

REPOSITIONING TECHNICAL, VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR TECHNOLOGY EMPOWERMENT AND A WORLD OF WORK IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

With over 40 years of Technical/Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Nigeria, its growth continue to be too slow when compared to its development in other parts of the world This paper identified two giant enemies that are responsible for the set back of Technical, Vocational Education and Training in Nigeria as social stigma and wrong implementation. Detailed discussion was made and strategies that can put the programme back on track were suggested.

Keywords: Repositioning; Technical Vocational Education; Training; Technology Empowerment

Introduction

Before the advent of western education in Nigeria, a system of non-formal Technical, Vocational Education and Training (TVET) existed in all the geographical areas that constituted the present day Nigeria. It was the heritage of some family vocations like wood carving, fishing, drumming, weaving, and blacksmithing among others. This perhaps is the reason why formal and informal Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) constitute just one percent of the entire education system in Nigeria (Dabesaki, 2012). TVET refers to the kind of education and training that are given in formal and non formal school systems relating to the manufacture or production of goods and services. In today's world, countries are rated as either developed or developing depending upon their technology advancement. Nigeria and its workforce need to be empowered technologically, this will upgrade it from a consumer nation to a productive nation. There is the need to solve the puzzle of Nigeria becoming one of the 20 largest economies by the year 20-20-20 when its TVET programme constitute only one percent of its educational programme?

Over the years science and technology has and continue to play a leading role in all human endeavour to an extent that if the two were to be abolished, the existence of mankind will be at great risk. Science concerns itself with the study of

the structure and behavior of the natural and physical world based on facts that can be proved (Hornby, 2001). The traditional crafts like fishing, wood carving, hunting, etc have to depend on science and technology products to contribute meaningfully to economic growth. Science and technology are both dynamic. They lend themselves to the discovery of facts and the application of same to innovative changes and developments.

In spite of all these global achievements, TVET in Nigeria has been bedeviled by many problems hindering its growth to meet up with global trend. It is common knowledge that majority of middle and high class citizens in Nigeria are educated to some extent. This is an indication that acquisition of knowledge helps to fight poverty, ignorance and diseases. The process of acquiring this well desired knowledge has gradually turned money spinning venture for many. Seekers of this form of knowledge exploit and make offers to the highest bidder to get what they want with little or no consideration for quality of service rendered and facilities on ground. The results of these negative vices have bedeviled TVET in Nigeria and don't allow a healthy economic, social and political growth. Nigeria has set to achieve. Certainly, Nigeria will have to reposition its TVET towards a purposeful goal orientation. This paper identifies systemic and structural intervention needed to overcome the challenges.

Challenges facing TVET development in Nigeria

A number of challenges that have bedeviled TVET in Nigeria include:

- (a) Problem of perception at individual and institutional level. TVET is relegated to the position of alternative for students that are not academically sound to study science subjects and is supported in some states and local governments through ad hoc skills acquisition programmes. Lack of adequate investment in TVET at technical school level has made matters worse. As a result, young people's aspirations in Nigeria have had a slant towards the more prestigious vocations such as medicine, law, accounting, engineering, etc (Dabesaki, 2012).
- (b) Inadequate funding befitting TVET importance. Nigeria has continued to down play UNESCO recommendation that 26% of annual budget be spent on education. Nigeria's budget has not been more than 10% in two decades and 8.43% for 2012. Nigeria Lacks adequate and equipped schools and has very high teacher- student ratio for all the levels of education. A comparison with some of its African counterparts show that Bostwana spends 19.0%, Lesotho, 17.0%; South Africa, 27.0%; Cote d'voire, 30%; Burkina Faso, 16.8%; Ghana, 31.0%; Kenya, 23.0%; Uganda, 27.0%; Tunisia, 17.0% and Moroko, 17.7%. "There is no denying the fact that education is poorly funded in Nigeria" (Vanguard, 14th March 2012).

- (c) Poor preparation and examination malpractices – Poor preparation of students for examination and lack of self-confidence that results into examination malpractice are evidently major problems bewitching education system in Nigeria. The rising cost of education (school fees, enrolment fees, cost of books, and other materials), also make both the students and their parents ready to compromise anything in order to avert any form of deficit or failure in any of the required subjects. Students' interests have drifted from reading, acquiring skills, procurement of books and materials to, i) fashion and ii) blocking or sorting (i.e. influencing examination results). This is evident in the drift of candidates from urban to rural areas to write examinations in most states of Nigeria. Some academic and non-academic staff of secondary and tertiary schools often accepts money from students in order to provide them needed assistance regarding examinations. These teachers readily enter into such corporation with students to make up for the inadequate preparation of their students. Lack of training facilities is also partly to blame for the poor preparation.

Other causes of poor students' preparation during exams include:

- (i) Deterioration of our societal norms - cultural and societal norms particularly in Nigeria's urban cities clearly leads to teachers sleeping with their students, sale of handouts, collecting money for production of test questions, etc.
- (ii) Poor remuneration to teachers. Teachers are not adequately paid commensurate to work done and in comparison to other professionals like doctors, lawyers, etc.
- Exploitation and educational standard resulting from:
- (a) Exploitation by school heads in both private and public schools in collaboration with ministry officers in the name of enrollment fees and success in exams.
- (b) Poor monitoring by ministry officers who compromise their assessment of actual facts for some financial returns.
- (c) Students / parents are surcharged in a number of ways (reading materials, other materials and dues) that are unaccounted for.
- (d) Poor parenting / guidance:
- (i) Parents do not provide their words with basic needs for a child's upkeep to properly equip him / her meet with the challenges of life.
- (ii) Poor monitoring of children by parents at all educational levels

Implementation assessment of education transformation in Nigeria

The education industry has several facets and stages. The facets include all inputs: students, facilities, manpower, curriculum and processes, and structure. The stages include all the levels in the educational system of Nigeria (pre-primary and primary, junior and senior secondary schools, and the tertiary level). A reform may be planned and implemented in any one or more levels, however, planning seem a lot easier than implementation because of several factors. Firstly, implementation requires a lot of resources. Secondly, those involved at the implementation stage may not have been involved in the planning. Thirdly, careful monitoring and evaluation, planning and adjustments are needed for the implementation to be successful.

Transformation in education sector and their implementation have been going on since independence till date with a view to transforming the Nigerian education sub-sector of the economy. A highlight of reforms and implementation are presented below:

The Nigerian government from 1960 – 1970 brought about a massive educational reforms. A major landmark of the reforms was the launching of the National Policy on Education (NPE) in 1976. The policy provided a reform from a 7-5-3 years of primary, secondary and university education respectively to 6-3-3-4 years of primary, junior secondary, senior secondary and university education respectively. Faced with numerous challenges the administration went ahead to:

- (a) Implement the 6-3-3-4 education system
- (b) Launch the Universal Primary Education (UPE)
- (c) Take control of first generation universities
- (d) Establish the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB)

From 1999 the democratic government faced with the problem of population explosion in schools and the desire to increase access to education implemented the following:

- (i) Reform of primary education to Basic education.
- (ii) Re- merging of the 21 federal supervision parastatals to eight.
- (iii) Increase in the number of public and private institutions at all levels of education system, technical colleges, universities of technology, etc.
- (iv) The welfare of teachers in terms of salaries and wages for the tertiary institutions.

Problems of implementation of technical and vocational education programme in Nigeria

Technical and Vocational Education (TVE) comprehensively refers to those aspects of the educational process involving in addition to general education, the studies of technologies and related sciences and the acquisition of practical skills, attitude, understanding and knowledge relating to occupation in various sectors of the economic and social life (FRN, 2004). A close examination of the definition of TVE provides the following features:

- (a) It's an integral part of general education
- (b) It is a method of alleviating poverty.
- (c) It is also a means of preparing for occupational field and effective participation in the world of work.

The implementation of TVE cuts across all the stages with different levels of success. At the pre-vocational stage (primary school) subjects like fine art, handicraft and agriculture/ home economics are taught. However, evidence abound revealing poor implementation that include buying and submission of brooms, hoes, tissue paper, etc to the school authorities instead of actual participation in craftwork by pupils.

Such practices deny the Junior Secondary School Students the necessary foundation needed for creativity and interest in vocational subjects. A quality TVET programme provides for learning of skills employed in using tools, machines and materials of the occupation with good judgment and pride in good workmanship. This is lacking and needed exposure of JSS students to career awareness is far underachieved. Low students' enrolment in technical and vocational trades except electrical/electronic are clearly manifested in both public and private schools. Okwonkwo (2007) reported that students' loss of interest in TVE subjects because they were regarded as dirty ones. Though appreciable numbers of students are found in technical colleges, only little achievement has been recorded due to lack of human, material and financial resources. Lack of needed resources limits curriculum adjustment to changing business and industrial conditions, technology change and the requirements for the labour market.

TVET teachers are masters in their occupation and have completed teacher training programme where they have learned how to impart their knowledge and skills to learners. Saba (2006) noted that some physics, chemistry and mathematics teachers were compelled to read and teach introductory technology subjects due to inadequate number of qualified technical teachers in our schools. The inadequacies always observe among many undergraduates and

graduates alike are the result of the inadequacies associated with both primary and secondary education levels in Nigeria.

At the tertiary level, there is incessant brain-drain due to inadequate and poor facilities and lack of motivation. These have also paralyzed research activities at this level. Scholars and researchers have largely attributed the attainment of global greatness by countries to an efficient and functional TVET system (Mohammed, 2008; Saba, 2006). To support this, Tajudeen (2007) identified technology education as an index used to categorize a country to whether is developing, under-developed or developed.

Re-engineering Technical, Vocational Education and Training

To achieve meaningful growth in TVET in Nigeria, a re-engineering work needs to be done. This paper identifies the following as worthy targets:

- (i) A good transformation agenda should begin with the training of the personnel in TVET who will implement and those that will monitor the implementation of the programme.
- (ii) Research development as a prime mover: Every 'one' who cherish genuine growth and sustainable development should as a matter of fact encourage and finance research programmes, inventions and mass production of products. This may discourage prospective students from indulging in any form of academic irregularities. The research sub-sector suffers neglect in Nigeria, thus the basis for the socio-economic, political, scientific and technological advancement of our most admired developed nations of the world today. There's the need for giant efforts to be made towards a qualitative and enduring education system for Nigeria to achieve its educational objectives.
- (iii) Funding constraints: Government has always try to shy away from the responsibility of funding education and when they do, the timing is not always right. Today's global economy growth is based more heavily on scientific and technological knowledge. This is evident in the competitions between countries to acquire nuclear capability, space exploration, a vibrant technology and economy. Adequate funding that will put TVET in the front burner in the nation's bid towards realizing vision 20-20-20 is a necessity. Hence, addressing the observed inadequacies can be a step in the right direction.

- (iv) Organizational influence versus educational standard: Public and corporate organizations indulge in an unfair selective judgments during recruitment, e.g. emphasis on type of school attended, class of degree and so on. In doing so compromise standard of skills developed. This brings about theoretical training given to technical and vocational education students at all levels at the expense of grade. Thus, the perpetual syndrome of bringing expatriates for both medium and high level technical service.

Conclusion

The Federal Government's transformation agenda in Nigeria is not by any means a new programme, so also is the approach. A critical assessment of the transformation agenda revealed that laudable initiatives have been developed in the past but fell short of achieving desired results. The challenges faced were identified as poor implementation and effective monitoring by the architect of the initiatives. Nigerian Government intervention has also been a single short implementation that lacks continuation. These have resulted into lack of progress experienced by the programme.

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