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FUNCTIONAL VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION CURRICULUM FOR SUSTAINABLE YOUTH EMPOWERMENT IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: *This paper was designed to look at vocational and technical education curriculum. Vocational and technical education is a programme designed for sustainable youth empowerment in Nigeria. Vocational and technical education cannot be overemphasized for development and growth of the economy. The paper treated the topic under the following sub- headings: Technical and Vocational Education in Nigeria, Functional Vocational and Technical Curriculum Implementation, Factors Militating against Implementation of Functional Vocational and Technical Education in Nigeria, and Promoting Vocational and Technical Education Curriculum for Sustainable Youth Empowerment in Nigeria. The paper was concluded and recommendations were made to further improve on the vocational and technical education programme. Some of the recommendations are: Government should delegate inspectors from ministry of education or set-up an implementation committee that will advise government on better ways of monitoring, controlling and implementing the affairs of vocational and technical education programme*

KEYWORDS: Curriculum, Education, Empowerment, Functional, Sustainable, Technical. Vocational and Youth

INTRODUCTION

The relevance of the application of vocational and technical education as pre-requisites for human, material, socio-economic and technological development has long been noticed worldwide by huge investment in vocational and technical, science and technology core curriculum introduced in 1985, and is now being implemented in schools across the country. Vocational education is education for work. It prepares individuals to be gainfully employed.

These preparations become effective when teaching and implementation of results in functional learning (Nwachukwu, 200I). The importance of vocational and technical education advancement, usefulness and sustainable youth empowerment of any nation in nearly all fields of human endeavour has been a source of concern to various people and government at various times.

The youth learns to accept responsibilities for his well-being favourably; he will not achieve this by simply accepting information on why vocational education is necessary for work or by the mere preparation of factual materials about it in a classroom. We cannot be content merely to guarantee the right to acquire vocational education, but must provide opportunities in such a way as to help youths to learn and adapt to a lifestyle that is deeply rooted in vocational and technical education curriculum. To achieve this goal, the youth must be actively involved in the learning process.

Umuru (1999) explained curriculum as all the learning experiences given to the child under the auspices of the teacher. The problem that confronts most developing countries after independence is always identified to be that of inappropriate curricula and education in such states. Vocational and technical curriculum constitutes a broad range of student's experiences in the technical college setting. Instructions are given by teachers and curricula include these instructions that constitute a broad range of staff's experiences.

Mbaiorga (1992) stated that instruction focus on the delivery of vocational and technical, science and technology experience in the school. He further stressed that instruction may be perceived as the planned instruction between the technical teachers and students that results in desirable learning. He pointed out that some educators feel that all curricula include instruction, while others contend that sound instruction includes a sound curriculum.

Technical and Vocational Education in Nigeria

Even before the advent of British in Nigeria, many communities and cultures had developed their own system of informal, formal and vocational education system. Vocational education was done through the system of apprenticeship, whereby young boys and men were attached to master craftsmen where they learned various trades and skills such as carpentry, masonry, blacksmith, foundry, carving, textile design and dyeing, etc. Such apprentices could spend from three to seven years depending on the trades they were specializing in, the master's skill, competence and exposure, and the ward's individual ability and performance. At the end of such training, the graduate apprentice was assisted by the family to acquire necessary tools, and local equipment to start his own trade. He would recruit other apprentices to work within his new set-up (Odugbesan, 1995).

Reflecting on the history of vocational and technical education in Nigeria, one will recognize how education curricula were subjected to social and political influences aimed at achieving any political or social end of the government of the time (Umoru, 1999). The advent of British in Nigeria during the colonial missionaries, trades, and administrators and so on, curricula were used and fine-tuned towards achieving the vested interest of colonial masters. After Independence in 1960, it became clear that colonial system of Education was no longer suitable for the people of Nigeria as it has failed to produce the type of manpower necessary for development of the society. The expected sustainable youth empowerment was not achieved through the colonial curricula of education.

The New National Policy on Education (6-3-3-4 system) was designed to prepare individuals for useful living within the society (N .P.E. 2004). The choice of any vocational and technical education curriculum model is based on the roles that technical colleges or institutions are expected to play in the society. This means that curriculum must be relevant to societal needs as stated by the National Policy on Education (2004) in its national objectives.

The Federal Government's realization of a better citizenry for the nation decided to implement this kind of new policy on education of 6-3-3-4 in order to achieve sustainable youth development and empowerment for the nation as a whole to foster a change.

Functional Vocational and Technical Curriculum Implementation

Nwachukwu (2001) stated that certain factors are crucial for functional vocational and technical education curriculum implementation. The factors are enumerated and explained as

follows:

1. The vocational and technical education curriculum must be humanized. The curriculum for vocational and technical education in Nigeria should not be something foreign to technical college students, and should not be chosen just because it is traditional. The vocational and technical education curriculum must speak of today, of real-life problems facing our communities and society and the process of living in its entire ramification. Nwachukwu explained that humanizing today's vocational and technical Education means making the curriculum responsive to the present situation of Nigeria. Humanizing vocational and technical education means training the youths for sustainable and self-reliant empowerment in Nigeria. Materials chosen in this vocational and technical education curriculum to be taught and utilized for learning should be derived from the need and environmental requirement of Nigeria for sustainable youth empowerment in the nation.

2. Trainees must be ready to receive what is taught. The ability of the trainees to learn depends on that student's readiness to learn. In any teaching-learning situation, there is a period when effective learning takes place. This learning period varies among individuals even when they are exposed to the same learning environment. Many factors are known to influence the readiness to learn among students. The factors include age, family background, nutritional status, fatigue or lack of it. Others are belief and attitudes of learners. It therefore means that the art of good teaching lies in the ability of the teacher to find out those learning related problems, which students exhibit during classroom and workshop instruction, and utilizing the knowledge about it to structure the curriculum of vocational and technical education in Nigeria.

3. The learning experiences must provide the development of the ability to think. In vocational and technical education, thinking is the process of realizing and finding solutions to problems. It has been defined as all those cognitive actions taken by an individual in advance of an action as a preliminary to deciding among alternative thinking. According to Nwachukwu (2001), it characterized the whole process of solving a problem, which is very essential for handling problem-solving situation or for carrying out tasks in vocational and technical education situations.

4. The vocational and technical education curriculum must be based on and contain experiences intrinsic to the life of the learner. There are stages in vocational and technical education and when students pass through the pre-vocational to the vocational concepts and characteristics, they develop new ideas, shape their values and can by so doing, solve their individual problems. These students can constantly undergo the process of exploring and testing out ways of getting to where they want to go. In this manner, these students will learn, and this learning process requires direct thinking. These students can in this process discover new materials relevant to the solution of their problems. Such materials must be intrinsic to them because they discovered the materials themselves and found it useful for solving their immediate problems. These intrinsic materials will remain internalized in the students because they have fixed the knowledge into the repertoire of their abilities and understanding.

FACTORS MILITATING AGAINST IMPLEMENTATION OF FUNCTIONAL TECHNICAL EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

The problem facing the effective implementation of functional technical education is numerous and ranges from the existence of technical education. Oranu (1990) stated that lack of physical facilities is the problem of technical education in Nigeria. On the problem existing in the technical colleges and the system of education, it is lack of materials and necessary equipment for effective teaching of vocational and technical, science and technology subjects (Aromolaron,1985). Okoro (1991) stated that the facilities, which include the buildings, equipment, tools and technical college materials available, are inadequate for effective use and implementation of vocational and technical curriculum in technical colleges. The state of inadequate equipment and facilities for teaching and effective implementation of vocational and technical curriculum in technical colleges has been a source of concern to various people and government at various times. Functional vocational and technical education curriculum for sustainable youth empowerment in Nigeria is clearly stipulated in the National Policy on Education (2004). The policy stated that equipment and other facilities in technical institutions will be utilised also for evening classes and for adult and non-formal education, for instance in establishing training programme for groups of traders and road-side mechanics. In this way, maximum use would be made of this equipment from their use in normal day class. The realization of the objectives of functional technical education curriculum depends to a large extent on different factors.

The attainment and actualization of functional technical education for sustainable youth empowerment was also emphasized by the National Policy on Education (2004). The policy is aimed at:

a. Providing trained manpower in applied technology particularly at, craft, advanced craft and technica1 levels.
b. Provide the technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, commercial and electronic development.
c. Give training and impact the necessary skills to individuals who shall be self-reliant economically.

When discussing problems militating against proper implementation of technical education, the teachers and students always come to mind because it is the teacher that uses the technical equipment, books and facilities in teaching the students during the implementation of the technical college curriculum. Msue (1992) undertook a study of the problem facing vocational and technical college and secondary school in Benue State in Nigeria. Msue noticed that the shortages of teachers to effectively use these available tools and equipment in terms of quality and quantity available in schools are the major problems facing vocational and technical curriculum. He recommended that there should be need to train teachers to effectively make use of the technical equipment in technical colleges.

Promoting Technical Education Curriculum for Sustainable Youth Empowerment

Ezekwe (1990) made his contribution towards the promotion of technical, science equipment utilization and technological, management of materials in Nigeria. In this regard, in collaboration with UNESCO, he hosted the international workshop on the management of science equipment and technology in Africa, in February 1990. The workshop recommended the establishment of an African Network of training institutions in science and technology

equipment management and utilization for sustainable youth empowerment in Nigeria.
Technical education issues were addressed by the international project on Technical and Vocational Education (UNEVOC) at Yaba College of Technology, Lagos located in the largest urban centre in Nigeria, It was established forty-seven years ago with a present population of about 14,000 full-time and: part-time students in 5 schools and 24 departments offering courses in engineering, environmental studies, applied sciences, management and business studies and arts and painting technology.
The National Board accredits about 98% of its programme for technical education (NBTE). Spare parts of equipment have been difficult to procure for germane training programme and implementation of curriculum of sustainable youth empowerment. The procurement of genuine spare parts to assist the implementation of the programme to cover the ever increasing number of youths yearning for technical education is difficult. It became difficult to meet up with the demand for equipment in the technical college, because spare parts may not be easy to obtain for replacement of damaged parts during implementation and practical training in technical college.

Okorie (2000) stated that many machines for training in the technical colleges may be out of use for a long time until parts of the equipments are ordered from country of manufacture.
The Federal Government has already taken a gigantic step in this direction by setting up the Federal Science equipment manufacturing centre at Enugu, Enugu State. The establishment of second one in Minna, Niger State was another attempt made by government toward achieving the objectives of functional technical education for sustainable youth empowerment in Nigeria. The centres were expected to manufacture over 200 items for science equipment and technology tools to meet all level of educational system from primary to tertiary institutions.
Abdullahi (1990) further stated that as an ongoing project, the federal science equipment centre, Ijanikin, Lagos and those set up by the states and some universities organize workshops on repairs, utilization, maintenance and improvisation of technical equipment for sustainable youth empowerment in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study is meant for re-appraising the technical education curriculum for sustaining youth empowerment in Nigeria. The author looked at technical education's aims of National Policy on Education (2004). The aims of vocational and technical education in Nigeria will remain unachievable if the challenges posed by the contemporary needs are not met. The nation must therefore look ahead and project evolving strategies for a better implementation of the curriculum that can actualize sustainable youth empowerment for the Nation.
The following were suggestions for improvement on the implementation of vocational and technical education curriculum for sustainable youth empowerment for the Nation.

1. Government should delegate inspectors from Ministry of education or set up an implementation committee that will advise government on better ways of monitoring, controlling and implementing the affairs of vocational and technical education as it relates to our immediate situation in Nigeria.
2. The government should train qualified vocational and technical education teachers and experts to operate the complex machines and equipment during the implementation of technical college programme and use such skills acquired by teachers to educate and empower the youths of Nigeria.

3. The industries, non-governmental agencies and private enterprises should provide laboratories, equipment, workshops, facilities and machines in the existing technical colleges as stated in the curriculum for effective implementation of the technical college programme.
4. Government should post minimum of five vocational and technical teachers to the technical colleges to handle the different areas, and the principals should be in the field of technical education field
5. Scholarship and research grants/loans should be given to individuals in the field of vocational and technical education to assist the technical education programme to grow academically and also to meet the target of sustainable youth empowerment and self-reliant individuals.
6. Government should provide fund to enable the principals and teachers install the machines and equipment not installed in the different technical colleges and also to provide other facilities for effective implementation of the vocational and technical education curriculum.
7. Accreditation should be carried out on regular basis in technical colleges to check the dwindling situation in our technical colleges.

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