

LINKING INDUSTRIES IN THE REPOSITIONING OF TECHNICAL EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The development of any nation is characterized by the height of its technological and industrial growth, it is also been observed that industry is the life wire and foundation upon which the standard of living and quality of life of a nation depends. This paper examines the need for technical training objectives, and vocational training as a key to industrialization. The paper finally advocates for the production of quality technical graduates by linking industries in the repositioning of technical education.

Introduction

Technology has emerged as the dominant factor in determining the wealth of a nation. This according to Toffler (1980), is because advances in technology have continued to expand and re-define the boundaries of knowledge and job assignments in industrial and technical occupations. He further noted that social and economic gap between developed and developing countries could be traced to the differences in their levels of technological development.

Technical and vocational education has been described as the connecting links between the school system and the employment market. According to UNESCO (1990), developments in technical and vocational education are intimately linked to general trends in the economy and labour market, which are particularly susceptible to the effects of technological change. The channel to technological development demands total commitment of all segments of the society. The task of technological development also requires years of training and inculcation of the attributes of technology into the young ones at authentic locations (Emenyonu, 1992).

The development of any nation is characterized by the height of its technological and industrial growth. It may be said that industry is the life wire and foundation upon which the standard of living and quality of life of a nation depends. For the survival of any industry, the technological know-how must be adequate and readily available.

Some Technical Training Objectives

While most industrialized nations have succeeded in stemming the general shortage of manpower in their industries, they are still confronted with the problems of producing just the appropriate manpower at the appropriate time. There is also the problem of getting the technically trained ones in the places they are needed when they are needed. In developing countries none of these problems have been totally solved. For some decades to come, despite courageous educational programmes, there will still be not enough technical manpower to cope with the industrial aspirations of these countries. In this aspect, Nigeria is no exception.

Vocational Training: Key to Industrialization

In both industrialized and non-industrialized countries, institutions of formal (technical) education have been found unable to provide for the specific manpower needs of industries. Owing to the dynamic character of modern economy, skills acquired through training in formal (technical) institutions are sometimes out of date and no more relevant to the current needs of the economy. Formal qualifications therefore, only serve as indices for measuring the ability of the individuals to learn and understand a chosen set of relevant techniques within specific time limits.

Furthermore, to transform those techniques into practical activities in the industry have remained the problem of modern industries today. Because of these unavoidable inadequacies in formal (technical) education when measured against, the background of the diverse needs of industries, industrial vocational training and retraining have become one of the major activities of many growing industries. Unless industrial technical education is given its required attention by both government, corporate organizations and industries, we shall continue despite numerous educational programmes to lack adequate technical manpower to cope with the industrial aspirations of our nation. The aforementioned situation therefore, places a daunting task on both the government, management of various industries with no option than to rethink a better way of repositioning technical education in

Nigeria.

Need for Repositioning Technical Education Through Linkage with Industry

The expansion of the economic system of any nation is due to such factors as the system of inventions and patent techniques of mass production. It also involved an increased productivity per worker efficient business management and the method of distributing profits. Workers who are responsible for the success of these factors are in need of education and training that will enable industry to grow and thus, keep pace with the increasing demands of consumer goods. To buttress the above statement, Okoye et al (1987), maintained that, revolutionary educational programmes would initiate our young people into scientific culture through formal teaching and orientation to the application of scientific skills to the daily lives.

Employers and vocational educators need each other today, perhaps more than ever before; both need to find ways to train a work force that knows how to ride each successive wave of technological change to come along. Part of the task is to educate a crop of young technical graduate who will be able to grow as their work demands it. For the rest, industry and technical education need to work together to periodically retrain individuals who are already in the workforce. Also to deal with the shortage of skilled workers with advanced levels and technical understanding.

Industry and technical education need to open new paths to workers whose occupations are no longer useful and to make a better headway in preparing people on the fringes of our economic life with the skills that can move them to a place inside.

Highlighting the impact of the inter-dependency of the school and industry in the occupational training of the workforce, Roth (1987), stated that,

School-industry linkage represents the means of which the industry contributes to the quality of vocational training. Nigeria has made considerable progress in industrial development and vocational institutions are now required to train the vocational personnel and engineers who can generate and sustain the tempo of the country's industrial growth.

The industrial sector according to him has survival sake in the quality of technically skilled personnel trained by the institutions, since the success of any industry in an increasing competitive world market is contingent upon the availability of a workforce which can learn, grow and adapt to changing work techniques. Olaitan (1992), stressed that, when the training programmes of technical institutions are targeted at meeting specific needs of the industry (employers), it serve as a check on the rate of unemployment among the graduates.

Thus school-industry linkage should offer appropriate up-to-date training relevant to specific needs of the industry and commerce. Olaitan (1992), observed that school-industry linkage in Canada and Sweden relieved the industry of the responsibility of training and retraining their workforce.

Similarly. school-industry relationship should reduce the cost of training technicians and other skilled personnel for both the technical institution (including technical colleges) and industry. Okpechi (1992), observers that, the Nigerian economy has become more and more, diversified with new-trained and skilled indigenous workforce mostly technicians. As Olaitan (1992), put it, "the solution to problem of poor quality of technical graduates and the dearth of manpower information, rest with foregoing closer links and cooperation between industry. Training institutions and government that it exists presently."

Recommendation

The following recommendation which engage proffered:

1. Industrial establishments which engage the services of the bulk of technicians and craftsmen trained in technical colleges should be made to show greater commitment in the education and training of technical college graduates.
2. Federal and state governments should provide the necessary supports and encouragement to technical colleges In their effort to produce well trained manpower needs to attain the country's quest for technological empowerment.

3. The National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) and Industrial Training Fund (ITF) should rise up to their statutory functions of promoting and coordinating skill acquisition by students in vocational/technical institutions at all levels.

Conclusion

Vocational / technical education is a skill and practice-oriented education and training intimately linked to work or employability. The scheme of organized school-industry relationship can enlarge technical education capability, for superior occupational training of technicians and craftsmen. In the face of Nigeria's present economic circumstance, the task of up-grading and updating technical education programmes is certainly beyond the capacity of the fledging government's financial appropriations. Organized school-industry relationship to technical education programmes is highly desirable since most of the new-job skills and techniques are found in the industry.

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