**THE ROLE OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN NIGERIAN GOVERNMENT**

**THE ROLE OF VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION (VTE) IN**

**NIGERIA**

**ABSTRACT**

*Vocational and Technical Education have become imperative in the 21st century considering the*

*significant role it plays to the socio-economic development of every society. This paper titled “the*

*role of vocational and technical education in Nigeria Democratic dispensation is written to*

*appraise the significant role of Vocational and Technical Education in Nigeria society especially in*

*the fourth republic of the democratic dispensation. The paper elicited data from secondary sources*

*such as textbook, magazines, Journals, newspapers and periodicals. The paper concludes that the*

*quest for improved skill acquisition and youth empowerment could be achieved if technical and*

*vocational education is aggressively enhanced by injecting funds into Polytechnic education so as*

*to address the problems of unemployment and economic instability bedeviling the nation.*

*Therefore, the paper recommends that the nation’s policies and programmes be adequately*

*strengthened to address the challenges facing TVE in Nigeria.*

**Key words:** Vocational, Technical Education, Democracy.

**Introduction**

Education is a right of every individual. It unlocks the development of personal and national

potentials of citizens of a country and the world at large. According to Balogun (2010), education

is the light without which the world will be darkness. It is the basis for scientific and technological

breakthrough and also the basis for modernity which has made all nations of the world to accord it

immense priority, even though the level of priority varies from one country to another.

Currently, emphasis is shifting away from the general education that encourages mere acquisition

of certificates to skill-based education which centers more on what one can do and the ability to

apply requisite skill n real work environment. In Nigeria, the rising unemployment has helped to

heighten the need for vocational and technical education. This paper therefore traces the historical

development of vocational and technical education (VTE). Concept of vocational and technical

education (VTE) in Nigeria vocational and technical education in Nigeria democratic dispensation,

challenges facing VTE, role of VTE way forward and conclusion.

**Historical Development of VTE in Nigeria**

The origin of vocational and technical education in Nigeria has a chequered history. Its roots could

be trace to pre-colonial era when traditional education was in practice. According to Ogunmilla

cited in Sofoluwa and Olumade (2006), “in traditional education of the various ethic nationalities,

arts and crafts of various types have existed as their own expression of vocational training. The

traditional agricultural practices then were developed to suit the cultivation of agricultural species

predominantly produced in the different eco-geography areas of the country”. The instructional

method then was observation and imitation of the master. During the colonial era, the child was

trained in the family trade through direct apprenticeship by either the parents or relations. During

this period, non-indigenous companies like shell BP, the PZ and the UAC started training artisans

among their employees who were to serve the skill needs of the companies at that particular time.

There was no arrangement for examination of issuance of any certificate. The emphasis was to

improve the learners’ ability to accomplish more complex tasks. In other words, during the early

part of the colonial era, vocational training was encouraged. However, schools were built primarily

for the purposed of evangelism by the early missionaries. Specifically, the early missionary

activities were characterized by literacy types of education which was geared towards winning

converts and producing clerks and interpreters (Ajayi and Ayodele, 2002).

It was not until 1908 when government department started to organize some form of

vocational training school. The marine training school according to (Adegbite, 2000) came on

board in 1982. The public works, the post and telegraph and railway training school where also

established around 1931. Government active participation in the provision of technical education

became obvious between 1930 and 1960. The first technical institute established in Nigeria was the

Hope Waddell Institute in Calabar in 1885 with the aim of proving education in the rudiments

training in the technical trade and teacher’s education, (Mamman, Chadi, Jirgi, & Mubarak, 2013).

Yaba Higher College was officially opened on January 19, 1934 and later became the first

vocational and technical institute in 1948 with the motive to train Artisans, crafts men and

Technicians, together with teachers of technical education to teach in trade centres, (Aina in

Mamman, Chadi, Jirgi & Mubarak, 2013). Thereafter, technical colleges were established by

various regional governments various locations in the country , namely: Enugu (1950), Ilorin

(1951), Kano (1953), Bukuru (1953), Sapele (1955), Ijebu-Ode (1959), Osogbo, Oyo (1961), Owo

(1963), Aba (1964) and Abakaliki (1966).

These colleges were not fee paying and they were adequately funded by the government at

that time. In 1959, Nigeria Federal Ministry of Education set up a commission- the

Ashby commission to conduct an investigation into Nigerian needs in post secondary education.

The Ashby commission recommended that adequate attention should be given to technical and

vocational education. It also recommended that students studying technical drawing and craft

subjects should be encouraged. Similarly, technical schools should be upgraded to award the City

and Guilds London Certificate. The Commission for Technical Education (1963) recommended

three levels of vocational and technical education as follows:

Pre-vocational and pre-technical training usually offered in secondary schools;

Craftsmen training usually offered in technical colleges, trade centres and vocational schools and

Technical training usually offered in polytechnics and colleges of technology.

The fourth Commonwealth Education Conference (1986) recommended that industry should be

closely associated with technical education. This could be through policy-making, manpower

planning and curriculum development, and provision of opportunities for industrial experience,

accreditation, consultancy services part-time courses and vocational guidance.

In 1987, the National Council on Education (NCE) approved the National Board for

Technical Educational (NBTE) which classified vocational and technical institutions into:

Vocational Schools - These are made up of vocational/artisan training centres to produce artisans.

They are post-primary level institutions that offer courses leading to the award of the Federal

Ministry of Labour and Productivity Trade Test Certificates. Technical Colleges - Institutions that

produce craftsmen at the craft level and master craftsmen at the advanced craft level. They are

post-Junior secondary school institutions offering courses that lead to the award of the Advanced

National Technical Certificate/Advanced National Business Studies respectively.

Polytechnics/Monotechnics/Colleges of Technology: - These are post– Senior Secondary school

institutions, which produce technicians and higher technicians/technologists.

The courses offered by these institutions are of two-year duration, each leading to the award of

National Diploma (ND) and Higher National Diploma (HND) respectively. Federal Government of

Nigeria (2004) identified a range of courses offered under vocational and technical education as

mechanical trades, computer, craft practice, electrical engineering trades, building trades, wood

trades, hospitality, textile trades, printing trades, beauty culture trades, business trades and leather

goods manufacture. This historical evidence has shown that the VTE existed in Nigeria during the

olden days before its transformation as it exists today.

**Concept of Vocational Education in Nigeria**

The term vocational and technical education has been defined differently by many authors. Some

authors define separately while others defined the twin concept jointly. Oranu (n.d), saw vocational

and technical education as “skill-based programme designed for sub-professional level education

and based on a specific vocation. Technical education, on the other hand facilitates the acquisition

of practical and applied skills as well as basic scientific knowledge. The major difference between

the two terms according to Oranu is that whereas vocational education but gives general technical

knowledge. Thus, while every vocational education programme is technical in nature, not all

technical education is vocational. This subtle relationship accounts for the interchangeable use of

both terms in academic literature” (P.18).

The Federal Republic of Nigeria ((2004) through the National Policy on Education (NPE)

(2004) UNESCO in Ayonmike, Okwelle and Okeke (2015) defined VTE as those aspects of

educational processes involving in addition to general education, the study of technologies and

related sciences and the acquisitions of the economy and social life. The NPE which came into

existence as a result of the national curriculum conference of 1969 further stated that VTE is an

integral part of general education and also a means of preparing people for occupational fields and

for effective participation in the world of work. It is an aspect of life learning and a preparation for

responsible citizenship; an instrument for promoting environmentally sound suitable development

and a method of alleviating poverty. Vocational and technical education according to Okorocha

(2012) is an educational training which encompasses knowledge, skills, competencies, structural

activities, abilities, capacities and all other structural experiences for securing jobs in various sector

of the economy or even enabling one to be self-dependent by being a job creator. Vocational and

technical education according to ILO in Oluwale, Jegede and Olamade (2013) is a vehicle for the

development of marketable and entrepreneurial skills and engine of development. Amoor (2009)

saw it as the core of both individuals and society’s economy. The author further stressed that

through the acquisition of skills; individuals could explore their environment and harness the

resources within it, which could serve them and the society since the wealth of any nation

determines its development.

VTE according to Ojimba (2012) is a forms of education whose primary aim is to

prepare persons for employment in recognized occupation and this encompasses field of study

(agricultural education, fine and applied arts education, business education and vocational trades

in soap making, hairdressing, computer training among others). Iheanacho (2006) defined

vocational education as that aspect of education that deals with business education, farming, book

keeping, bricklaying, among others with aims of acquiring vocational skills in these fields. Uwaifo

(2009) posited that technical education is the training of technically- oriented personnel who are

to be initiators , facilitators, and implementers of technological literacy that would lead to selfreliance

and sustainability . The author stresses that technical education has direct impact on

national welfare. Banjoko cited in Dokubo (2013) summed it all stressing that skill is a major

distinguishing aspect of vocational education which makes it outstanding from liberal arts. In

summary, vocational and technical education essentially develops in the individual the knowledge,

skills, and desirable attitude for legitimate work.

**Vocational and Technical Education in Nigeria Democratic Dispensation**

It is evident that nations that have advanced technologically and scientifically have paid so only to

the extent they have paid more that verbal commitment substantial financial and technical

resources in the education sector and VTE in particular. In Nigeria, vocational and technical

education has long been perceived as critical to national development. Unfortunately, it has not

been accord and seriousness it deserves. The cumulative result is that today, vocational and

technical education in Nigeria is in a terrible shape, crippled by a general, persistent and chronic

crisis in terms of funding, staffing, curricula, infrastructure and facilities. Successive Nigerian

governments have for long pursed poorly planned and disjointed educational policies

with profound and devastating consequences on the development of the country. For example, our

educational system has witnessed series of transformation without achieving the desired goal. The

8-6-2-3 system of education which operate during the colonial era was change d in 1954 to 6-5-2-3

system.

The 1969 National Curriculum Conference recommended another change to 6-3-3-4

system (six years primary, three years in junior secondary, three years in senior secondary and four

years in the university). In September 2011, 9-3—4 system made up of nine years of basic

education called lower (primary 1-6) and upper (junior secondary 1-3), three years in senior

secondary and four years in the university came on board with emphasis on pre-vocational and

vocational skills acquisition at the secondary school level. This educational system was designed

to equip its recipients with knowledge that will make them to reason rationally and learn skills that

will help them have a decent and useful living. The essence of the reform as stated in the National

Policy on Education (NPE) document according to Abar, Baloch and Ghouri (2010) and Yusof, Za’

faran, Rahman and Ghouri (2012) was to address the issue of imbalance in the provision of

education in different parts of the country with regards to access and quality.

Igwe in Gusua (2008) stated that one of the merits of 3-3 system of secondary education is

that it will equip its recipients both intellectually and vocationally based on the receipts area of

interest, attitude and capability. According to Gusua, crises in education started when government

went all out to implement the 6-3-3-4 system without adequate planning put in place. Gusua (2008)

further stated that pre-vocational subjects meant to lunch Nigeria into a respectable

industrialized state with abundant pool of lower manpower became a mirage. The teaching of prevocational

subject ended up not having either workshop or qualified teachers. VTE subjects (where

possible) were theoretically taught like social studies. The hopes that reforms will enable schools

fabricate some of their basic needs such as chairs, desks beds, etc. never materialized. Priorities

were misplaced, and huge resources squandered with virtually no results to show for its (Akwara,

1998).

It s the legitimate duty of any democratic government to put in place an educational

system that will cater for the welfare of its citizen by providing them with relevant skills that will

makes for the socio-economic development of the society. This not the case in Nigeria where

corruption, negligence of VTE programmes, and government misplace priority is the order of the

day. This situation has subject most Nigerian families to abject poverty.

Rosefield and Mills (2013) cited in Orinos (2014:26) argued that “democracy is attractive but

elusive concept which literally means people’s rule, a governance system where the

political sovereignty of every citizen reign without privilege or special entitlements”. The authors

further noted that the mission of a true democracy is to provide the variety and quantity of public

services the people want. A true democratic government in addition to the above mission should

provide her citizens with education that is skill driven which will reduce unemployment in the

country. In line with this, Otamiri (2014) stated that quality education is the type that fulfils the

desired standard of knowledge and skills for individual and social needs of the country. One

wonders the extent this type of democratic mission is being practiced in Nigeria. How far has the

successive democratic government in Nigeria pursued the issue of vocation technical education and

training for the manpower needs of the country visa-a-visa the unemployment situation affecting

the Nigeria youths.

The youth unemployment according to Sun (2015) stood at 861,110 between December

2014 and March 2015. Jobs created by public institutions stood at 5,726 while informal sector

generated 400,000 jobs. This shows that people who are jobless exceeded the number that got jobs

within the period. This calls for proper attention to VTE programmes. According to Usioboh

(2007), successive governments have over-emphasized other university education programmes

above technical and vocational education. The author further stated that, what is needed is for the

government to give adequate and equal attention to all the levels of education in the overall best

interest of the country and the growth. Unfortunately, the government too much emphasis on

general and science education has affected VTE. The society, which would have need on the neck

of the government to finance the planning and implementation of vocational and technical

education is an education that is to Amoor (2009) has a misconception that vocational and

technical education is an education that s meant for the dropouts, unintelligent and non-achievers.

This misconception has in no small measure frustrated the enrolment of candidate into the

vocational and technical education programme in tertiary institutions. It has also affected youth’s

enrolment into artisan jobs. Everybody wants to play politics that is now more lucrative than

anything else. For instance, nine billion naira was announced as allowance for the National

Assembly members, an amount which a professor that laboured for years can not earn during his

service years. We need to have a re-think if actually we want the acquisition of skills by youth to

be a reality in Nigeria.