

EFFECTIVE FUNDING OF VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION IN THE NEW ERA

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ABSTRACT

The performance of the education sub-sector was constrained partly by inadequate funding and partly by management of funds. The issue of financing vocational and technical education needs serious emphasis because vocational and technical education provide trained manpower in applied science, technology and commerce. Recent trends however, show that the federal and state governments have realized the significant role which Vocational and Technical Education can play in the economic emancipation of the nation, hence the need for proper funding cannot be overemphasised. This paper looks into the hindrances to the development of Vocational and Technical Education have so far been financed in Nigeria and suggests ways through which Vocational and Technical Education could be financed in the new era.

INTRODUCTION

Vocational and Technical Education is the type of education provided in the new National Policy on Education (1981) for the purpose of the acquisition of practical and applied skills as well as basic scientific knowledge. The reflection of this type of education in the country's National Education Policy (NPE, 2004) is a mark of official recognition that socio-economic development is only achievable through the provision of relevant and functional Vocational and Technical Education, which involves huge capital outlay.

The provision of this type of education would not only assist in the development of skilled manpower as required by the nation's economy, but will also help in laying a solid foundation for technological development. In all aspects of our educational enterprise in Nigeria today, adequate funding is unquestionably central to all our considerations, from primary to tertiary education, professional to technical, federal to local government, laboratory, classroom and indeed from chalk to talk, the entire system is crying out every day for funding support.

For too long, the syllabus has been geared towards white-collar jobs against the practical needs of a developing society. There is need for vocational guidance to guide against unemployment in Nigeria because problems and circumstances of the Nigerian child are different compared to the British child. He needs not only theoretical knowledge but also how to impact knowledge to the solutions of problems of everyday life and rationalize thereby becoming practically oriented for self-reliance than to the policy makers without knowing how such policies are executed.

For these reasons, Vocational and Technical Education must be financed in developing countries. Education has become an important sector for progress, prestige and prosperity. Thus, most of the developing countries have tried to establish ambitious and at times, unrealistic plans for a quality and quantitative expansion of education. All in all, it can however be said that education if well funded can lead to more income generation, greater level of productivity and greater level of knowledge, a more equitable distribution of income and regulation of birth rate and a better standard of living (Inwang, 2000).

Although government yearly budgetary allocation to education takes lion's share as compared to other sectors, yet Vocational Education has not occupy its rightful place in our new educational system because of lack of adequate funding, it has suffered a great setback. The necessary instructional equipments needed to impact knowledge are deficient. In order for Vocational and Technical Education to attain its rightful place in technological enhancement, it is imperative that funding should be sustained to meet the specified objective by producing that substantial manpower that will apply the acquired knowledge towards the improvement and solving of our environmental problems. However, there is a need for adequate funding of vocational and technical education especially as a basis for human resource development and economic emancipation (Edigin, 1999).

DEFINITION AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

DEFINITION

The revised National Policy on Education (2004) defined Vocational and Technical Education as that aspect of education that gives its recipient an opportunity to acquire practical skill as well as some basic scientific knowledge. Okorie and Ezeji (1988) defined Vocational and Technical Education as the education designed to prepare skilled workers for industry, agriculture, commerce and the like. Bulus (1991) maintained that Vocational and Technical Education involves the acquisition of skills and competences that can help individuals to function productively in industries and commercial occupations.

Inwang (1985) remarked that Vocational and Technical Education is the educational process which involves general education, the study of technologies and related sciences and the acquisition of practical skills and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of economic and social life. Evans and Herr (1987) explained that the term Vocational Education is used to include only instructions designed to enable people to succeed in occupation required less than a baccalaureate degree.

Looking at the above definitions of Vocational and Technical Education, one can then say that Vocational and Technical Education can be defined as that aspect of education which gives the recipient practical skills that make them self employed and self-reliant.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

Vocational Education did not have early sympathy of the colonial administration in the educational system in Nigeria. Osuala (1987) noted that the organized planning of a system of Technical Education in Nigeria dated from 1946. It was given a major place in the ten-year plan for development and welfare. He also said that the attitude of the colonial government toward the provisions of technical education for Nigeria was neither necessary nor feasible.

Niemadim, (2005) has also noted that the history of Vocational and Technical Education in Nigeria had some interfering features. It is evident that before government showed any interest in Vocational and Technical Education, most training institutions owned and managed by the missionaries, private bodies, individuals have indulged in the provision of Vocational Education.

Vocational and Technical Education has been absent in the Nigerian traditional secondary school. Not until after the report of the Ashby Commission (1960) that some serious thought of introducing Vocational and Technical Education in Nigeria secondary schools was viewed with interest. The National Policy on Education (2004) has placed a great premium on Vocational and Technical Education in view of its important role in technological and industrial development of Nigeria. It has recognized it as "an aspect of education which leads to the acquisition of practical and applied skills and as basic scientific knowledge".

RATIONALE FOR VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

The contribution of Vocational and Technical Education to the nation is invaluable. If Nigeria is to achieve its lofty goals of industrialization, Vocational and Technical Education is necessary for those who are to work in the industry. Employers of labour need school leavers with Vocational and Technical Education to work as technician for the growth and success of their enterprises (Ehizogie, 2000).

For the intelligent exploitation of our resources, Vocational and Technical Education have a salutary effect, as they include in their content of instructional courses as business education, Home Economics, Education, Agricultural Education and so on.

OBJECTIVES OF VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

The basic objectives of Vocational and Technical Education are:

- To provide trained manpower in applied sciences, technology and commerce necessary for agricultural, commercial and economic development.
- To produce the manpower who will apply the acquired knowledge towards improvement and solution of their environmental problems, thus making the environment more useful and convenient for men and women.

- To impact the basic necessary practical skills that could lead to the production of craftsmen, technicians and other skilled personnel who should be enterprising and self-reliant in practical skills knowledge, understanding and attitude (FRN, 2004).

HINDRANCES TO DEVELOPMENT OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

One of the main defects in the Nigeria's educational system is the strong bias towards academic and literacy subject to the utter neglect of Vocational Education. Vocational Education has not been adequately developed which has been resulting in the dearth of men with vocational knowledge needed for the effective implementation of the various programmes for economic and industrial development. Recently, the federal and state governments have realized the significant role which Vocational Education can play in the economic emancipation of the nation, hence, the inclusion of Vocational Education in the new National Policy on Education (Ekpenyoung, 2005).

An important factor which seems to inhibit the development of Vocational Education in Nigeria is finance and the realization of the goals of Vocational and Technical Education as highlighted in the policy will come true only if the programme could be effectively funded.

WAYS VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATIONAL HAVE SO FAR BEEN FINANCED IN NIGERIA

Owing to the capital intensive nature of Vocational and Technical Education and the non-immediate returns on investment in education, generally there is very little private participation in the affair of education in Nigeria, particularly at the tertiary levels, thereby making the government and sole proprietor of educational institutions (Uwameiye, 2000). Recent happenings in the country such as the population explosion, the increasing demands for admission placements, incessant strikes by teachers in tertiary institutions, demands for improved facilities and equipment, salaries and welfare packages have made government become over burdened considering the nature of such institutions in Nigeria (Ekpenyoung, 1999). In the present circumstances, Vocational and Technical Education stand to suffer most, because of its unpopularity against popularity of literacy education and it is more expensive in terms of equipment, facilities and staffing. Source of funding Vocational and Technical Education in Nigeria are mainly from budgetary allocation, consolidated funds, education tax and so on. Also, funds that are budgeted to take care of all the sub-sector of vocation and technical education are obviously diverted to some other sectors (Aina, 2005).

SUGGESTED WAYS THROUGH WHICH VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION COULD BE FINANCED IN THE NEW ERA

For the purpose of this paper, the following means of financing Vocational and Technical Education are highlighted:

1. The government should set aside a certain percentage of the oil revenue and devote such to development of Vocational Education.
2. The government should mobilize the local community to embrace the sponsorship of projects needed by Vocational and Technical Education institution through campaigns.
3. The private sector could lease technical equipment to schools under liberal terms so that schools could use the equipment while they are being paid for.
4. The private sector could also build workshops for use in schools.
5. The institution could also generate fund through rendering consultancy services to surrounding communities like conducting feasibility studies for prospective businesses and organizing workshops for employees of the public and private sector and so on.
6. The institution can also generate fund by encouraging staff to embark on fruitful researches as well as writing of vocational and technical education textbooks to be published and marketed by the institutions.
7. Also, the institution can initiate an endowment fund to which all past graduates of each Vocational and Technical institution should contribute.

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