

ACHIEVING THE PROSPECTS OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: THE NEED FOR ADEQUATE FUNDING

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Abstract

The Nigerian National Policy on Education is the Federal Governments' blueprint to guide her educational system. It is on this blueprint, vocational education is enshrined. Vocational education been the education which is aimed at skills acquisition is sacrosanct to the development of Nigeria. It is against this backdrop this work focused on discussing achieving the prospects of vocational education in Nigeria: the need for adequate funding. The work discussed the concept of vocational education, goals and objectives; prospects; the need for adequate funding of; and source of finances for vocational education in Nigeria respectively. Finally, it concluded and recommended that adequate funding is a pre-requisite to vocational education in the country. As such, if ample funding is channeled towards vocational education, the status of vocational education in Nigeria will change to the better and there will be rapid economic growth for the country.

Keywords: Vocational Education, Nigeria, Adequate Funding.

Introduction

Education is the tool through which a country's socio-economic, scientific and technological development is achieved. It is the bedrock for any country's meaningful 'and sustainable development. Education is also the means through which both individual, group or any nation is economically, socially, culturally, politically and technological empowered. Education is, therefore, the instrument for empowering young people with knowledge and skills which provide the access to productive employment. Recognizing the need for education, the Nigerian National Policy on Education (FRN: 2004) noted that education is that process concerned with the transmission of worthwhile values, skills, and knowledge suitable for developing learners' potentials for national development.

However, if there is any education that is paramount for national development; is vocational education. Vocational education is that education that is aimed at bringing out the all-round best of the individual. Vocational education is any form of education which primary objective is to prepare

the individual for employment in recognized occupations as employers or employees (Asuquo, 2005). Therefore, the establishment of vocational education programmes should be based on needs; the needs of the country, the needs of the community, and the needs of individual citizens.

How well has vocational education fare in Nigeria? This has been an issue and a burden on the minds of researchers. Still, it is yet to have an answer. It is clear that vocational education has had and still has several issues. According to Ihimekpen and Olise (2004), since the introduction of vocational education in Nigeria in 1982, there have been lots of challenges militating against its success. Some of these problems were neither seen nor thought of during the introduction of the programme. Therefore, it is on this backdrop this work seeks to discuss achieving the prospects of vocational education in Nigeria: the need for adequate funding.

The Concept of Vocational Education

The term vocational education means vocational or technical training or retraining, which is given in schools or classes under public supervision and control. It refers to systematic learning experiences which are designed to fit individual for gainful employment in recognized occupation (Osuala, 2004 in Okoye & Udoudo, 2015). Vocational education includes preparation for employment in any occupation for which specialized education is required for which there is a societal need; which can be acquired in schools and off-school settings. It is concerned with the whole hierarchy of occupations from those requiring relatively short periods of specialized preparation such as clerks, typists, to occupation requiring two or more years the whole spectrum of the labour force from semi-skilled workers to technicians and sub-professional whose occupations require less than a bachelor's degree and professional with bachelor's degree and above.

Vocational education to Asuquo (2005) is any form of education which primary objective is to prepare the individual for employment in recognized occupations as employers or employees. To Ihimekpen and Olise (2004), vocational education is that aspect of education which mainly concerned with the preparation of individuals for skilled performance on task. It is a training intended to prepare students to earn their living in all occupations in which success is developed largely on technical information.

Vocational education facilitates the adjustment of the skill and knowledge of man to the changing demands within the society. Olaitan in Asuquo (2005) asserts that this form of education is deliberately designed to help man improve his skills in a chosen occupation. Vocational education focuses on providing knowledge, developing skills, and inculcating the attitudes that are necessary to enter into and progress in an occupation. Any education which is necessary for effective employment in an occupation is vocational education (Okoro, 2006).

To Ezeagu (2005) as cited in Itua (2013), vocational education has a specific or definite role of preparing and equipping youths with skills that increase their own employment. For Leo (2010), vocational and technical education is the vehicle for youth empowerment because, it enables the youth to appreciate the need for work and develop impact education because its occupational

contents offer the trainee the opportunity to acquire skills attitudes, interest and knowledge to perform such socio-economic works that are beneficial not only to the individual but to the society.

Goals and Objectives of Vocational Education in Nigeria

Having identified the important of vocational education to national development, the Federal Government of Nigeria deems it fit for its inclusion in the National Policy on Education. This policy in different sections stated the need for skills acquisition in self-reliance. The National Policy on Education (FRN: 2004) in section 1(8f), Section 7 (40 d & e and 42) and section 8(59a&d) and also (FRN: 2014) in section 1(9f), section 3(50) and sections 5 (81a, c & d) stated the following as goals and objectives of vocational education.

- acquisition of competencies necessary for self-reliance;
- an instrument for promoting environmentally sound sustainable development;
- a method of alleviating poverty;
- provide the technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, commercial and economic development;
- provide trainee manpower in the applied science, technology and business particularly at craft, advance craft and technical levels;
- give training and impart the necessary skills to individual for self-reliance economically;
- contributes to national development through high level relevant manpower training;
- acquire both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to be self-reliant and useful member of society;
- acquisition of functional skills and competencies necessary for self-reliance;
- provide high quality career counseling and lifelong learning programmes that prepare students with the knowledge and skills for self-reliance and the world of works; and
- reduce skill shortages through the production of skilled manpower relevant to the needs of the labour market.

In all, the Policy states that technical and vocational education and training is used as a comprehensive term referring to those aspects 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 relating to occupations in various sectors of economic and social life (FRN: 2004:29 & 2014:24).

From the above stated goals and objectives, it is important to mention here that vocational education should be given its pride of place in Nigerian educational system. In consonance with this Egumu, Akpotohwo and Ogeibiri (2017) aver that vocational education should be part of the on-going mass literacy campaigns, adult education, non-formal education as well as special education for the physically challenged e.g. the blind, deaf, dumb etc. this is to ensure that such programmes are relevant and meaningful to the individuals (recipients) and to the society generally.

Prospects of Vocational Education in Nigeria

Despite all the challenges facing vocational education in Nigeria the future of the programme is bright. According to Ordu (2017), various fields of occupations have professionalized their services. A study of emerging trends shows this bright future in a way that those who are ready to key-in would have the sky as their limits. It is necessary to note that vocational education enhances man's desire for productive life to adjust in the occupation that appears to be productive to him. Asuquo (2005) warned that vocational education is necessary now for youths and students because the labour market has become over stretched. He further emphasized that this is a time:

the civil service can no longer absorb all our graduate; a time government is trying to hands of from shouldering some social responsibilities; a time the economy can no longer tolerate dependency; a time governments the world over preach self-employment and job creation (p, 9).

For graduates to survive in this fast changing world, the individual must be creative and innovative. This is so because getting the right sort of education is going to be more crucial than ever before. However, Osuala (2004) affirmed that for an individual to enter into an occupation, he needs the vocational skills that are required by that occupation. This means that every occupation has vocational contents relevant to the field. This also translated to the fact that talented graduates from the programme who saw the vision and worked towards acquisition of skills and competencies would play in the economic development of the nation. In view of the above, the following are some of the prospects of vocational education as noted by Asuquo (2005) and Ordu (2017).

1. Entrepreneurship and employment
2. Reduction in crime and social strife (friction)
3. Industrial resolution
4. Favourable balance of trade
5. Diversification of the economy
6. Improved social infrastructural facilities
7. Technological growth and development
8. Dignity of labour and value of work
9. Research works in the field
10. Self-development of educators
11. Political stability and good governance

The Need for Adequate Funding of Vocational Education in Nigeria

The success of any system of education is hinged on proper planning framework, efficient administration and adequate financing. Education is a capital intensive social services, which requires adequate financial provisions from all tiers of government for successful implementation of its programmes (FRN:, 2014:62 & 70).

Of all the constraints facing Nigeria education more so in vocational educational the

constraint of funding appears to be the most potent. Putting this is global perspective; Combs (1968:45) had posited that;

Money is absolutely crucial input to any education system. It provides the essential purchasing power with which education acquires its human and materials input. With too little money, education can be helpless, with ample supply its problems become more manageable even though they do not vanish.

Government attitude towards the funding of vocational education is disgusting and appalling. Nigeria is probably the only country in the world where you can find any laudable and beautiful programme on papers, implementation and funding is always a problem. This is also true for vocational education in Nigeria; as it is evidenced on the table below;

Table 1: Federal Government Budgetary Allocation to Education Sector of Nigeria Economy (2010-2019)

S/N	Year	Total Budget (₦)	Allocation to education (₦)	% allocation
1.	2010	5.160trn	249.09bn	4.83%
2.	2011	4.972trn	306.36bn	6.16%
3.	2012	4.877trn	400.15bn	8.20%
4.	2013	4.987trn	426.53bn	8.55%
5.	2014	4.962trn	493bn	9.94%
6.	2015	5.068trn	392.2bn	7.74%
7.	2016	6.061trn	369.66bn	6.10%
8.	2017	7.444trn	550bn	7.38%
9.	2018	8.612trn	605.8bn	7.03%
10.	2019	8.83trn	620.5bn	7.05%
	Total	60.973trn	4.45bn	7.30%

Source: <https://www.vanguard.ng.com/2018/04/education-free-fall/>

<https://punch.com/2019-budget-education-get-n620-5bn-against-unnescos-advice>

From Table 1 it was observed that funding of the Nigerian educational system from 2010-2019 has been haphazard. Indeed, the Federal Government allocation to education in the last 10 years has been miserly. Out of a budget of N60.973trillion, only N4.45 trillion or 7.30 percent (see Table 1 above) was allocated to the sector. The year 2010 has the lowest, N249.09 billion (4.83%) budgetary allocation, while the highest allocation N493 billion (9.94%) of funds was in 2014 respectively. Thus, in the 10 years (2010-2019) under consideration Nigeria has not performed to expectation in terms of education funding in the country, as the Federal Government has not allocated more than 9.94% of her annual budget to education.

Despite the huge amount of revenue at her disposal the country has not met the 26% benchmark of annual allocation of funds to education as recommended for developing countries by

the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (Abali & Nwapi, 2017). Instead of striving to achieve that minimum recommendation, the funding of education is decreasing. According to Dawari (2012), it was the neglect of the education sector that warranted UNESCO's recommendation of 26% of the nation's budget provision to education, but this was not followed due to high level of corruption. Funds that should have been allocated to the education sector and diverted to other less important sectors due to corrupt financial practices.

Inadequate funding has been identified as the major reason for the rot and challenges in vocational education in Nigeria. According to Momoh (2012) in Okoye and Arimonu (2016), government lack of commitment to technical (vocational) education and funding has weakened technical (technical (vocational) education in Nigeria. That, a direct consequence of this is that while the number of technical (vocational) education institutions is dwindling in bounds. In corroboration, in a study by Isah, Che and Abu (2013) on a study of the problems for the development of technical and vocational education in Katsina State, Nigeria, with a total number of 37 respondents and with a 74% response, stating that there is inadequate finance to buy modern equipment, materials for practical works, inadequately equipped laboratories and workshops are among the reasons for less development of TVE in Katsina State, Nigeria. Although, vocational education has made some notable impacts on the Nigerian society, especially in respect to the products of the training programme who are contributing their quota to the economic growth and development of the nation through various industrial establishments.

However, inadequate funding of vocational institutions has caused the turning out of some half-baked graduates because of lack of funds to build and maintain workshops, laboratories or even purchase modern equipment. Staffing of vocational education is generally inadequate due to poor funding. Experienced and skilled teachers may not be employed. Even those that are employed, due to poor remuneration do not stay long in the teaching profession, but drift to some other lucrative jobs especially in industries and abroad. Consequently, in experienced and unqualified vocational teachers are employed thereby lowering academic standard, resulting to wastage in the achievement of the prospects of vocational education in Nigeria. In a related development, Isah, Che and Abu (2013) further affirmed that, the shortage of school workshops and laboratories to provide work experiences increase the problems of TVE development. The use of outdated equipment and facilities to train students worsen the problem as well. Also, inadequate teaching materials made the problem more rigid. There is also inadequate and less number of competent teachers and instructors in training institutions, lack of in-service programme for teachers to upgrade their skills and poor salaries and incentives for teachers contribute to the problems of TVE development in Katsina State, and in Nigeria in general.

Okeke and Eze (2010), reported that sufficient fund has not been channeled to vocational and technical education which is a major problem plaguing the system. Similarly, Okeke in Obiyai and Ehimen (2017) observed that poor funding causes acute shortage of necessary facilities needed

for effective implementation of the programme. Ajayi, Arogundadade and Ekundayo (2007) also affirmed that the neglect of vocational and technical education in the areas of adequate personnel, financial support and facilities to encourage vocational and technical education are robbing the nation of the contributions of their graduates would make in the economy.

Sources of Finance for Vocational Education in Nigeria

There are two major sources of finance to vocational education otherwise referred to as revenue. These sources include; internal and external sources of finance (Amadi & Johnwest 2016). Financed from either source is used for capital expenditure or recurrent expenditure. The internal sources of school finance include; school fees, income from investments or educational entertainment activities, sales and services etc (Ebong 2004 in Amadi & Johnwest, 2016). While the external sources include government grants, subventions, loans, non-governmental donations, endowment fund and appeal funds. For clarity, the sources of finance for vocational education are highlighted below;

1. Budget allocation by government
2. Students' school fees
3. Endowment fund/donations
4. Companies, international organizations, multi-national organizations and non-governmental organizations
5. Sales and services
6. Consultancy services
7. Industrial Training fund
8. Alumni Association and Aids
9. Host Communities
10. Parents-Teachers Association (PTA)

Conclusion and Recommendations

Vocational education which primary objective is to prepare the individual for employment in recognized occupations as employers or employees is sacrosanct to the development of Nigeria, hence, its enshrinement in the Nigerian National Policy on Education. Therefore, adequate funding is a pre-requisite to vocational education in the country. If ample funding is channeled towards vocational education, the status of vocational education in Nigeria will change to the better and there will be rapid economic growth for the country. As such, for funds to be made available for the achievement of the prospects of vocational education in Nigeria; there is every need for the establishment of Internally Generated Revenue mechanism by institutions running vocational education programmes to avoid the sole dependence on government for their needs. The varnishing school crops and livestock farms should be restored and/or revitalized and income from there could be ploughed back to ameliorate some of the pressing problems of vocational education. Also, institutions that run vocational education programmes should partner with individuals,

organizations and even with the government to ensure increased funding. They could do this by instituting distinguished personality chairs in vocational education and consultancy services. As a means of spurring or boosting up the interest on the part of distinguished guests, some specific structures, buildings, laboratories, or farm could be named after such personalities. This would encourage more of such people to finance the building and some other activities of vocational education.

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