

# Revitalizing Technical and Vocational Education in Nigeria for Youths and National Development

Assoc. Prof. Livinus Ogbondah, Ph.D; Ph.D

Ignatius Ajuru University Of Education, Faculty Of Education, Department Of Educational Foundations and Management, Rumuolumeni Campus, Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria

Kemkanma K. Wobi

University of Port Harcourt, Department of Educational Foundations, Choba, Rivers State, Nigeria

## Abstract

Nigeria as a developing nation cannot but strive to meet with the fast speed of technological advancement and the challenges in a globalize world nowadays. If she must address the numerous technological and job challenges, the issue of technology, skills and vocation acquisition must be tackled with all sincerity in the country's education system. Highly industrialized nations have at one time or the other identified technical and vocational education as a transformational and development key index policy trust for technological growth, economic performance and development in general. Technical and vocational education lays emphasis on learning, skills acquisition; job creation and development that would enable individual engaged in it adjust to the changes in the ever dynamic society of today. This paper therefore, tends to examine this aspect of education in the country's education system and the need to revitalize it to promote the technological growth in particular and development in general. It suggests among others; adequate funding, improvement of the status of technical and vocational education and training of needed manpower to impart the requisite skills and competencies the youths required in the technology world of today.

**Keywords:** Revitalizing, Technical, Vocational, Youths, National Development

## Introduction

There is no gain saying that no sane country can afford to play around with her education and youths' development. Technical and vocational education facilitated rapid development in most countries of the world particularly, the developed countries. No nation can hope to develop and advance technologically without trained individuals with relevant skills, knowledge, attitudes and abilities required to form an efficient workforce in all sectors of her economy. The emphasis placed on sound technical and vocational education programme stems from the fact that the development and advancement of any nation revolves around effective technical and vocational education policy and its implementation.

We need competent hands to design and install new and improved equipment and technically skilled personnel who will help in the production of quality products. By so doing, Nigeria will no longer be consumer of goods or a dumping ground for second-hand cars, computers and other equipment rejected by their producers, but will compete favourably in the production and export of things (products) needed in the developed world. The non-availability of the needed qualified technicians who can produce as well as assemble quality parts of engines and other equipment as well as fit in other fields of human endeavours in Nigeria is our greatest problem.

The inability of the government to promote this education programme makes people look down on it and this has slowed down the country's technological growth and development in general. According to Fakorede (2013) Nigerians depend a lot on products from Europe, Asia, America and other countries in Africa. He further opined that there is also a strong need to invent truly Nigerian technology for the production and consumption of made in Nigeria products including foods and services that the nation could be proud of. Nigeria should be able to export not only the products of her technology but also sell her technological know-how to other developing nations. The nation should not still be consumers of foreign "second hand" or "home used" cars, television sets, refrigerators and even toilet bowls and sinks (Fakorede 2013).

The country cannot hope to improve upon its standard of living under the present economic regime of dependency greatly on foreign made goods. Adequate supply of skilled manpower is very essential for the capacity effectiveness of our industries for national development. This can only be possible if technical and vocational education is revitalized by giving it the primary attention it deserves.

## Concept of Technical and Vocational Education

The National Policy on Education (2004) describes technical and vocational education as that aspect of education which leads to the acquisition of practical and applied skills as well as basic scientific knowledge. It emphasizes that Nigerians acquire the appropriate skills, attitude and competency both mental and physical.

Olaitan (2009) posited that vocational education is that type of education designed to prepare skilled personnel at lower levels of qualification for one or group of occupations. Okoro (1999) asserts that vocational and technological education is that form of education that prepares an individual for meaningful life in the society.

Technical education is designed to prepare the youths for skilled employment in the work place, skill-upgrading and worker-retraining programmes. According to Odu (2007) for technical and vocational education and training to be effective, the training should be fashioned in the same way, same operations using the same tools and machines in respect of the occupation being prepared.

The preparation of the youths to adapt to the knowledge and skills that will be needed in the future is very necessary. Technical and vocational education therefore, merges the traditional need for learning core knowledge and skills with the modern emphasis on adaptability, knowledge construction and self-regulatory.

Dike (2008:3) posited that “technical education is a planned programme of courses and learning experiences that begins with the exploration of career options, supports basic academic and life skills, and enables achievement of high academic standards preparation for industry-defined work and advance and continued education”. He went further to say that vocational education prepares learners for careers that are based in manual or practical activities, traditionally non academic and totally related to a specific trade, occupation or vocation. It is education that makes an individual more employable in one group of occupation than in another.

Technical and vocational education prepares the learner to enter an understanding of the laws of science and technology as applied to modern design and engineering. The task of technical and vocational education is to impart appropriate skills and competencies to the learners to enable them combat unemployment, poverty and further contribute to social transformation. Technical education is important for the technological and economic advancement. It provides ample opportunities for individual to acquire appropriate occupational skills, knowledge, abilities and attitude needed to enter the labour force, retain their jobs and make progress.

The broad educational goal of technical and vocational education according to National Policy on Education (2004:30-31) includes:

- a. To provide trained manpower in the applied science, technology and business particularly at craft, advance craft and technical level;
- b. Provide the technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agriculture, commercial and economic development;
- c. Give training and impart the necessary skills to individuals who shall be self reliant economically.

Adequate supply of skilled manpower is essential for the successful functioning of industries and commerce which produces significant part of wealth required for national development. To enable the youth have an intelligent understanding of the increasing complexity of science and technology through systematic exposure to modern technology, requires the total overhaul of technical and vocational education programmes.

For this aspect of education to be relevant, it must therefore respond to what the people want and the demands of the labour market. All nations recognize that technical and vocational education as the key to national development and Nigeria is no exception. The World Bank philosophy has been that developing countries like Nigeria do not need higher education, that we need more technical colleges (Ogbondah 2013). Though on paper, all educational reforms programme in Nigeria emphasized on this aspect of education. However, most governments in Nigeria over the years have failed to translate the good plans for technical and vocational education into action by failing to support its development, in terms of the provision of the needed logistics for proper implementation of the programmes.

### **Technical and Vocational Education and Youths Development**

According to Okafor (1985) the quest for development, scientific and technological know-how is worldwide and Nigerian youths need to be relevant and productive if they are to contribute meaningfully to the development of the country. Making the youths productive and useful lies in the ability of the government to implement sound technical and vocational education policy as a member of the committee of nations yearning for development. Okafor (1985:60) correctly posited when he said:

Nigeria today is a member of the committee of nations in a world characterized by technological revolution. Unless she woke up and act in concert contextually, she may be left standing in the platform, while the world revolves around the orbit... and beyond, accelerated techno-scientific development is a sine qua non.

Similarly, Manilla (2003) explained that when the youths are given different skills that can make them compete favourably and maximally participate in food production, manufacturing and assembling of parts, installing and maintenance of engines, etc, the tendency to depend on the government will be reduced, and the society at large become more enjoyable in terms of employment opportunities, food production, health, security, etc. There is no doubt that poor implementation of technical and vocational education system produces unskilled youths who in turn contribute in no small measure in the underdevelopment of the nation; as their tentacles gradually spread to the different areas of the society and the institutions.

Acknowledging the need to fully revitalize technical and vocational education, the National Policy on Education (2008:73) explained that:

technical and vocational education and training is currently not given the attention it deserves in Nigeria. If well developed technical and vocational education could be an avenue for addressing a number of social and economic problems facing the country. For example, the large number of out of school children, unemployed youths and adults with limited or no skills is an indication of an underdeveloped technical and vocational education and training.

Youths' empowerment through the acquisition of relevant skills and vocations is a gateway to expand their contributions to the development of their society. According to Alexander (2012) young people are empowered when they acknowledge that they have or can create choices in life, are aware of the implications of those choices, make an informed decision freely, take action based on that decision and accept responsibility for the consequences of those actions. Practical education creates and supports the enabling conditions under which the youths can act on their own positively. Similarly, equipped youths are a great asset to the society. They become financially independent, responsibly get married and fend for their families.

A person who is empowered with relevant skills will have no time for crime. He is engrossed with his handiwork. He is not idle and so will not be a devil's workshop. He preoccupies himself with the workload of his job. According to Alexander (2012), a number of skills are acquired through technical and vocational training. They makes the youths responsible in the society. He highlighted a few of them: photography and video production, hair dressing and cosmetology, fashion design and sewing, welding and fabrication, woodwork and furniture, catering and restaurant services, etc. Fakorede (2013) explained that for an individual to make a wise choice of occupation within which to acquire and develop these skills for a living, he/she needs to clarify, justify, verify and criticize the job before deciding to enter it for the actualization of his goals.

To truly harness the abilities and the potentials endowed in the Nigerian youths and to impart on them the skills and vocations mentioned above, there is a compelling need to revitalize this aspect of education which remains the greatest asset for National development.

### **Challenges that hinders the development of Technical and Vocational Education in Nigeria**

Numerous challenges hinder the development of Technical and Vocational Education in Nigeria which include:

- Negative Societal attitude
- Shortage of teaching and training facilities
- Inadequate Funding
- Government development strategy
- Inadequate teaching personnel

### **Negative Societal Attitude**

The early missionary cum colonial negative attitude towards this aspect of education in preference to general education still leaves a very bitter taste in Nigeria education till date. False negative impression carried against practical education has heightened the belief that this aspect of education is for the drop outs and the academically poor. Most elite parents think that their children would be labourers through technical and vocational education.

### **Shortage of Teaching and Training Facilities**

The strains of corruption and lack of political will power to improve this aspect of education have led to inadequate supply of relevant teaching and learning facilities or total lack of them in most technical schools and vocational centres. Although, the reforms on education in the country acknowledges the need to revitalize this

education sub-sector, but the implementation has continued to end only on paper. Such facilities like workshops, laboratories, libraries and equipment are inadequate, non-functional or not provided. This has further hindered the actualization of the goals of practical education.

### **Government Development Strategy**

The development strategy adopted by the government to a large extent determines policy making and its implementation. Due to the peripheral role which the Nigerian state plays in the international capitalism, particularly being content to supply raw materials to the advanced capitalist countries, it can not see the need to the development of technical skills in the citizens, hence the neglect of technical education. According to Aturu (2011:3):

...the fact that the elite which compose the ruling class are mainly rent – seekers and so we have a renter economy which encourages foreign investors such as the multi-national oil corporations to exploit our resources with their own technical knowledge, while Nigerian state receives commission. It will be difficult for the government to develop this aspect of education.

He went on to state that as a backward renter capitalist state, that is, a state that depends on rents or payments from multi-national companies that exploit its natural resources with foreign engineers and technicians doing the major scientific and technological works or manning technical departments, and the country accepted the role of providing raw materials for the advanced capitalists, Nigerian state does not and cannot place premium on the repositioning technical and vocational education programme, hence the levity with which technical and vocational education is treated.

Furthermore, Nigeria as a neocolonial state makes it possible for it to depend on the dictates of the advanced capitalist countries and institutions like the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), etc. Undeniably, the consequence of dependency and lack of sovereignty is the slow down of industrial development which is only achieved through the development of a skilled labour force and the fashion of mass movement based on an ideology that can guarantee a self reliant nation (Aturu, 2013).

### **Inadequate Funding**

The major challenge facing the implementation of educational policies in general and technical and vocational education in particular in Nigeria is inadequate funding (Okere, 2001). It is obvious that without adequate fund, running of functional education will be impossible. Ekundayo and Ajayi (2009) have decried the under-funding of education in Nigeria which they maintained has led to shortage of institutional facilities and services. This has adversely affected technical and vocational education development in Nigeria. They argued that there was an increase in the proportion of total allocation/expenditure devoted to education recently; but however, maintained that this has been considered to be rather grossly inadequate, considering the phenomenal increase in students' enrolment and the need for provision of functional laboratory equipment needed for the production of competent and skilled man-power for the country.

### **Inadequate Teaching Personnel**

The inability to properly fund education by the government coupled with poor conditions of service of teachers are apparently responsible for the dearth of experienced technical education teachers in our schools. Owing to the above, the few available ones that would have stayed and eventually served as useful source for teaching, training and developing of the younger or new entrants have left either for private practice or greener pastures in the oil companies and similar organizations.

### **Conclusion**

Nigeria like most developing countries needs well articulated and well implemented technical/vocational education to achieve a meaningful development. The objectives of the technical and vocational education when achieved will help develop the individuals, the societies and the nation at large. To achieve this, the government has to help remove the poor image on technical and vocational education, train more teachers who have practical skills to impart at the Universities and Polytechnics. This can be done with the provision of the right and essential teaching and learning facilities and resources needed.

In the same token, Nigeria cannot develop without well-equipped technical and vocational institutions, Osalor (2014). In fact, it is the foundation for any meaningful development. No nation ever survives on importation.

Higher productivity gives a nation advantage of economies of scale and lowers the costs of production and prices of goods and services.

Nigeria should begin now to take very seriously the need to revitalize technical and vocational education and skill training as no nation can compete effectively in the emerging global market with poorly educated and unskilled workers. The greatest challenge Nigeria is facing is how to make optimal use of its abundant human resources – which is the highest asset any country can be endowed with. This calls for urgency in a shift from the present intellectual human development to education that grantee creativity, innovation and career achievement.

### **Recommendations**

Looking at the importance of practical education to an individual and the nation at large, the youths and nation will certainly develop if the following practicable recommendations are adhered to:

#### **Improved status of Technical and Vocational Education**

The public's perception of technical and vocational education as being a programme for drop-outs of the formal academic system still exists and needs to be changed. Technical and vocational education must be seen as becoming a symbol for success for the youths and the society at large. Graduates of technical schools must not only be treated as field workers but must also serve as administrative staff in government establishments.

#### **Provision of Relevant Facilities**

Relevant training facilities such as functional laboratories, workshops and libraries necessary to equip students with basic industrial know-how and processes should be provided in all the technical and vocational schools in Nigeria. Apart from keeping students busy in the workshop or laboratory and positively motivate them to achieve maximally, the students attention would be gainfully directed away from the current wave of cultism, insurgency and other social vices.

#### **Increased Funding for Technical and Vocational Education**

The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2004) have noted that revitalizing this important education sector is among the ways to improve economic opportunities for the youths. The National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) and other stakeholders should take up the campaign for more funds for technical and vocational education.

Government at all level must be pressured to devote the recommended 26% of their budgets to education and considerably sum should be allocated to Technical/Vocational Education rather than spend taxpayers' money establishing secondary schools all over the country. Furthermore, the existing technical and vocational colleges should be well funded so that both staff and students will be motivated to make their contributions for the development of the country.

#### **Government Development Strategy**

The development of a skilled labour force makes an important contribution to development in general. Nigeria's over reliance on the importation of finished products from technologically advanced capitalist countries is a setback to the development of this aspect of education. Nigerian government should as matter of urgency de-emphasize on the importation of foreign goods. The adoption of development strategy based on the development of indigenous technicians by Nigerian government will be a proactive measure to revitalize technical and vocational education.

#### **Provision of adequate Teaching Personnel**

The government should as a matter of importance address the problem of shortage of teachers in technical schools. They can do this by giving them special salary scale and other incentives. If their salaries are comparable to those of their oil companies' counterparts, oil companies will cease to constitute points of attraction for them. Government should also organize regular workshops and seminars for them.

### **References**

- Alexander A.O. (2012). Standard civic education for senior secondary schools and Colleges, Owerri: Standard Publishers.
- Aturu, B. (2011). Vocational technical education, the state and Citizenry in Nigeria. Paper presented to the school of vocational education of the federal college of education (technical) Akoka, 27<sup>th</sup> January 2011.
- Aworinyi (1988). Audio-visuals in the classroom in Oguranti O.E. (Ed). Problems and prospects of educational technology in Nigeria, Journal of vocational education and technology (JOVET) (2003).]

- Dike, V. E. (2008). Vocational education: Missing link in Nigeria development. Retrieved from [vdikeatcwnet.com](http://vdikeatcwnet.com).
- Ekundayo, H.T. and Ajayi, I. A. (2009). Towards effective management of university education in Nigeria. *International Non-Governmental Organization Journal* vol. 4 (8).
- Fakorede S.O.A. (2013). Improving vocational and technical education in Nigeria for national development in Oni, S (Ed) challenges and prospects in African education systems, USA: Trafford international.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004). The national policy on education, NERDC press, Lagos, Nigeria.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria (2008). The National Policy on Education NERDC press, Lagos.
- Manilla, B. B. (2003). Technology, vocational education and youths' development. *Journal of vocational education and technology Rivers State College of education Port Harcourt*.
- Odu, K. O. (2007). Formulation and implementation of educational policies in Nigeria in *Journal of educational research network for West and Central Africa (ERNCAWA)*.
- Ogbondah, L. (2013). The development of private universities in Nigeria: Implications for access and quality, 1999-2010. Unpublished Ph.D dissertation presented to the Department of Educational Foundation, Faculty of Education, University of Port Harcourt.
- Okafor, F. (1985). Philosophy of education a Sine-Qua-Non reference point in educational administration and planning. *Business and educational research journal* vol. 2 (1).
- Okere, J.U. (2001). Vocational and industrial education and development, *Journal of the league of researchers, Bauchi, Nigeria*.
- Okoro (1999). The imperative of vocational and technical education for a developing Nation. Onitsha: Cape Publishers International Ltd. Nigeria.
- Olaitan, S. O. (1994). Vocational and technical education in Nigeria: Issues and analysis, Onitsha: Noble Graphic press.
- Olaitan, S.O. (2009). The potentials of vocational and technical education for empowering youths and vulnerable adults with work skills of poverty reduction in Nigeria. Being a keynote address presented at 3<sup>rd</sup> National Conference of school of vocational education federal college of education (Tech) on vision 20-20-20 on home capacity building and empowerment of vulnerable groups in Nigeria 8<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> June Akoka, Yaba, Lagos.
- Osalar, P. (2014). Vocational and technical education – a key to improving Nigeria's development part 2 in *Vanguard* 11<sup>th</sup> August, 2014.
- United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organizations, UNESCO (2004). Synthesis Report: Improving access, equity and relevance in technical and vocational education and training (TVET) Bangkok, Thailand: UNESCO.