

Vocational Technical Education and Training for Self-Reliance: Towards National Development

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Abstract This paper criticized an educational system which was faulty from the onset and stressed that vocational technical education and training is that form of Education that leads to acquisition of practical skills, which will enable an individual to be gainfully employed in a chosen occupation to become self-reliant, in order to contribute to overall national development. However, a detailed analysis of the concept of vocational technical education and national development were greatly examined. Challenges facing vocational technical education and training for self-reliance and national development were pointed out. Some of which are: the lack of skilled man- power, inadequate training facilities and equipment, lack of follow-up and continuity in government policies, poor remuneration of vocational and technical teachers, lack of entrepreneurship education in vocational technical education and training and poor emphasis on the practical aspect of vocational technical education and training. Finally, one of the major recommendations is that, both the government and the non government organizations (NGOs) should pay serious attention to entrepreneurship development in technical vocational education and training by putting its priorities right and releasing funds adequately for proper development of individuals to become self-reliant and contribute to national development.

Introduction

In the past education in Nigeria was based on the need of the missionaries for teachers and preachers, as well as the need of the government for clerical workers in government offices, which is the main reasons for early establishment of both elementary and Secondary Schools by the missionaries themselves [Fafunwa, 1974]. The early Secondary Schools were grammar Schools founded after the English System. No technical or vocational schools were originally established. As a result of this, education gradually became a means of avoiding manual work hence, the educational system was greatly criticized and not only for neglect of vocational technical education and training that would have made people to be self-reliant for national development but, being not relevant to peculiar needs of the Nigerian pupils.

Education which is the process of emancipation, civilization and development as asserted by Jibrin, Danjuma and Zayum (2007), is also equated to a key that unlocks the development of personal (self-reliant) and national potentials (national development)..., which is the reason why the government of Nigeria regarded education as an instrument per excellence for effective national development (Jiddere, 2002). The development ideas, scientific advancement, vocational and technological breakthrough, economic development ...are made possible by the educational theories and practices (FME, 2003).

Educational system varies from one country to another, depending on the needs, goals, aspiration and philosophy of education of the country in question (Amaefule, 2004). Since education has been seen as an instrument for scientific and technological development, amongst others, the Federal Government of Nigeria on the National policy on Education, (2004) listed five main national goals of her education system among which are:

- a united , strong and self-reliant nation and;
- a great dynamic economy

From the on going vocational technical education and training is that form of education that leads to the acquisition of practical skills, which will enable an individual to be gainfully employed in a chosen occupation or become self-reliant.

Vocational technical education, according to Raymond (2007) is about work and training for work. One of the goals of the technical and vocational education as stated in the National Policy on Education (2004) is to give training and impart the necessary skills to individuals who shall be self-reliant. If this goal is adequately achieved, it would lead to a sustainable technological development (Raymond, 2007), which in my opinion will make vocational technical education and training a veritable tool for a united strong and self-reliant nation whose total achievement is for national development.

Concept of Vocational Technical Education and Training

Vocational technical education is undoubtedly a very important aspect of the Nigerian educational system under the 6-3-3-4 programme. It develops occupational competence and teaches those skills which enable an individual earn a living as cited by Kayoma (2009) in Okorie (2001). The National Policy on Education (2004) defined vocational technical education as that aspect of education which leads to the acquisition of practical and applied skills as well as basic scientific knowledge.

Nwogu (2009) quoting Okonkwo (1993), declared technical vocational education as viable industries and a prerequisite to new world technological order and therefore requires adequate support of human and material resources. Immanculate (2005) in his opinion said "that technical and vocational education are leaving experience meant to be impacted to an individual systematically in order to get him/her adequately equipped for a good employment in a recognized occupation. The programme includes numerous occupational areas such as agriculture, various trades, health services and technical training (Brickmen 2006). Vocational, technical education and training therefore, can be defined as an educational training, which has been designed technically and systematically to accommodate both the trainer and the trainee in order to enable most importantly the trainee acquire the basic knowledge, skills abilities, understanding and attitudes needed for one's efficient performance in his/her chosen occupational carrier for self-reliance and national development.

The Meaning of Self-Reliance

Self-reliance simply means reliance on one's own efforts and abilities (Merriam, 2006). According to Igweh (2008) when somebody acquires skills in any occupation, such person can establish his or her own business and even employ others, such person according to him is self-reliant. Self-reliance Igweh (2008) emphasized, "leads to national development".

Bassey (2009), in his opinion declared, self-reliance as that which pre-supposes the attainment and autonomy without unnecessarily resorting to begging or browning. He emphasized that, "a self-reliant individual is one that achieves steady supply of his needs, one that diversifies his resources to reduce dependency on others for assistance" Thus, self-reliance emphasizes growth and development in the life of a citizen, politically, socially and economically. Therefore, a man who is potently self-reliant will ensure an effective control of his resources over national life for proper national development for example Dangote and Adenuga etc.

Concept of National Development

A country's well-being depends on its economic development (Nwogu, 2009). An economist by name Walter Rodwey in Igweh (2004), asserted that development in human society is many-sided phenomenon which is complex and means different things in different societies in different situations and to different thinkers. Musa (1985), in his view sees the concept of development as an Euro-American term through culturally based, used to characterize the relative standard of living of the people between the highly industrialized nations of the North and the consumer import dependent nations of the South.

Igweh (2008), stressed that the most suitable definition of development may be that which is based on the experiences of the developing countries which is cited by Seers in Igweh (2001). He defined development in terms of reduction in the levels of poverty, illiteracy, unemployment and income inequality. However, Falodun, Omogiafor and Ezeaku (1999) in Nwogu (2009) emphasized that "national development encompasses social and political development as well as economic development which is defined as the attainment of a number of ideas of modernization such as a rise in productivity social and economic equity, improved institutions and values". Economic development is thus an important part of general development in any society.

The main objective of economic development is to raise the standard of living and the general well being of the people in an economy where almost everybody can be self-reliant. It involves changes in the structure of an economy that includes:

- emphasis on developing manufacturing industries as opposed to agriculture;
- movement of labour from rural to urban industrial areas and;
- less reliance on imported goods in preference to home produced goods (eg made in Nigeria products).

Vocational Technical Education and Training for Self-Reliance

There are five types of technical and vocational training institutions, National policy on Education recognized outside the university system. Yabam in Igweh (1997) indicated that three broad classifications are recognized by the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE). They are vocational schools, technical colleges, colleges of education (technical) or polytechnics, all the above listed are training institutions meant for the production of graduates who shall be self-reliant and contribute their quota for national development through instrument of vocational technical education and training.

However, vocational technical education and training in Nigeria according to Nwogu (2009) "should emphasized entrepreneurship awareness for it to be relevant in achieving the national educational aim of inculcating the right type of values and attitudes for survival of an individual and Nigeria society". Enahoro (2008), in his view said vocational training is utilitarianism and it is a concept of reorganizing the importance of labour. Therefore, to train someone in his appropriate field and for him to substantially contribute his quota to the overall good of the nation, he has to pass through vocational technical education and training. It is a fact that needs no further investigation to say that when and if it is good with a nation, it is also good with its inhabitants and vice versa. For this reason, any nation or country that gives proper training in one sided area of importance to her citizenry or gives improper training to people in all areas of importance has nothing to gain. People are differently gifted and therefore, should be given equal vocational technical education and training for self-reliance in the different occupational areas. Nigeria should be such that people are trained for the different opportunities or openings that abounds in the country, in compliance with the tedious task of giving suitable and proper training to individuals for optimum productivity amongst others.

Vocational Technical Education Training and National Development

Vocational technical education and job training has been an integral part of national development strategies in many societies because of the impact on human resources development, productivity and economic growth (Dike, 2007). Nigerians according to Ibenneme (2007) does not seem to accord vocational technical education the attention it deserves despite its proven contributions in other nations. It is important to note that UNESCO and ILO (2002) understood technical and vocational education to be:

- a means of preparing for occupational fields and for effective participation in the world of work.
- An aspect of lifelong learning and a preparation for responsible citizenship.

- An instrument for promoting environmental sound sustainable development amongst others.

As a matter of fact every nation, especially developing countries are making efforts to develop industrially, economically, technologically and socially. It is important to note also, that any type of developmental effort or initiatives requires human capital amongst others. The development of human capital requires necessarily skilled human capital that has appropriate skills, right attitude and good knowledge of how to retrieve, process and utilize natural resources for the benefit of humanity. Development of human capital that has appropriate skills, right attitude and good knowledge of how to retrieve, process and utilize national resources come within the preview of vocational, technical education and training for national development.

Igweh (2008) in his opinion declared that the artisans, craftsmen, technicians and technologists are adequately trained, they will fit well in small scale enterprises, industries, colleges and universities. There will be less dependence on foreign technical personnel in our cottage and main industries. Indigenous technology will be encouraged. There will be adequate manpower to handle our road maintenance, building, plumbing work, electrification, mechanical works, agriculture, computer and so on. By so doing our production capacity will be increased while our import duties will be decreased, all the benefit he said will lead to national development.

Challenges Facing Vocational Technical Education and Training for Self-Reliance and National Development

There are numerous challenges facing vocational technical education and training for self-reliance which has affected negatively our national life and national development. Among the numerous challenges are:

- Lack of skilled man power,
- Acute shortage of vocational technical teachers
- Lack of adequate training facilities and equipment
- Inadequate vocational, technical education policies
- Lack of follow –up and continuity in government policies
- Poor funding of vocational technical education
- Poor remuneration of vocational technical teachers;
- Lack of entrepreneurship education in vocational technical education and training
- Lack of adequate security/security needs and
- Poor emphasis on the practical aspect of vocational technical education as most tertiary institutions charged with the responsibility to teach vocational technical education subjects in Nigeria today are poorly equipped with machines and relevant tools/equipment.

Conclusion

The non- acceptance of vocational technical education and training as a means of intervention in the normal course of development by Nigerians has brought a setback in our national development, which must be addressed. However, an attempt was made in this paper to critically examine all the major concept and emphasized the role of vocational technical education and training for self-reliance and national development. Despite, all these things, there were challenges pointed out which if not checked properly will not allow the timid population of the Nigeria people grow and become self-reliant as to bring about national development.

Recommendation

For Nigerians to be self-reliant and contribute their quota to the national development, there has to be skill acquisition through vocational technical education and training to people of all ages especially the youths.

The followings are recommended:

- That both government and non government organizations (NGOs) should pay serious attention to entrepreneurship development in technical vocational education and training by putting its priorities right and releasing funds for proper development of individuals to become self-reliant and contribute to national development ;
- There should be a consistent policy frame work, backed by legislation that makes it mandatory for various levels of government to set aside some percent of the annual budget for the various levels of vocational technical education training institution;
- Qualified vocational and technical teachers proficient in theory and practical should be employed to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the area;
- Ensuring that the vocational technical education and training for self reliance is a tool for national development, teacher preparation programmes should be supported and serving teachers adequately remunerated.

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