

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION IN NIGERIA'S DEVELOPMENT**

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**ABSTRACT:** *There can be no sustainable national development without vocational and technical education, and there can be no vocational and technical education without skills acquisition. The issue of sustainable national development is not a one-day event, but constant or continuous process that affects the citizens positively. The paper x-rayed the peculiar characteristics of vocational and technical education in providing necessary skills to the populace for sustainable national development. The conceptual clarification of vocational education, technical education, vocational and technical education, and sustainable national development were considered. The paper further discussed a brief history of vocational and technical education in Nigeria, during the pre-colonial, colonial and the post-colonial era. The paper examines the importance of vocational and technical education in Nigeria development. It further highlighted the role of vocational and technical education in sustainable national development. The paper concluded that non-acquisition of saleable skills has been a major factor in the countries under development and high rates of poverty and other social vices. Therefore, VTE as the type of education with these values should be recognized and taken serious for sustainable national development to strive.*

**KEYWORDS:** vocational, technical, education, Nigeria, development

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of education in Nigeria has long been identified by the Federal Government of Nigeria (2004) in her National Policy on Education as the process that helps the whole man develop and change physically, mentally, morally and technologically. This is to enable him/her function effectively in any environment that he/she may find himself so as to become more productive, self-fulfilling and attain self-actualization. The Federal Republic of Nigeria also adopted education as an instrument for National Development and change. According to Narling-Hammond (2010) it is believed that quality education is the key variable for the survival of Nigeria in the competitive economy. He further stated that parents, practitioners and policy makers agree that the key to transform the nation's economy is to improve quality of education with more emphasis on Vocational and Technical Education (VTE).

Fafunwa (1997) asserted that education is the aggregate of all the processes by which a child, the young, or adults develops the abilities, attitudes and other forms of behavior which are of positive value to the transformation of the society in which he lives. Education therefore involves the process of transmitting culture interms of continuity and growth and for disseminating knowledge. Specifically, the national policy on education stipulated that education in Nigeria aims at; the acquisition, development and

inculcation of proper value orientation, knowledge and skills for the survival of the individual and societal transformation. The Federal Government in recognition of this stressed the role of vocational and technical education as education designed to prepare individuals to acquire practical skills, basic and scientific knowledge and attitude required as craftsmen and technicians at sub-professional level (FRN, 2004).

The framework for strategic sustainable development is a tool that is designed to provide the principles which are used to back-cast from a vision of a sustainability future. Education for sustainability aims at helping people to develop the attitudes, skills and knowledge to make informed decisions for the benefit of themselves and others, now and in the future, and to act upon these decision (UNESCO, 2004). Education for sustainable development covers different areas from elementary to university education. One of these areas is Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), which is the type of education that emphasizes on the acquisition and application of the skills, knowledge and attitudes required for employment in a particular occupation in any field of social and economic activity (Okafor, Onukes and Chikezie, 2017).

### **Definition of Concepts**

Vocational education is any form of education that has its primary purpose as to prepare persons for employment in recognized occupations. It provides the skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary for effective employment in specific occupation. Okoro (2006) defines vocational education as education that provides a special programme offered at secondary and post-secondary levels. Vocational education is education for occupational preparation. It is also regarded as that aspect of the total education process that focuses on individual occupation. In their view, Eneyoh, Okon & Okeng (2012) stated that vocation education has six major areas; these includes: - industrial technical education, agricultural education, business education, home economic education, distributive education and health occupation education. Nevertheless, the list may include fine and applied arts education and even computer education.

### **Technical Education**

This is a post-secondary vocational training programme whose major purpose is the production of technicians. Technical education is a special grade of vocational education which can be distinguished from other vocational education programmes because more mathematics and science are required in the training programme. The graduates of this programme are called craftsmen. It is more often found in trade and industrial education.

### **Vocational and Technical Education**

Vocational technical education is a comprehensive term referring 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, understanding and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of economic and social life, (FRN, 2004). Levesque (2000) submitted that vocational preparation must always be viewed against the backdrop of the needs of the society and of the

individual. While meeting the demands of the economy, the abilities of the individuals must be utilized to the fullest meeting the job needs of individuals is a crucial objective of vocational and technical education for sustainable national development.

### **Sustainable National Development**

Sustainable national development refers to the ability to harness all available resources, human, material or economic to bring out the potentials of a nation. In his view, Dzungwe (2012) affirmed that National development is the ability to flow along with other nations in terms of effective management and utilization of current development in science and technology. According to Aguele & Uhuamuavbi (2003, p. 4) development means “bringing a nation to an advanced or a highly organized state, that is utilizing all the human and material potentials of a nation to bring about growth and development”. Development has to do with employment for all the citizens of a nation.

However, sustainable development is attaining and maintaining the height of standard in the developmental agenda of the nation. This include; education, health services, economic, transportation, good road networks, justice and equity, food security and all the social amenities needed for safe and healthy living of citizens in a country.

### **History of Vocational & Technical Education**

The history of vocational and technical education (VTE) in Nigeria could be traced from the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial era. There was much emphasis on job orientation. Instructional mode was informal but purely participatory in the sense that parents and significant adult members in the community were involved in the process of educating the child through imitation. Anyawu and Mbakwem (2003) submitted that the curriculum then was deeply rooted in the culture of the people, the content was rich and it touched on all aspects of the society’s human life emphasizing vocational skills for self-reliance. According to the authors, the curriculum then was fused. Even though the subject areas like physical education, character development, intellectual training and vocational education existed, they were never treated as discrete subject areas. There was no compartmentalization, rather learning activities/opportunities were presented and learned in interrelated forms. Okoro (2006) commenting on the pre-colonial education stated that, before British intervention in Nigeria and the establishment of formal education institution in the later part of the twentieth century, education in Nigerian was mainly vocational. This shows that, the important function of education in those days was to teach people how to earn a living by becoming expert producers of goods or services.

The colonial era in Nigeria could be traced to 1914 when the northern and southern protectorates were amalgamated; even this era, no curriculum for VTE was developed, though some characteristics of the course were evidenced. Okoro (2006) further submitted that, the development of vocational and technical education in the country was slow. However, in 1946 the ten-year plan for development and welfare for Nigeria was published. This plan recommended an expansion in vocational technical education to meet the demand for technicians and craftsmen.

The present vocational and technical education still needs more to be desired for sustainable national development. This is for the fact that the aims and objectives of the programme are not been met despite the country's efforts towards technological self-sufficiency. We are still intractably tied to the technological apron strings of the major industrial nations (Tseayo, 1983). It is worrisome to hear people comment on how the standard of education has drastically fallen, on how our educational system is in disrepair and despair, on how our boys and girls are dropping out of school, on how irresponsible those within the teaching profession have become. Members of our society who were in the past talk glowingly of the past when education was education, on the level of discipline and order that pervade in the system. These comments on the nature and character of Nigeria's education system indicate mixed feelings and sometimes all being a pessimistic out-cry of degeneration and hopelessness. The entire comments whether in an encouraging stance or errant disappointment, point to one thing, that education is extremely important in the development of the people and the nation, and should under no circumstance be toyed with. Most importantly, the vocational and technical education programme which is a training programme responsible for knowledge, skills and attitude development.

### **The Importance of VTE in National Development**

The importance of VTE in National development need not to be over emphasized, this is because vocational and technical education provides the necessary knowledge, skills and competencies for survival and sustainable national development upto the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Akpan (2002) maintained that VTE is the gateway through which practical competencies can be successfully transferred for the sustenance of the country. Specifically, VTE provides; youth empowerment, consumer education, formation of attitudes, manpower development, training and empowerment for necessary skills, introduction to professional studies, lead to human capital development and career education.

- Youth Empowerment; through vocational and technical education the youths would be sensitized, mobilized, motivated and gingered for self-employment and self-reliance. Effective acquisition of vocational and technical skills will inculcate entrepreneurial skills that would help the youths to be self-reliant, this will in turn bring about national development, hence they will be self-employed.
- Consumer Education; consumer education promotes better understanding of individual relationship with business and the peace of business in our socio-economic system. Vocational and technical education educate the youths in the development of consumers business and socio-economic competencies. It therefore makes the youths intelligent consumers of goods and services. A good knowledge of consumer education helps to serve every individual in making adjustments in the economic arena. Akpen (2004) affirmed that vocational and technical education educates the public on the consumption of goods and services and foster healthy business communication consideration and discourage exploitation which could deter the socio-economic growth of the society.
- Formation of Attitudes; vocational and technical education educates the populace with proper knowledge, vocational behavior and attitude needed for successful vocational and technical career formation. It also inculcates in the citizens

efficient methods of distribution of goods and services to consumers and desirable social and cultural behaviours needed for sustainable national development.

- **Manpower Development;** vocational and technical education provide highly trained and dedicated vocational and technical education teachers for the production of various levels of business and technical manpower to keep her citizens above subsistence level of poverty. According to Eneyoh, Okon, & Ekeng (2012) it also provides a solid base for healthy multi-cultural transformation that would eliminate over dependence on foreign economic.
- **Training and Empowerment for Necessary Skills;** vocational and technical education will provide the training and skills that will lead to the production of craftsman, technicians and other skilled personnel who will assist in transforming the economy for sustainable national development.
- **Introduction to Professional Studies;** VTE will provide introduction to professional studies in engineering and technologies which is the bedrock for economic transformation and national development.
- **Lead to Human Capital Development;** vocational technical education will provide the lead to human capital development that enhances empowerment of people and strengthening economic prosperity of the nation.
- **Career Education;** vocational and technical education provides educational experiences and abilities that would enable students to make intelligent occupational decision, specialization and to progress in a chosen area. It provides opportunity for students to make realistic decisions about a successful and satisfying career for economic survival and sustainable national development in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Robert (2004) submitted that career education guide individuals to fit into the job opportunities available within the system for national economic development and transformation.

### **Role of Vocational & Technical Education in Sustainable National Development**

Nation building or development has to be sustainable in practical terms. This however, is dependent on available resources, beneficially as well as keeping the physical environment safe, healthy, stable and highly conducive. Sustainability, according to the world commission on environment and development cited in Okafor, Onuka & Chikezie (2018) is the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising future generation opportunities to meet their own needs. Sustainability includes a just and peaceful society, gender equality and intergeneration equity. Technical and vocational education and training has been identified as a tool for sustainable and stable economy. In Nigeria, vocational and technical education and training was previously not seen as fundamental to national development or for the economic development, but for school dropouts and never do well individuals. Akponue (2009) in Okafor Onuka & Chikezie (2018) asserts that no nation can move forward technologically, industrially and economically without developing a strong partner initiative in the creation of wealth, poverty reduction and employment generation through technical and vocational education and training.

Vocational and technical education and training plays a critical role in the Nigerian development. In fact, many African governments view it as a poverty reductions strategy. UNESCO (2004) identified the two major objectives of technical and vocational education and training as the urgent need to train the workforce for self-

employment and the necessity to raise the productivity of the informal sector. Some countries in sub-Sahara African in particular, governments, are renewing efforts to promote Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) with the conviction that development of skills enhances productivity and sustains competitiveness in the global economy. Vocational and technical education and training thus plays an orientation role towards the world of work and its curriculum emphasizes on the acquisition of such employable skills, which is a fundamental necessity for driving the industrial and economic growth, and it is a key to building this type of technical and entrepreneurial workforce which Nigerian needs to create wealth and emerge out of poverty.

Therefore, vocational and technical education is a means through which training needs of learners from different socio-economic and academic backgrounds are responded to, thus preparing them for self-employment and sustainable livelihoods. The poor and the vulnerable in the society can therefore benefit from vocational and technical education. Wale & Adaramola (2012) stated that concerns have been raised by most African countries about the move towards making vocational and technical education and training complementary to post-basic education.

Skill training enhances productivity and sustains competitiveness in the global economy. Worldwide countries are renewing efforts to promote technical and vocational education and training. This is because it is the only way to prepare people of workable age for the world of work, which reaches out to the marginalized and excluded groups to engage them in income generating livelihoods. High rate of unemployment has been leading to increasing poverty and serious social problems in Nigeria, (Ayodere, 2006). However, these problems can be addressed using the right form of education which is vocational and technical education.

Vocational and technical education holds the key to Nigeria becoming technological developed, internationally relevant and competitive in the world market. It is known that technology is the most effective means of empowering the citizenry to stimulate and sustain national development, enhance employment, improve the quality of life, hinder poverty, limit the incidence of social vices factored by joblessness and promote a culture of peace, freedom, and democracy, which are indices of unity and national development. Yet vocational and technical education has not gained its prominence in the country, (FME, 2000) cited in Chen and Magaji (2011).

## **CONCLUSION**

Non-acquisition of saleable skills has being a major factor in the countries underdevelopment and high rate of poverty and other social vices. For many citizens of the country, these problems are their daily challenges, when they cannot feed, clothe or shelter themselves or their immediate family. They surely cannot realize their full potentials, since the need for survival is so overwhelming and a good number of people have fallen victims to the pressures of survival and have ended up as arm robbers, prostitutes' scammers, or militants fighting for whatever that gives them a hope for survival. The failure of the government to reposition the vocational and technical

education programme with emphasis to empower the teaming youths for self-actualization and development to satisfy the basic social needs, added these problems. Therefore, the need for educated and skilled workers with the citizens of the country at the core becomes imperative and VTE as the type of education with these values should be recognized and taken serious for sustainability and national development to strive.

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