

**THE ROLE OF VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION
IN ACTUALIZING VISION 20:2020**

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Abstract

The thrust of this paper was to identify the different potentials of vocational and technical education (VTE) that can be adopted for the realization of vision 20:2020. This paper examines the concept of vocational and technical education, the aims and objectives of vocational and technical education, and the Nigeria vision 20:2020 project of the federal government of Nigeria were fully discussed. The paper went further to discuss the various ways of using VTE in actualizing vision 20:2020. This paper finally recommended that government should work collaboratively with the private sector to maintain and expand vocational education and training in Nigeria. Stakeholders of VTE should provide a clear vision and mission for the programme, and these vision and mission should be fully implemented. Policymakers should introduce legislation related to new reform initiatives to sustain employer and private sector commitment to VTE. Vocational and technical education teachers and students should be motivated through special scholarship awards for further studies within and outside the country. Moreover the government should make adequate allocation of resources for vocational and technical education.

Keywords: Vocational and technical education, Vision 20:2020, Nigerian Vision 20:2020

Introduction

Vocational and Technical Education (VTE) systems play a vital role in the social and economic development of a nation. Due to their vibrant nature, they are continuously subject to the forces which drive changes in the schools, industry and society. The challenges and Opportunities of VTE are unique due to the needs of the changing economy and local community. There is no doubt that the proper development of technical and vocational skills is vital to economic development of every country especially developing ones. Moreover, in today's knowledge driven and competitive global economy, VTE is a fundamental element in the development equation because it allows individuals and societies to unlock their potential, expand their horizons and adapt to the changes in the dynamic world.

The rapid technological changes in the 21st century poses challenges to education and employment sectors. The new labour market demands have caused many graduates with various certificates to be unemployed. The massive rate of unemployment and the changing face of the economic, social, political labour market worldwide have led to new education reforms/policies with emphasis on vocational and technical education (VTE) geared towards helping the youths and adults to be self dependent (Okolocha, 2012). A vital aspect of Nigerian educational process is vocational and technical education (VTE) (Osifeso, 2011). This type of education has been seen as the most reliable instrument for individual and societal survival and development in this constantly changing world. There is no gain saying that the provision of vocational and technical education through any mechanism put in place will enable recipient to be better, more useful and more productive citizens of the nation. One of the most important features of VTE is its orientation towards the world of work and the emphasis of the curriculum on the acquisition of employable skills. VTE delivery systems are therefore well placed to train the skilled and entrepreneurial workforce that Nigeria needs to create wealth and emerge out of poverty.

The Nigeria Vision 20: 2020 project of the Federal Government of Nigeria is the projection that by the year 2020, Nigeria should be one of the world's top 20 economies of the world. However, Nigeria has had other development plans since 1946; although comprehensive planning began after independence with the First National Development Plan: 1962-68. This was followed by the Second Development Plan, 1970-74, which aimed at accelerating post-war reconstruction. The Third National Development Plan, 1975-80, was an attempt to jump-start industrial development through the import substitution strategy. The Fourth National Development Plan, 1981-85 emphasized balanced development of different sectors of the economy and various geographical areas of the country.

The immediate post-Fourth Plan period witnessed the replacement of the Fifth National Development Plan that was to run in 1988-92 with the World Bank-IMF Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), which was implemented in 1986-92, the vision a 2010 was yet another development plan initiated to herald socio-economic prosperity in Nigeria. We have also had the National Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) in 2004. As NEEDS was a time-bound policy framework, it was upgraded to NEEDS II in 2007. Simultaneously, the Yar'Adua administration initiated the 7-point

Agenda and lastly, the millennium development goals. The draft NEEDS-II and the Yar'Adua's 7-point Agenda were harmonised to produce the National Development Plan. The harmonized development agenda formed an integral part of Nigeria Vision 20:2020. Its implementation is expected to be an important milestone towards meeting Nigeria's vision of becoming one of the World's 20 largest economies by 2020.

To be one of the 20 biggest economies by 2020 means that Nigeria must be able to do what some of these fairly big economies can do - Canada, Austria, France, Greece, Italy, Spain, Denmark, Norway, Poland, Russia, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Australia, India, Indonesia, Malaysia and Brazil. Vision 20:2020 will not be realisable merely because we now have a national development plan. Our government and leaders must understand that most of these countries were transformed through VTE.

But despite the contributions of VTE to national development, the leaders of Nigeria have not given this aspect of education the attention it deserves. This is one of the reasons for reasons for the nation's underdevelopment (Dike, 2009). Dike further remarked that the most, annoying part of it all is that most of the so-called expatriate engineers who are being paid millions of dollars to build Nigeria's roads and bridges are graduates of technical and vocational colleges.

It is against this background that this study poses and tries to answer these questions:

- What are the aims and objectives of VTE
- What are the objectives of Nigerian vision 20:2020
- How can VTE be used to actualize vision 20:2020

Conceptualizing of vocational and technical education (VTE)

Olaitan (2010) defined Vocational and technical education as a type of education given to an individual in order to enable him or her develop the creative and manipulate potentials inherent in him or her for the use of man.

The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) has placed premium on vocational and technical education in view of its important role in technological and industrial development of Nigeria. It has been recognized as an aspect of education which leads to the acquisition of practical and applied skills as well as basic scientific knowledge. Earlier, Osuala (1987) defined vocational education as technical and vocational training which is given in or outside the school. It is a systematic learning experience which is designed to fit individuals for gainful employment in recognized occupation or empowerment to create wealth.

UNESCO (2005) defined vocational and technical education as;

"a comprehensive term referring to those aspects of 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 in

economic and social life".

Akinseinde (2009) believes that vocational and technical education focus on occupational preparation. He also stated that VTE may not necessary create job but the

principal purpose is to equip individuals with skills and knowledge that will allow them to be economically productive. Vocational and technical education is the instrument for having skilled men and women who are relevant to the demands of labour market. Wahba (2010) as cited in Ogundu and Omofonmwan (2011) observed that vocational education is an integral part of national development strategy which help to develop the growth of productivity, economics and human resources.

Quality vocational and technical education and training will help to develop the individual's knowledge of science and technology in a broad occupational area. However, vocational and technical education has continued to thrive in many societies. Unfortunately, Nigeria is not taking the issues of vocational and technical education seriously. Vocational and technical education can provide students the skills to become productive entrepreneurs and engender creative and innovative ideas that would enlarge the nation's economic pie, and increase personal freedom. Thus the neglect of vocational and technical education is socially injurious as it rubs the nation of contribution the graduates would make on national development. More importantly, the Nigerian society needs competent auto mechanics and truck drivers, carpenters, plumbers, electricians (to maintain our power plants), computer database technicians and web/network technicians, medical technicians and vocational nurses to function well.

Under critical examination, vocational and technical education has been an integral part of national development strategies in many societies because of the impact on human resource development, productivity and economic growth. Despite the proven contributions of VTE to national development, does Nigeria seem to give vocational and technical education the attention it deserves? This paper therefore seeks to explore the roles of vocational and technical education in actualizing vision 20:2020 in Nigeria.

Aims and Objectives of Vocational and Technical Education

The National Policy on Education (2004) stated the aims and objectives of vocational and technical education as follows;

1. To provide trained manpower in the applied sciences, technology and business particularly at craft, advanced craft and technical levels.
2. To provide the technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, commercial and economic development.
3. To give training and impart the necessary skills to individual who shall be self-reliant economically.

The Nigeria Vision 20: 2020 project of the Federal Government of Nigeria

The Nigeria Vision 20: 2020 project of the Federal Government of Nigeria is the projection that by the year 2020, Nigeria should be one of the world's top 20 economies. The NV 2020 idea emerged during the presidency of late Umaru YarAdua. According to the National Planning Commission (2009), The Nigeria Vision 20: 2020 is the country's blueprint and perspective action plan which captures the collective aspirations of Nigerians to make their country one of the twenty leading economies in the world by the year 2020.

According to the National Planning Commission (2009), in order to achieve the foregoing aspiration, the country is expected to enhance her economic development performance in line with the following objectives:

- Polity - to have a peaceful, harmonious and stable democratic polity;
- Macro-Economics - to have a sound, stable and globally competitive economies, with a GDP of not less than \$900 billion USD and a per capital income of not less than \$4,000 USD per annum;
- Infrastructural Development - to have an adequate level to support the full mobilization of all economic sectors;
- Education - to boast of a modern and vibrant education system which provide for every Nigerian the opportunity and facility to achieve his/her maximum potential and provide the country with adequate and competent manpower?
- Health - to have a health sector that supports and sustains a life expectancy of not less than 70 years and reduce to the barest minimum the burden of high maternal and infant mortality as well as debilitating diseases such as malaria, HIV/AIDs, etc.
- Agriculture - to have a modern technologically enabled agricultural sector that fully harnesses the vast potential of agricultural resources of the country, ensures national food security and contributes significantly to foreign exchange earnings,
- Manufacturing - to be a vibrant and globally competitive manufacturing sector that contributes significantly to the GDP with a manufacturing value added of not less than 40%.
- Information and Communication Technology (ICT) - have a sophisticated and dynamic ICT to foster increased competitiveness and productivity in the economy with a positive impact on macro-economic growth.

The Nigerian Vision 20:2020 is a bottom-up strategic plan in which each major stakeholder group will prepare its Vision 20:2020 thoughts and ideas based on the guidelines approved by the Siena Council. The Nigerian government is required to have investments of between \$8bn and \$10bn annually to be among the top 20 economies of the world by year 2020. Such investments should be collaboration between government and the private sector. Still on funds required by the project, Okebukola (2009) observed that Nigeria need to invest a total of \$510 billion in upgrading its dilapidating infrastructure and building new ones over the next 10 years in order to achieve Vision 20:2020. Vocational and technical education can contribute to vision 20:2020 by enhancing economic development in infrastructural development, provision of skilled manpower in agricultural, commerce and industries for the actualization of vision 20:2020.

Using VTE in actualizing Nigerian Vision 20:2020

Vocational and technical education can be used to actualize Nigerian Vision 20:2020. This is because there is a link between vocational technical education and Nigerian Vision 20:2020. One of the objectives of vision 20:2020 is to have a sound and stable economy that can pare globally with other economies, and to raise a GDP of not less

than \$900 billion USD annually. Vocational and technical education has the capacity to contribute meaningfully to this objective by equipping citizens with knowledge and skills that will enable them to contribute their quota in the national development of the country. This will help the nation to have skilled citizens that are creative, productive, and independent.

Infrastructural development is another objective of Nigerian vision 20:2020. Vocational and technical education has the potential to contribute meaningfully to infrastructural development. This is due to the fact that technical education encompasses infrastructural and industrial development. Dike (2009) was fast to state that most of the So- called expatriate engineers who are being paid millions of dollars to build Nigeria's roads and bridges are graduates of technical and vocational colleges. As Soludo (2006) asserts, "Nigeria needs to revolutionise its science and technology infrastructure. Dependence on natural resources for growth is not sustainable, and science and technology holds the key to the future, and time to lay foundation is now.

A vibrant education that can provide skilled manpower is an objective of Nigerian vision 20:2020. Vocational and technical education helps in producing skilled people that are needed for technical and industrial development in Nigeria through learning by doing, enterprise education, and experiential activities. Edigin (2009) lay credence to the fact that there is hardly any developmental project that can be executed without the services of skilled workers, such as construction of roads, bridges, railways, buildings, industries, automobiles, airports and oil and gas exploration. Since vision 20:2020 is a plan for the country to be among the top 20 economies of the world, the issue of skilled manpower that can contribute to the country's GDP should not be neglected.

Similarly, vocational and technical education can contribute to the manufacturing of local goods and service. Vocational and technical education provides a strong base for the development of local goods and technology. Egharevba (2012) is of the opinion that every society has its own peculiar problems, and that it takes local artisans, craftsmen, technicians and technologist to design and fabricate tools, equipment and simple and complex machines to solve local problems. This was the case of China, Taiwan, Indonesia, Singapore, South Korea, Malaysia, Thailand and Hong Kong. These countries relied heavily on their local goods and services, and they were able to move from a third world status to a first-world status.

Vocational agriculture will play an important role in averting shortage of food and hunger, since one of the objectives of vision 20:2020 is to ensure national food security, and agriculture contributing significantly to foreign exchange earnings. Vocational and Technical education is one of the greatest tools that can be used to bring about redress in agricultural sector of Nigeria. Furthermore, vocational education will contribute significantly to agriculture. The skills acquired through VTE can contribute to food production and foreign exchange earnings in Nigeria.

The training of vocational nurses and doctors will contribute immensely to the health objective of vision 20:2020 by reducing maternal and infant mortality, and to debilitate other diseases such as HIV/AIDS. VTE holds the potential to produce health workers that will contribute to the actualization of vision 20:2020. Encouragement of

technical education will help to provide personnel that will help to develop sophisticated gadgets and software that will provide positive impact on economic growth.

A harmonious and stable economy can be encourage through vocational and technical education, since it can provide citizens with all it takes to be productive to contribute to the GDP of the country. VTE products can also help to manage the affairs of this country since politics is not basically your area of study.

Conclusion

The total neglect of the full implementation of VTE in Nigeria may affect the achievement of Nigeria's vision 20:2020. This is because NV 20:2020 may end up as a political music meant to keep Nigerians singing while the federal government and the so called politicians carry on with business as-usual. However, Nigeria has the potential of achieving vision 20:2020, if our government and the private sector will encourage vocational and technical education and training through adequate funding and proper implementation of its vision and mission. However, the role of VTE in actualizing vision 20:2020 is crucial in the areas of infrastructural development, qualitative and skill education, increase in our agricultural products, and commerce and industries. Therefore, it must be noted that VTE belongs to the critical aspect of vision 20:2020, and neglecting VTE may result in the non realization of vision 20:2020.

Recommendations

For vocational and technical education to play its role in achieving vision 20:2020, the following recommendations are hereby suggested:

1. The government should work collaboratively with the private sector to maintain and expand vocational and technical education and training in Nigeria. In particular, the government should encourage the private sector to invest in vocational and technical education and training.
2. Federal, state, and local agencies should provide a clear vision and mission for vocational and technical education. And the vision and mission should be fully implemented.
3. The government, especially the Ministry of Education, should seek input from numerous stakeholders, such as educators, business/industry personnel, parents, students, academicians, and other professionals, before formulating major policy decisions regarding vocational and technical education.
4. A balanced approach should be emphasized in the school curriculum through the integration of technical, employability, and generalizable skills in vocational programs. In addition, vocational curricula should be flexible and responsive to the present and future needs of the nation.
5. Policy makers should introduce legislation related to new reform initiatives such as school/business partnerships, school-to-work activities, technology preparation, and workforce development to sustain employer and private sector commitment to education, training, and human resource development.

6. The federal and state government should motivate vocational and technical education teachers and students through special scholarship awards for further studies within and outside the country.
7. As vocational and technical education is necessarily expensive, the government should make adequate allocation of resources for vocational and technical education. Poor investments cannot yield the desired result.
8. Vocational and technical educators should organize workshops, seminars and conference on the value and the relevance of vocational education to individual and national developments.

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