Strategizing Vocational and Technical Education Towards Best Global Practices for Accelerated Sustainable Development in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The paper is on strategizing Technical and Vocational Education towards best global practice for accelerated sustainable development of Nigeria. The paper examines implementation of Technical and Vocational Education policies for effective and efficient acquisition of knowledge, techniques and skills for sustainable development. The paper pointedly discussed economic development through functional vocational and technical education for accelerated national development and transformation. The paper also attempt to highlight the important of functional vocational and technical education for rapid economic development. The paper suggest/recommends among others that the Federal, States and Local Governments in Nigeria should set up a strong and viable supervisory and management teams for effective and efficient supervision and management of the available meager resources for accelerated transformation of Nigeria. Furthermore, government at all levels in Nigeria should provide adequate support for continuous training of teachers and students of technical and vocational so that technical and vocational education graduates produced in Nigeria should have the ability to stimulate inventions and generate innovative ideas inline with best global best practice for sustainable development and transformation of Nigeria.

Keywords: Strategizing; Vocational and Technical Education; Accelerated Sustainable Development
1. INTRODUCTION

Scientific and technological foundation, upon which technical and vocational education is based on, is in a continual state of change. Technical and vocational education, accordingly, must be in a continual state of change. Nigeria has been talking about developing vocational and technical education subsector for decades, but only little progress has been made. Why is this so? How may we overcome the obstacles? Nigeria has tremendous potential to develop her vocational and technical education sectoral policies needed to encourage parents, students, companies, factories, policy makers and other stakeholders to induce the rapid development that we need today to achieve the transformation agenda of the present government for sustainable development. Ukuma and Deke (2010) argued that, vocational and technical education can not be effectively and efficiently repositioned for sustainable national development, unless 26% (percent) of the Federal Republic of Nigeria annual budget is allocated for the upliftment of education sector and out of the 26% (percent) of the annual budget, 18% (percent) should be allocated to vocational and technical education subsector to enhance better performance and higher productivity of the Nigerian economy so as to meet global challenges. If vocational and technical education is not positioned, no meaningful development can take place in Nigeria.

Strategising vocational and technical education towards best global practice deals with the acquisition of life long employable skills and techniques for employment in the global labour market. Strategizing vocational and technical education would bring about new methods of instructions, new approaches, materials and development and it would also increase production in our industries companies and institutions of learning, occupational needs are all indicators of globally dynamic technological progress.

Strategising technical and vocational education would give clear indication on the direction of the implementation of technical and vocational education master plan and show credibility in how we can manage and use meager resources, finances and funds to put in place measures to diversify our economy away from oil.

Strategising technical and vocational education towards best global practice is also similar to revamping technical and vocational education. Ukuma, Ochedikwu and Deke (2013) opined that, it is a process of applying scientific knowledge into technical and vocational education subsector in Nigeria with a view of identifying, studying, analyzing, evaluating and continuing technical and vocational education courses in technical and vocational education institutions of learning towards best global practice for accelerated sustainable development that would meet the needs and aspirations of the citizens of Nigeria.

Okoro (1999) defined technical and vocational education as the same type of education often used interchangeably. Technical education is special grades of vocational education which can be distinguished from other vocational education programmes because more mathematics and science are required in the training programmes usually bridge the gap between the professional engineer and the craftsman. Technical and vocational education adequately prepared the individual in skills, techniques, knowledge and attitudes for effective employment in the world of work place.

Similarly, Olaitan, Nwachukwu, Igbo, Onyemachi and Ekong (1999) defined technical and vocational education as education for work, its value is therefore rooted in the worthwhile living in the world of work. Apart from work, vocational and technical education prepared learners to develop profitable social habits required by the society. Also Ogwo and Oranu
(2006) defined technical and vocational education as education that are used jointly or synonymously to mean education geared towards skills acquisition for gainful employment.

2. IMPLEMENTING VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION POLICIES FOR EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT ACQUISITION OF KNOWLEDGE TECHNIQUES AND SKILLS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

Implementing Technical and Vocational Education policies for acquisition of knowledge, techniques and skills could be done by training vocational and technical education teachers in line with global standard for effective and efficient planning and managing of vocational and technical education subsector through conducting research and disseminating current information relating to the vocational and technical education development to students so that Nigeria vocation and technical education students could compete favourably with their counterparts in developed and developing countries.

Implementing technical and vocational education policies for acquisition of knowledge, techniques and skills would help in conducting and managing research findings that may be focused on the problems of technical and vocational education and management issues that persist on technical and vocational education as a subsector in education. Although research in technical and vocational education could be task oriented and are based on efforts to remove problems that are existing in the areas of inputs, processes, outputs and outcomes of all technical and vocational education activities in Nigeria.

It is worthy to note that, the results of such researches would influence the contents and strategies adopted in the training programme of institutions in Nigeria and they could also impact on policy thrust of decision makers in technical and vocational education subsector. Titilayo (2002) stated that;

*Technical and vocational education in Nigeria today is in shambles. The system is creeping to a point that, if nothing is done, it may collapse. This accounts for the reason why technical and vocational education as it is Nigeria today remains the country’s problem of development. The entire educational system calls for review. Nigeria technical and vocational education is fast going down the drain qualitatively if not quantitatively. The greatest area of neglect and demand to the system is that of manpower training and recruitment. One of the fundamental goals of technical and vocational education, even at the technical school level is to provide manpower base for the country, no adequate manpower plans are made for the current structure of technical education in Nigeria.)*

Nigerian’s do not recognized the place of vocational and technical education in national development. Nigerian leaders should realize their dreams of moving Nigeria from an undeveloped country to the prestigious club of first world or developed countries.

Nigeria has not developed and implements a strong public technical and vocational education system with high standard in teaching and learning. It is disheartening to note that, Nigeria became a sovereign nation on 1st October, 1960 five years earlier and Singapore gained political independence from Britain on 9th August, 1965 and at independence, both
Nigeria and Singapore were all third world country. As at today, Singapore’s technical and grammar schools are rated as one of the best in the world but technical and vocational schools in Nigeria are not rated the best in the world and across the world, Singapore’s technical education text books are used in institutions of learning in many developed countries including the United States of America (USA) Finland and Israel respectively.

Uzoro (1982) was of the view that;

*University education in Nigeria has been incapable of providing adequate leadership for developing technical and vocational education. The process of biased regeneration continues by the fact that those who obtained university degrees in Arts and humanities have become top administrators and policy makers in government. Literary education that entrenched a massive lack of appreciation for the importance of technical and vocational education by ensuring that, those who are in a position to decide a reversal of policy and endeavour to develop favourable social altitudes to them have not been equipped by their education to appreciate them. We have a self-perpetuating system which could work for ever except very drastic counter policy measures are taken to alter it. Failure to do this will almost guarantee that, the country will not develop because high talent will not develop because high talent will not attracted to productive work in industry and agriculture.*

Today, technical and vocational education does not attract high quality education. Technical and vocational education subsector has less contribution to the country’s gross domestic product (GDP). This is what technical and vocational education can do in countries where leaders recognize its value and role. Nigeria has not been blessed with leaders who recognized the unique role technical and vocational education plays in national development transformation and growth and the correlation between technical and vocational education and economic development.

Consequently, the country’s lost opportunities for accelerated development. Non-revamping of technical education has largely been due to serious corruption and governance issues.

Edukugho (2007) confirmed that;

*The Nigeria-corruption index 2007 acknowledged that, corruption was growing in the country (probably at geometric level) and the survey designed to highlight the magnitude of corruption and its effects on democracy, development and good governance. Ministry of education was highly corrupt and was ranked 4th on the corruption index as verified in the conduct of functions and activities involving secondary schools, polytechnics, colleges of education, universities, technical and vocational institutions, teachers training institutes, national board for technical education, national universities commission, national teachers institute, national commission for colleges of education.*

Little progress or we can not actualize the millennium development goals MDGs in 2015 and vision 20:2020 in six years from now as long as monies intended to revamp technical and vocational are not directed to their intended uses.
Policy makers, policy implementers governments at all levels, technical and vocational education teachers and other stakeholders in technical and vocational education subsector would have to use the available resources more effectively and diligently for accelerated sustainable development and transformation.

3. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT THROUGH FUNCTIONAL TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION FOR NIGERIA’S DEVELOPMENT AND TRANSFORMATION

Nigeria can only actualize vision 20:2020 if serious reforms are been carried out in intellectual capacity in technical and vocational education which would enable Nigerian citizens to acquire knowledge, skills and techniques for rapid economic development. Therefore, innovation and transformation can only be actualize by heavily investing more on technical and vocational education from primary to tertiary levels of education.

Technical and vocational education graduates produced in Nigeria institutions of learning should have the ability to stimulate inventions and generate innovative ideas for accelerated sustainable development.

Furthermore, there is urgent need for government at all levels to provide adequate support for continuous training in technical and vocational education and effective management of technical education from developed and industrialized nations, this would provide greater opportunities for in service training and it would enhance excellence academic cooperative and direct learning contact with industries, all this programmes would greatly enhance sharing of skills, techniques and knowledge.

Nigeria as a developing country can critically x-ray the functional technical education programmes of developed economies like United States of America, (USA) China, Britain and other developed countries not mentioned here and work towards revamping or reversing Nigeria’s present stunt and underdeveloped economy. Oni (2006) was of the view that;

Nigerians need to create a new approach for the concept of technical and vocational education and its purpose to the society. This is because technical and vocational education, for some decades now has been perceived to mean the education for the mentally retarded, physically handicapped and socially maladjusted students. It is regrettable that many Nigerians still believe that technical and vocational education is for students with low intelligence and dropouts from formal school system.

Nigeria has been experiencing brain drain in technical and vocational education which has adversely affected institutions of learning over the years. The receding influence of the academia ever since has had a severe implication on our national development because our poorly-staffed universities, polytechnics and colleges of education today produce half-baked products who are supposed to be future leaders of our country. Today, Nigerian educational system does not appeal to foreign students because no Nigerian university is ranked among the best 500 in the world.

Osu (2010) confirmed that;
The decay in this vital educational subsector now reflects on the quality of education in many of the nation’s educational centers, our universities are now glorified secondary schools. If you doubt me, take any certificate here to London or even Ghana. They don’t respect it as they should because they know that our students always spend up to six months at home due to one strike or another. The public primary and secondary schools have been run down too much that they are now a shadow of themselves.

Also, Ijagbone was of the view that, we cannot proceed as if technical and vocational education is irrelevant for the solution to our economic problems. Ijagbone maintained that, China’s miraculous economic feat within the last thirty years was grounded on the development of appropriate science and technology infrastructures. It is also worthy to note that, inaccurate data, poor planning and implementation of technical and vocational education master plan…

Shortage of technical education teachers, lecture halls, laboratories or workshops, high level corruption and politicking, technical and vocational education programme as it operates today has completely lost its national focus. Nigeria do not have good technical and vocational educational system in terms of quality and quantity planning which do not make it easier for technical and vocational education subsector to produce high level manpower with modern skills and competence.

Nigeria’s economy will continue to be stunt unless Nigerian institutions of learning start to produce or graduate people in technical and vocational education and utilize them effectively and stop to produce people in Arts and Social Sciences. Hence globally, the economy needs high level of manpower and competent, skilled personnel’s in technical and vocational education towards best global practice for accelerated sustainable development and transformation in Nigeria.

4. SUGGESTIONS / RECOMMENDATIONS

(i) The federal, states and local government should set up supervisory and management teams for effective and efficient supervision and management of the available meager resources for accelerated sustainable development of vocational and technical education for Nigeria’s transformation.

(ii) Nigerian leaders and citizens should recognised the unique role of technical and vocational education plays in national development growth and the correlation between technical and vocational education and economic could be given the opportunity or recognition and maximally contribute to the country’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as it is obtained globally in other developed and developing countries.

(iii) Government at all levels in Nigeria should provide adequate support for continuous training of teachers and students of vocational and technical education in Nigerian institutions of learning so that technical and vocational education graduates produced in Nigeria should have the ability to stimulate inventions and generate innovative ideas for accelerated sustainable development for Nigeria’s transformation.
5. CONCLUSION

Nigeria as a developing country could critically x-ray the functional and sustained vocational and technical education programmes of developed economies like United States of America (USA), China, Britain and other developed countries and work towards revamping or re-engineering technical and vocational education so as to reverse Nigeria’s present stunt and underdeveloped economy.

Furthermore, as long as funds or finances allocated or intended to revamp technical and vocational education are not directed to their intended uses, the actualization of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and vision 20:2020 which is six years from now would not be actualized. Therefore, policy makers, policy implementers, government at all levels and other stake holders in technical and vocational education subsector would have to use the meager available resources effectively and diligently for Nigeria’s accelerated sustainable national development and transformation.

References


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