

# Emerging Trends and Strategies For Sustainable Development and Human Capacity Building in Vocational Technical Education in Nigeria

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## Abstract

The world-wide constant innovative changes and the emerging trends for sustainable development and human capacity building in the third world nations have shown that the future is unpredictable especially as it concerns education and training, technology, skills and competencies which are considered the bedrock of economic, social and political mobility and growth. It was a realization of this that a Nation Policy on Education was formulated in Nigeria. The trend now in the society shows that the level of one's education does not have a significant effect on one's growth rather the effects are more pronounced on the level of skills possessed and the ability to apply the skills in the real world of work. This paper explores the emerging trends for sustainable development and human capacity building in Nigeria as one of the third world nations. The paper identified some major challenges facing vocational technical education and the strategies for sustainable development and human capacity building. The paper is of significance to the three tiers government of Nigeria to re-access and reinforce the policy and its implementation of vocational technical education in Nigeria.

## Keywords

Emerging Trends, Vocational Technical Education, Sustainable Development, Human Capacity Building.

## I. Introduction

In Nigeria, education systems at all levels have witnessed dramatic changes in terms of purpose, organization, structure and changes in nomenclature of certificates awarded. For instance, 1970's to early 1980s witnessed the 6-5-4 system of education; late 1980s to 2007 witnessed a restructuring of the education system on a 6-3-3-4 system while 2008 witnessed a new reform of 9-3-4 system of education. The various reforms in education are reflected in the National Policy on Education (NPE) document. The vision of NPE document and various reform movements are to address the issue of imbalance in the provision of education in different parts of the country with regards to access the quality of education [1, 23]. The education reforms/policies of 1970s and 1980s which focused more on the acquisition of certificates instead of the needed vocational skills have caused many Nigerian youths and adults to move into the education industry in pursuit of certificates. As a result of this, the education industries grew rapidly in size in late 1970s and 80s. The growth, according to Teboho (2000), was mainly in size and not in quality. Teboho further stated that the education system of Nigeria and some other developing third world nations are still far from being ready for the challenges of preparing students for the contemporary global world [22]. The rapid technological changes in the 21st century poses challenges to education and employment sectors. The new labor 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, labor market worldwide have led to new education reforms/policies

with emphasis on vocational technical education geared towards helping the youths and adults to be self-dependent. Cinterfor/Ilo (2006) stated that vocational technical education can be a tool to counteract at least in part, the harmful effect of unemployment by promoting greater job turnover [3].

## II. Statement of the Problem

The success of vocational technical education programme hinges on proper planning, efficient implementation, adequate funding and motivation. Nigeria formulates viable policies but the implementation of such policies has been the major problem to vocational technical education development. This paper critically reviews the micro and macro vocational technical education policies in Nigeria as one of the third world nations and the current emerging trends, problems and the way forward.

## III. Significance of the Study

This paper will be of benefits to the three tiers government of Nigeria. It will help the three tiers government to re-access and reinforce the implementation of vocational technical education policies in Nigeria.

## IV. Research Methodology

Data for this paper were derived from secondary sources: previous researches and analysis of scholars, government documents, newspapers and magazines as well as journal articles that are related to the subject as the study involved an extensive literature review which critically analyzed the present status, problem and prospects of emerging trends in vocational technical education in Nigeria as one of the third world nations for sustainable development and human capacity building.

## V. Present Status of Vocational Technical Education in Nigeria

Vocational technical education can be defined as an educational training which encompasses knowledge, skills, competencies, structural activities, abilities, capabilities and all other structural experiences acquired through formal, on-the-job or off-the-job which is capable of enhancing recipients opportunity for securing jobs in various sector of the economy or even enabling the person to be self-dependent by being a job creator. Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) opined that vocational technical education is an aspect of the 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 relative to occupations in various sectors of economic and social life.[6] Manfred and Jennifer (2004) advocated that vocational technical education comprises all more or less organized or structured activities that aim at providing people with the knowledge, skills and competencies necessary to perform a job or a set of jobs whether or not they lead to a formal qualification. These definitions show that the relationship between vocational technical education and employments is undeniable [13].

As technological advances draw the world more closely together, vocational preparedness becomes increasingly important. Jean (2003) stated that there is ample evidence that better qualifications and skills protect individuals from unemployment while macro-economic perspectives show that higher skill level work force go hand in hand with better overall performances and also have positive impact on social capital [10]. It is in line with this that Lyons, Randhawa and Paulson (1999) stated that “muddling things in education industry” will no longer work in an era of international cartels. Prior to the present dispensation, Nigerians have historically considered vocational technical education as an education programme meant for low level, low brilliant and less privileged or second class citizens [5]. Vocational Technical Education Curriculum according to Grubb (1985) has always had to battle against not only the resistance of academic curricula, but also the suspicion that they provide second-class education and tract to some individuals’ of lower class. Today, the innovative system of the current time is shifting towards skill acquisition courses, which are capable of making the youths and adults self-dependent [9]. The major educational reforms according to Daniel (2001) have, however, been on vocationalization. It is in line with this, that different countries have come up with different framework towards repositioning their vocational technical education programmes [4]. Michael (2002) outlined some of efforts of European Union member states in reforming and repositioning vocational technical education in their countries. According to Michael (2002) the French National Assembly approved the law on social modernization which contains important measures concerning vocational education and the right to employment. The French Minister for Vocational Education officially launched the “craft high school” programme, which is aimed at reinforcing the synergy between different vocationally oriented education pathways, particularly the vocational and technological ones. In Denmark, efforts are made by the government to increase the number of training places and strengthening their practical element. [14] The reform implies substantial changes in structure and content such as emphasis on social and personal [7]. In Germany, a report according to Michael (2002) showed that one of the objectives of the German programme is to promote the vocational education of gifted young people and to raise the standard of vocational education and training. In Kenya, the 8-4-4 system was introduced with emphasis on technical and vocational education which ensured that the graduate students at every level have some scientific and practical knowledge that can be utilized for self employments, salaried employment or further training [21].

Nigeria therefore has joined her third world nations in revamping and repositioning vocational technical education programme geared towards ensuring a national system of vocational education. A system that ensures that, young people see vocational education as challenging and worthwhile. To achieve the objective of revamping of repositioning vocational technical education in Nigeria, the Federal Government according to Olakunri (2006) came up with the strategy of using the Education Trust Fund (ETF) which was set up by law in 1993 to fund and upgrade the quality of vocational technical education in Nigeria. The federal government recently mapped out a three-year action plan to revamp TVE through ETF. The sum of N5 billion annual allocations was mapped out for three-year action plan as follows: 2005 - N1.5 billion, 2006 - N 2.0 billion and 2007 - N2.5 billion.

In line with this, the ETF chairman in a press conference organized in Lagos on February 15, 2006 stated that the funding of vocational

technical education in previous years has been at the level of general interventions. The renewed interest in vocational technical education, according to the ETF chairman, is aimed at encouraging Nigerian youths to take to vocational technical education which is the direction the whole world is going now. The sum of N1.5 billion had already been distributed to the nation’s polytechnics and colleges of technology in 2005. This shows that Nigeria recognizes the importance of the vocational technical education in the world economic order. Despite the importance of the vocational technical education in Nigeria, the programme still seems to be far from receiving massive acceptance, and full implementation. There are however, a lot of other challenges [19].

## **VI. Major Challenges to Vocational Technical Education in Nigeria**

Although vocational technical education has been seen as a key element in the changing world economic order, nevertheless, vocational technical education in Nigeria like in many other countries still face a lot of challenges [13]. For vocational technical education in Nigeria to compete with their world counterparts in the changing economic order, they must address the following key challenges:

1. Putting in place workable policies and strategies
2. Advocating vocational technical education as a key element in the education industry
3. Learning in authentic and real-world environments
4. Encouraging continuity in vocational technical education and training
5. Putting in place coherent guidance and counseling system which will help to put students in proper career path.
6. Encouraging the development and usage of qualified trainers.
7. Creating awareness through image building, vocational attractiveness and participation in vocational technical education in Nigeria
8. Setting up ambitious and realistic goals that will enable Nigeria to be the most competitive and knowledge based economy by the year 2020
9. Adopting stringent measures for proper and efficient execution of policies regarding vocational technical education.
10. Adopting uniform standard and certification in vocational technical education at all levels.

## **VII. Emerging Trends and Strategies for Sustainable Development and Human Capacity Building in Vocational Technical Education in Nigeria**

The vision statement of NPE (2004) at secondary and tertiary levels is to provide trained manpower in applied science, technology [7] and business [8] particularly at craft, advanced craft and technical levels; provide the technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, commercial and economic development and to give training and impart the necessary skills to individual who shall be self-dependent economically. At the tertiary level, graduates are expected to acquire both physical and intellectual skills, which will enable them to be self-dependent and useful members of the society. To meet the policy goals of NPE, and the challenges facing the vocational technical education in Nigeria, vocational technical education should adhere to the following strategies for sustainable development and human capacity building:

### **A. Organizing Flexible, Workable and Adaptable Programme**

For Nigeria to address the socio-economic changes currently taking place in the third world nations, vocational technical education must be ready to amend and revise some of its curricula where necessary so as to effectively become a driving factor for Business the implementation of the adjusted socio-economic development strategies. Sansaliyu quoted by Alaku (1999), laments the gap between policy decisions in the field of education and implementation of those policies. In the opinion of the writer, Nigeria policies on vocational technical education must revolve around vocational technical education that is flexible and adaptable to capture the rapid changing demands on ICT and as well support tourism, hospitality, agro processing among others [2].

The globalization including that of job market now calls for vocational education curricula, which will ensure that vocational technical education graduates demonstrate work competencies that will meet global quality expectations. Vocational technical education according to Manfred and Jennifer (2004) has an important role to play in raising the quality of vocational graduates, increasing job satisfaction and motivating workers as well enhancing productivity. The achievement of these will help to create employment and enhance economic performance. Nigeria should emulate Israel who for instance generates a lot of money and creates a lot of employment opportunities for her citizens through agriculture and tourism. Nigeria is far better blessed in agriculture, tourism and other vocational jobs. Nigeria has a lot of places where she can habilitate, make money and create employment opportunities. What Nigeria required are technical and managerial skills [13].

Vocational technical education should strive to adopt strategies to produce graduates who are innovative and adaptable to changes in the world of work. Vocational technical education graduates should strive to be job creators rather than job seekers who roam around the street of Nigeria with dozens of certificate in endless search for jobs. This implies the production of competent vocational graduates who can adapt to changing economic situation in Nigeria. Vocational technical education should keep its gate open, flexible and learner oriented since one of the factors contributing to poverty in Nigeria is lack of equal access to education, and lack of employment/vocational skills. The Nigeria government should also devise a viable strategy of making its policies on VTE programmes a very continuous exercise from the planning, implementation and evaluation stages. Continuity and full implementation of the programmes lead to better success while disjointed programmes lead to disjointed success and perpetual exit of the programmes.

### **B. Investing in Quality Vocational Technical Education Programme**

The acquisition of skills and competencies is very necessary for one to fit into jobs especially in this era of ICT. The three tiers of government, education stakeholders and employers should give massive support to vocational technical education programmes, by investing in the programmes. The major hindrances to the growth of vocational technical education include dearth of vocational teachers, weak capital base, poor funding, poor technology among others, which result in graduates with low skills. In line with this, Olakunri (2006) stated that the major problem militating against the growth of vocational technical education in Nigeria is the dearth of technical teachers. [19] According to Manfred and Jennifer (2004), industrialized countries are transforming

themselves into knowledge society by investing more on human resources. This implies that productivity and competitiveness of Nigeria in the economic world order is dependent on a well educated, skilled and adaptable workforce [13].

### **C. Training and Learning Should Take Place in Authentic and Real Work Environment**

For vocational technical education to survive in Nigeria and meet the world economic order, training and learning must take place in an environment where all the necessary tools, machines, equipments and facilities are in place and resemble the place for real work environment. What one is able to see, touch, experience and finally put into practice is better than what experience teacher with dozens of building and artificial things can put in place. It is in line with this that Peter and Willam (1999) stated that whether to build accurate representations of reality, or create consensual meanings in social activities, or personally coherent models of realities, experience is still paramount. Experience gained in a real work environment provide actively upon which the individual minds operate and should be regarded the best teacher [20].

### **D. Government Proper Coordination of Education, Industry and Work Environment**

The three tiers of the government (Federal, State, and Local government) should try to create an enabling environment for vocational technical education as an integral part of government policies on youths and adult self-dependence. In line with this, Lyons, Randhawa and Paulson (1991) stated that education and training programme cannot meet national post industrial strategies with invisible hand but required the consensus effort of government, industry and labour. Although, Nigerian education planners have initiated measure to promote vocational technical education as long life learning, but coherent structure seems to be lacking. There is still need for elements of quality in the programme. The achievement of quality in vocational technical education programme requires proper coordination, integration and cooperation among the stakeholders of education. [12] In line with this, Obioma (2010) maintained that the earlier the National Vocational Qualification Framework (NVQF) is firmly put in place, the better it is for linking training with work and industry. The NVQF will place emphasis on competencies and functional skills that will facilitate the generation and application of a more realistic reward system for employees rather than on mere paper qualification. The image of vocational technical education programme should be boosted through adequate and proper sensitization of the general public and the students in particular. The roles of teachers and the benefits of vocational technical education to the students and the public should be made known with a view to assuring them of the quality of the programme. The evidence of awareness of the programme, and the status of the teachers in the society seem to determine the students/trainees enrolment [16]. Olakunri (2006) said that currently, only three percent of total school population enrolled in technical education. A total of 50 percent enrolment according to Olakunri should be aimed at. Once there is improvement in the image of vocational training in Nigeria and its flexibility in creating jobs, then the young people will rush into the programme.

The NPE (2004) set up ambitious goals of making Nigeria the most competitive and knowledge based economy through revamping of vocational technical education programme [19]. Other programmes, agencies and strategies set up for the same purpose includes: Family support programme, Directorate of employment agency. National



education and empowerment development strategies (NEEDS) which focus on wealth creation, employment generation, poverty reduction, elimination of corruption and value reorientation, and State education empowerment development strategies (SEEDS) among others [15]. Through proper coordination and integration of activities of these agencies, vocational technical education and industry will help to produce graduates who are theoretically and practically balanced.

#### **E. Encouraging Continuing Vocational Technical Education**

The greatest weakness in the execution of vocational technical education is disjointed training and lack of continuity of the programme from primary school level to tertiary school level and no-the-job training. There is urgent need for continuity in any programme or training. Nigeria is very good in formulating very viable policies and goals for the betterment of her citizens but the question is to what extent do the planners and implementers ensure that programme starts from the infancy stage to fully completed and evaluated stage without creating gaps along the line. In line with this Alaku (1999) stated that the major problem lay on the gap between policy planners and policy implementers [2].

During 1970s and 1980s for instance, primary school pupils and secondary school students (post primary school students) were encouraged through government policy to undertake handcraft and other skill acquisition tasks themselves as part of continuous assessment during a prescribed period of time. Today, handicrafts even in most rural areas are not taken serious. Most schools now seem to accept money in place of the crafts while some schools seems not to observe the craft periods any longer. This attitude seems to demoralize the students who would have offered skill courses up to tertiary institution and even after graduation.

#### **F. Adoption of Uniform Standard of Training and Certification**

In Nigeria, there is no uniform standard in training and certification at federal, state and local government area. Formal and inform sectors have their certification patterns. This makes it impossible to integrate different vocational education training into one national system. There is need for government to have analysis of the number of vocational technical education institutions and training centers. The essence of uniformity is to increase the mobility of training and occupations. There is also need for government to put in place proper machinery in order to standardize, monitor and control the issuance of these certificates. This will help to ensure that only the qualified candidate will be certificated, since some Nigerians for instance, buy trade test certificate with money without under-going the actual training.

#### **G. Setting up a National and Local Structure of Vocational Technical Education Councils**

In order to encourage structural participation by the general public in the vocational technical education system, a national tripartite council should be set up. The activities and structure of the nation council should be extended also to the local area. The council should be headed or chaired by vocational technical education professional. The professionals should coordinate and monitor the overall activities and assessment of vocational technical education in Nigeria as well as sensitizing the public and students through seminars, workshops, conferences, television and radio programmes, and rural leaders' involvement on vocational technical education campaign. The idea of a non-vocational

technical education professionals heading any vocational technical education programmes is a step in the direction of not having high regard and value for vocational technical education.

#### **H. Ensuring High Quality and Appropriately Skilled Vocational Professionals**

For vocational technical education to meet the economic, social and political trends of the time, the nation must use qualify vocational training professionals/teachers in implementing vocational technical education programme. These professionals are pivotal in promoting vocational technical education policies/ reforms and strategies in Nigeria. The professionals have all the necessary skills, abilities and capabilities for carrying out the programme since the quality of vocational technical education depends mainly on the quality of vocational technical education teachers and trainers [13]. The use of professionals helps in keeping pace with the rapid changes in the work environment and the content of the programme especially now that instruction is fast shifting from pure instruction to include learning facilitation and innovation. The use of non-professionals in the execution to vocational technical education policies has led to disjointed implementation and diversion of the greater percentage of the fund mapped out for the training. Disjointed implementation and diversion of fund has led to non-achievement of the programme objectives and lack of students' interest resulting in low enrolment and poor performance in the programme and poor performance in the world of work.

#### **I. Sharing Ratio of Education Trust Fund (ETF) Among the Three Tiers of Higher Institutions in Nigeria**

Nigeria is currently talking about revamping vocational technical education using Education Trust Fund (ETF) under three phase development plan. N1.5 billion according to Olakunri (2006) has been distributed to polytechnic and colleges of education. One should therefore ask if vocational technical education in universities is not part of the programmes. [19] Government should therefore be universal in their sharing if actually Government wants to achieve the objective of establishing vocational technical education since the University graduates will still meet their counterparts in polytechnic and colleges of education in the same labour market and will also help to build social and economic performance of Nigeria.

#### **J. Assessment Criteria**

Assessment criteria to be used should be based at least in principles, on occupational rather than educational standards. Assessment should reflect what a competent person needs to be able to do, rather than what it suppose to have achieved at the end of a specific course. When all these strategies and solutions are adhered to, the vocational technical education in Nigeria will definitely take a new outlook in line with the trend in the global world.

#### **VIII. Conclusion**

For Nigeria to address the socio- economic changes currently taking place worldwide and thereby survive in the modern world, she must ensure that her youths and adults were equipped with the best and the latest skills. Vocational technical education institutions should align its curricula to labour market demands in order to provide youths with sufficient skills necessary to access good jobs. Since an adage says "no man is an Island" there must be in place, a framework for pulling together resource and expertise of vocational technical education. This will create understanding,

cooperation and good academic input into various vocational technical education issues. The integration system of pathway should be adopted to bring together vocational technical education curriculum, academic and applied curriculum, the labour market demands, institutions and the society at large. Nigeria has to be fully launched into the industrial age especially now that vocational preparedness has become increasingly paramount.

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