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TECHNICAL
EDUCATION
DRIVEN BY
SELF-RELIANCE
TERRORISM

The high point of the scheme is to help identify and empower young entrepreneurs with technical skills, such that they could create employment for themselves as well as for others in different areas. The strategic shift in favour of skills acquisition particularly for unemployed undergraduates is fuelled by growing concerns that a great number of them may be unemployable. With this development, we are looking forward to producing the likes of Steve Jobs, the late co-founder of the personal computer and consumer electronics maker, Apple Incorporated who started his company from a garage in Cupertino, California in the United States. Other great entrepreneurs such as Dangote who are contributing their quota to mankind are self-reliant.

The clarion call of this edition of Education Today is for every Nigerian to promote the cause of Technical and Vocational Education and Training in our institutions of higher learning. This will, doubtless, go a long way in complementing the efforts of government in curbing unemployment and reducing to the barest minimum youth restiveness, terrorism and other such negative vices.

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Editorial

Accelerating Economic
Development Through Support
For Technical & Vocational and
Entrepreneurial Education

Technical and Vocational
Education and Training (TVET) -
Driven Economy: *A Panacea To
Self-reliance, Restiveness and
Terrorism*

Strategy to Revitalize Technical
and Vocational Education and
Training (TVET) in Africa

Technical and Vocational
Education and Training (TVET) -
Driven Economy: *A Panacea To
Self-reliance, Restiveness and
Terrorism*

TVET 20 2020 ICT4D and
Globalization

Vocational Technical Education
for Self - Reliance:
Implications For Language
Pedagogy and Andragogy

VOCATIONAL TECHNICAL EDUCATION FOR SELF – RELIANCE: IMPLICATIONS FOR LANGUAGE PEDAGOGY AND ANDRAGOGY

Abstract

Contemporary societies especially in developing countries like Nigeria are faced with a number of challenges. Some of these challenges include, escalating rate of unemployment which has led to high poverty level of many families, political instability, youth restiveness, increase in social vices among others. It has been observed in the very recent past that most Nigerian graduates lack the required skills for employability and productivity. Developing countries like Nigeria need the type of education that will empower the youths to be job creators rather than being job seekers. A major factor of escalating unemployment rate is no doubt a reflection of the failure of the curricular offerings of vocational technical education to meet the aspirations of parents, students and government which is themed, education for self-reliance. The poor perception of the public about any manual job makes students to view vocational and technical education as an inferior study area. There is a strong tendency for people to opt for white collar jobs as a result of the low status associated with most subjects and courses in the area of vocational and technical education courses. Nigeria needs an army of youths that are creative, pragmatic, dynamic and skillful for productivity. Overwhelming evidence which must be viewed with all sense of seriousness is that language is the major factor responsible for abysmal performance in academic and quasi academic activities. There is clearly a mismatch between aspirations and economic realities which calls for a review of the system. The issue of clarity and logic in implementation procedures, specification, choice and modalities pose a problem with

vocational, technical education as a gap was created between the need to provide full vocational as well as pre-vocational training within the context of general education. The evidence demonstrates the difficulties in bridging the gap between real needs and what is actually feasible. This paper therefore critically reviews the vocational technical educational practices in Nigeria, it discusses the pedagogical and andragogical issues as these affect the realization of self-reliance and productivity of Nigerian youths. The paper did not fail to proffer solution-based ideas towards assuring that Nigeria accesses the expected ends.

Introduction

The reformed education system in Nigeria which replaced the 6-3-3-4 system was conceived as a package, offering an integrated approach to transforming educational values, orientation and learning outcomes. It is structured into:

- a. Basic Education given to children aged 0 – 15 years. It encompasses early childhood education (0-5) and 9 years of formal schooling.
- b. Post-Basic Education of 3 years in senior secondary schools and technical colleges; and
- c. Tertiary Education provided in Colleges of Education, Polytechnics, Monotechnics and Universities.

Post Basic Education is further defined as the education children receive after successful completion of nine years of basic education and passing the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) (NPE, 2008:27). It includes:

I. Senior Secondary Education

II. Higher School

III. Continuous Education given in Vocational Enterprise Institutions (VEIs) to either basic education graduates who are not proceeding to senior secondary schools or senior secondary graduates that are not proceeding to the tertiary level.

Thus, the 2004 reforms set out to increase access to education, improve quality of education and to diversify the curriculum by introducing Vocational Technical Institutes (VTIs) towards repositioning the Nigerian education sector to effectively meet the challenges of the EFA initiative, MDGs and NEEDS which include the attainment of social and economic transformation, wealth creation, poverty reduction, employment generation, value re-orientation and self reliance. Nigerian education is also geared towards the reflection of national vision of attaining global economic relevance by new national framework on education and the 10- Year Strategic Education Sector Plan. The intention behind the reforms was widely perceived as elitist and which undervalued vocational and technical education.

The Curriculum for education as laid out in the National Policy on Education (NERDC, 2008) is designed to offer pre-vocational as well as academic education, thus enabling students to develop both cognitive and manual skills. It was conceived as a package, offering an integrated approach to transforming educational values, orientation and learning outcomes. The changes inherent in each element of the package have far reaching implications for the entire education system. One such element, the vocationalised curriculum, has been of concern especially at the level of concern especially at the level of implementation because of evidence that similar measures attempted previously in Nigeria through the 6-3-3-4 system of education had yielded unsatisfactory results. Moreover, the extent of vocational education in the education system and its effect on the labour market has been a cause of concern for sometime.

People generally see education as an

opportunity for social and economic mobility and therefore invest in the kind of education that they consider appropriate for the purpose. In Nigeria for instance, academic education is perceived to hold the key to success and vocational education is often regarded as having a lower status. This may explain the dichotomy in the rating and remuneration of graduates of Vocational Training Institutions such as Polytechnics and the Universities in favour of the latter. Consequently, vocational education stands a poor chance against academic education. Even when access to academic education is very limited, students tend to take vocational courses only as the last resort. This attitude reflects the aspirations of students to the curricular offerings of schools. Whereas the goals of vocational education generally emphasize orientation to jobs for self-reliance, students aim at access to the white collar jobs that offer higher incomes with minimal risks. It is now generally accepted that access to better jobs, higher wages, higher social status and better living standards lies in higher qualifications, preferably at the universities.

The situation is not peculiar to Nigeria. In Ghana, as reported by Osei (2006), academic education is perceived to hold the key to success and any other form is often regarded as having a lower status. Bacchus (1980) also reported a similar practice in Guyana noting that students only took vocational courses in order to prepare for later access to what they consider as a more prestigious form of education. Osei (2006) citing Anderson (1970) also noted that the same situation plays out in Kenya with the establishment of 'Jeanes' School' which the clients believed the course offered 'second class' education that really led back to hard manual labour instead of access to the wealth and technical advantages of the Western world.

In recent times, there have been strong sentiments on the relevance of vocational education in Nigeria. What has inspired these discussions is the escalating rate of unemployment which is a reflection of the failure of the curricular offerings of vocational technical education to meet the

aspirations of parents, students and government. There is clearly a mismatch between aspirations and economic realities which calls for a review of the system. Besides, a major conflict was posed by the policy statements.

The issue of clarity and logic in implementation procedures, specification, choice and modalities pose a problem with vocational, technical education as a gap was created between the need to provide full vocational as well as pre-vocational training within the context of general education. The evidence demonstrates the difficulties in bridging the gap between real needs and what is actually feasible. In line with the foregoing, this paper will address the following:

- a. A review of Vocational Technical Education (VTE) in Nigeria.
- b. The Language Pedagogy Factor in Vocational Technical Education.
- c. The Place of Andragogy in Vocational Technical Education for Self Reliance and
- d. The future of Vocational Technical Education for Self Reliance

A Review of Vocational and Technical Education Practices

A fundamental feature of Vocational and Technical Education is the dissemination of information and transfer of skills to the learner in an environment that replicates a true life work environment. Afeti, G. considers the strength of technical and vocation education and training is orientation towards the world of work and the emphasis of the curriculum on the acquisition of employable skills. It also demands that learners have the aptitude and attitude for the acquisition of manipulative skills. That presupposes that machines, tools, implements, equipment and gadgets that are required for the teaching and learning exercise have been provided for the use of the teacher/instructor/lecturer and the students. Workshops and laboratories would normally have been provided before being equipped. Vocational and Technical Education could be said to be a generic name that covers subjects and courses in the areas of art and craft, fabrication, trade and

commerce. We are presently in the technological age and every nation of the world is doing everything to prepare their youths to become useful to themselves and their country and the Nigerian state is no exception.

Section 40 of the National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria 2004:29) identifies Vocational and Technical Education as "the study of technologies and related sciences and the acquisition of practical skills, attitude and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of the economic and social life". The educational system has been so structured that students who have completed junior secondary school can either transit to the senior secondary school or the technical colleges whose major focus is vocational and technical training. Nonetheless general education is also given to enable those who wish to pursue their education further to attend higher institutions, including universities of technology. The technical colleges offer pre-vocational subjects in the areas of mechanical trades, computer craft practice, electrical engineering trades, building trades, wood trades, hospitality, textile trades, printing trades, beauty trades and others.

The policy requires that vocational and technical education starts at the primary school level (i.e. basics 1-6) with the introduction of vocational subjects such as agriculture, home economics, creative arts and computer education. At the junior secondary school level (basics 7-9) pre-vocational subjects are offered. These include Agriculture, Business Studies, Home Economics, Local Crafts, Computer Education, Fine Arts, Music and Introductory Technology (which is regarded as one of the core subjects). Furthermore, at the senior secondary school level, these pre-vocational subjects are taught as vocational subjects. Rather than being taught as groups of subjects, they are taught as individual subjects. For example, Introductory Technology is broken down into Applied Electricity, Auto-mechanics, Building Construction, Electronics, Metal work, Technical Drawing

and Woodwork. Business Studies is subdivided into Book-keeping and Accounting, Commerce, Computer Education, Typewriting and Shorthand.

After the successful completion of the senior secondary school, individuals are able to make a choice between getting employment and furthering their education. It could be at the polytechnic, college of education or universities. There are conventional universities and specialised ones such as the universities of technology and universities of agriculture to which they could receive technical and vocational education. Many of those who are unable to proceed to tertiary institutions would not have acquired enough skills from school; they therefore have to embrace the apprenticeship system. The apprenticeship system is largely unorganised and the training is often done haphazardly.

According to Afeti non-school completion is such that many young people drop out of the school system before they are able to acquire any marketable skills. That may explain why Zonkwa (2010) expressed the view that there is an urgent need for vocational and technical education to be made more functional and meaningful. All things being equal, there is no reason why the vocational education acquired at the secondary school level should not be enough for a youth to gain paid employment or start his own business. But the fact is that emphasis appears to be more on theory than practical work. Ideally, vocational and technical education should not be more than 20% of theory and 80% practical work. The reverse appears to be the case as the infrastructural facilities that are needed are in short supply. The hands-on approach has a more enduring effect on the mind of the learners since it is easier to recall what has been performed than what was listened to. This is not an attempt to play down the importance of theory. The theoretical aspect that enables the learner to reason at a higher intellectual level actually makes the difference between vocational and technical education and apprenticeship or vocational and technical training.

Some universities offer courses in vocational and technical education. This is usually in the Faculty of Education. Similarly, Colleges of Education and Polytechnics provide vocational skills for teaching in secondary schools and job acquisition. Again, like the case of secondary schools, the education acquired in most of these institutions would be more of theory than acquisition of practical skills.

Government has set up some agencies which regulate vocational and technical education. They are the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) and National Business and Technical Examinations Board (NABTEB). The National Board for Technical Education was established by Act No. 9 of 11th January, 1977 to regulate technical and vocational education and training. It is responsible for providing curricula guidelines and accreditation of programmes offered by technical colleges and post-secondary institutions, including polytechnics. The National Business and Technical Examinations Board was established in 1992 to take over the services that were hitherto provided by such examination bodies as the City and Guilds, Pitman and the Royal Society of Arts. It issues the National Technical Certificate and the National Business Certificate to successful candidates who sit for its examinations. These certificates have the same status as the Secondary School Certificate issued by the West African Examinations Council and the National Examinations Council (National Business and Technical Examinations Board, 2006).

There could be no better document articulating the provision of vocational and technical education than the Nigerian National Policy on Education. The main problem is the implementation of its provisions. It is almost impossible to achieve any meaningful development in an atmosphere of rancour. With the spate of killings in some parts of the country, kidnapping, armed robbery and cultism in other parts, it is very difficult for any teacher or learner to achieve optimum productivity. Some of the fundamental problems facing vocational and technical education in Nigeria are inadequate supply

of teachers and instructors, especially at the secondary school level. Some vocational and pre-vocational subjects have no teachers specialising in those areas. Poor funding has affected the provision of materials, particularly consumables. Some schools lack workshops, machines, tools and equipment. As noted earlier, the poor perception of the public about any manual job makes students to view vocational and technical education as an inferior study area. Arowolo, Zakari and Ibrahim (2010) opine that there is a strong tendency for people to opt for white collar jobs as a result of the low status associated with most subjects and courses in the area of vocational and technical education courses.

Some believe that those who study vocational and technical education are students who do not have the capacity for intellectual pursuits. It has probably led to students' lack of interest in such courses, coupled with the general apathy that has already pervaded the educational section. The will to supervise the provision of this type of education appears to be non-existent. This all important aspect of education is expected to be closely supervised to achieve the desired goals and objectives.

Harnessing Language Pedagogy with Vocational Technical Education

Language is central to human and national development. The centrality of language is encapsulated in the metaphoric and flowery terms linguists use in describing it, such as "vehicle of expression", "vehicle of thought", "linking cord", "pillar of communication" among others. Block and Trager (1942) cited in Balogun and Isaiah (2012) define language as a system of arbitrary vocal symbols by means of which a social group co-operates. According to Lindgren (1969) language is a normative system of symbols or symbolic behavior that can be used to transmit or evoke a shared meaning. Not only that, Bloom and Lahey (1983) see language as a code whereby ideas about the world are presented through conventional systems

arbitrary to communication.

Language as a system of vocalized symbol makes communication possible among humans of a given community and perhaps of the same geographical location or the same culture, thus we have three major Nigerian languages Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba. Nnaka (2013) notes that language could be any system of formalized signs, sounds, rules, gestures to convey thoughts like the language of mathematics. According to him, language could be in form of vocabulary or phraseology used by particular groups or professions like the medical and legal languages. When it is used to communicate thoughts and feelings through a non-verbal medium, it is body language and it could be programming language if it is used for communicating with or between computers.

Human language is unique, open ended and productive. Man has the ability to produce infinite set of utterances and sentences. Language also has displacement characteristics that is, the ability to express or to refer to abstract concepts, imagined or hypothetical events as well as past or future events (Trask, 2007 cited in Eze, 2013).

Language, no doubt, remains a core cultural character and at the same time serves as a tool and medium of education to propagate and perpetuate the culture of a people in totality. The indispensable role of language to individual and national development is clearly expressed in Essien (2006:10) cited in Eze (2013):

In so far as man (sic, 'human') is inseparably homo-sapiens and homo-loquens, in so far as education, a vital ingredient in development, is inconceivable without language, and in so far as all notions, concepts, theories, arguments, analyses and practices in all academic disciplines and professions that enhance national development find expression in language (or its proxy, e.g. codes), the role of language in the national development enterprise cannot be overemphasized.

Nigeria is a multilingual and multi-ethnic society with about 450 indigenous languages (Babalola, 1989). Out of these

many languages, the National Policy on Education (2004) recognizes three - Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba as major Nigerian languages. In section 1, number 10, the importance of language is addressed thus:

a. Government appreciates the importance of language as a means of promoting national cohesion and preserving cultures. Thus every child shall learn the language of the immediate environment. Furthermore, in the interest of national unity, it is expected that every child shall be required to learn one of the three Nigerian languages: Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba.

b. For smooth interaction with our neighbours, it is desirable for every Nigerian to speak French. Accordingly, French shall be the second official language in Nigeria and it shall be compulsory in Primary and Junior Secondary School but Non Vocational Elective at the Senior Secondary School (p.10)

For Early Childhood/Pre Primary Education, it is also stated that government shall "ensure that the medium of instruction is principally the mother-tongue or the language of the immediate community; and to this end, will develop the orthography of many more Nigerian languages" (Section 2, 14c&d p.11-12). At the Primary Education level, Section 4, number 19e&f provide that: The medium of instruction in the primary school shall be the language of the environment for the first three years. During this period, English shall be taught as a subject. From the fourth year, English shall progressively be used as a medium of instruction and the language of the immediate environment and French shall be taught as subjects. (p.16).

It is equally noted that recognition is given to the teaching of Nigerian languages at both the Junior and Senior Secondary schools. However, there are no prescriptions on the teaching or use of indigenous languages for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non Formal Education as well as Science, Technical and Vocational Education.

Except in a few elite homes, the indigenous language or the mother tongue is the

dominant language of communication in Nigeria. A gap is, therefore, created when a child leaves home for school and discovers a radical difference in school from what transpires at home especially in the language of communication and instruction. The use of the mother tongue as a medium of instruction throughout the primary school would appear to restore normalcy into the situation because psychologically, the child would be able to identify with activities at school having seen his home transported to school via his or her language. He would therefore be ready to learn and absorb. The bridge linking the home with the school is strengthened when the child is taught social and cultural studies in his own language, with the home experiences and the mores of the society being brought into the classroom. The alienation is thereby reduced; the affective quality as well as the inventive and creative abilities of the product are enhanced (Oderinde, 1996).

The views of Oderinde (1996) highlighted above agree with the recommendation of UNESCO (1953). Language experts agree that the best language for teaching a child in his geographical environment is the mother tongue or the language of the immediate community. According to UNESCO (2009), school language is one of the greatest barriers to quality education in the majority of developing and middle-income countries. Dutcher (2004) reports that 221 million children worldwide are speakers of local languages not used for teaching. Effects range from early drop-out from school to failing examinations and repeating grades (Heugh, 2005 and Save the Children, 2011).

Language is a vehicle of thinking that helps a child to understand whatever knowledge is being imparted to him. To prevent a child from stunted intellectual growth and development, the child must acquire a high degree of linguistic and communicative competence in the language of instruction. This is essential because he needs language for creative thinking and response to all the learning experiences offered to him by the teacher. Indeed all aspects of literacy-science, arts, vocational/technical etc. -

utilize language as a vehicle of understanding (Makinde, 2004).

Literacy in the modern sense transcends the ability to read and write. Oracy too, has gone beyond listening and speaking abilities. These also include digital technology, and the development of skills for social, political and economic empowerment. It also involves keeping people abreast of current technological innovations in the challenging organizational environment in the society that will enhance efficiency and effective service delivery (Okebukola and Jimoh, 2009). Language pedagogy must teach students to be flexible, tolerant of different viewpoints, analyze situations, work strategically and be able to solve problems rather than creating problems. Children or younger learners depend so much on their teachers or instructors for most of their learning experiences. The teachers must, therefore, be well informed about the relevant pedagogical skills in order to adequately meet the needs of the learners.

No matter the type of literacy (information literacy, technological literacy, scientific literacy, legal literacy and a gamut of others), language is the backbone of any literacy endeavour. Fafunwa (2003) cited in Makinde (2007) also noted that language is the engine of economic, social and political growth and development of any nation.

The term pedagogy originates from the Greek word 'paidos', meaning 'child', and generally refers to the teaching of younger learners. It can also refer to the field of teaching or teaching methods.

In many multilingual countries like Nigeria, teachers, families and government know that the way language is used in education is not working. They are aware that many children learn very little because they do not understand the language used in teaching or reading. According to Smiths et al, (2008) and Martin et al (2008), there is the overwhelming evidence that language is the major factor responsible for abysmal performance in examinations or school drop out. The problems are even more noticeable in rural areas where

children do not use the school language in everyday life.

As noted in Makinde (2007), it is pertinent to observe that in most of our schools, private and public, the use of mother-tongue or language of immediate community as medium of instruction is not complied with, as most elites do not see any good in the idea of teaching in the local languages. The most unfortunate situation is that captured by Obanya (2002) as he observed that even in the upper primary level, English as medium of instruction is never implemented as English is just used as a language of telling than language of instruction.

There are well documented teaching approaches at the local and international levels which give children good access to national, regional and international languages without jeopardizing their education or linguistic rights and heritage (Fafunwa, et al, 1989; World Bank, 1995; Patrinos and Velez, 1996). Alidou et al (2006) and Save the Children (2009) have reported that robust evidence abound from several countries that children who do not use mainstream languages at home need to learn their own language for at least six years, at the same time as being introduced to new languages that they will need later in life.

The Place of Andragogy in Vocational Technical Education for Self Reliance

Andragogy refers specifically to education of adult learners. This term refers specifically to the education of adult learners in contrast with the narrower use of pedagogy. Malcolm Knowles, generally believed to be a great pioneer in the field, describes andragogy as "simply another model of assumptions about adult learners to be used alongside the pedagogical model of assumptions, thereby providing two alternative models for testing out the assumptions as to their fit with particular situations" (Carlson, 2001). According to Knowles, andragogy is not superior to pedagogy, it simply is a different model used in appropriate contexts. Andragogy is the art and science of helping adults learn. In this paper, andragogy is used to refer to adult education. Other terms used for adult

education according to Saula (1998) include "continuing education" or "lifelong education" or "non-formal education" or "education permanente".

Adult education is a vast area of educational research and probably one of the most complicated. Adults learn differently and have different strategies in learning. Tom Whitby, citing the works of Malcolm Knowles identifies the six principles of adult learning as follows:

- Adults are internally motivated and self-directed
- They bring life experiences and knowledge to learning experiences
- Adults are goal-oriented
- They are relevancy-oriented
- Adults are practical
- They like to be respected.

Adult education could, therefore, be described from the following perspectives:

- Education or training given to an individual for further development of his or her abilities while in employment.
- It could take the form of in-service training, upgrading or updating education.
- It could be occupational or career training for self-development.
- It is concerned primarily with broad personal and professional development.
- Most of the subject matter is at the professional, technical and leadership training level or the equivalent (APPS, 1979:68 cited in Saula (1998).

Some of the beneficiaries of this type of education could be dropouts from the formal school system who, perhaps, were not able to cope with the technicalities of learning in a foreign language. Teaching this group of people in a language they are most familiar with will do those more good than forcing them to learn in a foreign language.

This calls for the promotion of the indigenous languages through bilingual education instructions as spelt out in the

National Policy on Education. The policy adopts tripartite bilingualism in which two official languages dominate each group: English-Hausa, English-Igbo and English-Yoruba (Okebukola, 2006). This implies that students should be free to receive instruction and answer questions in both internal and answer questions in both internal and external examinations in any language they prefer as is the case in Kenya, where Kiswahili retains a dominant position as an official language as English.

The Purpose of Vocational Technical Education for Self-Reliance

Education generally connotes 'formal education' provided through schools, colleges and universities. While formal education contributes to the modernization and democratization of societies, its effect on youth empowerment, productivity and self-reliance are indirect, diffused and distant. For self-reliance in this age of global unemployment, priority must be given to adult education which includes adult literacy (especially in a developing country like Nigeria). Education for self-reliance should not only be planned for children, parents living in poverty should not be excluded since they must also be involved in all spheres- political, economical, cultural, and technological. According to Bhola (2006), "we must not write off a billion or more men and women living in poverty and keep them from their rendezvous with their destinies to come while we wait for their schooled children to emerge from school and take places in families and communities". It is, therefore, important to plan vocational, technical education for self-reliance with the poor adults in mind. This is because they also need knowledge, attitudes and performance skills to function effectively.

There must be a synergy between andragogy and vocational technical education for self-reliance. In order to do this effectively; we need a new definition of the scope of vocational technical education and andragogy which includes men and women, farmers and artisans at the community level, curriculum planners and the academic. These systems must be

comprehensive and commensurate with the needs of the adults for self-reliance.

The overwhelming domination of English in the school language curriculum in vocational and adult education may be unproductive in the long run. The position of this paper is that schools and parents should not blindly pursue the learning of English and see it as being more prestigious than local languages. After all, the beauty of globalization lies in the plurality and equality among peoples, cultures and economies. As noted by Wing-Whah (2004:497) *to go global is arguably to become local in different parts of the world; to experience, enjoy, and respect local cultures and to learn and communicate though not necessarily fluently in local languages* (p.518).

Vocational and Technical Education requires a blueprint for implementation to augment the National Policy on Education and this should include specific proposals for implementing the curriculum of all levels. Two approaches are suggested: a subject-based approach and an integrated approach. The subject-based approach enables students take two pre-vocational subjects for two years and in the third year, they specialize in only one subject.

According to the integrated approach, students are introduced to a wide range of subjects which they study over the years. The emphasis here is on developing general aptitudes. The decision about which approach to adopt should be made locally, based on employment situation, availability of teachers and facilities. The blueprint which should be made available to all vocational institutions should allow considerable autonomy in the adaptation of curriculum content, allocation of time to subjects and flexibility in the use of English and local languages.

To show commitments to planned social change involving the adoption of vocational technical education for self reliance, for both the young and the old, Nigeria must declare campaigns for Vocational Technical Education Centers (VTECs) and adult literacy programmes as ways of mobilizing the masses and encouraging their

participation in the democratic process. The United Nations should play that part at global level.

The future of Vocational and Technical Education is considered a very bright one. It only requires that the training that is given is adapted to local needs. The time to project into the future is now. The government should be able to say with certainty, after empirical studies, how many plumbers, carpenters, welders, vulcanisers, tailors, computer operators, accounts clerks, etc. will be required in one or two decades. It calls for honesty in order to have accurate census figures to work with. Unless the population of the country is ascertained, it will be difficult to project into the future. Almost every industry depends on power supply. The epileptic power supply in the country has been a big setback to small, medium and large scale enterprises. With the recent privatisation of the power sector, it is hoped that there will be an improvement in the supply of electricity to aid the teaching of vocational and technical education as well as increase people's enthusiasm due to the assurance that power supply will not be a hindrance to setting up businesses by young school leavers and graduates. Availability of other municipal facilities such as roads and water supply are also necessary in order to make sense of vocational and technical education. The fear of some who are interested in embracing this type of education is the initial capital to set up their own businesses.

Teacher training is the starting point since good teacher preparation will ensure a healthy future for the Nigerian educational system. If teacher training is treated with levity, the products of the colleges of education and faculties of education will be the ones to teach the pupils and students the skills to the extent they themselves are equipped. Students need education on where they can have access to cheap loan or take-off grants. Right now the teaching is more abstract than practical. Almost every university has introduced entrepreneurial studies into the undergraduate curriculum. This is commendable, but it would be an effort in futility if the teaching is abstract. There is a need for workshops that replicate real life environments to be built in every

university for practical production of goods and services which would even boost the Internally Generated Revenue profile of such institutions. Young graduates who have entrepreneurial skills will become employers of labour instead of chasing jobs which are in short supply.

Conclusion

The merits of providing Vocational and Technical Education to Nigerian youths are clearly ascendant and this is considered a healthy development for the country. There is a need for re-orientation and shift in our value system. Ego is one of the major causes of unemployment among youths. We live in a society where blue collar jobs are snubbed and undervalued. The high premium placed on certification has tended to erode the value of skill acquisition. Jobs which Nigerian nationals should be able to undertake particularly in the construction industry are being undertaken by foreigners. Indeed, all stakeholders in education must continue to identify employability and workplace skills and transmit same to real-life situations for the country. There is a need to take a critical look at employing Vocational and Technical Education as an avenue for empowering Nigerian youths and poor adults to combat present day mass unemployment, restiveness and threat to security. It could also be examined from the point of view of being a weapon for poverty alleviation and self-reliance. Communication skills especially in the use of indigenous language as media of instruction in Vocational Technical Centres is an absolute necessity for successful entrepreneurship, as the entrepreneur should strive to be an adroit negotiator.

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