

## VOCATIONAL TECHNICAL EDUCATION AS A TOOL FOR SELF RELIANCE

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### **Abstract**

*In Nigeria, education for self-reliance has been much yearned for. However, this has eluded the nation because one of the problems facing Nigerian educational system currently is non production of graduates with skills, competencies and ability to feet in the world of work. Most graduates depend on government for employment, and it is very difficult for government to meet up with the expectations, so the graduates remain unemployed. The unemployed graduates constitute serious social problems. This paper therefore, examined vocational technical education as a tool for self reliance and suggests some strategic steps for quality vocational technical education to meet expected dreams of society and youth.*

**Keyword:** Vocational, Technical, Education, Tool, Self-reliance

### **Introduction**

The imperative of education in fostering more vocational and technical attitudes and behaviours are widely recognized. The benefits of vocational technical education are not limited to young graduates. Vocational technical education is a comprehensive term referring to the educational process where it involves, in addition to general education, the study of technologies and related sciences for acquisition of practical skills and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of economic and social life. Vocational technical education is part of general education that focuses attention on the acquisition of skills that fit recipients into the world of work either as an entrepreneur or an employee (Oduma, 2012). It impacts right habits of doing things in the recipients through repetitive training in experiences from the occupation. International Center for technical and Vocational Education and

Training of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2006), classified technical and vocational education into three categories. These include formal, non-formal and informal technical and vocational education training (TVET). Formal TVET education is provided in the system of schools, colleges, universities and other formal educational institutions that normally constitutes a continuous "leader" of full-time education for children and young people, generally beginning at age of five to seven and continuing up to 20 or 25 years old. Non-formal TVET is an organized, systematic, educational, activity, carried on outside the framework of the formal system, to provide selected type of leaning to particular subgroups in the population, adults as well as children. Informal TVET is the long-life process be which every individual acquires and accumulates knowledge, skills attitudes and insight

from daily experiences and exposure to the environment. Technical and vocational education is a means of preparing for occupational fields and for effective participation in the world of work. It is an instrument for promoting environmentally sound sustainable development as well as methods facilitating poverty alleviation. In a broad sense, vocational and technical education includes the learning of any kind of profitable and useful work. Thus, it implies vocational and technical training or retraining which is given in schools or classes under public supervision and control.

In any complex and technically advanced society, training in different types of work is imperative. This training must aim at preparing recipients with occupational skills, abilities and knowledge necessary for both paid jobs and self-employment as entrepreneurs. It can be better put as a programme aimed at increasing employability of individual and sustainability in general. It is the master key that can alleviate poverty, promote peace, conserve environment, improve quality of life for all and help achieve sustainable development (UNESCO, 2006). Vocational technical education is a tool required in order for Nigeria to achieve successful economic growth and self-reliance. Vocational technical education equips recipients with adequate skills that enable them to produce new product from process a particular job. Uzoka (2013) observed that vocational technical education subjects deal with knowledge, skills and competencies fit one's opportunities for entrepreneurship. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013) assigned it as a major position in the development of the nation; hence vocational technical education shall give training and impart necessary skills to individuals for self-reliance economically. The non acquisition of specific skills while in school constitutes serious social problems like poverty, unemployment. This paper therefore advocates training of children in acquisition of skills to stimulate economic growth and self-reliance in a developing nation like Nigeria with different entrepreneurial options in Vocational Technical Education.

### Entrepreneurial Options in Vocational Technical Education

There are many entrepreneurial options in Vocational Technical Education. According to Oduma (2012) the following occupational areas exist in vocational technical education;

**1). Vocational Agriculture:** This is the training for jobs on farms and occupation in such fields as livestock production examples poultry, goat, cow, pig and fish

production. Farm equipment and machinery expert-suppliers and maintenance, agricultural extension service, agricultural supplies and distribution in chemicals, feeds, seeds, fertilizers and hand held farm tools etc, soil management, agricultural resources management like forestry as well as ornamental horticulture.

**2). Vocational Home Economics:** Vocational Home Economics is known to be a subject that prepares recipients for job. Hence economics as a vocational subject has many opportunities for small and medium scale enterprise. Small scale enterprise has been found to contribute immensely to the development of any nation (Igbo, 2019). Gamawa (2015) highlighted the following as potentials available in vocational home economics

- a. **Skills in food and Nutrition:** Food specialist community nutritionist, dietitian, catering services, hotel management, food confectionaries, meal planning and so on.
- b. **Skills in Home Management:** It include, making toiletries, soap, body cream, housekeeping, laundry, dry cleaning services, production of detergents, household maintenance, money management, event planning, home cares, nailing, social workers, care giver extension works among others.
- c. **Skills in clothing and textiles:** Its include clothing, retailers, batik making, weaving, crocheting constructions or sewing, pattern makers, hair dressers, beauty care ability, embroidery tie-dyeing, boutique, fashion designing, tailoring, interior decoration, a indirect
- d. **Educators.** Teaching at nursery, primary, secondary and tertiary or vocation centers.
- e. **Home Economics Journalism,** share ideas the people using print and non print media.
- f. **Consumer Education:** Specialist, toy production, poultry keeping, market gardening for vegetables of all kinds.

**3). Vocational Business:** Vocational business equips its recipients with competencies necessary for gaining entry-level employment as well as advance in their chosen office career of occupation in the face of advanced technological changes in modern offices. Vocational options in the specialized area include;

- a. Establishment of private secretarial training centers
- b. Establishment of computer operators training centers
- c. Establishment of private business centers

- d. Establishment of post-primary business/commercial schools.
- e. Office ergonomics
- f. Establishment of account and auditing firms

**4). Trade and Industries Education:** Oguntu (2013) noted that trade and industrial technical education provides instruction for the development of basic manipulative skills, safety judgment, technical knowledge and related occupational information for preparing persons for useful self or paid employment in vocational industrial pursuit. The desired outcome of trade and industrials technical education is to gain sufficient vocational skills, efficiency and competences for self employment or the secure employment and advance in the chosen occupational career. This is the training for occupations as repair and maintenance or serving of air conditioners, repair and maintenance or servicing of refrigerators, compressors, dryers, toasters, water heaters, electric stoves, radio, Tv, vehicle electrical work, engines as well as carpentry, woodworks, joinery, building technology, building electrical works, fabrication etc.

**5). Technical Education:** Training in this occupation normally covers one to three years of studying beyond high school. It is generally more theoretical than other vocational training but less theoretical and more specific than professional training (Anene, 2002). In technical education, there exist wide varieties of entrepreneurial options. Some of these include; computer training, electronics, draftsmanship, nursing, dental assistant, cartography food service management, production control supervision.

It will be necessary to point out that in order to achieve the much need technological development and to prepare the citizens for this technological ear, vocational education perceived to be the greatest weapon that can be used to bring or achieve a guide desirable change or development to the country's economic political, sociological and human resource. No nation both big or small can be self-reliant without developing and utilization her indigenous talents and technologies. In the absence of this, unemployment and other associated problems will remain with us unless the basic tools for sell-reliance or self-employment is provided to our children.

Thus, vocational technical education become important tool in solving this problem by using it to educate and inculcate in the children the ideal skills, action abilities expected in order to bring about technical, economic and national development.

### **Aims and Objectives of Vocational and Technical Education**

The National Policy of Education (2008) listed the following among others as objectives of vocational and technical education.

1. To provide trained manpower in the applied sciences, technology and commerce.
2. To provide the technical knowledge and technology and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, industrial, commercial, economic development and economic reliance of Nigerian.
3. To give training and impact the necessary skills to individuals who shall be self-reliant economically.
4. To give training and impact the necessary skills for the production of technicians, craftsmen, technologists and other skilled personnel who shall be enterprising and self-reliant.
5. To train people who can apply scientific knowledge to solve environmental problem for the convenience of man.
6. To provide full-time or part time courses for instructors and trainee in engineering, other technologies, applied sciences, business and management leading to the production of trained manpower.

Furthermore, the five commonly accepted goals of vocational technical education as outlined in Ofile & Usen (2013) in Enyi (1999) are listed as follows

- i. Prepare the learner for entry into employment and advancement in his chosen career
- ii. Meet the manpower needs of society
- iii. Increase the options available to each student
- iv. Serve as a motivating force to enhance all types of the learning
- v. Enable the learner wisely select a career
- vi. It is for skills acquisition for self-reliance

### **Importance of Vocational Technical Education Programme**

Vocational technical education plays a vital role for sustainable economic development in Nigeria. In Nigeria for example, the quality of industrial workforce which is the prerequisite for economic and technological growth and development is determined by Vocational technical education.

As bedrock to economic and technological transformation, there is need for adequate attention to be given to vocational technical education in all ramifications. This is because according to Umunadi (2009), vocational technical education is the ultimate means of addressing the teething socio-economic-political- moral problems of Nigeria and the hope of placing Nigeria among the 20 top world economics.

Nwogu (2009) points out that for vocational technical education to produce skills, attitudes and good work habits on correct proportion to enhance national development, it must be functional, practical and skill oriented. This is possible only in workshops or laboratories in vocational and technical colleges where vocational technical education is taken a tool for self reliance.

### **Vocational Technical Education as a Tool for Self-Reliance**

A tool is any hand-held instrument and used to perform a particular kind of work. In a simpler term it is an instrument used to accomplish some tasks. A tool means anything that helps one to perform one's job effectively (Anene, 2002). A tool used to consistently perform a task helps to facilitate self-reliance. Self reliance means being confident in ones' abilities. Self reliance is things that one needs in order to rely on one's own abilities and efforts to maintain on self as well as family members (Anene, 2002). Self reliance has three major characteristic which are

1. **Resourcefulness:** Resourcefulness refers to the ability to find a way around challenges b y providing solutions
2. **Reliability:** reliability is the aptitude to prove and fellow through as expected
3. **Resilience:** resilience is elasticity to rebound when things do not go as planned

Therefore, for an individual to be self reliant, he/she must be resourceful, reliable and resilience in addition to required skills and working materials and equipment for in an occupation. If an individual is lacking in the acquisition of adequate skills, even if he/she is given the working materials and equipment, it will be difficult to achieve as expected because incompetence to manipulate provided equipment.

Adequate tool required for self reliance is the training that will provide an individual with those competencies for survival in society, to understand and appreciate their environment, become useful members of the community as well as acquire objective view of the local and external environment. There is doubt that by so doing this will guarantee self reliance and

economic development. The major occupational areas of vocational technical education are, vocational agricultures, vocational business and office education, distributive education, vocational home economics and trades and industrial technical education.

It is necessary to promote an environment that supports development of vocational technical education across board. By being self employed, the unemployment problem which has resulted in high incidence or various forms of social ills such as armed robbery, assassination, kidnapping, human trafficking, diseases including HIV/AIDS will be reduced drastically. Again, the poverty situation in Nigeria occasioned by unemployment is precarious and terrifying. No nation has ever survived successive high rate of unemployment because of the attendant waste of human resources, which is breeds (Igbo, 2004). Nigeria future prosperity is a function of producing individuals who are well prepared and well equipped to take their place in tomorrow society.

Nigeria as a nation is anxious not to be left out in the march for scientific and technological development. The government has tried to put in place policies and interventions to stem the tide of unemployment but this has not been achieved. New education reforms have been put in place but facts still remain that poverty and unemployment with all its attendants evils still persist. If Nigeria must achieve the goal of self reliance, the citizens must be trained in such a way that they can fit in very well into new jobs that came with advanced technology. Such an educational training must provide for vocational technical education geared towards production of potential entrepreneurs. Vocational technical education system is usually the backbone of any nation especially in view of new occupations.

New occupations are being created through discoveries and inventions, hence the tendency of employers to set higher educational requirements and the need for employees with specialized training to make vocational preparations imperatives in the country. Vocational technical education activities ensure self reliance; no matter the level and rate of the impact of advancement on the nation, the citizens will only be self-reliance by working with the skills they have already acquired (Chinyere, 2016). Those who have government employment or paid jobs can maintain it since they have the adequate skills.

### **Challenges of Vocational technical Education and hindrance to self-reliance in Nigeria**

Vocational Technical Education is facing my raids of problems that if not checked, the laudable objectives

would remain a dream into the next century. Notable among these challenges include the following;

**1. Poor funding:** Funds available for vocational technical education are grossly inadequate. Funds are needed for day to day running of vocational technical institution. They are needed to furnish the workshops with the right kind of machines and other tools. In addition to purchasing these items funds are also needed for consumables and maintenance. This is as a matter of fact, lead to low enrolment of students in vocational technical education institution. Therefore, governments at all level should ensure the 26% budgetary allocation prescribed by the UNESCO.

**2. The status of teachers:** Status of teachers in vocational technical education is very low. This is responsible for the difficulty in recruiting and retraining of teacher. In support of the above statement, Mckeown (2013) added that there is need to be autonomy for appropriate registration encourage the workforce.

**3. Deficient programmes:** There are many trained but jobless vocational technical institutions products in this country. These set of individuals have useful, employable skills but lack the usable skills required to become self-employed. Obioma (2013) attributed this to paltry technical education programs. The position taken in this paper is that products of vocational technical education programmes should be given all the skills and support necessary to enable them, when necessary become job creators rather than job seekers.

**4. Public Attribute:** Vocational Technical Challenges are complex and diverse. On one hand, vocational technical education programmes are battling with poor public image and on the other hand, the public looks down on the teacher. This attitude has continued to affect the growth of the programme. Despite the fact that teachers enjoy the same condition of service as other public officer, this has not improved the attitude of the public forwards teaching generally.

**5. Government Policy:** Patrick & Samuel (2013) maintain that some government policies are counterproductive. It does see that even the National Policy on Educative placed some limitations on

vocational technical education, which is required for self-reliance.

For instance, one of the aims of vocational technical education is to provide training manpower in applied science, technology and commerce, particularly at sub professional level. By this, it has already placed a limit to the status to be attained and does not seem to provide enough incentive for ambitious people who may reach the top in the field.

#### **Ways for promoting of Self Reliance and Economic Growth through Vocational Technical Education**

The provision of adequate and function vocational technical education requires proper implementation of the National Policy on 6-3-3-4 system of education. This includes;

1. Provision of facilities and equipment needed. Such facilities are introductory technology workshop with tools, farm land and farm implements, equipped schools' libraries and adequate security.
2. Training, retraining and employment of qualified teachers and instructors as well.
3. Qualified teachers should handle various occupational areas
4. Time to fine supervision and appraisal of the implementation process should be carried out
5. Mass literacy campaign should be embarked to make the society change its wrong attitude towards vocational technical education.

#### **Conclusion**

Based on the facts on ground, the quest for self-reliance can never be achieved without an adequate implementation of vocational technical education. Training in various entrepreneurial options in vocational technical is essential, this training must be aim at preparing the recipients to be self-reliance since new approaches; methods and skills are constantly being applied to familiar occupations citizens without adequate skills are likely to be pushed out of jobs. Again, the ever-increasing population of youths might make it impossible for the government to employ all, thus the citizens of a nation should be armed with the tools self reliance fit into any situation that might occur.

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