

APPRAISAL OF THE PROSPECTS AND PROBLEMS OF ADULT LITERACY EDUCATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY NIGERIA: IMPLICATION FOR VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT IN NIGER STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Manpower development denotes a process of education and training through which human resources available are enable to acquire skills for optimal performance and subsequent improved productivity. As a process, such recurrent form of education and training could be at the instance of governments, employers of labour or associations or still at the discretion of individual workers who perceive the need for further training in order to be relevant in the society. This paper therefore discusses adult education, forms of adult education, objectives and roles of adult education to human resource development. The paper further discusses the concept of vocational and technical education capturing the challenges facing vocational and technical education. The paper concludes that skill acquired in non-formal education centres enhances securing employment.

Key words: Adult, Education, Problems, Technical, Vocational,

Introduction

Education 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.

Adult education is one of the fields of academic endeavour that is saddled with the responsibility of solving socio-economic, cultural, political and environmental problems. There is positive association between adult education programmes and increased levels of self-esteem and high levels of knowledge and skills which thereby encourage positive and active engagement of people in their own development (Umar, Eshak, Bichi, & Aujara, 2010). Adult education is narrowly interpreted as literacy only.

Vocational and technical education according to Okorochoa(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.

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 in 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.

Conceptual Framework

Concept of Adult Education

The term adult education across different societies and nations seems to be perceived in different ways, hence the difficulty in arriving at a unified definition. Ihejirika (2012) reporting the outcome of the first conference on comparative study of adult education presented it as:

A process whereby persons who no longer attend school on a regular and full time basis (unless fulltime programmes designed for adults) undertake sequential and organized activities with the conscious intention of bringing about changes in information, knowledge and undertaking or skills appreciation and attitudes or for the purpose of identifying and solving personal or community problems.

Adult education is understood as a transmission process of general, technical or vocational knowledge, as well as skills, values and attitudes, which takes place out of the formal education system with a view to remedying early education inadequacies of mature people or equipping them with the knowledge and cultural elements required for their self-fulfilment and active participation in the social, economic and political life of their societies (Seya, 2014).

As pointed out earlier, the use and meaning of this concept tend to be applied in line with the needs of the people of a given society. In developing nations, with associated political problems, poor economy and high rate of illiteracy, the concept is used and defined to meet their varying needs.

Forms of Adult Education

The education of adults whether in developed or developing countries comes in three forms; Formal, Non formal and Informal.

Formal Adult Education: This is a form of adult education which shares some kinds of characteristics, within the formal school system. Here the programmes are organized and planned in schools or colleges and tertiary institution with laid down conditions, and stipulated time and periods of classes and reward in form of certificates to those found worthy on completion of some prescribed examinations.

Non-Formal Education:

Non-formal education is the direct opposite of the formal adult education in terms of structure. While the formal can take place within the walls of a school, college or university, the non-formal takes place out of school. Though organized, its entry requirement, learning content and time are planned to suit the learners so as to avert constraints and maximize objectives.

Informal Adult Educational

This form of education takes place informally. It is not pre-planned, but unorganized and accidental. It is gained through the reading of books, magazines and other printed materials, watching of television and other day-to-day life activities.

In the light of the proceeding, Ihejirika, 2000, posited that adult and non-formal education connotes “alternative to schooling” and known in some quarters as “out of school education. Explaining further, Ihejirika opined that it covers training and instruction outside the formal education system and ranges from apprenticeship to national mass literacy. It may be vocational, such as the craft centres in Nigeria or the girls vocational entrées established in many developed and developing countries which train girls in vocational skills like sewing and preparation of young women for marriage and small businesses.

Non-formal education is given in form of training learners. Learners are not involved in intensive and rigorous mental activity. They learn particular skills or trades and particular discipline. The various skills acquisition and apprenticeship programmes are examples of non-formal education. Because of the differences in skills to be acquired, the assessment process will also differ.

Objectives of Adult and Non-formal Education

The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) outlined the goals of mass literacy, adult and nonformaleducation to include:

- a. Provide functional literacy and continuing education for adults and youths who have never had the advantage of formal education or who did not complete their primary education. These include the nomads, migrant families, the disabled and other categories or groups, especially the disadvantaged gender.
- b. Provide functional and remedial education for those youths who did not complete secondary education.
- c. Provide education for different categories of completers of the formal education in order to improve their basic knowledge and skills.
- d. Provide in-service on the job, vocational and professionals in order to improve their skills
- e. Give the adult citizens of the country necessary aesthetic, cultural and civic education for public enlightenment.

Role of Adult and Non-formal Education in Manpower Development

Manpower development denotes a process of education and training through which human resources available are enable to acquire skills for optimal performance and subsequent improved productivity. As a process, such recurrent form of education and training could be at the instance of governments, employers of labour or associations or still at the discretion of individual workers who perceive the need for further training in order to be relevant in the society.

In the views of Igbo(2008), the role of non-formal education in development is explained by the complex relationships existing between all its forms and the economic, social and cultural factors of development. For instance, the economic role of non-formal education in development is apparent in its contribution to human capital development. Non-formal education yields high rates on investments and enhances labour productivity by equipping various categories of recipients with essential literacy and numeracy skills alongside health care, sanitation and nutrition knowledge that improve people'sstandard of living, as well as relevant skills to improve productivity. In all, Igbo (2008) concluded that investment in the development of h 1MV Cman capital through non-formal education is critical for producing a labour force and technical-know-how that is able to compete in today's global economy.

Non-formal education has brought about reduction in poverty and thus contributed to national development in practical terms, non-formal education equips participants with skills that enhance income generation and improve self-reliance. Non-formal education skills development programmesreduces burden placed on family members, help participants to contribute meaningfully to the society,and reduce unemployment by developing this many aspects of the

individual. Studies have shown that there is a connection between literacy levels and per-capita growth and ultimately a decrease in poverty.

Equally, there is a relationship between non-formal education and the re-skilling and up skilling of the population to be useful to the society. Non-formal education programmes have created opportunities for learners to acquire and apply the knowledge and skills that will propel their own economic development, and national development.

Generally, non-formal education is effective in the provision of life planning education.

This programme kept participant busy by getting them committed to various skills of their choice. The topic treated in life planning education include; sexuality, teenage unwanted pregnancy, abortion, communication skills, HIV/AIDS, rights and responsibilities, mediation and peer pressure, gender roles, cultism and examination malpractice. Furthermore, Assemblies of God (2006) posited that “the inward reality of conversion must influence the outward life, including a person's character, disposition, conversation and behaviour”. This means that Sunday school which is a model of nonformal education also teaches life planning skills. Furthermore, in the Nigerian prisons, the inmates are often given advice on how to refrain from acts capable of indicting them again after serving their jail term.

In addition, skill acquired in non-formal education centres enhances securing employment.

To Ilhejirika (2000) functional literacy education could be work oriented. For instance, an industrial worker needs to improve his skills for greater efficiency and productivity through retraining and attendance of workshop and seminars. Again, an apprentice who had completed his apprentice training could establish his own workshop (self employment). Besides the certificates issued after the training could be used to seek employment in any company, civil service, etc depending on the sector that needs the trade or skill. Furthermore, Ranson (1994) opined that the control and direction of education, because of the perceived function in preparing young people for their future roles in employment and society, becomes a central concern for the corporatist state.

The National Directorate of Employment (NDE) also operates small scale enterprises programme designed to promote self-employment among job-seekers by inculcating in them the spirit of entrepreneurship, creativity and self-reliance as against the usual dependence on public and private sector establishments. To achieve, these objectives, the NDE encourages the retention of entrepreneurship through the provision of requisite training, other called the Entrepreneurship Development Programme (EDP), credit assistance and other necessary support services, to set up small scale business thereby generating jobs for themselves and other Nigerians.

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 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, bookkeeping, 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 self-reliance 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 pursued 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 changed 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 launch 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 is 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 make 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 is 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.

Roles of Vocational and Technical Education

Vocational and technical education is not just a Nigerian issue. It has been a long time discourse both in academic and practice. Through the issue in most developing countries like Nigeria has been a question of successful implementation of VTE programme (Okorochoa, 2012). In this era of globalization and Information and Communication Technology (ICT), emphasis is on vocational skills for the production of self-reliant citizens. VTE therefore, has the following roles to play:

Youth Empowerment In this 21st century characterized by knowledge explosion, the emphasis should be on production of self-reliant citizens. VTE should empower the Nigerian youth with requisite employability skills that should be sustained. VTE schools should produce men and women who, at the end of their education should be able to put into use the skills they have acquired while in school. Institutions should partner with industries and other businesses to enable students fit into the wider society on graduation, either as individual workers in paid employment or self-employed person and functional members of the political society. VTE should also empower the people socially and economically so that they will be able to participate in the making of decision regarding policies affecting their lives, to make the citizens and nations to be self-reliant in the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services.

Ogundele, Akingbade and Akinlabi (2012) revealed that youth empowerment is influenced through acquired skills. Enhancement of Citizens National Economy Vocational and technical education should play a crucial role in the social and economic development of a nation (Grootings and Nelsen, 2006; King and Palmer, 2000).

The development of a nation's economy is contingent on the quality of skilled human capital in the pool. Vocational and technical education provides student with life skills that will make them to be productive entrepreneurs as it engenders creative and innovative ideas; enlarges the economic pie and increases personal freedom. The business environment is changing at a fast pace due to the rapid emergence of technology and globalization. This has added to the increase in demand of valuable human skills necessary to respond to such drastic changes for economic progress. As a channel for entrepreneurial skill acquisition, VTE play the role of improving the economic situation of Nigeria through production and distribution of goods in different areas of specialization. This is achievable through the training of the students in different specialized fields.

In the long run, this will help the students to establish their own enterprise as seen in China, Turkey, India, Japan among other countries that have succeeded economically through vocational education. This is in line with the views of Lawal (2014) who opined that "for a country to advance socially, economically and technologically, its citizens must be creative and productive with a majority becoming job creators rather than seekers" P.54. The author concluded by emphasizing that optimum attention and recognition is to be giving to the promotion of VTE in Nigerian if the country wants to attain great achievement of productivity and sustainable economic environment and natural development. According to Sheieh, Wang and Chon (2009), lifelong vocational education will gradually improve the economic and social development of both the people and the country by making vocational education a channel for exploitation of human resources.

Ozasagir, Bayraktutan and Arsian (2010), their regression and causality test carried out in Turkey provided empirical support for a positive relationship between vocational education and industrial productivity. Vocational trainees' productivity Okafor (2011), will contribute to domestic economic activities. Provision of guidance and Counseling Services to the Students: vocational and technical education should equip students with the right skill for effective adaptation to the business environment. However, no student can acquire all the skills needed in every aspect of the economy. Therefore vocational education practitioners have a role to play in terms of observing and monitoring students' behaviors, attitudes and actions within

the environment for proper skill alignment. The behaviour observed with help VTE practitioners to counsel, guide and advice students on their choice of skills. This will help to ensure that students enrolled in appropriate callings for effective performance and sustainability of the skills learnt.

With proper guidance and counseling, students can acquire skills in dealing with finance and accounting matters, economics, business, ICT, fine and applied arts, music and entertainment, building, auto-mobile, woodwork, electrical and electronics, metal works and agricultural activities such as fishery, poultry, snarling, piggery, crop planting among other numerous skills that will make them self-reliant, self dependent, self fulfilled and self-actualized.

Challenges Facing VTE in Nigeria

There are numerous challenges facing vocational technical education and training which has affected negatively both our national life and development. Among the challenges are:

Poor Public Perception and Apathy to Vocational Education: Vocational and technical education in Nigeria has a very low image and there is need for a turn around on its perception for public acceptance. Observations have shown that many parents especially the elites, the rich and the political class do not encourage their wards to make VTE a career and those people who opt probably for VTE programme either by accident or chance are not motivated or encouraged because the society does not place any significant value or dignity on the programme. In

Nigeria today, how many ministers, governors, local government chairmen, professors and even teachers of VTE do encourage their siblings to enlist for VTE certificates? Rather, they prefer them to study courses like pharmacy, medicine, law, accounting etc. Therefore, boosting the image of VTE should be a serious concern to VTE practitioners, institutions and other stakeholders.

Government Lukewarm Attitudes/Poor Funding: The three tiers of Government in Nigeria have not fully come to appreciate the contributions of vocational and technical education to national economic development even though it is an indispensable tool for tackling unemployment and poverty in the society. This is because successive governments have not found it necessary to adequately finance both the planning and implementation of standard and sustainable vocational and technical education programmes in the country. In support of this statement, Okorie (2001) and Okeke and Eze (2010) stated that insufficient finance is a realistic and practical factor inhibiting the implementation of vocational and technical education sector is holistically on science education. Too much noise is made on the pages of papers and television about vocational and technical education, but little is done to improve the teaching/learning of vocational and technical education programmes in Nigeria.

Shortage of Qualified Vocational Technical Teachers: Many tertiary institutions across the country are inadequately staffed both qualitatively and quantitatively. In most departments especially in vocational education programmes, the number of qualified VTE teachers for each specialized area is in short supply. It is an indisputable fact that without quality VTE teachers, practical works which is an essential component of VTE programme will be difficult to implement.

Acquisition of skills requires that strict attention and supervision should be given to every student.

In other words, individualized instructions become very difficult during practicals' due to shortage of qualified VTE teachers and this affects performance of both the teachers and

students

as teachers were made to teach many VTE courses. Many people who are qualified to teach VTE courses have always abandon teaching for other better jobs that have prestige and better remuneration. According to Adeyinka (n.d), teaching is gradually becoming a profession for fresh graduates of universities and colleges of education who are ready to call it quit, without provocation, as soon as they find better job opportunity. Oluwale, Jegede and Olamide (2013) stated that attracting qualified staff into teaching and teacher training in technical and vocational education was a problem for most countries including Nigeria. In order to spur locally needed vocational and technology teachers, it is imperative that Nigerian government should seriously consider proper retention schemes for their best talents by providing special working conditions such as; adequate research supports and other incentives to stem this problem of brain drain.

Lack of Adequate Equipment and Training Infrastructure: Most vocational education departments in our higher institutions do not have well equipped laboratories, workshops and usable infrastructures. Where these exist, they are grossly inadequate, obsolete and in a dilapidated state. Oduma, (2007) posited that what is seen and referred to as vocational education laboratories in various institutions today are eye-sores as the laboratories only have items or equipment that were provided at the point the departments were established. It is however a statement of fact that most vocational education departments still depend on engineering workshops and lecturers to teach vocational and technical education courses.

Opeoluwa in Dokubo and Dokubo (2013) indicated that only 40% of tertiary institutions in Nigeria has laboratories or workshop spaces for vocational education programmes. They further stated that 60% of other institutions do not have laboratories or workshop spaces and this affects the low quality of technology programmes in higher institutions. Opeoluwa, concluded that this situation is partly responsible for the reason why it has been increasingly difficult to run experiments effectively for students and thus making the teaching and research in vocational and technology difficult. However, the country turned into producing insufficient, unqualified and ill prepared vocational education graduates who ordinarily are supposed to be the driving force for the economic and industry transformation of the country as experienced in developing countries like China and Turkey. This inadequacy in the field of teaching, laboratory and workshop facilities has contributed to poor performances on the part of students.

Non-Uniformity of Course Contents: Most of the Nigerian universities and colleges that offer vocational education programme do not have uniform course contents. Non uniformity in the course contents usually creates problems for students who may wish to transfer to another institution to complete their studies. This disparity in course contents of vocational education programme in Nigerian universities and colleges poses a great challenge for the standardization of the VTE programmes. An Ideal Environment for the Teaching and Learning of Vocational and Technical Education it is a fact that no meaningful teaching and learning can take place in an environment that is not conducive. Observation has shown that most schools lack adequate infrastructural facilities, poorly equipped classrooms and obsolete equipments. For a better result, teaching and learning environment need to be conducive and well furnished. Okoro in Okolocha (2012) opined that effective vocational education can only be achieved where the training on the jobs are carried out, with the same tools and machines as exist in the industry itself. This means that vocational and technical education will be efficient and effective in proportion to the environment in which the learner is trained. To achieve this, a well-planned and organized environment is imperative for students to learn.

Conclusion

The concept adult education tends to be applied in line with the needs of the people of a given society. In developing nations, with associated political problems, poor economy and high rate of illiteracy, the concept is used and defined to meet their varying needs. The paper concludes that skill acquired in non-formal education centres enhances securing employment. For instance, an industrial worker needs to improve his skills for greater efficiency and productivity through retraining and attendance of workshop and seminars. Again, an apprentice who had completed his apprentice training could establish his own workshop (self employment). Besides the certificates issued after the training could be used to seek employment in any company, civil service, among others depending on the sector that needs the trade or skill.

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