



Strengthening Technical and Vocational Education for Socioeconomic Development

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Abstract

The paper title 'Strengthening Technical and Vocational Education for Socioeconomic Development in Nigeria'. Examined Technical and Vocational Education in Nigeria with a view to strengthening it for Stimulation of Socioeconomic Development. This was achieved through: explaining the concept of socioeconomic development, examining the features and disposition of technical and vocational education in Nigeria and propose measures for strengthening technical and vocational education. The study adopted qualitative method that relied purely on literature materials that included reports, journals, conference and seminar papers as well as internet materials. The main findings of the paper included; Inadequate political will to support the programme in Nigeria, Inadequate qualified lecturers and instructors, Inadequate infrastructure, Inadequate funding, Unsuitable learning environment, Substandard libraries, Below standard curriculum as well as Inadequate awareness on the importance of technical and vocational education in socioeconomic development in the country. The paper recommended provision of adequate political will, Introduction of technical and vocational education in all stages of education in the country. Planning in all activities of technical and vocational education, Adequate funding, Inclusiveness, Employing adequate qualified personnel, Training and retraining personnel, Alliance, collaboration and networking, Continuous research and utilization of

result, Publicity and enlightenment, Promoting stakeholders participation as well as Moral and spiritual development in the strengthening of technical and vocational education to stimulate socioeconomic development in the country.

Keywords: *Development, Education, Strengthening, Socioeconomic, Technical and Vocational.*

Introduction

The activation, unfolding and realization, improvement and bringing about positive change in social and economic life of population and by population which every reasonable society desire to achieve are termed socioeconomic development (Adamu 2015). In other words it is the process of social and economic development in a society measured with indicators, such as gross domestic product, life expectancy, literacy and level of employment, changes in less tangible factors such as personal dignity, freedom of association, personal safety, freedom from fear of physical harm and the extent of participation in civil society (Waksha and Adamu 2016).

Technical and vocational education is seen as essential for enhancing economic competitiveness and contributing to social inclusion, poverty reduction and sustainable development. As well as responding

to labour market trends, equip learners with basic skills and to support personal and social development (UIS 2006). It is a vital aspect of the educational process in all countries, and in particular contributes to the achievement of the societal goals of social, cultural and economic development, while at the same time developing the potential of all individuals, both men and women, for active participation in the establishment and implementation of these goals, regardless of religion, race and age; lead to an understanding of the scientific and technological aspects of contemporary civilization in such a way that people comprehend their environment and are capable of acting upon it while taking a critical view of the social, political and environmental implications of scientific and technological change; and empower people to contribute to environmentally sound sustainable

development through their occupations and other areas of their lives (UNESCO, 2001). It is essential and indispensable for creating knowledge of skill, social security and wealth. It is perceived as a noble and meritorious endeavour in promoting the dignity of the labour and the economic well-being of individuals (Yusuf and Yusuf 2016), It is a means of wealth creation and economic empowerment that provide one with legitimate means of livelihood and relieve one from the burden of being dependent on people.

Skills development is an increasingly important factor in adapting societies to changing economic and environmental conditions. It can bring innovation, enhance productivity, stimulate economic competitiveness and underpin inclusive approaches to development. Despite significant progress, too many developing countries still lack effective vocational education and training (VET) strategies, and are struggling with costly and outdated training systems, and have no culture of evaluation and knowledge-based policy making and programme administration (Berlia 2016).

In Nigeria vocational and technical education is associated with series of problems that included inadequate political will, qualified lecturers and instructors, infrastructure, funding and unsuitable learning environment among others that have weakened its capacity in proper arousal of socioeconomic development.

The aim is to examine technical and vocational education in Nigeria with a view to strengthening it for stimulation of socioeconomic development. This was achieved through: explaining the concept of socioeconomic development, examining the features and disposition of technical and vocational education and propose measures for strengthening technical and vocational education to stimulate socioeconomic development.

CONCEPT OF SOCIOECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

It can be speculated that socioeconomic are issues relating, involving or concerning social and economic factors whose development can have wide-ranging social and economic effects, from local on a small community to entire society or a nation. The goal of socioeconomic study is generally to bring about socioeconomic development usually by improvement on literacy, employment, gross domestic product, personal dignity and safety among others.

Development is the unfolding and realization of the people creative potential, enabling them to improve their material condition of living through the use of

resources available to them. It is a process by which the people's personalities are enhanced to be creative, organized and disciplined. "It entails the activation of a society's socio-economic potential in a combine effort to overcome problems or indicators of underdevelopment. Socio-economic changes which are drastic and which touch all spheres of society" (Ilesanmi 2007). Development has an ethical connotation. Its aim is or should be primarily the improvement of human being in a rounded sort of ways. Raising the quality of life of the masses, creating an egalitarian society where equal opportunities are available and which involve the adequate provision of education, health, employment, and housing facility as well as food... (Olusanya 1984) in Ebigbola and Renne (2000). Adamu (2015) described development as implying "the multidimensional process, procedure, method or means involving or resulting in positive changes or improvement in structures, attitude and institutions as well as the accelerations of economic growth, the reduction of inequality and eradication of absolute poverty" Kilani (2006) sees development as being holistic and should look at the human development from all aspects it is purposive all value loaded as its aim is success in all ramification. It envisions that development changes must begin from inside the heart and must reach the social and material surroundings.

According to Adamu (2015) socioeconomic development is the event (happening, occurrence, change, incident and stage), growth (expansion, progress, advancement, change, increase, enlargement, improvement and elaboration) and enhancement (advancement, training, education and extension) relating or involving social and economic factors of a people. For Odekunle (1989:39) as cited in Umar (2005) Socio economic development means the improvement on a continuous basis of the quality of the life of the overwhelming majority of the members of society in all respect. It can be seen as progressive transformation of the social and economic life and environment of people in an area.

Socioeconomic development is the process of social and economic development in a society measured by gross domestic product (GDP), life expectancy, literacy level, level of employment and changes in less tangible factors such as personal dignity, freedom of association, personal safety, freedom from fear of physical harm and the extent of participation in civil society among others (Wikipedia 2014). To Audu (2016) socio economic development means the improvement of peoples' lifestyle through improved education, income, skills

development and employment. It is a process of economic and social transformation which is measured with indicators such as trade and investment, life expectancy, literacy, employment and infrastructural development in a society. It implies the process by which a state improves the economic, political and social wellbeing of its people through the improvement in the gross domestic product (GDP), per capita income and investment. Socioeconomic development thus is a process of improvement in a variety of ways that call for eradication of poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, low income and investment so as to improve the standard of the masses. Also Adamu and Waksha (2016) explained that socioeconomic development is about activation, unfolding and realization, improvement and positive change in social and economic life of population and by population which every reasonable society desire to achieve. However, from the forgone socioeconomic development could be conceived to cover growth, expansion, progress, advancement, positive change, increase, enlargement, improvement, elaboration, enhancement, among others in human social and economic life and environment in a continuous and harmonious basis achieved through deliberate, provision of professional planned education, training and practice in knowledge and skill.

FEATURES AND DISPOSITIONS OF TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

The National policy on education (2014 edition) in Nigeria explained that "technical and vocational education is used as a comprehensive term referring to those aspects of the educational process involving, in addition to general education, the study of technologies and related sciences and the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of economic and social life". In other words it is an aspect of learning which leads to acquisition of practical and applied skills as well as basic scientific knowledge. It is a form of education designed to prepare students for industry, agriculture and commerce among others usually provided at senior secondary or lower tertiary level (Ewere, 2011). Olaitan (1986) described it as planned programme of courses and learning experiences that begins with exploration of career options, supports basic academic and life skills, and enable achievement of high academic standard, leadership preparation for industry defined work and advancement and continuing education.

It is an extensive programme as rightly described by Ohiole and Ogomezim (2013) putting it as "an umbrella which covers many units. They are the agricultural education units, business education which is also an umbrella for secretariat or office education, accounting education, computer education, distributive/marketing education. Another unit is industrial and technology which has electrical education, mechanical education, building education, woodwork education and metal work education".

Technical and vocational education plays an important role in nation building. It is the cornerstone and veritable vehicle for the revitalization of technology education and economy as it provide the required manpower for socio economic, technical and industrial sectors of a nation (IProject 2016). It is important in preparing a person for a specific job, it equips a person with skills and qualities required to do a particular job, it promote self-employment, it encourage entrepreneurship, reduces rate of unemployment and migration to urban centres. It leads to technological advancement that ensures optimum utilization of resources and leads to enhanced productivity and thereby increased level of growth, job satisfaction and reduction in gap between demand and supply, bring innovation, stimulate economic competitiveness and underpin inclusive approaches to development. (Berlia 2016, Waksha and Adamu 2016). The National Policy on Education (2014) further elucidated that technical and vocational education is "an integral part of general education, a means of preparing for occupational fields and for effective participation in the world of work, an aspect of lifelong learning and a preparation for responsible citizenship, an instrument for promoting environmentally sound sustainable development and a method of alleviating poverty." It is a programme that provides ample opportunities for all individual to become useful to themselves, the society and the country at large.

In Nigeria the aim, ambition, purpose, target, aspiration, intention, idea, or end of technical and vocational education according to the National Policy on Education is:

- Provide trained manpower in the applied sciences, technology and business particularly at craft, advanced craft and technical levels.
- Provide the technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, commercial and economic development.

- Give training and impart the necessary skills to individual who shall be self- reliant economically.
- Provide people for a new vocation as a result of occupational changes due to changing method of production which necessitates new technical competence.
- Rehabilitate the aged and handicapped to ensure a productive utilization of all available manpower.

In enactment, undertaking, achievement, acquirement, pursuance or carrying out of the above the following are embark on:

- The main features of the curricular activities for technical colleges should be structured in foundation and trade modular.
- The curriculum for each trade shall consist of general education, theory and practical related courses, workshop practices, industrial training/production work as well as small business management and entrepreneurial training components.
- For effective participation of students in practical work the teacher-students ratio shall be kept at 1:20.

The programme provides opportunities for a wide range of activities that among others included mechanical trades, computer craft practice, electrical engineering trades, building trades, wood trades, hospitality, textile trades, beauty culture trades, business trade and leather goods manufacture. With these effectively and efficiently carried out it is expected that Technical and vocational education "gives individuals the skill to live, learn and work as a productive citizen in a global society" (Dike 2015), It is considered as an important measure for the development of trained labour force required for the socio-economic development of a country (Berlia2016).

However, Technical and Vocation Education in Nigeria is among others bedeviled by the following issues.

- Inadequate political will to support the programme.
- Inadequate qualified lecturers and instructors to provide the required skill training and education
- Inadequate infrastructure in the various institutions where such skills and knowledge are given.

- Inadequate funding of the activities of the programme.
- Unsuitable learning environment.
- Substandard libraries.
- Below standard curriculum.
- Inadequate awareness on the importance of technical and vocational education in socioeconomic development in the country.

However the accumulation of these and other issues have weakened the capacity of the technical and vocational education in the country in stimulating socioeconomic development, hence the need for strengthening.

MEASURES FOR STRENGTHENING TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

In the context of this paper the term strengthening is synonymous and composes of consolidation, solidification, reinforcement, intensification, amplification, fortification, bolstering, buttressing, firming up and making stronger the technical and vocational education. This involves the following;

- Committing adequate political will — this involves government or administration determination, resolve, will power, motivation, drive and strength of character toward technical and vocational in Nigeria.
- Introduction of technical and vocational education in all stages of education in the country.
- Planning — all activities of technical and vocational education should be professionally planned and implemented at all stages of education.
- Adequate funding- provision of adequate finance for all financial commitment of technical and vocational education.
- Inclusiveness— comprehensive in involving all categories of the population in the society without discrimination.
- Employing adequate qualified personnel — relevant in terms of theoretical and the practical knowledge and skill in the various disciplines that will be capable of impact knowledge and skill in all categories of learning.
- Training and retraining personnel — both the new and the old personnel should be updated through schooling, workshops, seminars and conferences so as to cope with current challenges in their field.

- Alliance, collaboration and networking - should be highly encouraged between institutions, governmental and non-governmental organizations, local, national and international in supporting technical and vocational education in the country.
- Continuous research and utilization of results regarding issues in technical and vocational education.
- Publicity and enlightenment on the importance of technical and vocational education using community and religious leaders, mass, print and social media.
- Promoting stakeholders participation with each playing specified roles appropriately.
- Moral and spiritual development should be incorporated into the training activities.

CONCLUSION

Technical and vocational education in Nigeria is identified to be afflicted by inadequacy of: political will, qualified lecturers, infrastructure, funding, awareness, unsuitable learning environment, substandard libraries and curriculum that deterred it from playing its expected role in the country.

The paper proposed committing adequate political will, introduction of technical and vocational education in all stages of education, planning, inclusiveness, adequate funding, employing adequate qualified personnel, training and retraining personnel, alliance, collaboration and networking, continuous research and utilization of results, publicity and enlightenment, promoting stakeholders participation and moral and spiritual development for strengthening technical and vocational education to stimulate socioeconomic development in the country.

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