

## Comparative Study of the Cultural Construction of Vocational Education and Training in Norway and Nigeria

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**Abstract** *Despite the emergence of a common agenda for vocational education and training across many countries, it is increasingly recognized that policy in practice varies significantly according to national context. Of course, it is one thing to develop grand visions of the vocation education and training society within official policy documents, translating such visions into reality usually turns out to be rather more problematic. This paper evaluated the pedagogical legacy of vocation education and training in these countries by analyzing the contribution of teachers and students to the development of VET based on the enrichment of historical and cultural environment. Norway had encountered difficulties in attempting to further progress the cause of vocational education and training. Nigeria to reach "the position" might be a very strong statement because of different situations, cultures, etc. Nigeria to work toward a goal to which Norway offers a good model could be more realistic.*

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**Keywords:** *Vocational education and training, culture, Nigeria and Norway*

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### Introduction

Around the world, all economically advanced democracies place a high value on the quality of their vocational education and training. Vocational education and training has become a key policy issue as its importance to national economic performance has become generally recognized (Porter, 1990). In the face of rapid technological advance, economic globalization and the intensification of competition both within developed and developing countries, it is now clear that human resources are the key to continuing prosperity in the advanced economies. It is also clear to most government, although to some perhaps more than the other that a maximum diffusion of education and training are necessary prerequisite for a healthy democracy and for maintaining a level of social cohesion and solidarity in fast changing and increasing pluralistic societies (Ruberti, 1993)

In view of this, Copenhagen Declaration, adopted at European Vocational Education Ministers Conference in 2002 concerning the vocational education policy development throughout Europe, defines as its strategic priority the restructuring of the content of education and learning in Europe, their modernization and adjustment. To attain this, it is necessary to study the historico cultural experience as according to one of the major 20th century philosophers H.G. Gadamer, "our everyday life is constant passage through the simultaneity of the past and the future (education)"

In order to provide a wider perspective on vocation education and training in Norwegian and Nigerian secondary schools, this study reviews why Nigeria and Norway. The two countries Norway in Western Europe and Nigeria in West Africa have been strategically chosen for the purpose of shedding light on maximal vocation education and training within the world context using cultural apparatus. The comparative advantage of these countries on vocation education and training were largely based on cultural values, including folk art, craft, professional art values, historical and cultural documents, documental evidence, etc. In addition these two countries also had comparative advantage due to their operations as a mono-export economy in crude oil. Petroleum production and the vocation education and training base of the workforce quickly led to the development of new processes and products. It is a principle within comparative research that if common patterns are found between extremely different cases, they are supposed to have great significance and validity. However for two cases to be comparable, some similarities concerning important characteristics are also required (Archer 1979; Patton 1987; Daun 1998). These two countries have culture which comprises many expressions of art and creativity and the respective institutions through which it is

produced, distributed and consumed. The contemporary promotion of vocational education and training utilizing culture can be defined as one strand of local economic policy that could be used to cushion the negative effect of the painful transition from an industrial to a post industrial economy. In this model, culture is defined in the language of economic, with the attendant measurement applied to policy analysis; investment, leverage, employment, direct and indirect income effects, social and spatial targeting etc.

## Education and Culture

Cultural legacy is formed by the traditional cultural values, including folk art, craft, professional art values, historical, cultural documents, documental evidence, etc. Education and culture are situated in historical context, and against a background of a rapidly globalising world, where cultures are drawing close to one another, and the need for tolerance of diversity is paramount. The study pointed out the necessity of special emphasis on that knowledge which is the contribution of each individual culture to the common world intellectual legacy. These intellectual legacy serves as the distribution of intellectual abilities, areas of interest, inner motivation, and persistence to "make it" in spite of difficulties is equal among all nations and societies. Education when viewed as a system according to Smehaugen (2004), transmits and internalizes cultural value and culturally elected knowledge, has function of socializing individual and providing them with significant lifestyle that may vary from one cultural context to another. This could be seen as acculturation which is considered as the process through which the dominant culture is being reproduced (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1994). This takes place by mean of training and information, which form attitudes and behaviour patterns that uphold the cultural and social order. In this sense, transmission of abstract and practical knowledge may take three main forms.

- *Diffuse education*: pedagogic action is exerted by all the educated member of a social formation or a group
- *Family education*: pedagogic action is exerted by the family group member to whom the culture of a group or class delegate this task
- *Institutionalized education*: pedagogic action is exerted by a system of specialized agent who are explicitly mandated for this purpose by an institution

Above all mentioned form of education may be active simultaneously, and all relate to cultural power and authority in one way or the other. Applied to the Norwegian and Nigerian case, it may be seen that compulsory education for the masses was early systematized in order to open the access to post compulsory education for a broader segment of society in the Norwegian case (an inclusive system). In Nigeria, informal education in the family, work and religious contexts have historically been predominant for the masses. Here, schooling designed to have higher education a destination has mainly been reserved for elite groups

## Place of Vocational Education and Training

Global economic restructuring led to increased competition among the large countries at both end of the emerging economic hierarchy. Economically growing countries increasingly competed at a global level, while for declining countries competition became necessary for survival itself. Colonial neglect of vocational education and training had the effect of destroying existing indigenous systems of vocational learning that were embedded in distinctive local socioeconomic and cultural contexts. This legacy has continued even after Independence and is strongly reflected in manpower development plans and discourses of international agencies, which cater primarily to the needs of the formal economy.

Vocation education and training is a vehicle upon which the skills of workforce are built. Without effective implementation of vocation education and training, we cannot hope for a future self-reliant graduate with the required skills and flexibility for sustainable human economic development in the global age.

Vocation education and training 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 economic 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 vocation education and training implementation of the programme will inculcate the necessary skills and competencies that would help the youth to be self-reliant.

However, as the informal economy increasingly comes to be seen as the key ground both for economic growth and poverty eradication, so the ability of vocation education and training to promote informal sector activities needs to come to the fore even further in government and agency concerns. There is always a comprehensive picture of the educational processes and the competency people in the informal economy want, need and utilise. For, if vocation education and training is to cater to both the formal and informal labour markets, then it is necessary to learn from the periphery and to take into account the traditions and values of the system of vocational learning in working life. This applies to the specific goals, cultural policies and initiatives that are being pursued and implemented, the wider institutional framework within which they take place, and the roles played by key actors such as state, employers and trade unions etc.

By the same token, some countries may not only benefit from more favourable conditions for making progress towards the goal of vocation education and training but may already be some way further down this road than others. One such country is Norway, well-known for its egalitarian social ambitions and comprehensive approach towards education. Norway invests considerable resources in its education system and has one of the most highly educated populations in the developed world (OECD, 2002a). As in the other countries like Nigeria, participation tends to be lower. Norway has also been seen to benefit from a strong tradition of tripartism and consensus building, with the social partners invited by government to play an active role in policy formulation. This work will try to explore some of the challenges and problems that Norwegian policy makers and the social partners have confronted in their attempts to implement this policy.

What makes the Norwegian case interesting is not simply that Norway has encountered difficulties in attempting to further progress the cause of vocation education and training, but that its experience may also be instructive as to the kind of challenges that other countries like Nigeria might confront trying to reach the position in which Norway finds itself today. However, Norway still has its own mountain to climb. But, it may resemble something of a steep hill in comparison to the Everest that other countries like Nigeria have to scale

### **Objective of the Study**

- (1) to analyze the cultural policy standpoints as concerns the organization of vocation education and training in these countries
- (2) to specify the conditions that have contributed to the foundation of vocation education and training in their schools
- (3) to find out what factors have enhance or hinders the development of vocation education and training and to analyze the teaching content and methods at vocational secondary schools
- (4) to evaluate the pedagogical legacy of vocation education and training by analyzing the contribution of teachers and students to the development of VET as well as the enrichment of historical and cultural environment.

### **Methodology**

This study is a process of learning and understanding the background and growth of an organizational culture, current trends, and future possibilities. The methodology utilizes historical systemic approach to investigate the subject of the research in relation to the functioning of diverse political, economic, social, cultural systems and structures. Vocation education and training is one of the vital spheres of the socio

cultural life; its objective is embedded on pedagogy, philosophy, history and psychology of education. There was necessity for evaluating the legacy of the past for understanding the present and projecting future strategies for its improvement. These countries are used to produce a comparative perspective on vocational education and training revealing its essence, regularities of development and general common features.

This research methodology utilizes multiple method, in which triangulation techniques attempted to map out, or explain more fully, the richness and complexity of human behaviour by studying it from more than one standpoint and, in so doing, by making use of both quantitative and qualitative method

### Stages of the Research

*1st stage* comprised the historical investigation of traditional activities on the development of vocation education and training in these countries

*2nd stage* comprised the analysis of cultural policy in organizing the vocation education and training, summarizing data on the content of vocational secondary education establishments in these countries

*3rd stage* comprised the analysis of artifacts - personal life stories, records of experience, applied historical sources, visual materials, in order to assess the contribution of teachers and students to the development of vocation education and training and teaching methods during various period of educational reformation, bringing out the intrinsic features of the object and subject of the research, formation tendencies and regularities.

### Discussion

The historical development of today's technical and vocational teaching profession in Norway, reflects the development of the Norwegian social democratic post-war society as well as the development of TVET in the country. Difficulties in communication have contributed to making Norway politically decentralised and, undoubtedly, played a significant role regarding the strategies and policies chosen for the development of initial technical and vocational education and training as much as for education in general

The modes of dispensation of ancient forms of education were both informal and non-formal. Formal education evolved from these primordial modes as a feature of organized modern societies. Nigeria have all along in their history been in the business of education, sustaining themselves with their traditional modes of vocational education. Vocational education is not therefore new in Nigeria, or for that matter in any community. A Nigerian child learns the language and occupation of his parents and relatives. Thus he grows up to communicate well in his mother tongue and become proud practitioner of his parent's traditional occupation after due period of traditional apprenticeship.

The introduction of formal vocational training in Nigeria during colonization was to meet the demand for skilled manpower to maintain the colonial administration. However, the colonial masters did bring with them their liberal education culture which despises manual work and holds it to be unfit for the intellectual and leadership class. That culture created liberal education in Nigeria and sustained it as the antithesis of technical and vocational education. The Platonic argument against technical education has been well laid out. It has become the conventional rut of thought of much of the Western World, Nigeria being no exception. The base of the argument is the rendering of training as the antithesis of education. It is held that education deals with the mind or the head and it emanates from the study of liberal arts while training deals with the hands in the acquisition of work techniques.

As educated man is supposed to be superior to his techniques as he has in the process acquired scholarship and sensibility, a mind which by virtue of its acquired potential for understanding can function in novel situations to its advantage. As in most societies, these classes of people (the educated elite) in Nigeria use their socially ascribed intellectual attributes to allocate social privileges, favourable career and lifestyle prospects to themselves and to the detriment of technically trained. This they view vocational tracks to inhibit

further educational attainment. The track which mainly lead to vocational qualifications from which access to tertiary education is very difficult and rather rare. If not based on the, on-going Federal Government intervention in vocational education and training, many a young Nigerian who enters the track of technical or vocational education finishes up in a dead-end.

Whereas, anchored in the model of training of the master-apprentice relationship, Norwegian initial vocational training was, for a long time, a well-defined area determined by the learning conditions of the work place concerned with the training. Schools for training craftsmen and industry workers appeared at different times in Norwegian and were established at various paces in line with the advancement of industrialization in the second part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is possible to state that during the 1990s, quality and equity was once more reinforced as a fundamental value in the Norwegian educational system. This is observed both in basic education (primary and lower secondary level) and in upper secondary education. Considering these developments, it is possible to state also that the conviction that the school plays an important role in eliminating social differences still remains strong in Norwegian educational policies. However, all these changes are part of an intertwined political and cultural context.

In Norway, Public regulations give the Ministry of Education considerable power regarding decisions about technical and vocational training, independent of whether it takes place at a school or in a work establishment. The Ministry of Education and Research determines whether a trade is labeled to be included under the law of apprenticeship in the enterprises or if it must be placed elsewhere not covered by this law. A National Council for Vocational Training, established by the Ministry of Education for a period of four years, serves as an advisory organ to the ministry when preparing documents related to the inclusion of particular trades under the supervision of the law of apprenticeship. Each vocation education and training is attached to a council of education and training, also established by the Ministry of Education. This council usually gathers several trades in the same branch, prepares educational plans and regulations for certification in the trades concerned. This council also functions as an instance of complaint for the apprentices. Each trade that is organized under the law of apprenticeship is attached to council of education and training, also established by the Ministry of Education. This council usually gathers several trades in the same branch, prepares educational plans and regulations for certification in the trades concerned. This council also functions as an instance of complaint for the apprentices. Each county has its Committee for Vocational Training (Yrkesopplæringsnemd, YON), which is responsible for the implementation of vocational training. The principal tasks of this committee are: a) to function as a mediator between the apprentices and the companies; b) to certify the companies as places of vocational training, including the certification of the offices of vocational training or the circles of vocational training; c) to supervise the conditions for teaching and learning in the companies; and d) to administer the tests for certifying the students as skilled workers.

Within this system, in which there is a common frame for general education and vocational training, the apprentices have the rights and the responsibilities legitimated by the law of apprenticeship in enterprises and by the law for the work environment (Arbeidsmiljøloven, AML). Among the rights, one can mention the apprentice's right to a contract with an enterprise, which is accepted by the public authorities as a place for vocational training and the right to wages in accordance with negotiated tariffs for the period of apprenticeship. The rights also define the time set aside to be away from work in order to follow the formal and theoretical learning during the period of apprenticeship.

The enterprises are obligated to submit the apprentice to tests relevant to the trade in which they are examined at the end of the training period, and the apprentice has the right to wages during the tests. If the enterprise, or if the apprentice, wishes to cancel the contract before it is officially over, the cancellation must be approved by the Committee of Vocational Training (YON). If a student is not given a place as apprentice after having completed the two years of upper secondary education at school, that precede the training in an enterprise, he/she has the right to a third year of education at the upper secondary school level. These regulations illustrate the amount of decision power that the Ministry of Education continues to have regarding technical and vocational training, at school as well as at the work place in Norway.

In Nigeria, vocation education and training constitute two distinct educational subsectors which are characterized by their purposes, levels of institutions, course offerings, organization and control. Generally the institutions in the technical education subsector are of tertiary level but non-university in status. Their primary role is to produce middle or technician level manpower for commerce, industry, agriculture, healthcare and teaching. The three types of institutions distinguishable in the technical education subsector include: Polytechnic or Colleges of Technology, Monotechnics and Colleges of education. The colleges of Education in this subsector are those which produce technical teachers. Many Nigerians subscribe to the position that the skills taught in most vocational tracks are of little value to employers and employees, and that vocational education is simply a diversion of working-class students from the road leading to higher education and the professions. They perceived it as an organizational aspect of education which are considered to reproduce social inequality between generations and the education on the future attainments of students appear to vary consistently between men and women, with women benefiting more from it than men. Consequently, vocation education and training in Nigeria is underrated and is besieged with enormous problems such as hinge on funding, staffing and management. Nigeria is still in search of adequate solutions to these three problem areas. There is the realization that this type of education is capital intensive and that Government alone cannot bear its funding. Yet it has not been possible to obtain significant cooperation in funding from the private business who utilizes the products of vocation education and training.

## Conclusion

The basis of this research is constituted on the ideas of the necessity of humanizing the teaching process, of possibilities of optimum personality socialization as well as of correspondences between the learner and teacher as the leading force of social development.. The society needs to be re-oriented about the values of vocation education and training as a special field of human discipline that has its contribution to the development of the economy. It should not be taken from the views of the layman on the streets and even some educated men on general education that vocational education is meant for dropouts and no-do-wells. The theoretical standpoint is related to the idea that school activities are to be evaluated in close relation to the contemporary socio-cultural, socio-political and the socio-economic-development of the country, and the demands of society.

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