and innovation as well as the restructuring of national economics to provide more employment opportunities. Orano, R. N. (2001) A common goal has been, to make education more functional and development related by bringing technical and vocational education into the mainstream of general education. Some of the most common innovations include the following:

- 1). Introduction of technical and vocational education in early childhood education (at the primary school level) to inculcate positive attitudes towards vocational and technical education in the world work.
- 2). The diversification of vocational and technical education at the secondary school level to offer more opportunities to learners in order to enable them to choose and pursue careers of their interest.
- 3). The expansion and strengthening of vocational and technical education, programmes at the post secondary level including teacher education.
- 4). The articulation of vocational and technical education in higher education to ensure that those who are able and are motivated can pursue their education to the highest level possible.
- 5). Fostering a closer link between education institution and enterprises, to ensure quality and relevance in the vocational and technical programmes.
- 6). The introduction of entrepreneurship education in most vocational and technical education programmes in order to prepare graduates for self employment in the growing informal sector.
- 7). The promotion of associations for heads of vocational and technical education institution and teachers to enable them participate more effectively in the decision making and management of vocational and technical education in the country.

## **7. REPOSITIONING STRATEGY**

In realization that a well implemented vocational and Technical education programme will pave the way for the effectiveness of NEEDS in Nigeria, the following Repositioning strategies are hereby advanced: The government should expeditiously provide the instructional materials and facilities in the right amount in all our schools. Infrastructure decay in such schools needs to be urgently reversed. Sufficient funds should be expended in this regard. Thus, government's discriminatory attitude in funding education should be stopped forthwith in order to redress this imbalance and purchase basic equipment needed for teaching and Technical education subjects. The Government, Education Planners and Policy Makers should embrace this strategy if the discipline must play its role for the effectiveness of NEEDS in Nigeria.

## **8. CONCLUSION**

Education is the pivot around which other spheres of Nigeria economy revolves. Unfortunately, education in Nigeria has suffered unpardonable and unforgivable neglect over the decades with vocational and Technical education having more than its fair share of the deplorable phenomenon. Noting the utilization of unqualified/under qualified (untrained) and no-committed teachers, inadequate/decayed facilities due to poor government funding, curriculum defects both in application and contents, etc, it is not far-fetched to understand the down slide in the implementation of vocational and Technical education programme. Thus, the educational reforms of the present Federal Government in the area of NEEDS couldn't have come at a more auspicious time when Nigeria yearn for economic development so as to belong to the comity of developed nations. This paper

appreciated government efforts at providing necessary and Technical education facilities at different areas of implementation in Nigeria and to believe that more needs to be done in order to actualize NEEDS. Therefore, the paper concludes that in order to enhance the effectiveness of NEEDS, the economic empowerment of Nigeria for national development can best be placed or rooted in a well Repositioning Vocational and Technical Education. This will, to a considerable extent, enhance the realization of the dual objective of individual and national development which is the focal point of NEEDS in Nigeria.

#### RECOMMEDATIONS:

- The government should be courageous enough in insisting that only professionally qualified, competent and qualified teachers are involved in the teaching of and Technical education courses. Premium should also be placed on a teacher's area of specialization which is very basic to the success of the programme.
- As a measure towards enhancing the study of the vocational education subjects, there is need for students to go on field trip (study trip). Where appropriate, students should be released to participate in SIWES (Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme). These learning experiences would permit the students to study equipment and layout of office, observe employees at work and appreciate and Technical procedures, study the relationships between departments as well as acquire knowledge and skills necessary for their effective functioning in the society.
- As an intervention strategy at overcoming the problem of inadequate qualified and preponderance of unqualified/untrained teachers, the government should support the production of more vocational education graduates in tertiary institutions.
- In order to checkmate the seeming ignorance of the use of appropriate teaching methods by some teachers and to spice up those who are indifferent to their use, adequate supervision of instructional activities should be mounted by the relevant government agency. The role of the Areas Inspectorate of Education (AIE) is relevant in this regard.
- The vocational and Technical studies subjects should no longer be taught as integrated, pre-vocational subject as is presently the case at the Junior Secondary Schools. They should be disintegrated due to the constraint already identified earlier in this paper.
- Membership of the professional association, the Association of and Technical Educators of Nigeria, should be encouraged and, if possible, made mandatory for all the Vocational and Technical education teachers. This would help in updating their knowledge and teaching methods.
- The vocational and Technical education curriculum in our schools needs to be appropriately enriched to accommodate subjects like And Technical Communication, Consumer Education, Entrepreneur-ship and Computer Appreciation. This is what Olaitan (1996) would rather describe as "complete career exploration" which promotes intelligent career choices and development.

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