

**Vocational And Technical Education: Imperative Towards The Attainment of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) In Nigeria**

**Basharu Musa Usman  
Department of Education (Tech.)  
Kaduna polytechnic**

**&**

**Hassan, A.M  
Department of Industrial and Technology Education  
Federal University of Technology, Minna**

**Abstract**

Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is a constructed reform program, which is aimed at touching on all sectors of life of the Nigeria citizen. This paper dwells on the point that, for the (MDGs) to succeed depends largely on how well vocational and technical education is handled. The well handling of VTE means how it is set up from the planning table to the implementation stage where proper equipment is put in place. It is an area that is wholly based on skill acquisition and promoting entrepreneurship. This paper focuses on the imperatives of vocational and technical education (VTE). It also explains how practically oriented government programmes like Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) can be achieved through it.

**Introduction**

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are the outcomes of international conferences and summits held in the 1990s, which the world leaders ratified in their millennium declaration of September 2000 in New York. The millennium declaration centres on eight time – bound goals to be achieved by 2015. These include reducing extreme poverty and hunger, achieving universal primary education, promoting gender equality and women empowerment, reducing infant and maternal mortality rates, combating HIV and AIDS and other diseases, ensuring environmental stability, and developing a global partnership for development across all nations, especially the developing countries. Over the past years, the MDGs have become a major global target and have provoked considerable interest, concern and support from the international community. At the same time, they have become important paradigms for monitoring development progress across the nations.

As a signatory to the Millennium Declaration, Nigeria is committed to the achievement of the goals by 2015. After three consecutive years of preparing the national MDG reports (2004 – 2006), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) decided to step down and concentrate on monitoring the development progress of the states so as to capture fully

their peculiarities which has been largely absent in the national reports. A global comparison of MDGs achievement reveals that Africa's development is far behind the rest of the world. Unless substantial efforts are made by countries in the region in collaboration with the donor community, most of them will be unable to reach the goals and targets of the millennium declaration by 2015. Evidence from the 2008 global MDGs report shows that good governance is the missing link. Empirical findings from development studies which show a very close linkage between good governance and economic transformation and sustainable human development further emphasize this point.

### **Imperatives of Technology Education towards the Attainment of MDGs in Nigeria**

Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which is a nationally co-ordinate framework of action, cannot be achieved without the appropriate mechanisms, knowledge and procedures set in place. MDGs, being a development strategy in different perspective, requires the application of the right type of education that will bring about the required developments. Going by the goals or objectives of MDGs, they are all outcome of technically products of technology education. Technology, being the application of science, is the foundation of employment generation, wealth creation and poverty reduction. Technology education makes people to become self reliant, simplify their day-to-day activities and make life comfortable, which are all goals of MDGs. How do we come across the knowledge that makes us to become self reliant? In line with Fagbemi (1988), Okoro (1993), Kazeem (2006) contributed that technical education is that aspect of education, which utilizes scientific knowledge in the acquisition of practical and applied skills for solving technical problems. Okoro (1993) maintained that technical education is any form of education whose primary purpose is to prepare persons for gainful employment in an educationally recognized occupation.

Technical education referred to those aspects of the educational process involving, in addition to general education, the study of technologies and related sciences and the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understand or comprehending and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of economic and social life (National Policy on Education, 2004). NPE (2004) further stated that technical education is a means of preparing persons for occupational field and for effective participation in the world of work. It is also a method of alleviating poverty. Technology education is very important towards the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals and Development Strategy in Nigeria.



### **Objectives of MDGS in Technology Education**

MDGS considers technology education as a key bridge to the future and as an instrument for empowering the youth to take charge of their lives in the future, Akala, (2004). In line to this, the Federal Ministry of Education brought out what is considered the education sector of the MDGs reform agenda among which are:

- Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger by 2015
- Achieve universal primary education by 2015
- Promote gender equality and empower women
- Reduce child mortality
- Improve maternal health
- Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
- ensure environmental sustainability
- Develop a global partnership for development.

### **Objectives of Technical Education**

The objectives of the technical education program according to (NPE 2004) are:

- To provide qualified technical teachers and practitioners of technology capable of teaching introductory technology in the junior secondary school.
- To produce technical N.C.E teacher who will be able to inculcate scientific and technological attitude and values into the society.
- To produce qualified technical teachers motivated to start the so much desired revolution of the technological development right from the Nigerian school.
- To prepare technical teachers so as to qualify them for a post-NCE degree programme in technology education (NCCE, 2002)

Education has been a veritable tool for national development and technical education can be said to be the implement for the cultivation of the country's aspiration for national growth. It is therefore necessary that the school programmes should be relevant, practical and comprehensive to attain national development.

### **Factors that Hinder the Achievement of the Goals of Technical Education**

Factors that hinder the achievement of the goals of technical education in Nigeria include: insufficient acquisition of practical skills; inadequate study of entrepreneurship

education, SIWES poor performance; apathy towards technical education, and absence of career guidance.

1. Technical oriented institutions are incapable of imparting sufficient practical skills to their students. This is so because the tools and equipment to be used to demonstrate practical skills are not available in most schools and where they exist, they are obsolete or have no trained teachers to operate them, Kazeem, (2006) observed that:

Inadequate acquisition of technical or practical skills is a problem confronting vocational/technical education in Nigeria. Ideally vocational/technical education is supposed to equip its recipients with balanced theoretical and practical knowledge to enable them function in the world of work, but unfortunately this is not so probably because of inadequate tools and equipment in the schools. The end result of this is the production of half-baked materials (graduates) that can only explain principles rather than perform skills that will make them self-reliant.

Okoro, (1993) says: "individuals who enter into employment without adequate knowledge and skill do not perform well".

2. The inadequate study of entrepreneurship education in most of the technical institutions is another problem affecting technical education in Nigeria. It is one thing to acquire technical skills it is another thing to have entrepreneurial or managerial skills that will enable the individual establish and manage his or her own business successfully. The argument is that an individual who acquires technical education without adequate entrepreneurship education may not likely succeed in business.
3. The Student Industrial Work Experience Schemes (SIWES) is not performing to expectation. The scheme is meant to complement the efforts of technical schools in the area of imparting practical skills to the students. Akale (2004) has this to say concerning the problems affecting SIWES:
- That the duration of the industrial training programme is inadequate in most cases for the acquisition of meaningful experience.
  - That students are sometimes placed on jobs other than the ones for which they enrolled in their institutions.
  - That conflicts sometimes arise between what was taught at the school and how it is actually done on the job.
  - That some industrial training students do not receive training or supervision all through the duration of their industrial training placement.



- That adequate training facilities are not available in some organisation that accept industrial training students.
- 4. Negative attitude of the public towards technical education is another problem affecting technical education. Some members of the public are not aware of the benefits that could be derived from this type of education. Governments are equally not helping matters because they failed to enlighten members of the public on the importance of technical education. Agbebim (1984) argues that: the attitude of the public for a long time has been biased against technical education and aspersion cast upon it as subject for grammar school "drop outs".
- 5. Absence of career guidance in some of the technical oriented institutions prevents the graduates in excelling in the "world of work" this is so because graduates do not receive in school adequate information relating to the jobs they do.

### **Promoting Technical Education to Achieve its Goals and Millennium Development Goals**

If technical education is to succeed and contribute to empowering beneficiaries, the following factors need to be considered: acquisition of adequate practical skills; adequate study of entrepreneurship education; adequate use of career guidance services; enlightenment of the public on the importance of technical education and effective performance of SIWES.

Because of the importance or usefulness of practical skills to graduates of technical education, there is the need for these technical institutions to ensure that adequate practical skills are imparted to their students. To achieve this the school authorities should make sure the tools and equipment for practical are available in the workshops and that teachers attend the practical lectures. Kazeem, (2006) says: "the performance of graduates of technical education in the world of work" depends to large extent on their level of acquisition of practical skills while in school. Hence it is imperative for students to be encouraged to acquire sufficient practical experience. When an individual acquires sufficient skills he or she would be capable of being self-reliant and invariably result to MDGs.

For technical education to achieve its goals especially in the area of self-reliance and to meet up with Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), there is the urgent need to adequately study entrepreneurship education in technical institutions. This is so because it is one thing to acquire technical skills, it is another thing to acquire entrepreneurship education that will help individuals to manage their businesses successfully. To buttress this assertion,

Nwakolo (1994) maintains that "Entrepreneurship skills inform of small business management competencies should be incorporated in the programme of all technology".

Based on the interest and gift of the students, the career guidance services would go a long way in helping students to make wise choices or decisions concerning the type of vocations they want to do in life. A wise choice of vocation will lead to a successful business, which will in turn result to empowering the individual economically. To support this argument Akale (2004) is of the view that:

Career planning and placement is the final phase of the guidance and counseling programme in schools. It is a systematic assistance given pupils (students) in developing their goals and choices related to their educational vocational interests. Career planning and placement are primarily conceived with obtaining information and opportunity and assist pupils (students) take steps to achieve their goals.

### **Meeting MDGs objectives through technical education**

The national policy on education (NPE, 2004) is not silent on the importance of technical education. It highlights the goals of technical education as follows:

- (i) To provide trained manpower in the applied sciences, technology and business particularly at craft, advanced craft and technical levels;
- (ii) To provide the technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, commercial and economic development;
- (iii) To give training and impart the necessary skills to individual who shall be self-reliant economically, MDGs (2006).

In order to attain the stated goals, government needs to focus its attention on the following:

#### **1. Re - Tooling and Repositioning of Technical Colleges**

In order to address the technical manpower needs of the economy MDGs will be directed towards encouraging the youth to acquire skills and knowledge that would prepare them into the world of work. These could be attained through supporting teacher training program and improving the quality of education. The government of Nigeria made efforts in the repositioning of the country's education sector. One of these efforts is the Education Sector Analysis (ESA). The strategies to be adopted by the government in the attainment of ESA as succinctly stated by Akale (2004) are:



- (A) National summit on higher education (2002), aimed at repositioning higher education in the country via increased institutional autonomy award of degree by qualified colleges of education (COES) and some polytechnics
- (B) A blue print for revamping and repositioning technical and vocational education in the country.

All these are attempts towards providing an efficient and effective educational development in the country.

### **Conclusion**

The effect of acquiring education without saleable skills and moral values are presently a painful experience for all of us. Skill acquisition should be the focus of Millennium Development Goals, the citizens should be helped to think and fashion out things on their own. The concept of depending on wage employment should gradually give way for self-development through wide intensive skills training among the citizens. The establishment of small-scale business enterprise in Diaspora will be the evidence of Millennium Development Goals and will rejuvenate economic activities for national economic growth. The inculcation of moral virtues in our educational system would gradually restore prudence, respect for the dignity of labour and truthfulness. When the citizens are empowered positively the economy and political system of the nation becomes better.

### **Recommendation**

MDGs is currently Nigeria's new development plan that identifies the major problems the country is facing today and suggest how we can begin to solve them over the next five years and beyond. However, these objectives can be fully realized through adopting some of the recommendations outline below:

- MDGs should adopt appropriate implementation strategy for every developmental aspect contained in the plan.
- MDGs plan need to have an inbuilt sustainable development mechanism in the plan so as to ensure a balance between development and the use of resources found within the environment.
- Need for private sector participation
- The MDGs plan need to have an inbuilt monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for assessing success and failures.
- Providing courses that will build in vocational and entrepreneur skills.

- Technology teacher education (lecturers) should be provided access to continuing professional development so that they remain competent and efficient in their disciplines.
- MDGs program should be directed seriously by the Federal Government so that it does not become the ancient mariner's albatross.

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