

Vocational and Technical Teacher Education: A Panacea to Security Challenges in Nigeria

By

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Abstract

This paper had been able to discuss the concept of Vocational and Technical Education, the concept of security and its challenges and furthermore how Vocational and Technical Education can ameliorate security challenges. The paper therefore made some suggestions as to repositioning Vocational and Technical Education by including peace education into the curriculum of all Vocational and Technical Education programmes (Agricultural Science Education, Fine and Applied Arts, Business Education, Industrial Education, Computer Education and Home Economics and Catering Hospitality Education), and that government should improve in the funding of Vocational and Technical Education programmes amongst others.

Key words: Vocational and Technical Education, Teacher Education, Security Challenges

Introduction

The upliftment of human condition is the prime concern of education. Education is an important tool for human and material development. This is why Uddin and Uwaifo (2003) stated that through education, people are helped to develop their knowledge and skills, adopt new behaviours and are better equipped to survive in their society. Similarly, Gayus (2003) opined that, education is an agent of people – processing. When the people are processed, they bring about change and development to the society. Education is an aggregate of all the processes by means of which a person develops new knowledge, attitudes, skills (and other forms of behaviours of positive or negative), values in the society where he/she lives (Anyakoha, 2009). Education is a viable tool to achieving the national objectives, which in turn informs the national educational goals. These National goals according to Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2013) include:

- ❖ A free and democratic society
- ❖ A just and egalitarian society
- ❖ A united, strong and self reliant nation
- ❖ A great and dynamic economy and
- ❖ A land full of bright opportunities for all citizens.

The National Educational goals also include the following:

- ❖ The inculcation of national consciousness and national unity
- ❖ The inculcation of the type of values and attitudes necessary for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society

- ❖ The training of the mind in the understanding of the world around and
- ❖ The acquisition of appropriate skills and the development of mental, physical and social abilities and competencies as equipment for the individual to live and contribute to the development of the society.

These national educational goals are being impacted upon by various global and national challenges and concerns which also impact on the individual, families and the society in its entirety. Government has accordingly embarked on genes of transformations that are expected to position the education system to incorporate national and global concerns and challenges. While the entire education system has tremendous contributions to national development, Vocational and Technical Education (VTE) in particular has vital unique contributions in making the nation forward in the present global era. For vocational and technical education to do this effectively there must be an enabling environment. On this premise the paper will be discussing the concept of Vocational and Technical Education, the concept of security, aligning Vocational and Technical Education to security challenges in Nigeria and Repositioning Vocational and Technical Education to help promote security challenges in Nigeria.

Concept of Vocational and Technical Education

The role of Vocational and Technical Education (VTE) in the realization of national educational goals cannot be overemphasized. Vocational and Technical education is defined as any form of education whose primary purpose is to prepare persons for employment in recognized occupations (Okoro, 1993). For Esen (2002), Vocational and Technical education is the ingredients of socio-economic and political stability of a nation and its economic survival. In recognition of this, the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) entrenched it into the nation's education system; and defined it as that aspect of education, which leads to acquisition of practical and applied skills and basic scientific knowledge. For Ater and Onwuegbuna (2005), it is seen as education for work; where skills are taught for the purpose of gaining employment.

Vocational and Technical education are leaving experiences meant to be impacted to an individual systematically in order to get him or her adequately equipped for a good employment in a recognized occupation. Asuquo (2005) defined Vocational and Technical Education as any form of education whose primary purpose is to prepare individuals for employment in recognized occupation. Iheanacho (2006) also defined vocational education as that aspect of education which deals with business education, farming, book keeping, auto mechanics, electrical and electronics, bricklaying, computer education, and garment construction, cosmetics and hair dressing, foods and catering services with the aim of acquiring vocational skills in these fields. For Anyakoaha (2009) Vocational and Technical Education is a means of preparing for occupational fields and for effective participation in the world of works. Vocational and Technical Education gives individuals the skills to live, learn and work as productive citizens in a global society (Nwogu and Nwanoruo, 2011). Vocational education encompasses the fields of study, such as Agricultural education, Home Economics, Fine and applied arts education, Computer Education, Business education and vocational trades in soap making, hairdressing, computer training among others (Ojimba, 2012)). Therefore, this paper defines vocational and technical education as a system of education which is predicated upon the teaching of basic skills, abilities, knowledge, and understanding the professional or expert use of hands for self - reliance. The various areas of Vocational and Technical Education include Agricultural science education, Home Economics education, Business education, Computer education, and Industrial Education. Vocational Education has numerous opportunities for youths and adults. The Goals of VTE include:

- ❖ An aspect of life- long learning and a preparation for responsible citizenship;
- ❖ An instrument for promoting environmentally sound sustainable development;
- ❖ A method of alleviating poverty (or eradication). Vocational and Technical education has the potentials of producing job creators and not job seekers. Vocational and Technical

Education is offered at the various level of education. The goals of this education at the various levels are properly stipulated in the national policy on education (2004) as below

- ❖ At the pre-Technical and Vocational Education level, the emphasis is on JSS (i.e. at junior secondary school);
- ❖ Introduction into the world of technology and appreciation of technology towards interest arousal and choice of a vocation at the JSS and professionalism later in life;
- ❖ Acquiring technical skills;
- ❖ Exposing students to career awareness by exploring usable options in the world of work; and
- ❖ Enabling youths to have an intelligent understanding of the increasing complexity of technology. Beyond the JSS level, the goals of technical and vocational education include to:
 - ❖ Provide trained manpower in the applied science, technology and business particularly at the craft, advance craft technicians levels.
 - ❖ Provide the technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agriculture, commercial and economic development.
 - ❖ Give training and impart the necessary skills to individual who shall be self reliant economically.

Thus, VTE as stipulated by NPE, 2013 is robust enough to equip the individuals for self reliance thereby combating poverty, unemployment or wrong employment, and also contribute to national security.

The Concept of Security

Security is the degree of protection to safeguard a nation, union of nations, persons or person against danger, damage, loss, and crime. Security as a form of protection is structures and processes that provide or improve security as a condition. David in Igbuzor (2011) defined security as the condition or feeling of safety from harm or danger, the defence, protection and preservation of core values and the absence of threat to acquire values. According to Nnoli, (2006) in Okafor (2013) Security is a very elastic term and traditionally defined as absence of or freedom from threat, anxiety or danger. The institute for Security and Open Methodologies in Yaga (2013) defined security as “a form of protection where a separation is created between the assets and the threat”. Security as national condition was defined in a United Nations Study (1986) in Yaga (2013) that nations can develop and progress safely with security guarantee.

Human Security therefore includes both personal and physical; the economic, social and political; basic necessities in food, health, education and shelter; and community and environmental security. Arriagada and Godoy, (2000) opined that it is fear that produces a sense of “insecurity” and vulnerability and which in turn impact negatively on the well being of individuals. Craighead (2003) gave a traditional definition of security as the provision of private services in the protection of people, information and assets for individual safety or community wellness. Security according to Fischer and Green (2004) implies a stable, relatively predictable environment in which an individual or group may pursue its ends without disruption or harm and without fear of such disturbances or injury. However, security may be expanded to include national security and the defence of a nation, through armed forces or the use of force to control a state’s citizens. Security may also include public policing, with state employed public servants. Many others see security as crime prevention, security technology and risk management or loss prevention (Brooks, 2007). For Davidson (2005), security may present very different meaning to different people given the time, place and context. According to Rice (2012) socio-economic development is the foundation for peace and security.

Security today is more than warding off physical violence (and they are many such as armed robbery, ritual killings, child trafficking and other crimes) against the state and individuals. Otiye (2011) in Nkechi and Esomonu (2013) observed that, insecurity can be precipitated by three types of violence which include: Direct violence manifested by physical, emotional and psychological violence: Secondly, Structural violence which is carried in form of deliberate policies and structures that cause human suffering death and harm; and thirdly, Cultural violence which involves norms and practices that create

discrimination, injustices and human suffering. According to Nkechi and Esomonu (2013) resources sharing have created a lot of political tension, increased rate of unemployment, high level of poverty and youth resilience as some of the security challenges facing the country.

Nigeria is overwhelmed by the threats posed by all manners of conventional criminal behaviour; militancy and insurgency, transnational crime syndicates involved in kidnapping people and drug trafficking, advance fee fraud (419) and cyber crime, political violence which include election violence, ethno-religious conflicts which exist especially in the northern part, and resource-based conflicts over land, particularly between farmers and pastoralist. Nigeria has been experiencing security threats from discontent and separatist group such as MEND in the south south zone (Niger Delta); MASSOB in the south east zone; OPC in the south west zone; and the more recent, deadly BOKO Haram insurgency in the north east zone. All these issues or conflicts are symptoms of the disease poverty which is enhanced by inequality and deprivation and where there is perception of exclusion by some segment of the society. Vocational and Technical Education is robust enough to equip individuals for self reliance, thereby combating unemployment or wrong employment and poverty that ruin the minds of youths in violence.

Aligning Vocational and Technical Education to Security Challenges in Nigeria

The relevance of vocational and technical education is to make the individuals aware of changes in their environments especially as a result of development in science and technology; and to be able to exploit and adapt to the changes positively. Its aim is to empower the people economically, socially, and politically so that they will be able to participate in the making and implementation of policies affecting their lives or well-being. It is also aimed at making the citizens and the nation to be self-reliant in the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services. According to Ukpongson (2000) vocational and technical education is aimed at endowing its recipients with appropriate skills, experiences, abilities and competences and that, the knowledge acquired equips the individual to live and contribute to the development of the society.

Vocational and Technical Education makes any person who acquires it stand the chance of being self employed because vocational training acquaints its beneficiaries with saleable skills, with which they can earn a living and become useful members of their society. According to the Renaissance World, (2011) VTE is very much important in empowering the youths because these people need relevant work skills and knowledge to either gain employment or be self employed and earn their daily living. In the absence of relevant skills, they become readymade weapons in the hands of the devil and his agents of destabilization. VTE creates job opportunities for those equipped with the skills and for the general public by establishing private business that prevent the youths from being tools of violence. The candidates of VTE possess the basics necessary for a better chance for success in self – employment and becoming self-reliant. The people of Nigeria would then become empowered to take advantages of these opportunities by creating a system of incentives that reward handwork and punish corruption by investing in education generally and VTE in particular.

Vocational and Technical Education promotes wealth for a nation as well as the reduction of poverty. Despite the great general wealth from oil and agriculture if properly developed, Nigeria remains to be very poor. Concerted pursuits of the goals of VTE would reduce the nagging poverty of individuals, families, society and even the country, thereby boosts the wealth of the nation. When this happens, insecurity will be ameliorated, because citizens will not feel being left out. To buttress the above, Nnabude (2009) opined that, an unfriendly security climate preclude both external and internal investment into the nation. Nzekwe and Okeke (2009) observed that entrepreneurial skill acquisition by youths makes youth self-reliant and leads to national development.

Vocational and Technical Education deals with human work, with human attempt to satisfy his/her want by human action on physical objects. It is a type of education that helps a man or woman to get what he/she wants. Thus, a study of the field relating to occupations in the economic and social sectors of life which are concerned with helping men to satisfy their wants are, here, taken to be technology education. The VTE based courses have its components exposure to relevant future working environment. There are

few jobs at the moment for the growing urban population and urban unemployment and because of the practical and theoretical nature of VTE gives leverage to waste living. By this act youths who are tools of violence are engaged in one job or another, because an idle mind is the devil's workshop.

Vocational and Technical Education also inculcating tolerance in the midst of diversities: the escalating of societal conflicts is rooted in diversity, which may be looked at in terms of economic, culture, politics, ethnicity, nationality, religion and gender among others. It is because of this diversity that there is a tendency for members of one group not to tolerate the views and actions of others (Johnson and Johnson, 2003). In Nigeria, cultural and religious diversities have been grounds for violence and youths have been tools to perpetrate violence (Faleti, 2004; Aluigba, 2010). This leads to a fight for dominance, the result of which is conflict and consequential breakdown of security. Hence, vocational education (Home Economics Education) teaches tolerance and cooperation among family members, community and society as a whole.

Vocational and Technical Education (Home Economics Education) teaches conflict prevention and resolution strategies: VTE helps to foster interdependence, integrative negotiation, co-operation and critical thinking before actions. Johnson and Johnson (2005) observed that a strong sense of positive interdependence is required for peace, and individuals believe they are linked with others; so they cannot succeed unless the others do (and vice versa). According to Duke-Natrebo and Ashara (2014), using constructive controversy in schools teaches students how to engage in constructive political discourse in a democracy. Paris (2001) identified negotiation and problem solving techniques important for peace.

Repositioning of Vocational and Technical Education to help Promote Security in Nigeria

There are lots of challenges that the nation faces as she tries to meet the goals of education with regard to VTE. This is due to the fact that, the country is not only a developing nation but, it is a corrupt country that witnesses frequent changes in leadership in the past with corresponding abandonment of the out gone regime's programme. There is also need to reposition vocational and technical education in Nigeria, so that it can live up to expectation in a global era. Some of these could be inclusion of Peace education, globalization into the curriculum of all vocational and technical programmes, funding and implementation of VTE programmes, academically weak entrants, insufficient students industrial work experience scheme (SIWES) and deregulation of Nigerian economy

Peace Education: Peace education has become an important and most effective means of peace building, especially for societies where there are inherent diversities. It is concerned with helping inhabitants of a particular society to develop an awareness of the process and skills that are necessary for achieving understanding, tolerance and goodwill required for peaceful co-existence. Tjosvold and Sun (2002) observed that peace education implies a process of examining and discussing our values and attitudes towards diversity, cultural differences, tolerance and human dignity and directing our efforts towards achieving fundamental changes within societies. At the heart of violent acts is the youth who is already rendered vulnerable by the very ugly scenario created by the imbalances, injustices and intolerance in the society. While hungry and unemployed, the youth becomes a ready tool for prosecuting and unleashing terror on the society. In order to tackle the complex and interwoven problems that confront our society, there is need to make the preventive measures and solutions to these problems deeply rooted in the minds of the populations by including peace education into VTE programs. The need for peace education for youths cannot be over-emphasized, thus they are as follows:

- ❖ Raising awareness on violence and Peace
- ❖ Patriotic Consciousness
- ❖ Teaching Conflict prevention and resolution strategies
- ❖ Inculcate tolerance in the midst of diversities

Globalization: Globalization refers to the emerging worldwide independence of individual and countries, which is characterized by various economic, political, cultural and social realities. There are very many global issues that impact on the society and have implications for repositioning in vocational and technical education in Nigeria; which include terrorism, environmental disasters, millennium development goals among others.

Funding and implementation of VTE programmes: Poor funding and implementation of VTE curriculum and programmes is a naughty challenge. This is due to the fact that, necessary skills cannot be acquired in absence of requisite equipment, qualified teaching staff and conducive teaching and learning environment. The experience has been that funds is either not adequate (Orah, 2003; Ebenehi and Akor, 2007) or poorly managed (Eneyi, 2001; Ogbonna, 2001). The issue of corruption in Nigeria has made this matter worse. In most cases, little money released to managers of VTE departments/sections is seen as an opportunity to have a share of the national cake (Achor, 2009). It is expected that Goodluck Jonathan's administration will accord VTE programme a priority by funding it adequately. To redeem the nation from the ugly state of security challenges, investment in VTE seems to be the right way forward. The anti-crime commissions should be made to be on the watch out on all that has to do with education in Nigeria including what Principals do with PTA funds and what headmasters do with handicraft money in primary schools.

Academically weak entrants: As long as education (be it science, technology or VTE) is considered as an alternative only when all doors close, there is no hope for very brilliant ones coming in. In some institutions, the situation is made worse by lowering the entry point of those coming into education particularly VTE. We have simply missed it. All that is needed is to accord VTE graduates high rating by giving them scholarship while in school, special salary structure and condition of service, a fairly high entry point when employed and you will see brilliant students coming in (Achor, 2009). For now, Nigerian believes that anything that is cheap is inferior and so, today the issue has gone beyond just that and it is difficult to stop.

Insufficient students industrial work experience scheme (SIWES): Training as both a professional teacher and an industrial or skilled worker for those in education takes time to master. The practice of spending 3years for NCE VTE and 4years for B. Ed VTE and at the end considered to have possessed the relevant knowledge and experience to perform is doubtful. Sometimes during the Industrial Work Experience (SIWES), students are attached to redundant sections with little or no experience to gain and after 16 weeks during the period of study and such a person is considered to have mastered the skill with evidence of certificate issued. All that is required is to accord priority to VTE to extend their study time by one year, which shall purely be for the practical experience. This recommendation is different from the one year (for first degree) and two years (for NCE) graduate teachers as internship contained in the 4th edition of the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004)

Deregulation of Nigerian economy: Vocational and Technical Education programmes witness a lot of importation of equipment. These equipments have their prices increased sharply due to deregulation policy that has brought in increased interest and exchange rates. Deregulation policy is an offshoot of Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) that was introduced in Nigeria in 1986, which has a lingering effect. Achor and Okeme (2000) opined that science and technical education equipment, which are often imported, are adversely affected by this policy. Therefore, partial or complete removal of such control in VTE related items could be a viable option for now.

Conclusion

The paper had being able to discuss VTE goals and the capabilities of Vocational and Technical Education programmes in having the potentials of producing job creators and creative problem solvers. It has also looked at VTE in combating unemployment and reducing poverty with its related consequences and how it can help to solve security issue through peace education. In order to do these effectively, VTE programmes need to be repositioned by including peace education and globalization in to the curriculum, as well as taking a positive stand on funding and implementation of VTE programmes.

Recommendations

In view of the foregoing discussion, the following recommendations are made to help handle the situation.

- ❖ Both Federal and State government should improve on the funding and implementing of VTE programmes. This is due to the fact that, equipments and machines used by these programmes are expensive and the everyday running of the programmes required enormous fund as well.

- ❖ The federal government should accord priority to VTE to extend their study time by one year, which shall purely be for the practical experience. This suggestion is different from the one year (for first degree) and two years (for NCE). This is due to the fact that, the practice of spending 3years for NCE and 4years for B. Ed VTE and at the end considered to have acquired the relevant experiences to perform is doubtful.
- ❖ The removal of deregulation policy either partially or completely on VTE related items by the federal government could be a viable option for now.
- ❖ VTE graduates should be accorded with high rating by giving them scholarship while in school, special salary structure and condition of service by both federal and state government will help motivate excellent or very brilliant student to enroll in to the programmes.
- ❖ Anti crime commissions should be instituted to be on the watch out on all that has to do with education in Nigeria including what Principals do with PTA funds and what headmasters do with handicraft funds from primary schools

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