



Scaling-Up Innovations of Vocational Education and Training in Nigeria.

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Abstract

In recent times, there have been an outcry for the need to scale up Vocational Education to be as creative and innovative as ever in order to make it relevant to the needs and aspirations of the general public. It is on this note that this work focuses its tentacles on the various issues and innovations that are as a result of the administration of the education. The paper identified scaling up facilities for training and learning, scaling up funding, scaling up programme development from institutions of learning, scaling up environment for innovations, scaling up legislation from the government concerning vocational education among other. The paper had identified issues and core innovations of vocational education in the education system. Improvisation of learning, among others. It was recommended among others that government should improve the required funding for vocational education.

Keywords: apprenticeship, development, Scaling-Up, Innovations, Training,

Introduction

Vocational education has really come of age in Nigeria. From the era of apprenticeship to the modern day of vocational education and training. But sad enough, the problem of unemployment and its attendant effects has been facing the society naked in her face. According to Wills (2014) vocational education has not rightly taken its place in the heart of the society. But Udofia (2018) will always see vocational education as a means of putting food on one's table. Surprisingly, Vocational education has grown above putting food on the table to the need to solving core economic problems confronting the society as a whole.

In recent times, the level of unemployment and its attendant crime wave has greatly put a question mark on the veracity and efficacy of vocational education in Nigeria. Allen (2012) opines that Vocational education can be a veritable tool for curbing unemployment and insecurity in the system. In this paper, vocational education would be defined on its credit, areas of vocational education would be discussed, issues, then the challenges and innovation.

Concept of Vocational Education

Vocational education can be defined as the type of education that involves impartation of skill, knowledge and attitudes to enable one gain a successful learning Akpan (2013). It is also seen by Akpan (2005) as hands on experience on occupational areas to enable the individual earn a productive living. On the other hand, it is a form of specialized training given to individuals who are not opportune to be exposed to western type education (Harry; 2015).

Another definition of vocational education is that type of education for and about job. Sampson (2013) sees vocational education as a specialized education that enables one fit into a chosen occupational area. Vocational education is education that prepares



people to work as a technician or in various jobs such as a trade or a craft. Vocational education is sometimes referred to as career education or technical education. A vocational school is a type of educational institution specifically designed to provide vocational education. Vocational education can take place at the post- secondary, further education, and higher education level; and can interact with the apprenticeship system. At the post-secondary level vocational education is often provided by highly specialized trade Technical schools , community colleges , colleges of further education (UK), universities, as well as Polytechnic Institutes (Institutes of technology) (Akpan, 2013).

Recently, almost all vocational education took place in the classroom, or on the job site, with students learning trade skills and trade theory from accredited professors or established professionals. However, online vocational education has grown in popularity, and made it easier than ever for students to learn various trade skills and soft skills from established professionals in the industry. The World Bank's 2019 World Development Report on the future of work suggests that flexibility between general and vocational education particularly in higher education is imperative to enable workers to compete in changing labor markets where technology plays an increasingly important role. Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is education and training that provides the necessary knowledge and skills for employment. It uses many forms of education including formal, non-formal and informal learning, and is said to be important for social equity and inclusion, as well as for the sustainability of development. TVET, literacy and higher education, is one of three priority subsectors for UNESCO. Indeed, it is in line with its work to foster inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all.

The development and definition of TVET is one that parallels other types of education and training, such as Vocational Education; however, TVET was officiated on an international level as a better term to describe the field, and therefore is likewise used as an umbrella term to encompass education and training activities such as Vocational Education. The word vocation refers to a strong feeling of suitability for a particular career or occupation. Okoye (2010) defines vocational education as a skill-based programme designed for skill acquisition at a lower level of education. It is planned to offer people the opportunity of refining themselves in their general proficiency, especially about their current or future occupation. When people hear vocation education, they believe it is for those who cannot afford a quality education. However, this is a wrong assumption; the truth is everyone needs to learn valuable hands-on skills. In the long run, these skills can act as a means in which income is generated. In Nigeria, there is too much emphasis on university education which has reduced the economic opportunities for those who are more work-oriented. Not everybody can afford a university degree, and not everyone is academically inclined. They have been lot of successful entrepreneurs who are changing and shaping the business world, for example Bill Gates, Steve Jobs etc. These people learnt technical and vocational skills which impacted and led them into designing technologies that provide solution to the world (Palm: 2013).



Schools in Nigeria need to introduce vocational education into their curriculum. By doing so, it will assist students to develop skills they can use in the future. Vocational training should be taught to children from an early age. That way, they can imbibe and nurture the expertise as they grow. Many early childhood education institutions in Nigeria are lacking in this aspect. They focus on just taking care of this young children and teaching them elementary numerical, reasoning and verbal skills. If the nation had this culture absorbed from an early age, the economy would not be suffering from low productivity. According to Ido and Bassey (2016), Vocational education is the engine for economic growth in the country. Nigerians should invest in skill training, as no nation can compete effectively in the emerging global marketplace with poorly educated and unskilled workers.

Areas of Vocational Education

Vocational education is sub-divided into several units. They include but not limited to Business education, Agricultural Education, Computer Education, Home Economics, Nursing, Technical Education, and Distributive Education. The Vocational business education is subdivided into Accounting, Management, Office Technology, Secretarial Studies, marketing and Banking. The Agricultural sector covers Agric-economics, agronomy, animal science and husbandry. The Home Economics sub sector includes Home Management, Food and Nutrition, Clothing and Textile. The technical aspects includes woodwork / building Technology, auto metal, technology welding/ metal technology and electrical/electronic.

Importance of Vocational Education

Vocational Education helps people in the better performance of their jobs as they acquire a great learning experience. Working professionals get a chance to know their skills while making money. Usen (2010), Vocational education and training is a sort of introduction as it gets employees ready for the workplace which comes in handy while performing various tasks. Due to the nature of the skills it imparts, student does not consider it a futility as compared to academic education. Vocational Education as the term itself denotes, the students are specialised and therefore they have more chances of employment as compared to others. Many students who are in a dilemma whether they should attend college or not, Vocational education really opens a completely new door. It makes an individual responsible and independent whereas those who study regular courses lack in this sphere.

The career of one's own choice is one of the major benefits of this education. A vast majority of people are caught in the wrong jobs because they were in it for the sake of job, money, lack of alternative and professional compromise whereas an individual pursuing Vocational Education is already pursuing his dream job. This type of education is a great asset to the economy. Our government need not import foreign technicians on higher wages as our own can do the required work. To Sampson (2013), certain vocational skills acquired from Vocational Education teaches students the importance of manual work. The physical labour done under certain jobs makes them strong, healthy and active. Majority of Vocational Skills are applicable all over the world and these create employment opportunities in foreign countries. Technical programs develop the economy by bridging the demand and supply gap with highly skilled workers. It also gives students the opportunity to take marketable skills from the classroom directly into



the working world (Akpan, 2013). Better Vocational Educational attracts foreign investment and foreign exchange in form of foreign conglomerate and foreign students. School drop-outs and adults can also receive this type of education as it provides an opportunity to learn a skill or trade. There are many well-paid career fields in which a college degree is not required.

Issues of Vocational Education

Vocational education in Nigeria has transformed from its crude nature of apprenticeship to the imbibement of Vocational Education and Training (VET) or Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET). Vocational Education has its issues which ranges from non-challant attitudes of parents and guardians to the area of vocational education. Most parents to Bassey (2015) are lukewarm to the advancement of vocational Education by their wards and children. These parents see Vocational Education as education for the misfit. This problem of poor perception is both a problem and issues to content with.

Another issues confronting vocational education is the issues of legislation. Legislation backing and standards setting has made professions like Law, Accounting, Medicine and surgery, etc what it is? Standard setting has made the likes of accounting to be restricted. Vocational Education is a career for all comers. It is not supposed to be so, but the non-standardization of Vocational Education, has made it an all man affairs (Usoro; 2014).

Most important issues confronting Vocational Education is the problem of misconception of the ideology. Some people limit Vocational education as an avenue for food on the table, rather It deals more on experience and core impartation of skills to people who want the skills and knowledge.

Areas of Vocational Education that requires scaling up

Vocational education can be thoroughly dealt with, only if the issues affecting its implementation to the educational sector are upscale. Vocational training can contribute to the reduction of poverty, hunger and unemployment if the challenges are up scaled. Below are some of the problems of vocational education that required up scaling in Nigeria;

1. Up scaling Qualified Trained Teachers

Most educational institutions lack qualified teachers that can handle vocational subjects. Qualified vocational educators play significant role in ensuring that students enjoy practical learning. Nevertheless, the primary challenge is that, a qualified teacher may not accept a low paying job, even if he/she has a passion for teaching vocational education. Many educational institutions do not see the need to explain vocational/technical education to students in the first place. Hence, the reason they exclude it from their curriculum and therefore do not require qualified teachers for their students (Akpan; 2013).

2. Scaling up Facilities

Vocational education departments in schools in Nigeria do not have the facilities or workspace to train and educate students. Art departments in primary and secondary



schools lack the amenities needed to teach vocational studies to this children and as such required scaling up. According to OryemOriga (2005), only 40% of institutions of Higher Education in Nigeria have laboratory or workshop space for technical education programmes. Most of what is available in Nigerian schools are the items that were provided when the division was first set up, which is often outdated.

The lack of sufficient facilities makes it difficult to provide high-quality vocational education (Ukpong, 2014). Corporate organisations or alumni associations should ensure they provide an enabling environment for vocational education as students will enjoy working in well-equipped laboratories and workshops. By providing these facilities to students, their creativity skills will more likely develop.

3. Up Scaling Training and Incentives to Staff

Most educational institutions do not educate and train their teams on vocational education. Training is an essential aspect of education and provides an opportunity for employees to expand their knowledge. Without appropriate training, employees can become demotivated and this may impact negatively on the learning process (Bassey, 2014). Educational institutions should consider training their staff in vocational education to boost their knowledge and motivate them to teach these subjects. Aside from training staff in vocational education, schools should look into providing incentives to employees that perform exceptionally well.

4. Scaling up Interest from Political Office Holders

Political office holders in Nigeria show lack of concern in introducing vocational education into the school's curriculum. It will take technical educators to convince lawmakers to give priority to providing the required resources for such programmes. Lawmakers' attention to vocational education is negligible; their devotion to the success of the economy is focused on other sectors. The effort to get political holders to pay more attention to vocational education has proved difficult over the years. However, with the proliferation of more and more intellectuals in Nigeria's political arena, there is hope that vocational education will see the light of day and be positioned as one of the solutions to drive the technological advancement of the country (Usoro; 2014).

5. Up scaling Nigerian Value System

Nigerians have this mentality that a university degree is more important than technical or social training. There is too much emphasis on getting a university qualification, not bearing in mind whether the holder possesses the required knowledge and skills. In Nigeria, people go to school with the mindset that education will give them the opportunity to contribute to the society.

However, from the look of things, full input in Nigerian society requires vocational and technical training at all levels of our education system, which will identify the different skills and abilities and give equal opportunity to all children to prepare for work. Schools successfully teaches students in elementary and secondary school, technical and vocational education. In 2016, the school organized Scientific, Technological and Mathematics (STEM) fair which was aimed to encourage students to learn, understand and apply the scientific, technological and mathematics skills they have acquired during their course of learning. According to Akpan (2014), Teaching students vocational



education is the most effective way to build a secure socio-economic environment for everyone regardless of race, gender or personal belief is a way of upscale their value system towards vocational education.

6. Scaling up Funding

Inadequate funding has been a major challenge to vocational education. A look at technical schools will make one to see the decay that arises from the system due to poor funding. Students sit on the floor to learn, no or poor equipment among others. Vocational centers have turned to hideouts for criminals. On the whole, funding becomes a problem in the system (Akpan: 2013). There is need to upscale funding in vocational education in order for u to achieve it aims and objectives.

7. Scaling up legislation

Vocational education has suffered from poor legislation. Not enough bills have been passed for the improvement of vocational education in Nigeria. It is disheartening to note that most legislators know nothing about vocational Education (Palm: 2013). It is imperative that people that know more about vocational education should be supported morally and financially to aspire for public offices.

8. Scaling up Programme Development

Most tertiary institutions do not have a veritable and concrete curriculum for vocational education. What they do is to crowd the programmes with general curriculum with little or no vocational interest therein. This usually affects the output of the graduates produced. There is greater need to upscale programme development in order to enable vocational education to achieve his purpose.

9. Scaling up environment for innovations

Another emerging challenges facing vocational education is in the area of harbouring a conducive environment for innovative developments to take place. Palm (2013) opined that most innovations has their inspirations from a conducive environmental variables. In Nigeria, vocational education has been placed in environments that encourages struggling and inertial. It is quite worrisome that environmental variables relating to vocational education in Nigeria only encourages unproductivity. Thus, there is need for up scaling of the environment.

Innovations of Vocational Education in the Educational System

If creativity is the seed that inspires entrepreneurship, innovation is the process of entrepreneurship. This was Schumpeter's (1999) conclusion when he wrote about the economic foundations of free enterprise and entrepreneurship. Drucker (2000) agrees and elaborates: Innovation as the means by which an entrepreneur either creates new wealth-producing resources or endows existing resources with enhanced potential for creating wealth. Innovation is the process of doing new things. It is important to recognize that innovation implies action, not just conceiving new ideas. When people have passed through the illumination and verification stages of creativity, they may have become inventors, but they are not yet innovators.

Vocational education has added value to the educational system in several ways, such as:



1. Innovative teaching methods;
2. Innovative ways of doing things
3. Production of new machines for industries
4. Scaffolding
5. Introduction of entrepreneurial studies in secondary schools

1. Innovative Teaching Methods

Vocational Education as a core area of the general Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) has brought about innovative teaching methods like the practical approaches to teaching (Usen, 2010). Vocational Education emphasizes more on practical approaches to learning against the theoretical approach. This shift in approach and methods is what idem (2005) calls innovative teaching methods.

2. Innovative Ways of Doing Things

Vocational Education has sincerely changed the paradigm and structure of the economy and the society as a whole. Poluoke (2014) opines that vocational Education and training has changed the mindset of people from the normal white-collar mentality to going blue-chip. In Nigeria, the functionability of vocational Education has made it possible for young school leavers to embrace vocational skills alongside their programme. Ukpong (2014) opined that the innovative nature of Vocational Education has made it possible for people to overcome the poverty problem.

3. Production of New Machineries for Industries

A notably innovation in the area of Vocational Education is the re-engineering and production of new machineries for, industrial developments in Nigeria (Udo, 2013). Vocational; education has made it possible for people to be trained on the job in order to functionally operate the said machineries. Without Vocational Education, operating these new machines would be quite cumbersome and impossible.

4. Scaffolding

Scaffolding to Usoro (2014) is a new type of teaching method as recognized by Ido and Basse (2015) as a teaching strategy that gives the child the prior information for him/her to grab and build on the information for higher level of understanding and usages of the information. Scaffolding on its own is an engineering process that aids the construction of higher level building. Since the human brain is likened to the building where information is provided with this becomes the pivot of the pivot of the scaffolding technique.

5. Introduction of Entrepreneurial Studies in Senior Secondary Schools

The recent introduction of 34 trade subjects into the Nigerian school curricular is a great innovation achieved by Vocational Education, Ukpong (2014). This is an achievement in that it has made students in secondary schools offer at least an entrepreneurial skills to function after graduation, if they are unable to further their education. Best (2015) opines that the introduction of entrepreneurial studies is affected negatively because teachers for most of the core studies have not been trained. So, the problem becomes who will train the teachers to train the students.



Conclusion

Vocational Education has a way of rejuvenating the awareness of the youth towards job creation. It is quite disheartening to note that although, Vocational Education has a great potentials for improving production capabilities, it is faced with enormous challenges like low patronage, poor financed, perception problem etc. it is believed that if these challenges are up scaled, vocational Education will be an avenue for job creation. The core issues associated with vocational education and training remains the problem of attitudes. The paper recognized potential innovations of Vocational Education and then made possible suggestions.

Possible Suggestions

The following are suggestions for the study:

1. Government should embark on massive sensitization of the public on the potentials of Vocational Education in Nigeria.
2. Government should also provide incentives to encourage youths to get technical training. Incentives such as small loans for business setup upon graduation should be provided.
3. Adequate budgeting should be made by the federal Government for vocational education so there will be enough funds to provide standard education.
4. Funds provided should also be properly monitored and accounted for by vocational education administration. This will prevent workers from enriching themselves with money that is supposed to be used for development.
5. Standard facilities should be provided by the government. Sub-standard facilities need to be done away with so that learners can access quality education.
6. Instructional Materials and learning aids suitable for use in the Nigerian society should be provided by the government of the day. This includes textbooks especially.
 6. Instructors and teachers of vocational education should be properly trained by professional Vocational educators and should also have vast experience so as to be able to teach students well.

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