

# **TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION: A MEANS TO SELF-EMPLOYMENT AND THE REALIZATION OF NIGERIA VISION 20-20-20**

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## **ABSTRACT**

*The importance of technical and vocational education to the economic development of Nigeria was reviewed in this study. Some areas where Nigerians can acquire vocational and technical skills include institutions of learning, NDE, and some centres/programmes that have been put in place by Government at all levels to encourage the acquisition of technical and vocational education. Factors such as poor policy implementation, funding, fraudulent practices, mismanagement of funds, politics in policy formulation and/or implementation, and lack of trainers militate against the success of most, if not all of such programmes. It was further observed that if the Federal Government's emphasis on self employment, and the vision 20-20-20 dream must be realized, then technical and vocational education must be given proper attention. Hence, establishment of more technical and vocational institutions, adequate funding of federal government programmes, and good incentives for technical and vocational teachers were among the recommendations.*

*Keywords: Technical and Vocational Education, vision 20-20-20, Nigeria*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Technical and vocational education is a necessary tool to leap frog the economy of a nation. If Nigeria is to face the challenges of the 21st century starting at it in the face successfully and achieve success in the much talked about vision 20-20-20, technical and vocational education must be allowed to play a critical role. Education and training help individuals to escape poverty by providing them with the skills and knowledge to raise their output and generate income. This calls for continuous, lifelong learning and training in entrepreneurship, technical and vocational education. For the purpose of this study, technical and vocational education (TVE) 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 skill, attitudes, understanding and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of economic and social life (Singh, 2007). For Nigeria to have a robust economy, it must recognize the need of empowering individuals by

training them to acquire the necessary skills that will help them to make meaningful contributions to their immediate society. Indeed, TVE is a veritable tool in achieving a self-reliant economy. Unemployment has been described as a social plague, which contributes to the problem of poverty, theft, untimely death, violence and juvenile delinquency (Aibieyi, 2006). Apeon (2004) contends that anything done to increase the quality and standard of life of a community is empowerment. This paper attempts to x-ray places where Nigerians can acquire technical and vocational education for self-employment. This study also brings out some constraints confronting TVE implementation in Nigeria and makes some useful recommendations on the way forward.

### ***ACQUIRING TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN NIGERIA***

Many people learn on the job and supplement their practical knowledge with correspondence courses and evening schools. Increasing number of technicians receive their education in trade schools, technical high schools, vocational-technical schools, community or junior colleges, or technical institutes. The trend is toward education beyond high school, with more skilled technicians and technologists completing either two or four years of college (Brickman, 2008a). Many different technical courses and programmes are available. Some schools offer technical training in only a single field, others in a variety of fields. Some schools combine agricultural and industrial training within the same school; other schools train skilled crafts men as well as technicians.

Vocational education programmes include numerous occupational areas, such as office skills, agriculture, various trades, health services, and technical training. The scope of vocational education is broad, ranging from occupations requiring little skill to those requiring a high degree of skill and scientific knowledge (Brickman, 2008b). The National Policy on Education (2004) states five objectives as the goal of education in Nigeria. These are a free and democratic society, a just and egalitarian society, a united, strong and self-reliant nation, a great and dynamic economy, and a bright and equal opportunities for all citizens (Aibieyi and Ibrahim, 2007). Abdulazeez (2004) observes that the policy supports the establishment of vocational centres for the training of primary school leavers to acquire skills that will enable them to be self-employed or work in factories and construction companies. While some stop at the primary or junior secondary school level to contend with their areas of skill for self-reliance, others may decide to complete their senior secondary and proceed to tertiary institutions to accomplish their chosen areas of study for future stability. Furthermore, TVE could be acquired from centres/agencies such as the following:

***National Directorate of Employment:*** The Federal Government of Nigeria established the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) in 1986 to reduce the rate of unemployment in the country. Through the programme, youths could be made self-employed and self-reliant after proper training in different areas of specialization irrespective of their educational background. In order to ensure effective

implementation, a Board of Directors representing a cross section of all interest groups from commerce, industry, agriculture, finance, employers of labour and government was set up to define policy and supervise operations (Aikhomu, 1987). The Board articulated four practical programmes nationwide, each operating as a separate Department. These are - National Youth Employment and Vocational and Skills Development Programme, Small Scale Industries and Graduate Employment Programme, Agricultural Sector Employment Programme, and Special Public Works Programme. These programmes are backed by the necessary administrative, monitoring and support personnel. Offices and training centres were created in all the States of the federation, in urban and rural areas. The National Directorate of Employment (NDE) adopts training as its main strategy to achieve the mandate of job creation. The training could be vocational or entrepreneurial, depending on the target group. Programmes being carried out to empower youths nationwide are - National Open Apprenticeship Scheme, Waste to Wealth Scheme, School-on -Wheels Scheme, Disabled Work Scheme, and Saturday Theory Classes.

***Petroleum Technology Development Fund for Technology Acquisition:*** The Petroleum Technology Development Fund (PTDF) is a scheme that was initiated by the government of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo to meet the long term capacity requirement of the oil and gas industry through the training of qualified Nigerians in oil and gas fields in Engineering, Geological Sciences, Environmental and Energy studies at the postgraduate level. It replaced the Gulf Oil Training Fund for the purposes of training and educating of Nigerians in the petroleum industry (PTDF, 1973).

***National Agency for Science and Engineering Infrastructure:*** The National Agency for Science and Engineering Infrastructure (NASENI) has pioneered a paradigm shift in the effort to utilize advanced manufacturing technologies in the industrial and manufacturing sectors of the economy for global competitiveness. The agency is investing in human capacity development in various areas of advanced manufacturing technology. The Science Equipment Development Institute (SEDI) Enugu, one of the outfits of NASENI, is charged with the responsibility of developing products and technologies related to scientific equipment and other technical items, including machines, and passing on to the private sector for local mass production and commercialization. The intention of the government is to arrest foreign exchange outflow as well as generate employment in the public sector, in pursuance of national economic development. The agency has developed special primary and secondary science kits for teaching science in primary and secondary schools in Nigeria (Alabira, 2008).

#### ***CONSTRAINTS TO EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN NIGERIA***

There are some factors that impede progress in governments' policies and/or programmes. These factors include the following:

**Poor Implementation of Government Policies and Programmes:** Government has promulgated several policies in the past to enhance technical and vocational education so as to curb or ameliorate unemployment in Nigeria. However, the desired results have not been achieved because of poor implementation. It is lamentable that education and technical policy, which ought to be given priority, are not given proper attention by the government.

**Poor Funding:** When the Federal Government initiated the National Directorate of Employment, for instance, everybody was happy as it was introduced to reduce the problem of unemployment in Nigeria. All areas were said to be covered, irrespective of tribe or ethnic groups. This was fairly alright, at least for the first three years. Few years later, the number of persons recruited continued to diminish. There was a period that the Directorate did not even recruit anybody at all in all the States of the federation. This was attributed to lack of funds from the Federal Government.

**Corruption and Financial Mismanagement:** The management of the nation's abundant resources is shrouded with mystery and secrecy. This has proven to be a breeding ground for high-level corruption and mismanagement of public funds. Secrecy breeds corruption and corruption is a major cause of poverty. It hampers the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals by undermining the economic growth and sustainable development that would free millions from the poverty trap. Obasanjo (2003) rightly observed that "...Nigeria had practically institutionalized corruption as the foundation of governance. Hence institutions of society easily decayed to unprecedented proportions as opportunities were privatized. This process was accompanied by the intimidation of the judiciary, the subversion of due process, the manipulation of existing laws and regulations, the suffocation of civil society, and the containment of democratic values and institutions. Power became nothing but a means of accumulation and subversion as productive initiatives were abandoned for purely administrative and transaction activities. The legitimacy and stability of the state became compromised as citizens began to devise extra-legal and informal ways of survival. All this made room for corruption".

**Peoples' Poor Perception and Mindset about TVE:** A good percentage of Nigerians work in jobs requiring a skill level associated with vocational education and training. However, the development of these jobs is being challenged by peoples' poor perception and mindset that vocational education is second choice to academic education. Most parents would want their children to become Lawyers, Engineers, Medical Doctors, etc just because they believe that this will give them better job opportunities. This is one of the obstacles facing TVE in Nigeria.

**Inadequacies in Policy Formulation and/or Implementation:** It has been observed that once a particular government which formulated a certain policy goes out of power, the incoming government rather than enforcing its implementation, tries to

kill it or formulate a new one which may not also be fully implemented at the end of the day. Also, policy and legislative inadequacies contribute to the poor performance of TVE in Nigeria.

***Lack of Trainers:*** Lack of appropriately trained personnel also contributes to the poor performance of TVE in Nigeria. The NDE's School-on-Wheel Scheme, for instance, was designed to train youths in the rural areas so as to enable them benefit from the Directorate's laudable programmes. However, gathering Master-Craftsmen to train interested applicants in the various trades in the rural areas is a serious problem. The NDE has had to, on several instances, cut down the number of trades in the rural areas so as to motivate only those who are interested in the available trades that do not require sophisticated equipment or facilities.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In recent times, the Nigerian Government has been laying emphasis on self-employment and self-reliance. However, the government does not seem to "match its walk with its talk" by providing the necessary environment that will encourage self-employment and self-reliance. Efforts made in the past to assist in training school leavers on technical and vocational endeavours have not yielded sufficient results as majority of them are still living in abject poverty. The state of infrastructure in the country is not helping matters. Also, the number of technical and vocational schools/centres in the country leaves much to be desired. This study, in the light of the above, makes the following recommendations

- i The Federal and State Governments should establish more technical and vocational schools for the teaching of technical and vocational courses.
- ii The Federal and State Governments need to establish more industries and/or revive the existing ones. This will provide employment opportunities for trained youths who may not have the wherewithal to start of a business on their own.
- iii The state of the country's infrastructure needs a complete overhaul.
- iv Government policies should be properly watched and implemented, and programmes should be adequately funded.
- v There should be good incentives for technical and vocational educators/trainers.
- vi There is the need to involve community and industry in TVE in order to develop our nation's economy.
- vii Government should create technical and vocational programmes that deliver professionally successful graduates. This will bring the products (graduates) of these programmes to limelight and make TVE to be highly demanded.
- viii Centres such as NDE, ITF, PTDF and NASENI should be funded adequately to make TVE receive a boost in developing manpower skill for the country.

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