

VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION TOWARDS CURBING UNEMPLOYEMENT FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

This paper re-establishes the indissoluble link between the philosophical principle of pragmatism and Technical and Vocational Education. Technical and Vocational education, at its best, is that aspect of education that seeks to equip its learners with the basic competency in skills and craft, which is anchored on pragmatic principle. This is with the intention of achieving economic relief; provide means of livelihood for our restive youths towards national development. The paper enumerates the benefits of Technical and Vocational Education in achieving not only quality education, but also sustainable education that leads to the development of the individual and the society in general. The paper acknowledged the fact that pragmatism, which is from the ambience of the principle of practical application of knowledge, is a portent tool in achieving the education that embraces all types of learning to assist financially, not only within the economic circle, but holistically. The paper concluded with the position that if the principle of pragmatism is to be applied effectively, then Technical and Vocational Education will have to be repositioned so as to serve as a viable tool in achieving economic relief in the face of the national unemployment. The paper recommended among others, the possibility to make Technical and Vocational Education as attractive as possible to those whose interest and ability is focused towards the acquisition of practical skills and knowledge for self-reliance.

Keywords: Pragmatism, Technical-Vocational Education, Unemployment, National Development.

Introduction

The National Policy on Education (2009) exposes the philosophy behind Technical and Vocational Education (VTE) as that of “providing the technical knowledge and skills necessary for agricultural, industrial, commercial and economic development of Nigeria.” It

then means that the Nigerian educational system embraces the type of education, where necessary skills are given to individuals. The idea of this practice of Technical and Vocational Education suggests the production of technicians and technologists who would lead the way in terms of productive skills. Technical and Vocational Education, which has its foundation on the principle of pragmatism, is the academic preparation of students for jobs involving applied science and modern technology. It emphasizes the understanding of practical application of basic principles in science and the attainment of proficiency in manual skills. This proficiency is properly the concern of [Technical and Vocational Education](#). It is to cope with the requirements of the fast developing economy, to provide employment opportunities for the restive youths so as to meet the challenges of globalization. It was absolutely imperative then to realign Technical and Vocational Educational system in the country to cater for these requirements of national development.

It is therefore pertinent at this point to concede to the fact that Nigeria as a nation has been battling with the challenges of economic hardship and unstable financial balance and unemployment. This is the situation where the nation and even individuals cannot only satisfy their basic needs, but that the basic necessities of life are even absent. In the midst of this predicament, quite a number of people are likely to question the role and function of the educational system in general, and the Technical and Vocational Education, which is embedded in the principle of pragmatism, in particular.

It is in view of this, that the paper ex-rays the concept of pragmatism as it relates to Technical and Vocational Education, its aims and objectives in the light of the National Policy on Education and how it can be a viable tool in the delivering of quality VTE for survival especially, at the period of unemployment, for national and individual development. The focus of this paper is that despite the outstanding positive role of VTE, it is faced with some outlined challenges that stand as impediments in achieving the functional education. The input of the paper is also to provide an enlightened understanding as to the misleading impression that those who subscribe to TVE are disadvantaged in terms of academic performance. If the recommendations of this paper are implemented, the VTE will occupy its rightful place as a quality education which will invariably lead to economic recovery and national development.

Meaning and Significance of Concepts

Pragmatism

The genesis of Pragmatism as a concept is from a Greek word 'pragma' which literally means 'action' or 'work'. According to Bukeny (1994), pragmatism was first brought to educational scene by Charles Peire to blend education with the elements of what is practical in terms of achieving ones goal. Pragmatism is a philosophy that can be described as the greatest American contribution to practical education in the 20th century. By this understanding, it is often referred to as the philosophy of practical orientation or philosophy of workability. Amaele (2007) described pragmatism as that philosophy that "encourages the search for the processing and doing of those things, which work best to help man to achieve desirable ends." Here, what it then means is that pragmatism as a philosophy is that principle that makes man to be practical in terms of work towards conquering the earth for not only survival, but towards individual and societal development. That is why Akinsanya (2015) calls it learning-

by-doing-it-oneself” It suggests that man ought to use manipulative skills to improve the present life style.

One of the appreciative elements of the principle of pragmatism is that pragmatic education upholds an educational methodology that is not only flexible, but applicable to a practical life situation. Just as one will expect, the pragmatic principle is believed to be the method and theory that could be of tremendous importance in terms of solving educational problems and forwarding man’s progress. The theoretical framework on which this work depends revolves round this same pragmatic principle that “knowledge must be used to solve daily life’s problems, practical affairs and to assist one to adapt to the environment.” It is with the same temper of mind that Dewey in class note (2015) responded not unexpectedly that “we think only in order to solve our problems so that our theories are instruments that we employ in order to solve problems in our experience, and the theories, ought to be judged in terms of their success at performing this function.” The above does not, however, imply any greater significance than that of focusing on the human person towards arresting and alleviating problem. Pragmatic principle has always envisaged that man is in constant war with the problems of life that confronts him. Structurally, the focus of pragmatism is not only to formulate theory, but functional and implementable theories that could save man from a wide diversity of problems and needs that basset man’s existence towards national development.

Pragmatism, as a principle, has rejected the traditionalists’ approach to what knowledge is, as being separated from experience. The implication is that the philosophy of pragmatism has debunked the idea that experience within the educational circle should be fragmented or be separated and compartmentalized. Bueylen (1994) opined that when this happens “facts are torn from experience and made to fit general principles which may or may not be helpful.” In addition, this implies that education, experience and skills within the individual ought to be blended or else one may be stranded in terms of self-reliance, especially as the nation suffers from unemployment and underdevelopment. On the whole, what this position amounts to is that general education, and technical and vocational education in particular, which empowers the learner to acquire manipulative skills, ought to lead one to a position of economic balance towards national development. By this understanding, one can easily access productive venture through solving problem in a scientific manner towards the right direction.

The significance of this principle is that one should not be idle, but always engaging in one form of productive activity or the other. It then simply alludes to the fact that man ought to interact with the environment so as to struggle intelligently to achieve a meaningful life-style. This intelligent struggle implies that man solves environmental problems scientifically and with the modern tools. How does man solves the problem that may confront him within the society? To what extent can man solve his problem in a scientific manner? This happens when man uses the concept and method of VTE towards sustaining oneself in the light of the principle of pragmatism.

Vocational and Technical Education

Vocational and Technical Education can be defined in a variety of ways depending on the perspective one is viewing it. Okoro (1993) defined Technical and Vocational Education “as a type of education that equips its recipient with knowledge, skills, and attitudes in a chosen occupation for useful living in a society”. This suggests certain usefulness in terms of man’s

daily needs and desires. It can be sighted that one important subject of education in technical and vocational education is that one can be empowered, which is a necessary condition for a developing nation like Nigeria in order to become developed. By this understanding, it is the ability to follow one's way based on his opportunity, ability and capability. To follow one's way suggests where and how it works best for an individual in terms of the ability in manipulating skills. The manipulation ought to always be for the benefit of the concerned individual as well as the larger society.

Nnamdi and Badan (1997) defined TVE as "that aspect of educational process involving in addition to general education, the study of technologies and related sciences and the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding knowledge relating to occupation in various sectors of economic life." What this will imply is that technical and vocational education is concerned with manipulation of skills and application of relevant technical knowledge in producing things that are not only useful, but better the life of man. By implication, a person is empowered with the necessary techniques to manipulate skills based on one's talent and capability. In this, the attitude of the person is transformed from looking at the training of the skills as that of great advantage not only to the individual, but the larger society towards national development.

Ariyo (2015) further buttresses the scope and understanding that technical and vocational education is "as an educational programme which encourages skill acquisition, knowledge and attitudes needed for professional careers and through orientation the social and economic inclusion (needs) of the rural population and the marginalized communities are addressed." This by far entails an economic liberating principle buried in the type of education it embraces. It suggests a direct embrace of the human capacity to be involved in resource improvement to creatively acquire skills. This implies the manipulation of the psychomotor domain of the learners to be re-creative and productive in terms of being useful in provision of goods and services. This is of great help to the rural community and especially those who could not access the limited white colour jobs.

The significance of these benefits of technical and vocational education is that the skills acquired will assist the individual in providing for oneself the basic necessities of life. Technical and vocational education, which is deeply rooted in pragmatic principles, does have the capacity to provide job opportunities for restive youths. To further widen the scope, one can depict that it provides certain skills to be used in rendering a lot of paid services to the members of the society. If this is achieved, it can be implied that it is a way of alleviating the poverty level within the society. By this activity, a person's life-style is enhanced and given a sense of belonging within the same society. Just as one will expect, it is also largely in line with an activity such as technical and vocational education, which has its basis on pragmatism, benefits and develops man's inner capacity to develop one-self and the society as a whole. It then means that if technical and vocational education is given all the seriousness it deserves, then it can provide the type of education that ought to empower an individual especially in time of unemployment towards national development.

It is expected that such an activity is a means by which individuals secure occupational activities to better their lives and the environment at large. There is yet another advantage of technical and vocational education in an era of unemployment, as outlined by the National

Policy on Education (2009) namely: “that it provides a life-long learning for the individual and makes them responsible.” By this understanding, being a responsible citizen entails a number of issues. The positive contribution of the individual towards making the society a better place is to be highly appreciated as the contribution of technical and vocational education. This is largely anchored within the aims and objectives of technical and vocational education. The idea is to properly challenge and situate the technical and vocational educational system within a context.

The significance of the technical and vocational education is hinged on the premises that a nation can provide for itself the act of creativity and mastery in certain skills. It entails an individual to access and achieve quality education that empowers the same individual through life’s challenging situation. This, by and large, develops both the individual as well as the entire nation. It is expected that no nation develops into being an industrialized nation without establishing small scale industries which later develop and into major industries. If this premise is anything to go by, then the provision of manpower for such industries is not only important, but a necessary condition on which the development of the nation depends.

Aware of this great need, the federal government of Nigeria has been apt in its emphasis that the nation ought to be at fore front in the provision of highly qualified personnel to take the nation to greater heights. That is why emphasis is placed on the fact that the nation should move to technological progress and prowess through VTE. This can reasonably be achieved through such an education. In accordance with the expected performance of Technical and Vocational Education, which is largely anchored within the pragmatic principles, it could be referred to as a functional education. The idea of technical and vocational education and pragmatic principle’ suggests a functional Vocational and Technical Education and the positive role it plays on man and his environment. This is mostly in terms of personal and national development.

Functional Education and Curbing Unemployment for Development

Unemployment is a situation where trained and employable persons are not gainfully engaged in a productive venture. It is a situation of not only an idle man, but an idle mind. By this description of what unemployment is, it suggests that there exist economic hardships in which the common man could not cater for his immediate financial needs. It can easily be seen here that employment will not be there for restive youths. Unemployment will lead to increase in the rate of crime. In such a circumstance, how can Vocational and Technical Education, which has its roots on pragmatic principles, be used to minimize or to eradicate such a situation? To what extent can Technical and Vocational Education be a portent tool in solving unemployment that leads to economic hardship within a nation? In solving the economic hardship by providing employment, to what extent can that assist in personal development which leads to national sustainable development? What is national development? How does national development occur? To what extent can we say a nation has developed?

According to Obafemi (2014) the term ‘development’ refers to the act of advancement, growth, change or evolution from one stage to another marked by progress. This suggests process of increase in physical growth and other features. Just as an organism, once in a favourable condition develops and grows towards its maximum potentials, so too the human

society in that direction develops into its full modernization. Obafemi (2014) further maintained that National development implies “a general and sustainable improvement in the socio-economic well-being of a state, arising from the structural transformation of the economy.” Structurally, the indices used in judging a nation as developed or not are in terms of degree of the availability and assessment of common goods and services which are primarily designed to better the life of the individuals. These goods and services include food, shelter and clothing. The need for vocational and technical education arises out of the need to manage the available resources towards the socio-economic advancement of the society.

To achieve development, both at individual and national levels, the technical and vocational education using the principles of pragmatism, is not only vital, but obvious effort in the right direction. The following are the roles and functions of technical and vocational education from the perspective of pragmatism which rely solely on learning by doing:

1. **Creation of Employment for Human Development:** A prosperous and glamorous future is that technical and vocational education ought to have an inseparable link with job creation. This is one of the major roles of such education which has to do with creation of jobs to the people, especially the youths. Technical and vocational education helps in providing practical working skills to the learners and making them to be self-reliant. This is the situation where the learners are trained to enhance their ability, through giving them the proper technique to build on the existing skills. By this, the learners are not only employable in any organization or an industry; rather, the learners can also establish their own businesses and even employ other members of the society. It gives them hope and they are likely to shun any acts of violence that is likely to disrupt the peace of the nation. This can be seen as an advantage to the nation towards development. Through this, the youths are giving hope and their future brightens to the extent that they develop themselves and the nation at large. It is in the same vain that Mba and Akinsuroju (2020) positioned themselves that “any country that will develop meaningfully, must give her citizenry adequate and quality education (technical and vocational education) that calls for human capital development, this is because education creates improved citizenry and helps to upgrade the general standard of living in a society.”
2. **Advancement of Technology and Industrial Development:** Technical and vocational education is so vital that it prepares an individual towards the use of technology for daily living. Technology in general term has to do with the application of scientific knowledge to solve practical human problems. Industrial development on the other hand, is the establishment of more and more industries that can provide enough employment, job opportunities especially for the unemployed youths and continuous development of the society structurally. This therefore makes man by nature always trying to solve one problem or the other for such development, just as the principle of pragmatism posits. The technical and vocational education offers greater opportunities for rapid technological and industrial development in Nigeria and other nations of the world. Through technical education, which is rooted in the principle of pragmatism, it can also help in producing component graduates that are able to develop the country socially, politically and economically. So important is this goal that Remilekan and Onobong (2020) surrendered to the fact that “Vocational and technical education (VTE) is fundamental to the development of and industrialization of nations. Thus the skills, abilities and

competences that are needed by the nation are imbedded in VTE, which are central to a nation's social and economic emancipation." From this ambiance, therefore, one can infer how such education can be used as a tool to help especially in time of unemployment and economic difficulty. The implication of this is that the individual develops himself. When the individual develops himself in terms of daily survival and needs, it is further expected that the nation at large develops through diverse ways.

3. **Reduction of School Drop-outs:** One of the major challenges within the educational sector is when the students who are currently undergoing the school programme get discouraged and lack the spirit to forge ahead due to one problem or the other. In every society, there may occur such a situation in some people who may not have the strength to sustain the stress associated with the processes of education in general, either based on economic situation or disabilities. This may likely surface when some learners see those who have graduated before them are not gainfully employed and are giving up any hope of meaningful survival. This is likely to breed the problem of learners being discouraged and so unable to complete certain level of education there by producing drop out of school. School dropout is generally viewed as a factor which hinders one from going through and completing the training in the school system as expected. By far, technical and vocational education helps in reducing the dropout rate, and so important is it that it helps in national development. This is achievable if one is engaging in functional technical and vocational activities thereby becoming resilient and self reliant. It is implied here in the view of Bodang (2006) that "education (TVE) is an indispensable tool in the integration of an individual into the society. It enlightens, liberates and prepares one for useful living. Adequate preparation... must take cognizance of the challenges around." This therefore reduces the rate of the number of youths on the street through giving them hope. The implication of this is that it helps to a large extent in bridging the gap and the differences that exist in the learners in terms of learning practical engagements, thereby making the youths to be engaged in one form of productive venture or the other. After all, it is often said, 'an ideal man is a devil's workshop'
4. **Additional Income and Earnings:** Apart from the creation of employment that leads to the individual development, there is the advantage that technical and vocational education comes with. This is in the area of increasing the income of the people that have the skills and which gives them self-employment. Generally, it improves the living standard, and just as one will estimate, it also contributes to national development. Technical and vocational education assists in national development through fighting poverty, inflation, and political instability. It is with the same temper of mind that Abie and Eyam (2017) reiterated that "through this process of education (vocational and technical education) a foundation that would lead to improvement in their standard of living and environmental friendliness would be laid. It is expected that this would pave way for the betterment of the lives of the generations to come, it has the potentials of bringing about sustainable development in Nigeria, ... because it include Agricultural education, business education, home economic education" It can also create skilled manpower that is better equipped to convert a nation's natural resources into useful goods and maintain productivity for the benefit of the nation. When this is achieved, then the nation is set towards development of its citizens and the society at large. One can be

employed by an industry and still operate a private venture, by this, income is likely to increase, and the life of an individual is developed and the nation as well.

5. **Improvement of the quality of life:** When income increases, there is also another role that the technical education plays in Nigerian society and other societies of the world. Naturally, when an individual is gainfully involved in activities that are related to technical and vocational education, it is believed that such a person does not only earn certain financial benefits from the services rendered to the public, but possesses knowledge of what and how to survive in terms of food and nutrition. The implication of such realization, is that life-style of the person improves in terms of nutrition and attitude towards food and drinks. Nutrition has to do with feeding life-style and it is also a process by which the people receive food necessary for them to grow and be healthy. Here, having the knowledge of home management through the studies of 'Home Economics' is important because it is part of technical and vocational education that improves the quality of human life. However, the knowledge in itself does not improve one's standard of living, what seems to subsist here is the knowledge of nutritional value put into practice and the financial benefit which helps in preparing balanced diet and improves physical wellbeing and productivity. So important is this goal that Sulai (2015) posits that to live healthy and productive live... students must not only have knowledge of food, but to be able to develop positive attitudes towards finding the relationship between knowledge of nutrition and knowledge of utilization" The value of a proper nutrition emanates in mental and physical well being of the individual. The well being becomes evident on good health, this is personal development that ought to lead to national development. The technical and vocational education is also significant in reducing small business failures and it does that by equipping the Nigerian populace with the entrepreneurship skills and attitudes that will help in effective maintenance of the business. In this case every one's life is enhanced, hence leading to both the individual and national development.

Challenges of VTE

Despite the vital role technical and vocational education plays in developing a Nation, there are many challenges be-deviling the system. The following are some of the challenges of technical and vocational education in Nigeria as outlined by Boyi (2014)

1. Lack of sufficient qualified teachers
2. Negative attitude
3. Insufficient funding
4. Poor leadership skills

Lack of sufficient Qualified Teachers: Teaching has to do with the teaching and learning processes, which lay emphasis on giving lessons or passing on of ideas, knowledge or skills to the learners in a formal school setting, college or university. An effective teaching process helps the learners to achieve quality education. It is likely not to be erroneous to maintain that the absence of a qualified teacher is one of the challenges of technical and vocational education in Nigeria. It is simply safer to say the challenge of sufficient supply of teachers in many Nigerian schools is evident. However, lack of sufficient, component and qualified teachers lead to poor performance of technical students and as a result of that, the situation contributes to a serious deficiency in education of the country.

Negative Attitude: It is not unconnected, that poor societal attitudes are manifested in low enrolment of technical and vocational education. It is without stress to maintain this position when compared with the enrolment in other courses both in secondary schools and tertiary institutions. The society tends to view those in technical and vocational section of the education as less intelligent and sometimes being looked upon in a condescending manner. More so, there are many technical schools in Nigeria that are not in a favorable condition. Sometimes these are characterized by dilapidated buildings, poor staffing and unavailability of teaching and learning materials. Hence, one can be discouraged from being enrolled in such an atmosphere. In this situation, it militates against the development of the individual and the larger society.

Insufficient Funding: Central to the emphasis on the problems of technical and vocational education is the issue of inadequate funding. This is one of the challenges of technical and vocational education in Nigeria. Technical equipments are quite expensive and any government that is not committed to this venture eventually fails in terms of funding. Funding has to do with budgetary allocation, but the monitoring of how the fund are released and used. And a budget is a financial plan expressed in quantitative terms and used in controlling government's finances for a specified period of time usually a year. The federal government's funding of technical and vocational education is not too encouraging and in addition, when one views the national allocation to education in general far below what the united nation recommended be given to education as whole.

Poor leadership skills: Leadership is a process of influencing the activities of an individual or group oriented towards goals achievement in a given situation. The expectation of leadership as an institution is the ability to processes and directs the affairs of a group of people for their well being. The chain of leadership in Nigeria is a problem to not only the development of technical education, but to education as whole. Boyi (2014) maintained that the sequence of leadership in Nigeria is a problem of the development of vocational and technical education and the failure is also as a result of lack of basic equipment for effective teaching and learning, This poor leadership leads to the failure in producing basic equipment for effective teaching and learning. Needless to say that this has constituted a huge block in process of a meaningful teaching and learning process towards national development, is to say the least.

Conclusion

It is in full recognition of the fact that technical and vocational education, which is rooted in the pragmatic principle, as a potent tool in the development of both the individual and the larger society that nations of the world see as worth pursuing. However, the struggle to formulate and implement the process of Vocational and Technical Education is confronted with a number of challenges. These challenges to VTE have been discussed in the paper as impediments to achieving quality education towards accomplishing personal and national development. In the light of the above, the paper concludes that there is the need for the intensification and commitment towards of VTE in Nigeria so that graduates of VTE can be self-reliant. This will guarantee the production of skilled graduates who will in turn guarantee development depending on one's capability to move the nation forward.

Recommendations

In the light of this, the paper made the following recommendations:

1. There is the need for organizing efficient and effective teaching of technical education by the government and all stakeholders. This can be achievable and done through the provision of competent and qualified teachers in Nigeria. This can be achieved through effective teacher training and re-training programmes.
2. Technical education is an important vehicle for national development and as such, there is the need for the Nigerian societies to value technical and vocational education by enrolling more and more students in technical schools..
3. Inadequate funding of technical and vocational education is a serious challenge of development in Nigeria and the government at all levels should join hands together so that the budgetary allocation on technical education should be increased.
4. Adequate monitoring of what was ear-marked for education in general and technical and vocational education in specific. If adequate measures are taken towards making sure that what was released is properly used for that reason, then the system will be re-busted to provide quality education towards national development.
5. In the same vein, financial institutions should be encouraged to increase their assistance to graduates through effective and reasonable loan fertilities to establish business venture of their own.
6. There is the need for creating a conducive atmosphere for learning in all the schools that run technical and vocational education in Nigeria. This can be done through the provision of modern equipments and workshops where these equipments are housed. The provision of modern equipments will encourage the learners to compete favourably with their counter parts internationally, and this ought to guarantee national development especially in time of recession.
7. Leadership is important in every society or state and there is also the need for organizing effective leadership skills in Nigeria. This is because it is through good leadership by example that the problems of corruption and mismanagement of government's funds can be minimized. This seems to be one of the problems that have crippled every sector of the nation. All should join hands to ensure transparency and good government for a better society eventually for a better educational sector.

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