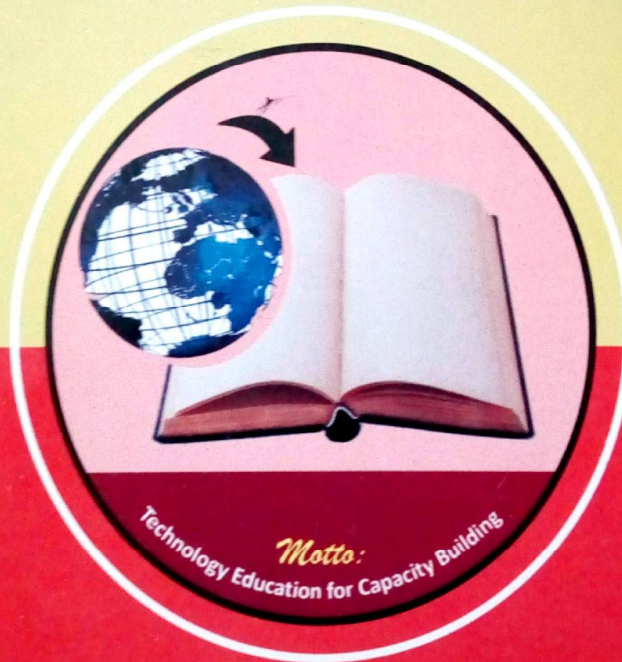


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## **Capacity Building Strategies in Vocational Technical Education for Effective Global Competitiveness, Job Creation and National Development in Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

*This paper focuses on capacity building strategies in Vocational Technical Education (VTE) for effective global competitiveness, job creation and national development in Nigeria. The concept of capacity building as it relates to VTE was discussed. The need for capacity building was explained; and it was revealed that capacity building is necessary because of the high level of underdevelopment in Nigeria which is as a result of the prevalence of skill gap among the students, workforce or members of staff in most organizations and educational institutions in Nigeria. It was also revealed that in every technological institution, skill gap are noticeable in five areas: basic skills, technical skills, professional skills, management/leadership skills, and emotional intelligence skills. The paper therefore calls for the need to empower VTE teachers and students with the requisite skills for improved performance. To enhance empowerment of VTE teachers and students, the researchers developed capacity building strategies for VTE. In conclusion, the researchers stressed the need for various government, individuals and other stake holders to invest seriously in capacity building programmes and also recommended adoption of the strategies developed by the researchers to enhance production of technical graduates that can compete globally, involve in job creation, entrepreneurship development and wealth generation.*

**Keywords:** *Capacity building, Vocational technical education, skills, national development.*

### **Introduction**

Vocational and Technical Education (VTE) for effective global competitiveness, job creation, entrepreneurship development and wealth generation can only be possible when VTE teachers and students acquire the requisite capacities that can enhance acquisition of qualitative skill-based education that can enhance national development. According to the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN,2004) in her National policy on education, National development entails building a free and democratic society; a just and egalitarian society; a united, strong and self-reliant nation; a great and dynamic economy; and a land full of bright opportunities for all citizens. It involves the total transformation of society, making humanity the focus of the development drive and seeking to develop man's potentialities to the fullest. National development includes reduction of poverty, wealth creation and equitable distribution of

wealth, ensuring nutrition and health, housing and ancillary services, social security and welfare (Mohammed, 1991). It entails building capacities to advance material and human capital or human resources for effective production of goods and services.

Unfortunately, Nigeria has failed to achieve its national development goals due to a poorly capacitated workforce. The country is still trapped in a vicious cycle of underdevelopment, security crisis, political and social upheavals that threaten national unity. The people are still engulfed in ignorance, disease and poverty. According to United Nations Development Programme (UNDP,2010) report, Nigeria was classified as one of the countries with low human development index. This implies that the country is still characterized with high level of poverty, insecurity, poor nutrition and sanitation, high illiteracy level, health crisis, dead infrastructure and lack of improved water sources (Agba & Agba 2008). These problems have been attributed to a number of factors including lack of visionary and strategic leaders, corruption, poor utilization of human and natural resources and above all neglect to capacity building which is a major management improvement technique. This paper therefore sets out to examine capacity building strategies in Vocational Technical Education for effective global competitiveness, job creation and national development in Nigeria.

### **Concept of Capacity Building**

Capacity simply refers to an individual's ability or capability to function. Capacity can be expressed in terms of maximum possible output or performance. Simply put, capacity building is the process of developing and improving the ability of an individual to function more effectively. Capacity building is the gateway to national development because no nation can succeed without a highly skilled and efficiently capacitated workforce. Capacity building also referred to capacity development is a conceptual approach to development that focuses on understanding the obstacles that inhibit people, governments, international organizations and non-governmental organization from realizing their developmental goals while enhancing the

abilities that will allow them to achieve measurable and sustainable results. UNDP (2010) defined capacity building as a long-term continual process of development that involves all stakeholders including ministries, local authorities, governmental and non-governmental organizations, professionals, community members, academics and more. Capacity building uses develops and improves a country's human, scientific, technological, organizational, institutional and resource capabilities. The goal of capacity building is to tackle problems related to policy and methods of development while considering the potential, limits and needs of the people of the country concerned. Capacity building takes place on an individual level, an institutional level and societal level.

- **Individual level** – Capacity building on an individual level requires the development of conditions that allow individual participants to build and enhance existing knowledge and skills. It also calls for the establishment of conditions that will allow individuals to engage in the process of learning and adapting to change;
- **Institutional Level** - Capacity building on an institutional level should involve aiding pre-existing institutions in developing countries. It should not involve creating new institutions, rather modernizing existing institutions and supporting them in forming sound policies, organizational structures, and effective methods of management and revenue control; and
- **Societal Level** - Capacity building at the societal level should support the establishment of a more interactive public administration that learns equally from its actions and from feedback it receives from the population at large. In this case capacity building must be used to develop public administrators that are responsive and accountable.

The World Customs Organization (2009) defined capacity building as those activities which strengthen the knowledge, abilities, skills and behavior of individuals and improve institutional structures and processes such that the organization can efficiently meet its mission

and goals in a sustainable way. Ann (1996) defined capacity building as the process of developing and strengthening the skills, instincts, abilities, processes and resources that organization and communities need to survive, adapt and thrive in the fast-changing world. Capacity building is the element that gives fluidity, flexibility and functionality of a personnel, programme or organization to adapt to changing needs of the population that is served.

Capacity building is much more than mere training and includes the following:

- **Human Resource Development:** The process of equipping individuals with the understanding, skills access to information, knowledge and training that enables them to perform effectively.
- **Organizational Development:** The elaboration of management structures, processes and procedures, not only within organizations but also the management of relationships between the different organizations and sectors (public, private and community).
- **Institutional and Legal Framework Development:** Making legal and regulatory changes to enable organizations, institutions and agencies at all levels and in all sectors to enhance their capacities (Eade, 2007).

Capacity building in a broad development context according Dahlman (2008) implies a dynamic process which enables individuals and agencies to develop the critical social and technical capabilities to identify and analyze problems and proffer solutions. Okoye (2004) referred to capacity building as activities that improve an organization's ability to achieve its mission or a person's ability to define and realize his/her goals or to do his/her jobs more effectively. In other words, capacity building is the process by which individuals, organizations and societies develop abilities to perform functions, solve problems, set and achieve goals.

From the conceptual review it is obvious that capacity building in Vocational and Technical Education is the sine qua non for effective global competitiveness, job creation,

entrepreneurship development, wealth generation and economic development in any nation since innovations in science and technology is an everyday phenomenon. Vocational and Technical Education teachers and students therefore should be at the fore front of current information, skills and knowledge acquisition and like the Boy Scout must always be prepared to learn, unlearn and relearn so as to update their knowledge and capabilities to enhance national development. In support of this, Fullam (2007) maintained that the illiterates of the 21<sup>st</sup> century are not those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn and relearn. It is therefore imperative for VTE teachers and students to personally embrace capacity building activities to acquire the capabilities necessary for global competitiveness, job creation, entrepreneurship development, and wealth generation.

### **The Need for Capacity Building in Vocational and Technical Education**

Capacity building is necessary because of the high level of underdevelopment in Nigeria which is as a result of the prevalence of skill gap among the students, workforce or members of staff in most organizations and educational institutions in Nigeria. A skill denotes expertise or ability developed in the course of training and experience. It includes not only trade and craft skills acquired through apprenticeship but also includes high-grade performance in various fields such as professional practice, education, leadership, the arts, games and athletics. Adetokunbo (2009) described a skill gap or performance gap as a significant gap between the needed skills and the current capabilities of the workforce in an organization. A skill gap is the shortage in performance. It is a negative performance. It is the difference between the standard required or expected performance and the actual performance from a worker. In other words, skill gap is the standard required performance minus the present performance.

The prevailing issue of skill deficiency common among fresh graduates call for the need for skill gap analysis which is a scientific quotient developed by researchers for

measuring skill gap. Adetokunbo further stated that the prevalence of skill gap in the Nigerian workforce has negatively affected the quality of goods and services from Nigeria as well as the quality of teaching and research in our tertiary institutions, consequently leading to the accumulation of graduates with very good certificates but without the requisite capabilities to function effectively in the work place: thereby supporting the UNDP (2010) statement that eighty percent (80%) of Nigerian graduates are not employable.

Adetokunbo (2009) revealed that skill gap analysis involves comparing the performer's (the worker) skills with the standard skills required for a particular kind of job in order to determine the deficiency and to identify future performance improvement opportunities. The present behaviour (B) is subtracted from the desired standard (S) to measure the performance gap (G) This measurement,  $S - B = G$ , becomes the span that must be bridged in order to reach the objective. Therefore, it is the measured skill gap that determines the kind of capacity building training needed to bridge the gap so as to improve the performance of the capacity-deficient staff. Skill gap analysis can also be used for personal improvement of capabilities.

In every technological institution, the gaps are noticeable in five major areas:

- **Basic skills:** These include proficiency in reading, writing, simple calculations, communications and human relations;
- **Technical skills:** These are capabilities in manipulating engines, machines, equipments, constructions, and computers;
- **Professional skills:** These are required professional teaching skills for effective teaching or instructional delivery in Vocational and Technical Education;
- **Management/Leadership Skills:** These cover areas like educational administration, supervision, team-building, goal-setting, planning, motivation, decision making, delegation, and ethical judgment; and

- **Emotional intelligence skills:** These are innate capabilities. They manifest as self-awareness, self-discipline, persistence, sympathy, perseverance and intuition.

From the foregoing, it is obvious that bridging the skill gaps is not merely improving teachers and student's competence in core fields like technology, engineering, science and mathematics, but there are gaps too in non-technical areas such as leadership, management and communication. Research shows that the changing nature of jobs due to innovations in science and technology affects the availability of labour to fill high-skilled jobs. Ironically, skill gaps result from technological advancements. Therefore, in reality, institutions will always face some types of skill gaps all the time; if they do not, they are not growing. As a result of the current trends in innovations, capacity building remains a vital necessity for every organization be it an educational or industrial organization to enhance national development and readiness for effective global competitiveness.

### **Empowering Vocational and Technical Education teachers and Students**

Empowering Vocational and Technical Education teachers with the requisite skills and technological knowledge through regular periodic capacity building programmes will be of great importance to Nigeria. This is because the main drivers of successful teaching and learning are teachers. Hence, quality teachers who can perform their responsibilities with great commitment are prerequisites for successful and excellent education. Quality curriculum cannot be implemented effectively without appropriate instructional delivery by the teacher. The National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS, 2005) recognized Vocational and Technical Education as the vital transformational tool and a formidable instrument for socioeconomic empowerment in Nigeria. The goals of wealth creation, employment generation, poverty reduction, and value re-orientation can be effectively pursued, attained, and sustained only through an efficient, relevant and functional VTE system.



Empowering vocational and technical education teachers should be treated with all seriousness in order to achieve success and fulfill national objectives. The purpose of teacher education and empowerment in this regard is to bridge the gap of educating students at different levels. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2004) in her National policy on education, under the section for teacher education emphasized that teachers should receive quality training to cope with the changes and innovation in education system, since no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers. There is need to emphasize on teacher training and retraining to enable them acquire knowledge and skills during training in Nigeria because no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers.

The National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004) stipulated that since no education system may rise above the quality of its teachers, teacher education shall continue to be given major emphasis in all educational planning and development. The policy also stipulated that minimum qualification for entry into the teaching profession shall be the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE). All teachers' education programmes shall be structured to equip teachers for the effective performance of their duties. The policy stated that the goals of Teacher Education shall be to:-

- a) Produce highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of our educational system;
- b) Encourage further the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers;
- c) Help teachers to fit into social life of the community and the society at large and enhance their commitment to national goals.
- d) Provide teachers with the intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment and make them adaptable to changing situations;
- e) Enhance teachers' commitment to the teaching profession.

The National Policy on Education highlighted VTE for developing national consciousness, acquisition of skills, intelligent understanding of the complexity and inculcating the right type of values in the individual students. The National Policy on Education (FGN, 2004) revealed that the goals of vocational and technical education shall be to:-

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

Vocational and technical education teachers and students should strictly work hard to achieve the goals stated in the National Policy on Education which is rich enough to enhance the quality of graduates for global recognition. It is therefore paramount for VTE teachers and students to go the extra mile to play their roles effectively by personally embracing opportunities that lead to acquisition of relevant instructional skills and specialized entrepreneurship development skills necessary for job creation, wealth generation and global competitiveness.

For effective global competitiveness, job creation, entrepreneurship development and wealth generation in Vocational and Technical Education in Nigeria, the researchers developed and proposed the adoption of the following Five-step strategic process for systematic capacity building:

- 1) **Engage stakeholders on capacity development:** An effective capacity building process must encourage participation by all those involved. If stakeholders are involved and share ownership in the process of development they will feel more responsible for the outcome and sustainability of the development. Engaging stakeholders who are directly affected by the situation allows for more effective decision-making, it also makes development work more transparent. In a Vocational and Technical Education institution, teachers, supporting staff and students should be involved.
- 2) **Assess capacity needs and assets:** Assessing pre-existing capacities through engagement with stakeholders allows capacity builders to see what areas require additional training, what areas should be prioritized, in what ways capacity building can be incorporated into local and institutional development strategies. Capacity building that is not rooted in a comprehensive study and assessment of the pre-existing conditions will be restricted to training alone, which will not facilitate sustainable results.
- 3) **Formulate a capacity development response:** Once an assessment has been completed a capacity building response must be created based on four core issues:
  - a. Institutional arrangements-** Assessments often show that institutions are inefficient because of bad or weak policies, procedures, resource management, organization, leadership, frameworks, and communication. Problems associated with institutional arrangements can be fixed by developing human resource frameworks, cover policies

and procedures for recruitment, deployment and transfer, incentives systems, skills development, performance evaluation systems, and ethics and values.

**b. Leadership**-Leadership by either an individual or an institution can catalyze the achievement of development objectives. Strong leadership allows for easier adaptation to changes, strong leaders can also influence people. Coaching and mentoring programmes can be used to help encourage the development of leadership skills such as, priority setting, communication and strategic planning.

**c. Knowledge**- It is generally believed that knowledge is the foundation for capacity. Greater investments should be made in establishing strong education systems and opportunities for continued learning and the development of professional skills. There should be support for the engagement in post-secondary education reforms, continued learning and domestic knowledge services.

**d. Accountability**- The implementation of accountability measures facilitates better performance and efficiency. A lack of accountability measures in institutions allows for the proliferation of corruption. There should be modalities that promote the strengthening of accountability frameworks that monitor and evaluate institutions. There should also be modalities that promote independent organizations that oversee, monitor and evaluate institutions for more effective performance.

**4) Implement a capacity development response:** Implementing a capacity building programme should involve the inclusion of multiple systems; national, local, institutional. It should involve continual re-assessment and expect change depending on changing situations. It should include evaluative indicators to measure the effectiveness of initiated programmes.

- 5) **Evaluate capacity development:** Evaluation of capacity building promotes accountability. Measurements should be based on changes in an institution's performance. Evaluations should be based on changes in performance based on the four main issues: institutional arrangements, leadership, knowledge, and accountability.

## **Conclusion**

The paper examines the need for capacity building in Vocational and Technical Education, and also stresses that, capacity building remains a single major enabler of national development. It also highlights the capacity building strategies needed for effective global competitiveness, job creation, entrepreneurship development and wealth generation in Nigeria, since no any educational system can succeed or make any meaningful development in the 21<sup>st</sup> century with a poorly capacitated teachers and supporting staff. Nigeria should begin now by investing seriously in capacity building programmes and adopt the necessary capacity building strategies which are the gateway for producing craftsmen that can compete globally, involve in job creation, entrepreneurship development and wealth generation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## **Recommendations**

1. Adoption of the capacity building strategies developed by the researchers to enhance production of VTE graduates that can compete globally, involve in job creation, entrepreneurship development and wealth generation.
2. Periodic training and retraining of VTE teachers, trainers and students by regularly organizing workshops, seminars and conferences and free access to virtual resources should be employed.
3. Funding of VTE teacher education programmes should be improved substantially through partnership with employers of labour, and business organizations.

4. Proper and adequate funding of youths skill acquisition training programmes and agencies by all levels of governance in Nigeria for, more efficient capacity building.
5. The raising of the youth's national consciousness to the national goals of vocational and technical education and its benefit to employability and wealth creation.
6. Periodically organizing Youth Trade Fair Programme (YTFFP) to allow graduates from skill acquisition centers to showcase their talents. This will encourage the youth to imbibe the culture of capacity building through skill acquisition.

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