FUNCTIONAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION FOR VALUES, KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Vocational Education is a specialized programme of training designed to equip individuals with balanced work behaviour reflecting cognitive, affective, psychoproducive and perceptual skills. It is also an integral part of general education. Vocational education training follows a set of goals and objectives in preparing learners for the world of work and these goals are quite impressive. To the average Nigerian, vocational education is received as education for those unfortunate members of the populace who, for one reason or the other, are mentally, physically or socially handicapped. This paper therefore, examined the concepts of vocational education, goals of vocational education, challenges that hinder vocational education from achieving its goals/objectives and the demands of functional vocational
education for national development. The paper argued that, if serious attention is given to functional vocational education, it has the role of providing knowledge, values, skills and employment; thus, transforming the nation economically, technologically, in her human resource development potentials.

Historically Technical and Vocational Education has evolved with the changing employment needs of different nations as they pass through various stages in their social, economic and political development (American Vocational Association, 1982). Consequently, Technical and Vocational education had been described and defined by different individual in various ways, based on purpose. According to Roberts (1971), if a learner engages in the study of a subject matter or activities for the purpose of increasing his Vocational efficiency, he is involved in Vocational Education.

Basically, Technical and Vocational education provides the individuals with the knowledge, skills and attitude required in the world of work. Since the colonial era, various institutions and organizations in the country have been established to provide Technical and Vocational education or training services to the general public for special segments of the population. More recently, there have been renewed efforts by the government to provide functional technical education to its citizens (National Policy of Education, 2004). In spite of these efforts, coupled with the huge and extensive public funds invested in technical and Vocational education, the nation is still grappling with the seemingly unending problems of youth employment and economic recession. Many have attributed this position to the changing political and socio-economic situation in the country, coupled with a rapidly changing technological environment.

It follows that education and training can also help individuals to escape poverty by providing them with the skills and knowledge to raise their own output and generate income. Investing in vocational education training is therefore an investment in the future. Knowledge and skills are the engine of economic growth and social development. Functional vocational education and training help develop the individual's knowledge of science and technology in a broad occupational area requiring technical and professional competencies and specific occupational skills. Vocational educational systems therefore, need to develop the knowledge and skills that will help the workforce become more flexible and responsive to the needs of local labour markets, while competing in the global economy of the 21st century.

In a time of continuous economic, social and technological change, skills and knowledge become quickly out-of-date. People who have not been able to benefit
from formal education and training must be given opportunities to acquire new skills and knowledge that will give them a second chance in life ad at work. Providing all individuals with learning opportunities throughout their lives is an ambitious but necessary undertaking. An all-inclusive lifelong learning system calls for the mobilization of increased public and private resources for education and training and for providing individuals and enterprises with the incentives to invest in meeting their learning and skills development needs. This paper therefore, discusses the concepts of vocational education, goals of vocational education, challenges that hinder vocational education from achieving its goals/objectives and the demands of functional vocational education for national development.

**Concepts of Vocational Education**

It has become the norm to pair vocational and technical education when referring to that segment of education which goes beyond general education to prepare the individual for the acquisition of practical and applied skills, and basic scientific knowledge as well as attitudes and values relating to different occupations. Used as twin term, both are geared towards occupation requiring manipulative and technical skills application (Besmart-Digbori, 2004).

This notwithstanding, Aghenta (1985), noted a definite distinction between vocational and technical education. Vocational education, he argued, focuses on manipulative skills in non-technical occupations as reflected in fields such as agriculture, business, home economics, painting and decoration. Technical education, on the other hand, is more science-oriented with emphasis on the application of scientific and Mathematics principle as applied in such fields as engineering. Both vocational and technical education aim at manufacturing and production.

According to Okafor (1992), vocational education is that segment of education charged with preparing people for work. It also refers to education for self-reliance or employment. Olaitan (1985), observed that vocational education has the potential role of transforming the nation economically and technologically. However, vocational educators ability to meet this challenging potential is frustrated by the public lack of awareness of the true value of vocational education to the nation. To the average Nigerian, vocational education is perceived as education for those unfortunate members of the populace, who for one reasons or the other, are mentally, physically or socially handicapped. It is interesting to note that the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004) sees vocational education as that form of education which is obtainable at the technical colleges. This is equivalent to the senior secondary education, but designed to prepare
individuals to acquire practical skills, basic and scientific knowledge, and attitude required as craftsmen and technicians at sub-professional level.

Considering that a majority of the Nigerian population can be safely classified as uneducated, Olaitan's (1985) study on the views of the education, uneducated and vocational education confirmed this general lack of public awareness of the potential of vocational education. Against this background, vocational education may be seen as a work-oriented utilitarian education, designed to enable the individual function productively in his occupation, and be useful to himself and the society. While vocational education is designed to develop skills, abilities, attitudes, work habits among others, emphasis should be placed on education for self-reliance or self-employment.

The Goals of Vocational Education in Nigeria

According to the National Policy on Education (2004), the goals of Vocational Education include the following:

a. To provide trained manpower in the applied sciences, technology and business particularly aircraft, advanced craft and technical levels;

b. Provide the technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, commercial and economic development.

c. Give training and impact the necessary skills to individual who shall be self-reliant economically;

the extent to which these goals are achieved depends on the quality of the vocational programmes.

Much has been written about the challenges that hinder vocational technical education from achieving its goals and objectives in national development. For example, Inyang (2004), Usoro and Ibritam (2009), Odiqn and Ede (2.010), Ladipo (2010), Idris (2010), Out, Udo and Usoro (2010), Wapmuk (2010) have identified the following sources of challenges against vocational and technical education as an agent of national growth.

1. Admission into vocational-technical programmes through JAMB and aptitude test.

2. Non provision of training materials to support students skills acquisition at secondary and tertiary levels of vocational-technical education.

3. Lack of placement of vocational-technical education graduates on jobs in their final year of the programme.

4. Absence of follow-up studies to ascertain the performance of vocational programme graduates on their jobs.

5. Allocation of 60-70 percentage of students grade to cognitive learning and 30-40 percent to performance in practical projects and continuous assessment.
6. Poorly built and poorly equipped workshops in all service areas of vocational education.
7. Lack of integrating ICT into the programmes for equipping students with appropriate skills for vocational careers.
8. Large class sizes and inadequate teacher-learner ratio,
9. Lack of effective counseling and guidance services in vocational-technical institutions.
10. The exodus of fine vocational-technical teachers into the so-called "greener pastures".
12. Lack of adequate incentives to teachers (midwives) to keep them on the job of skills training and witness the "birth" of psychoproductive skills development in the Nigerian Youth.
13. Lack of clear and dependable basis for identifying tasks/skills to be taught to students in vocational technical education and in technology education as a whole.
14. Lack of special research grants for vocational education system.
15. Absence of Instructional Materials Laboratory for the Development and Production of Special Skills-oriented instructional materials by Nigerian Vocational Teachers.
16. The products of vocational-technical programmes in Nigeria lack the basic skills needed for gainful employment in today's sophisticated world of work.
17. Dependence on obsolete curriculum which is not sufficiently responsive to innovations in vocational education service areas and their instructional options.
18. Lack of pre-service and in service training for upgrading teacher's competence in laboratory practice.
19. Domination of instruction by memory work, theory and note-taking rather than psychomotor skill is learning backed by technical information.
   Lack of enriching vocational teacher training programme with techniques of occupational and tasks analyses-the sure basis of skills training in all service areas of vocational-technical and their options.
21. Inadequate learning and teaching environment.
22. Lack of integrating of technology in all its ramification into the Nigerian culture because technological development of any nation is culture-based.
23. Low production of teachers/instructors for vocational education training in Colleges of Education (technical) polytechnics, monotechnics, universities of technology and skills acquisition centres.
24. Poor implementation of relevant government policies, thus affecting
entrepreneurial development.

25. High failure rate of technical college graduates in technical examinations, particularly in the technology-based trades.

26. Lack of adequate workshops or laboratories to accommodate modern facilities for psychoprodutive skills development.

27. Lack of integrating technical and vocational education and training and open distance learning (DDL).

28. Lack of integration of new technological innovations in the curricular for the Nigerian Vocational-Technical College programmes. For example, these are 41 innovations in automobiles which are yet to be included in the Nigerian Technical College Curriculum. Students' learning difficulties lie in the areas of new innovations in automobiles (Odigiri and Ede, 2010). This observation is true of almost all options in the service areas of vocational education.

29. Lack of ability to identify the type of technology for which we facilitate skills acquisition in Nigeria: Relevant Technology, Repair Technology or Replacement Technology, is it for Low-Tech or High-Tech? (Wap muck 2010).


**Demands of Functional Vocational Education: Implication for National Development**

Functional vocational education and the actualization of the goal of vocational education is based on quality vocational education programme. Okorie (1985) highlighted some criteria "or measuring functional vocational education to include the following among others:

1. A functional programme prepares students for entry into chosen occupation without neglecting the essentials of a sound general education.

2. A functional programme is flexible; it permits youths and adults to enter into training when ready and able to do so.

3. A functional programme accepts the responsibilities for the retraining of unemployed and underemployed workers, related instrument for apprentices, and other types of vocationally oriented adults' education opportunities.

4. A functional programme provides for a wide variety of exploratory and occupational information, opportunities. It helps students make wise choices for further education and training, help them find satisfactory employment, and remains available for further counseling service during the working life time of the individual.

5. A functional programme is administered and supervised by personnel who are educated and experienced in vocational education, who understand the needs
of pupils and the needs of business and industry and who are able to work effectively with employers. Labour, other school officials, employment and social agencies.

6. A functional programme serves as a geographical area whose student population is large enough in support of a day and evening programme offering a wide variety of occupational choice and that has employment opportunities related to the training given.

7. A functional programme is housed in physical facilities which are adequate, well planned and properly equipped to provide realistic vocational education.

8. Teachers in a functional programme are masters in their occupation and have completed teacher training programme where they have learned how to impact their knowledge and skills to pupils.

9. A functional programme is based on an analysis of each occupation to determine what is required to perform as a successful worker in that occupation.

10. A functional programme adjusts its curriculum to changing business and industrial conditions, technology change, and the requirements for the labour market. It properly uses advisory committees to assist in this process.

11. A functional programme provides for the learning of the skills employed in using the roots, machines and materials of the occupation and using them safely, with good judgment and with pride in good workmanship.

12. A functional programme provides for the learning of the technology mathematics, science or art related to the occupation.

13. A functional programme used methods, materials and equipment as similar to actual working conditions as is practical in a school situation and schedules a sufficient amount of continuous workshop or laboratory time to carry through the learning experiences.

14. A functional programme provides for a systematic evaluation of its effectiveness through periodic review, performance tests and written examinations, and follow up studies of its graduates.

In conclusion, a functional vocational education programme can be operated in a wide variety of educational institutions. The evaluative criteria can be applied in any institution and at any given level. They can be applied in any vocational education, trade and industrial, distributive, home economics, business and occupation, technical agriculture or health occupations. If there is tenacious adherence to these principles, vocational education programme will have the quality and stability to meet the needs of the society it intends to serve.
**Conclusion**

Vocational education is a "wise business investment' both "or the nation and for the individual. It can ensure the development and conservation of natural resources. It is therefore, imperative that there is a greater emphasis on vocational education for the purpose of among other benefits, developing a good society.

**Recommendations**

1. There is need for the government to promote and develop functional vocational education programmes and empower the dispossessed adults.
2. Government should create and implement job-oriented education programmes.

**References**


