

THE ROLE OF VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION (VTE) IN NIGERIA DEMOCRATIC DISPENSATION

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ABSTRACT

Vocational and Technical Education have become imperative in the 21st century considering the significant role it plays to the socio-economic development of every society. This paper titled “the role of vocational and technical education in Nigeria Democratic dispensation is written to appraise the significant role of Vocational and Technical Education in Nigeria society especially in the fourth republic of the democratic dispensation. The paper elicited data from secondary sources such as textbook, magazines, Journals, newspapers and periodicals. The paper concludes that the quest for improved skill acquisition and youth empowerment could be achieved if technical and vocational education is aggressively enhanced by injecting funds into Polytechnic education so as to address the problems of unemployment and economic instability bedeviling the nation. Therefore, the paper recommends that the nation’s policies and programmes be adequately strengthened to address the challenges facing TVE in Nigeria.

Key words: Vocational, Technical Education, Democracy.

Introduction

Education is a right of every individual. It unlocks the development of personal and national potentials of citizens of a country and the world at large. According to Balogun (2010), education is the light without which the world will be darkness. It is the basis for scientific and technological breakthrough and also the basis for modernity which has made all nations of the world to accord it immense priority, even though the level of priority varies from one country to another. Currently, emphasis is shifting away from the general education that encourages mere acquisition of certificates to skill-based education which centers more on what one can do and the ability to apply requisite skill n real work environment. In Nigeria, the rising unemployment has helped to

heighten the need for vocational and technical education. This paper therefore traces the historical development of vocational and technical education (VTE). Concept of vocational and technical education (VTE) in Nigeria vocational and technical education in Nigeria democratic dispensation, challenges facing VTE, role of VTE way forward and conclusion.

Historical Development of VTE in Nigeria

The origin of vocational and technical education in Nigeria has a chequered history. Its roots could be traced to pre-colonial era when traditional education was in practice. According to Ogunmilla cited in Sofoluwa and Olumade (2006), "in traditional education of the various ethnic nationalities, arts and crafts of various types have existed as their own expression of vocational training. The traditional agricultural practices then were developed to suit the cultivation of agricultural species predominantly produced in the different eco-geography areas of the country". The instructional method then was observation and imitation of the master. During the colonial era, the child was trained in the family trade through direct apprenticeship by either the parents or relations. During this period, non-indigenous companies like Shell BP, the PZ and the UAC started training artisans among their employees who were to serve the skill needs of the companies at that particular time. There was no arrangement for examination or issuance of any certificate. The emphasis was to improve the learners' ability to accomplish more complex tasks. In other words, during the early part of the colonial era, vocational training was encouraged. However, schools were built primarily for the purpose of evangelism by the early missionaries. Specifically, the early missionary activities were characterized by literacy types of education which was geared towards winning converts and producing clerks and interpreters (Ajayi and Ayodele, 2002).

It was not until 1908 when government department started to organize some form of vocational training school. The marine training school according to (Adegbite, 2000) came on board in 1982. The public works, the post and telegraph and railway training school were also established around 1931. Government active participation in the provision of technical education became obvious between 1930 and 1960. The first technical institute established in Nigeria was the Hope Waddell Institute in Calabar in 1885 with the aim of providing education in the rudiments training in the technical trade and teacher's education, (Mamman, Chadi, Jirgi, & Mubarak, 2013). Yaba Higher College was officially opened on January 19, 1934 and later became the first vocational and technical institute in 1948 with the motive to train Artisans, crafts men and Technicians, together with teachers of technical education to teach in trade centres, (Aina in Mamman, Chadi, Jirgi & Mubarak, 2013). Thereafter, technical colleges were established by various regional governments various locations in the country, namely: Enugu (1950), Ilorin (1951), Kano (1953), Bukuru (1953), Sapele (1955), Ijebu-Ode (1959), Osogbo, Oyo (1961), Owo (1963), Aba (1964) and Abakaliki (1966).

These colleges were not fee paying and they were adequately funded by the government at that time. In 1959, Nigeria Federal Ministry of Education set up a commission- the Ashby commission to conduct an investigation into Nigerian needs in post secondary education. The Ashby commission recommended that adequate attention should be given to technical and vocational education. It also recommended that students studying technical drawing and craft subjects should be encouraged. Similarly, technical schools should be upgraded to award the City and Guilds London Certificate. The Commission for Technical Education (1963) recommended three levels of vocational and technical education as follows: Pre-vocational and pre-technical training usually offered in secondary schools; Craftsmen training usually offered in technical colleges, trade centres and vocational schools and

Technical training usually offered in polytechnics and colleges of technology. The fourth Commonwealth Education Conference (1986) recommended that industry should be closely associated with technical education. This could be through policy-making, manpower planning and curriculum development, and provision of opportunities for industrial experience, accreditation, consultancy services part-time courses and vocational guidance.

In 1987, the National Council on Education (NCE) approved the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) which classified vocational and technical institutions into: Vocational Schools - These are made up of vocational/artisan training centres to produce artisans. They are post-primary level institutions that offer courses leading to the award of the Federal Ministry of Labour and Productivity Trade Test Certificates. Technical Colleges - Institutions that produce craftsmen at the craft level and master craftsmen at the advanced craft level. They are post-Junior secondary school institutions offering courses that lead to the award of the Advanced National Technical Certificate/Advanced National Business Studies respectively. Polytechnics/Monotechnics/Colleges of Technology: - These are post-Senior Secondary school institutions, which produce technicians and higher technicians/technologists. The courses offered by these institutions are of two-year duration, each leading to the award of National Diploma (ND) and Higher National Diploma (HND) respectively. Federal Government of Nigeria (2004) identified a range of courses offered under vocational and technical education as mechanical trades, computer, craft practice, electrical engineering trades, building trades, wood trades, hospitality, textile trades, printing trades, beauty culture trades, business trades and leather goods manufacture. This historical evidence has shown that the VTE existed in Nigeria during the olden days before its transformation as it exists today.

Concept of Vocational Education in Nigeria

The term vocational and technical education has been defined differently by many authors. Some authors define separately while others defined the twin concept jointly. Oranu (n.d), saw vocational and technical education as “skill-based programme designed for sub-professional level education and based on a specific vocation. Technical education, on the other hand facilitates the acquisition of practical and applied skills as well as basic scientific knowledge. The major difference between the two terms according to Oranu is that whereas vocational education but gives general technical knowledge. Thus, while every vocational education programme is technical in nature, not all technical education is vocational. This subtle relationship accounts for the interchangeable use of both terms in academic literature” (P.18).

The Federal Republic of Nigeria ((2004) through the National Policy on Education (NPE) (2004) UNESCO in Ayonmike, Okwelle and Okeke (2015) defined VTE as those aspects of educational processes involving in addition to general education, the study of technologies and related sciences and the acquisitions of the economy and social life. The NPE which came into existence as a result of the national curriculum conference of 1969 further stated that VTE is an integral part of general education and also a means of preparing people for occupational fields and for effective participation in the world of work. It is an aspect of life learning and a preparation for responsible citizenship; an instrument for promoting environmentally sound suitable development and a method of alleviating poverty. Vocational and technical education according to Okorochoa (2012) is an educational training which encompasses knowledge, skills, competencies, structural activities, abilities, capacities and all other structural experiences for securing jobs in various sector of the economy or even enabling one to be self-dependent by being a job creator. Vocational and technical education according to ILO in Oluwale, Jegede and Olamide (2013) is a vehicle for the

development of marketable and entrepreneurial skills and engine of development. Amoor (2009) saw it as the core of both individuals and society's economy. The author further stressed that through the acquisition of skills; individuals could explore their environment and harness the resources within it, which could serve them and the society since the wealth of any nation determines its development.

VTE according to Ojimba (2012) is a forms of education whose primary aim is to prepare persons for employment in recognized occupation and this encompasses field of study (agricultural education, fine and applied arts education, business education and vocational trades in soap making, hairdressing, computer training among others). Iheanacho (2006) defined vocational education as that aspect of education that deals with business education, farming, book keeping, bricklaying, among others with aims of acquiring vocational skills in these fields. Uwaifo (2009) posited that technical education is the training of technically- oriented personnel who are to be initiators , facilitators, and implementers of technological literacy that would lead to self-reliance and sustainability . The author stresses that technical education has direct impact on national welfare. Banjoko cited in Dokubo (2013) summed it all stressing that skill is a major distinguishing aspect of vocational education which makes it outstanding from liberal arts. In summary, vocational and technical education essentially develops in the individual the knowledge, skills, and desirable attitude for legitimate work.

Vocational and Technical Education in Nigeria Democratic Dispensation

It is evident that nations that have advanced technologically and scientifically have paid so only to the extent they have paid more that verbal commitment substantial financial and technical resources in the education sector and VTE in particular. In Nigeria, vocational and technical education has long been perceived as critical to national development. Unfortunately, it has not been accord and seriousness it deserves. The cumulative result is that today, vocational and technical education in Nigeria is in a terrible shape, crippled by a general, persistent and chronic crisis in terms of funding, staffing, curricula, infrastructure and facilities. Successive Nigerian governments have for long pursued poorly planned and disjointed educational policies with profound and devastating consequences on the development of the country. For example, our educational system has witnessed series of transformation without achieving the desired goal. The 8-6-2-3 system of education which operate during the colonial era was change d in 1954 to 6-5-2-3 system.

The 1969 National Curriculum Conference recommended another change to 6-3-3-4 system (six years primary, three years in junior secondary, three years in senior secondary and four years in the university). In September 2011, 9-3—4 system made up of nine years of basic education called lower (primary 1-6) and upper (junior secondary 1-3), three years in senior secondary and four years in the university came on board with emphasis on pre-vocational and vocational skills acquisition at the secondary school level. This educational system was designed to equip its recipients with knowledge that will make them to reason rationally and learn skills that will help them have a decent and useful living. The essence of the reform as stated in the National Policy on Education (NPE) document according to Abar, Baloch and Ghouri (2010) and Yusof, Za' faran, Rahman and Ghouri (2012) was to address the issue of imbalance in the provision of education in different parts of the country with regards to access and quality.

Igwe in Gusua (2008) stated that one of the merits of 3-3 system of secondary education is that it will equip its recipients both intellectually and vocationally based on the receipts area of interest, attitude and capability. According to Gusua, crises in education started when government

went all out to implement the 6-3-3-4 system without adequate planning put in place. Gusua (2008) further stated that pre-vocational subjects meant to lurch Nigeria into a respectable industrialized state with abundant pool of lower manpower became a mirage. The teaching of pre-vocational subject ended up not having either workshop or qualified teachers. VTE subjects (where possible) were theoretically taught like social studies. The hopes that reforms will enable schools fabricate some of their basic needs such as chairs, desks beds, etc. never materialized. Priorities were misplaced, and huge resources squandered with virtually no results to show for its (Akwaru, 1998).

It is the legitimate duty of any democratic government to put in place an educational system that will cater for the welfare of its citizen by providing them with relevant skills that will make for the socio-economic development of the society. This not the case in Nigeria where corruption, negligence of VTE programmes, and government misplace priority is the order of the day. This situation has subject most Nigerian families to abject poverty. Rosefield and Mills (2013) cited in Orinos (2014:26) argued that “democracy is attractive but elusive concept which literally means people’s rule, a governance system where the political sovereignty of every citizen reign without privilege or special entitlements”. The authors further noted that the mission of a true democracy is to provide the variety and quantity of public services the people want. A true democratic government in addition to the above mission should provide her citizens with education that is skill driven which will reduce unemployment in the country. In line with this, Otamiri (2014) stated that quality education is the type that fulfils the desired standard of knowledge and skills for individual and social needs of the country. One wonders the extent this type of democratic mission is being practiced in Nigeria. How far has the successive democratic government in Nigeria pursued the issue of vocation technical education and training for the manpower needs of the country visa-a-visa the unemployment situation affecting the Nigeria youths.

The youth unemployment according to Sun (2015) stood at 861,110 between December 2014 and March 2015. Jobs created by public institutions stood at 5,726 while informal sector generated 400,000 jobs. This shows that people who are jobless exceeded the number that got jobs within the period. This calls for proper attention to VTE programmes. According to Usioboh (2007), successive governments have over-emphasized other university education programmes above technical and vocational education. The author further stated that, what is needed is for the government to give adequate and equal attention to all the levels of education in the overall best interest of the country and the growth. Unfortunately, the government too much emphasis on general and science education has affected VTE. The society, which would have need on the neck of the government to finance the planning and implementation of vocational and technical education is an education that is to Amoor (2009) has a misconception that vocational and technical education is an education that is meant for the dropouts, unintelligent and non-achievers. This misconception has in no small measure frustrated the enrolment of candidate into the vocational and technical education programme in tertiary institutions. It has also affected youth’s enrolment into artisan jobs. Everybody wants to play politics that is now more lucrative than anything else. For instance, nine billion naira was announced as allowance for the National Assembly members, an amount which a professor that laboured for years can not earn during his service years. We need to have a re-think if actually we want the acquisition of skills by youth to be a reality in Nigeria.

Roles of Vocational and Technical Education

Vocational and technical education is not just a Nigerian issue. It has been a long time discourse both in academic and practice. Through the issue in most developing countries like Nigeria has been a question of successful implementation of VTE programme (Okorochoa, 2012). In this era of globalization and Information and Communication Technology (ICT), emphasis is on vocational skills for the production of self-reliant citizens. VTE therefore, has the following roles to play: Youth Empowerment In this 21st century characterized by knowledge explosion, the emphasis should be on production of self-reliant citizens. VTE should empower the Nigerian youth with requisite employability skills that should be sustained. VTE schools should produce men and women who, at the end of their education should be able to put into use the skills they have acquired while in school. Institutions should partner with industries and other businesses to enable students fit into the wider society on graduation, either as individual workers in paid employment or self-employed person and functional members of the political society. VTE should also empower the people socially and economically so that they will be able to participate in the making of decision regarding policies affecting their lives, to make the citizens and nations to be self-reliant in the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services. Ogundele, Akingbade and Akinlabi (2012) revealed that youth empowerment is influenced through acquired skills. Enhancement of Citizens National Economy Vocational and technical education should play a crucial role in the social and economic development of a nation (Grootings and Nelsen, 2006; King and Palmer, 2000).

The development of a nation's economy is contingent on the quality of skilled human capital in the pool. Vocational and technical education provides student with life skills that will make them to be productive entrepreneurs as it engenders creative and innovative ideas; enlarges the economic pie and increases personal freedom. The business environment is changing at a fast pace due to the rapid emergence of technology and globalization. This has added to the increase in demand of valuable human skills necessary to respond to such drastic changes for economic progress. As a channel for entrepreneurial skill acquisition, VTE play the role of improving the economic situation of Nigeria through production and distribution of goods in different areas of specialization. This is achievable through the training of the students in different specialized fields. In the long run, this will help the students to establish their own enterprise as seen in China, Turkey, India, Japan among other countries that have succeeded economically through vocational education. This is in line with the views of Lawal (2014) who opined that "for a country to advance socially, economically and technologically, its citizens must be creative and productive with a majority becoming job creators rather than seekers" P.54. The author concluded by emphasizing that optimum attention and recognition is to be giving to the promotion of VTE in Nigerian if the country wants to attain great achievement of productivity and sustainable economic environment and natural development. According to Sheieh, Wang and Chon (2009), lifelong vocation education will gradually improve the economic and social development of both the people and the country by making vocational education a channel for exploitation of human resources.

Ozasagir, Bayraktutan and Arsian (2010), their regression and causality test carried out in turkey provided empirical support for a positive relationship between vocational education and industrial productivity. Vocational trainees' productivity Okafor (2011), will contributed to domestic economic activities. Provision of guidance and Counseling Services to the Students: vocational and technical education should equip students with the right skill for effective adaptation to the business environment. However, no student can acquire all the skills needed in

every aspect of the economy. Therefore vocational education practitioners have a role to play in terms of observing and monitoring students' behaviors, attitudes and actions within the environment for proper skill alignment. The behaviour observed with help VTE practitioners to counsel, guide and advice students on their choice of skills. This will help to ensure that students enrolled in appropriate callings for effective performance and sustainability of the skills learnt. With proper guidance and counseling, students can acquire skills in dealing with finance and accounting matters, economics, business, ICT, fine and applied arts, music and entertainment, building , auto-mobile, woodwork, electrical and electronics, metal works and agricultural activities such as fishery, poultry, snarling, piggery, crop planting among other numerous skills that will make them self-reliant, self dependent, self fulfilled and self-actualized.

Challenges Facing VTE in Nigeria

There are numerous challenges facing vocational technical education and training which has affected negatively both our national life and development. Among the challenges are:

Poor Public Perception and Apathy to Vocational Education: Vocational and technical education in Nigeria has a very low image and there is need for a turn around on its perception for public acceptance. Observations have shown that many parents especially the elites, the rich and the political class do not encourage their wards to make VTE a career and those people who opt probably for VTE programme either by accident or chance are not motivated or encouraged because the society does not place any significant value or dignity on the programme. In Nigeria today, how many ministers, governors, local government chairmen, professors and even teachers of VTE do encourage their siblings to enlist for VTE certificates? Rather, they prefer them to study courses like pharmacy, medicine, law, accounting etc. Therefore, boosting the image of VTE should be a serious concern to VTE practitioners, institutions and other stakeholders.

Government Lukewarm Attitudes/Poor Funding: The three tiers of Government in Nigeria have not fully come to appreciate the contributions of vocational and technical education to national economic development even though it is an indispensable tool for tackling unemployment and poverty in the society. This is because successive governments have not found it necessary to adequately finance both the planning and implementation of standard and sustainable vocational and technical education programmes in the country. In support of this statement, Okorie (2001) and Okeke and Eze (2010) stated that insufficient finance is a realistic and practical factor inhibiting the implementation of vocational and technical education sector is holistically on science education. Too much noise is made on the pages of papers and television about vocational and technical education, but little is done to improve the teaching/learning of vocational and technical education programmes in Nigeria.

Shortage of Qualified Vocational Technical Teachers: Many tertiary institutions across the country are inadequately staffed both qualitatively and quantitatively. In most departments especially in vocational education programmes, the number of qualified VTE teachers for each specialized area is in short supply. It is an indisputable fact that without quality VTE teachers, practical works which is an essential component of VTE programme will be difficult to implement. Acquisition of skills requires that strict attention and supervision should be given to every student. In other words, individualized instructions become very difficult during practicals' due to shortage of qualified VTE teachers and this affects performance of both the teachers and students

as teachers were made to teach many VTE courses. Many people who are qualified to teach VTE courses have always abandon teaching for other better jobs that have prestige and better remuneration. According to Adeyinka (n.d), teaching is gradually becoming a profession for fresh graduates of universities and colleges of education who are ready to call it quit, without provocation, as soon as they find better job opportunity. Oluwale, Jegede and Olamide (2013) stated that attracting qualified staff into teaching and teacher training in technical and vocational education was a problem for most countries including Nigeria. In order to spur locally needed vocational and technology teachers, it is imperative that Nigerian government should seriously consider proper retention schemes for their best talents by providing special working conditions such as; adequate research supports and other incentives to stem this problem of brain drain.

Lack of Adequate Equipment and Training Infrastructure: Most vocational education departments in our higher institutions do not have well equipped laboratories, workshops and usable infrastructures. Where these exist, they are grossly inadequate, obsolete and in a dilapidated state. Oduma, (2007) posited that what is seen and referred to as vocational education laboratories in various institutions today are eye-sores as the laboratories only have items or equipment that were provided at the point the departments were established. It is however a statement of fact that most vocational education departments still depend on engineering workshops and lecturers to teach vocational and technical education courses. Opeoluwa in Dokubo and Dokubo (2013) indicated that only 40% of tertiary institutions in Nigeria have laboratories or workshop spaces for vocational education programmes. They further stated that 60% of other institutions do not have laboratories or workshop spaces and this affects the low quality of technology programmes in higher institutions. Opeoluwa, concluded that this situation is partly responsible for the reason why it has been increasingly difficult to run experiments effectively for students and thus making the teaching and research in vocational and technology difficult. However, the country turned into producing insufficient, unqualified and ill-prepared vocational education graduates who ordinarily are supposed to be the driving force for the economic and industry transformation of the country as experienced in developing countries like China and Turkey. This inadequacy in the field of teaching, laboratory and workshop facilities has contributed to poor performances on the part of students.

Non-Uniformity of Course Contents: Most of the Nigerian universities and colleges that offer vocational education programme do not have uniform course contents. Non uniformity in the course contents usually creates problems for students who may wish to transfer to another institution to complete their studies. This disparity in course contents of vocational education programme in Nigerian universities and colleges poses a great challenge for the standardization of the VTE programmes. An Ideal Environment for the Teaching and Learning of Vocational and Technical Education it is a fact that no meaningful teaching and learning can take place in environment that is not conducive. Observation has shown that most schools lack adequate infrastructural facilities, poorly equipped classrooms and obsolete equipments. For a better result, teaching and learning environment need to be conducive and well furnished. Okoro in Okolocha (2012) opined that effective vocational education can only be achieved where the training on the jobs are carried out, with the same tools and machines as exist in the industry itself. This means that vocational and technical education will be efficient and effective in proportion to the environment in which the learner is trained. To achieve this, a well-planned and organized environment is imperative for students to learn.

The way forward

The discovery of a problem is half way to its solution. Finding the way forward for vocational education in Nigeria entails the correction of the anomalies highlighted in this paper. To achieve this, the following strategies are recommended.

Boosting the Image of Vocational and Technical Education: In this 21st century, the business environment is changing at a very fast pace with regard to the world of work. This demands new skills for proper adaptation to the business world. For Nigerians to meet the skill needs of the 21st century job market, they should have a rethink and change their negative mindset by embracing vocational skill acquisition for the improved socio-economic development of the country. The image VTE programmes should be boosted through adequate and proper sensitization of the general public and students in particular. Government should make VTE programmes more attractive by awarding scholarships to its students, making it compulsory for each student to acquire at least one vocational/technical skill irrespective of the area of specialization. The government, VTE professionals and institutions offering VTE should use persuasive advertising both print and electronic media, workshops, conferences, seminars, churches and other local means to create awareness of what VTE is for, what it does, and its benefits in improving the political, social and economic status of individuals and the nation at large. Proper re-orientation will make the education stakeholders to begin to see the vocational and technical education with the seriousness that it requires. Students must be made to realize that certificates do not count again but the depth of knowledge and vocational skills which they have acquired and their ability to sustain the skill. Once there is improvement in the image of vocational training in Nigeria, young people will move into the programme because the quest for certificate has failed Nigerian youths and the nation at large.

Involvement of VTE Professionals in VTE Policy Decisions: The major problem confronting VTE is the use of non-professional in handling VTE matters. Ibeneme (2007) noted that many administrators of VTE programme at policy making level are not vocationally trained persons and thus do not seem to understand the needs of the programme regarding fund distribution. For VTE to be successful, government must ensure that VTE professional are involved in VTE policy making decisions, planning and implementation. This is necessary because VTE professionals know the needs of the VTE programmes in terms of deploying human and material resources for effective implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The professionals, according to Manfred and Jennifer in Okolocha (2012), have all the necessary skills, abilities and capabilities for carrying out the programme.

Matching VTE Policies with Needs Assessment and Proper Planning: Government should conduct needs assessment of the people and the country at large with respect to VTE and match it with proper planning before implementation. Policies on education made in haste will never give desired results. It would be better according to Gusua (2008), if policies are made in such a way that changes can be accommodated without disturbing the overall system. Proper planning will also help to avoid inconsistencies in policy decisions which could hinder performance and success of VTE programmes. In line with this, Gove (2014) stressed that if the youth of the country are to be prepared for the anticipated radical in the world of work, there is need for a plausible plan to overhaul the education system in favour of VTE to enable the youths secure their future.

Enrich Laboratory/Workshop: Dramatic changes occasioned by globalization have shown that functional skill acquisition is truly capable of improving one's economic destiny rather than mere acquisition of certificates. To acquire the right skills needed for wider choice of jobs and career paths, well equipped laboratory. Workshop becomes critical. Government should equip VTE workshops with modern equipment, tools and machines to enable teachers and students practice the skills using a replica of what should be obtained in the workplace and as well undertake socially relevant researches. Reprinting relevant books that are out of stock, encouraging new book projects and launching endowment funds for new libraries and book should also be undertaken by government. Nigerian institution should not relent from seeking assistance from foreign donors, NGOs, philanthropists and industrialists. Students can acquire the right skills only when they are taught with the right tools, equipment and machines in a good environment. This is why Gove (2014) stressed need to end the artificial division between the academics and the practical.

Exchange Programmes within and outside the Country: Government and institutions should plan, negotiate and fund exchange programmes with other countries that are already neck deep in skill acquisition practices. This will definitely help to increase the graduates and teachers knowledge and technical know-how in the field of vocational and technical education. The involvement of government agencies in skill programmes such as ITF, SURE –P, National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategies (NEEDS), and National Directorate of Employment (NDE) in the VTE programme will help and value and promote the image of VTE. Cooperation between institutions and industries will help to provide students with state-of-the-art equipment, machines and tools and also make the students' experience real life situations. Interaction between Institutions and the General Public through Exhibitions: Internally, there should be a planned interaction among institutions offering VTE programmes and the general public through institutional exhibitions. This will help institutions to know where they have comparative advantage over others in the area of skills acquired. It will also create awareness on what VTE institutions do and capabilities of the students. This will motivate parents and donors to assist institutions in the areas of funding and encourage parents to send in their wards to enroll for the VTE programme.

Staff Training: The training of academic staff should be a continuous exercise to ensure consistent improvement in the quality of VTE teachers. The training should be in two folds: training to acquire qualifications required for teaching and continuing professional training. Both types of training can be acquired either locally or overseas. Government should adequately fund and support VTE programme through scholarships awards, funding/research grants, provide current books and journals in order to meet the needs required for staff good job performance. Restoration of Craft Period in Primary and Post Primary Schools: Encouraging pupils and students to imbibe the culture of craftsmanship at a tender age will create a very conducive atmosphere for the sustainability of VTE in Nigeria. During the 1970s and 1980s for instance, primary school pupils and secondary school students were encouraged through government policy to undertake handcraft and other skill acquisition tasks themselves as part of continuous assessment during prescribed periods of time. Today, handicrafts are not part of the school curriculum. Parents, especially the elite, rich and influential members of the society, do influence teachers and school management to accept finished (imported or locally) goods from their wards rather than making them learn how to acquire the skills and use same to produce goods. Most schools seem not to observe the craft period any longer. This attitude seems to demoralize the students who would have offered skill courses in higher institutions and even after graduation. There is an urgent need for

government through various boards in charge of primary and secondary schools to reintroduce this in schools and ensure compliance.

Funding: Considering the economic forces reshaping the world today, getting education right should be given priority attention in this democratic dispensation. Government should endeavour to fund VTE and other skill acquisition programmes very well, bearing in mind the capital intensive nature of the programmes a special fund to be tagged “Vocational and Technical Education Intervention Fund” should be created for the effective implementation of VTE programmes at all levels. This will help to equip the workshops and laboratories for effective skill acquisition.

Conclusion

Improving skill acquisition through vocational and technical education will no doubt solve Nigerian’s multiple problems regarding human capital development, empowerment, unemployment and economic instability. The world has recognized that no meaningful social and economic progress could be recorded when majority of the populace is unemployed. This is why nations are striving to overcome the problem of unemployment especially among its youths and Nigeria is not left out. Since many programmes introduced to tackle the issue of unemployment in Nigeria has failed the nation, it now becomes obvious that the easiest way to achieve the goal is by improving skill acquisition through vocational and technical education for youth empowerment and sustainability. When all these strategies and solutions are adhered to, VTE in Nigeria will definitely take a new outlook in line with the trend in the global world.

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