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## **NIGERIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM:**

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**Nigerian Educational Research Association**



## **An Appraisal of Vocational Technical Education Programmes in Nigerian Education System and the Effects on the Individuals.**

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### **Abstract:**

There seems to be a general feeling of little or no impact of Vocational Technical Education programmes on the individuals in the society. The feelings about the programme may be perceptive but since the programme is a component of the Nigerian Education System, an appraisal of its operation and effects on the individuals in the society becomes relevant. This paper therefore discusses the meaning of vocational technical education, the types and levels of operation, societal expectations, issues/constraints and the way forward.

### **Introduction.**

The mission of vocational technical education in Nigeria is the transformation of the individuals and the society to self-less living. ~~to~~ become occupationally wealthy, independent and self sustaining through relevant skill oriented programmes of training and for retraining.

The provisions for vocational technical education components of the National Policy on Education (1981) focuses on the individuals' acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competence both mental and physical for effective living in, and contributing to the development of the society. Suffice it to state that the mission and focus of vocational technical education in Nigeria tracing from the traditional informal type to the present planned and implemented type has been creativity, occupational development, skill acquisition and occupational efficiency for self reliance and for integrating the individual into a sound and effective citizen to help himself and the society. But the effectiveness of vocational technical education programmes in the realisation of the above mission and focus pose a problem, and have always been one of the issues for discussion in relevant local and national workshops, conferences and seminars. This paper therefore attempts an appraisal vocational technical education programmes in the Nigerian education system, the types and levels of operation, societal expectations, issues/constraints and the way forward.

### **The Meaning of Vocational Technical Education.**

Vocational education can be defined as an occupational oriented educational programmes directed toward making the recipients occupationally skilful and efficient in role performance in a chosen occupational area. Olaitan (1998), defined vocational education as a designed field of study for the development of work skills, attitudes, appreciations crativity in the individuals as well as the creation of awareness of occupational entry and the demands for progressive vocational education is therefore a designed, planed and developed programme of training and/or retraining for the development of the individuals' capabilities, abilities and attitudes toward efficient performance in specific vocations.

Technical education explains an educational programme aimed at helping the individuals to acquire practical and applied skills as well as the scientific knowledge basic for effective functioning in the ever changing society. Vocational technical education can therefore be described as a comprehensively designed, planned and developed programme for the individuals for the acquisition of occupational, practical and applied skills as well as the basic scientific knowledge and development of creative abilities for survival in the dynamic technological world. It is a comprehensive, scientific, occupational and skill development oriented educational programme for individuals for self development or improvement to be functional and effective in the society.

### **Aims of Vocational Technical Education:**

The aims of the programme as spelt out in the National Policy on Education (1981) paragraph 49 (a-f) include:

1. To provide trained manpower in applied science, technology and commerce particularly at the sub-professional level.
2. To provide the technical knowledge and vocational skill necessary for agricultural, industrial commercial and economic development.



3. To provide people who can apply scientific knowledge to the improvement and solution of environmental problems for the use and convenience of man.
4. To give an introduction to professional students in Engineering and other technologies.
5. To give training and impart the necessary skills leading to the production craftsmen technicians and other skilled personnel who will be enterprising and self-reliant and
6. To enable our young men and women to have an intelligent understanding of the increasing complexity of technology.

### **Types and levels of Vocational Technical Education Programmes in Nigeria:**

The National Policy on Education (1981) paragraph 7.45 states that there are five types of technical institutions outside the universities. These are:

1. The pre-vocational and vocational schools at the post-primary level.
2. The technical schools at the post-secondary level.
3. The technical colleges at the post-secondary levels.
4. The polytechnics and monotechnics at the post-secondary
5. The colleges of technical teacher education at the post-secondary level.

The pre-vocational programmes are at the junior secondary school level with the focus on preparation of youths for useful living within the society and the preparation for higher education. The curriculum is pre-vocational and academic and with core and pre-vocational subjects (woodwork, metal work, electronics, mechanics, local crafts, home economics, business studies, technical drawing, book-keeping, shorthand/typing) and the non-vocational electives.

It covers the first three years of the secondary schooling in the 6-3-3-4 system of education.

The vocational programmes are designed for the senior secondary school level for those who are able and willing to complete the last three years of the secondary schooling. The curriculum is comprehensive with core contents related to technical, commercial and other vocational courses to broaden the students knowledge and outlook. The focus is to make the senior secondary school graduates immediately employable.

The technical schools and colleges are meant to absorb the products of junior secondary schools. Training programmes are in specific trades such as electrical installations, electronics, woodwork and so on aimed at the provision of basic employable skills for those who would want to terminate at that level of education.

The Polytechnics and Monotechnics are at the post-secondary level for specialized training of technicians. The Monotechnic example is the schools of Agriculture concerned with agricultural training. The programmes are directed toward the production of holders of National diploma and Higher National Diploma certificates to be employable.

The colleges of technical teachers training at the different levels are meant to train the teaching manpower at the National Certificate in Education level and the level of National Technical Teachers Certificate (NTTC).

The fulfilment of the needs of the individuals and the society constitute the basis of providing vocational technical education programmes. As expressed by Olaitan (1996), the programme is characterised by insistence on needs and interest of learners and the environment as determinants of content for training. The training received should have utilisable values. The society therefore expects that vocational technical education programmes should be able to perform the following functions:

1. Enabling beneficiaries to use for further growth.
2. Enabling the individuals to be creative.
3. Provide employable skills for self employment.
4. Changes the attitude and orientation of the individuals occupationally.
5. Make the individuals to be self-reliance and self sustaining.
6. Help make the society economically viable
7. Creating occupational opportunities
8. Creating opportunities for retraining for self improvement.

An appraisal of the satisfaction of the above societal expectations of the programmes raises issues such as:



1. Skill training issues
2. Occupational issues.
3. Structural issues.
4. Retraining issues.
- 5.

#### **Skill Training Issues:**

This issue in vocational technical education is primarily that of the programmes providing the learners with the skills relevant to their occupational needs. A number of appraisal questions could be raised as the basis for assessment of the effectiveness of the programmes in skill training. Such questions include:

1. How relevant are the programmes to the needs of individual for useful living in the society?
2. Are the learners exposed to practical manipulation of tools and equipment likely to be met in the actual work situation?
3. Has the training provided the necessary understanding and appreciation of the changing technologies?
4. Has the training made provision for sharpening the learners to independently take decisions about the choice of career?
5. Through the skill training, have the individuals been able to develop the abilities of solving problems within their immediate environments?

#### **Occupational Issues:**

Vocational Technical Education programmes are believed to be able to provide occupational training opportunities and preparation for self employment. Yet it seems the programmes has fallen short of the expectations of the individuals and the society. Commenting on the situation Aniagboso (1993) remarked that most skilful personnel in Nigeria are doing jobs which their skills do not fit in. Examples being the Engineers and technicians becoming contractors and suppliers of goods and services, leading to wastage. A pertinent question would be –are the products of vocational technical education really self employed? Why then the cry of youth unemployment in the Nigerian society? By implication therefore, much is still desired in the occupational aspects of the programme.

#### **Structural Issues.**

Vocational Technical Education programmes seem unlike structurally and as observed Olaitan (1991), drawing example from the school agriculture programme structurally, the student after completion of prevocational agriculture, and who may decide to develop skills in Horticulture would find it difficult at the senior secondary levels since the curriculum seem to be devoid of relevant contents to meet the specialized requirement. Yet it is supposed to be vocational oriented. The same would apply to those who may want to receive further training in aspects of industrial – technical programmes.

The access to another level of the vocational technical education programme without some additional academic requirement is a structural gap. For instance the transition from the technical schools and colleges to the Polytechnics or Universities is possible only after acquiring the liberal general senior secondary school certificate in addition. The technical colleges of education provides training for the Nigerian Certificate in Education (NCE) with conceding two years loss for the degree programme. The Higher National Diploma (HND) of the Polytechnics does not qualify the individual into direct postgraduate studies in vocational technical education programme without a first degree requirement. Commenting on the effects of the situation Omoregie (1989) noted the existence of structural gap in the Nigerian Education system with respect to national technical education and which have often resulted in low student enrolment in the programmes and therefore structural wastage. A re-examination of the structural component of the Nigeria Education Programmes becomes relevant.

#### **Retraining Issues**

After many years of graduation with some knowledge, there has always been the need for updates or complete recycled training in the phase of obsolete ideas. This therefore, calls for re-training either by returning to a full institution academic programme or refresher courses for updates through short in-service courses, conferences, seminars and workshops. Re-training can be described as the organised educational



programmes for knowledge and skill updates through full new institutional recycled training or through refresher courses by way of seminars, workshops, conferences or short in-service courses.

The National Policy on Education (1981) recognizes in-service training necessary for up-dating competence. But the recognition is one thing and the implementation mechanisms for effectiveness is another for relevance in the education system.

### **The Way Forward:**

A number of mechanisms can be put in place for a re-directed approach toward making the vocational technical education component of the Nigerian Education system functional and useful of the individuals and the entire Nigerian society.

### **Such mechanisms Include:**

1. Institutions of Vocational Technical Education Programme evaluation centre for regular evaluation of the programmes at the different levels to determine the relevance, quality, quantity, constraints; to provide feedback for improvements.
2. A review of the vocational technical education policy should be embarked upon with a view to stating clearly defined occupationally oriented objectives with in-built mechanisms for achieving them.
3. Vocational technical education programme implementation should be re-directed to about 65 percent of field practical experience for effective preparation of the individual for the world of work.
4. Structurally a review should be instituted to make effects linkage and structural flow with in-built flexible provision for the individuals to have opportunities for options for ensured steady career future.
5. Re-training component of the vocational technical education should be given a prominent status rather than subsidiary recognition and fully implemented to ensure updates in the individuals, the programmes and the society.

### **Conclusion.**

It is an indisputable fact that all is not well with the vocational technical education component of the National Policy on Education in Nigeria, from all indications the satisfaction of the mission of the programme, that of making the individuals and the society occupationally wealth, independent and self-sustaining and yet to be met: But there are ways forward for purposeful re-direction.

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