

Managing Vocational and Technical Education in the Development of Educational Sector Towards Achieving Millennium Development Goals in Contemporary Nigeria

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Abstract

The Paper examined the role of vocational and technical education in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as it relates to poverty and hunger eradication. It basically focused on the indexes of development by UNDP and the relationship between MDGs and technical vocational education and training (TVET). The paper concludes that; it is imperative for this nation to have any chance of meeting the goals of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Therefore, it cannot be overemphasized that managing technical and vocational education and training is the engine for economic growth. No nation can fight a war without an army. In the same token, Nigeria cannot develop without well-equipped technical and vocational institutions. In fact, it is the missing link in Nigeria's development policy. Finally, it recommended the need to continuously update the curriculum to reflect the emerging needs of the society with a corresponding transformation of teachers to be facilitators of learning rather than been those who impart knowledge.

Keywords: *Curriculum, Development, Education, MDGs, TVET*

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Background to the Study

The 20th century has been characterized with numerous political, economic, religious, and social upheavals which have culminated in global and local wars, economic depression, deprivation and poverty, religious intolerance, disease and ill health, all of which present a picture of a world not conducive for happy and harmonious living. From global and national policy perspectives, the provision of managing Technical/Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is viewed as a necessary intervention in attempts to empower people, reduce poverty, and realize the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The logic is that if people, especially the youths, are equipped with employable skills with which they can access labour markets, then the incidence of unemployment, poverty, and other undesirable consequences of social and economic exclusion would be reduced (Bukar& Habib, 2008).

Nigeria as a member of United Nation planned to achieve her goals through systematic educational programme. Among the educational programmes Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) seems to possess the effective tool for achieving the MDGs. Afro (1999) in Okonkwo (2009) saw TVET as the most effective tool and inevitable means by which extreme poverty and hunger can be eradicated through providing the requisite skills needed to be self-reliant and sufficient in life because Nigeria has the potential to achieve this. This statement is true because TVET focuses on equipping individuals with vocational and technical skills which makes them gainfully employable at the labour market. It also arms people with the basic theoretical and practical facts, make their economic and commercial activities easy, vibrant, interesting and successful. However, the challenges of TVET are enormous, hence, this paper focused on concept of TVET, indexes for development, vocational and technical education teachers role in achieving the MDG in area of poverty and hunger eradication, and the relationship between TVET and MDGs.

Indexes of Development

According to UNESCO and UNDP, human development is not just measured in terms of the economy but also in terms of freedom, equity (access to education health), participation and equality of life (UNDP, 2002). Human development is much more than the raising of national incomes. It is about creating an environment in which people can develop their full potentials and lead productive, creative lives in accordance with their lives situation.

Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET)

Poverty is not new but at each mention, it stirs a lot of misgiving. This is because it has a very devastating influence on its victims. It reduces the social and psychological prestige of its victims. Poverty is a condition of being poor. This could be evidenced even amidst plenty because there could be reeking poverty as a result of lack of knowledge to translate potentiality into practical creative benefits to actuate well-being. Therefore, the key towards translating this potentiality into practical creative benefits is education. Education is any act or experience that has a formative effect on the mind, character (moral) or physical ability of an individual. It is also a process by which society deliberately transmits its accumulated knowledge, skills and values (personal and cultural) from one generation to another. To this end, education is a basic human right and considered by many as a key tool for national development (Anger,

2010). However, this tenet has been challenged by several economists, especially Pritchett (1996). His empirical analysis suggested that many countries, whilst having a large educated population, remain unable to make significant progress. Consequently, scholars argue that countries need a well-diversified education system in order to gain sustainable development through education.

Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) has been an integral part of national development strategies in many societies because of its impact on productivity and economic development. In spite of its contributions, Nigeria as a nation has not given this aspect of education the attention it deserves. This is one of the reasons for the nation's underdevelopment. Technical Education is a planned program of courses and learning experiences that begins with exploration of career options, supports basic academic and life skills and facilitates achievement of high academic standards, leadership, preparation for industry-defined work, and advanced continuing education where as Technical Vocational Education and Training prepares learners for careers that are based on manual or practical activities, traditionally non-academic and totally related to specific trade, occupation or vocation. In other words, it is education designed to develop occupational skills. Vocational/technical education gives individuals the skills to live, learn and work as a productive-citizens in a global society. Technical and Vocational education has many prospects. It can be used as a catalyst for creating employment opportunities. Thus, it is a panacea for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), needs and interests. Development is thus about expanding the choke people have, to lead lives that they value. It is thus, about more than economic growths, which are only a means and an important one of enlarging people's choices. It is therefore viewed that national development must be a country's development in terms of its economic and social freedom which is interrelated; one cannot succeed without the other (Aquah, 2009). To increase national economic development, a country must have social freedom and, to achieve social freedom, a country must have economic freedom. The impact of Technical Vocational Education and Training in national development is linked to human resources development; because People are the real wealth of nations; it has significant impact on economic growth, as well as the development of individuals and societies.

According to Abama and Kwaja cited in Aliyu (2015), the concept of 'human capital suggests that education and training raises the productivity of workers and increases their earnings over their lifetime. But this is not always true for the high proportion of learners and trainees who have gained school leaving certificates. It is the people with skill education who are most likely to benefit from human capital investment. The efforts of the Universities, Polytechnics, Monotechnics and Colleges of Education have not produced the type and quality of skilled worker that can support the economy in the 21st century. There is a wide gap between the theoretical curriculum taught in tertiary institutions and the practical skill needed by employers of labour. The disconnect between the educational system and the world of work is one of the major challenges facing Nigeria today. While the dynamics of global labour market have been tilting towards the replacement of physical labour with knowledge and innovation skills, the undisputed fact remains that the knowledgeable and competitive skilled force are in

desperate short supply in Nigeria today. Similarly, Technical Vocational Education and Training in Nigeria is fraught with problems, which hamper its ability to produce adequate number and the quality of the skilled technical manpower required to lift the country from the unenviable state of technological irrelevance and economic depression. Worse still the various Government Technical Colleges which are spread all over the Federation have continue to perform below expectation in terms of the quality and quantity of trainings and trainees. On the issue of inadequate resources, the problems are legion but suffice it to say that the teachers stand clearly out as factors that can make or mar qualitative Technical Vocational Education and Tanning.

Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) Socio-Economic and Sustainable Development in West Africa

Performance on Millennium Development Goals in achieving socio-economic and sustainable development has varied by country and region; some regions are closer to meeting the targets, while others such as West Africa are not as closer (ECA, 2011 & 2015). However, Africa as a whole has accelerated progress on the MDGs despite unfavourable initial condition being the region with lowest starting point. According to United Nations (2008a) at the midpoint between their adoption in 2000 and 2015 target date for achieving the MDGs, West Africa is not on track to achieve any of the goals (ECA, 2014).

Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are as follows:

- Goal 1: Eradication of Poverty and Hunger
- Goal 2: Achieving Universal Primary Education
- Goal 3: Promoting Gender Equality and Empowered Women
- Goal 4: Reduction of Child Mortality
- Goal 5: Improve Maternal Health
- Goal 6: Combat HIV/Aids, Malaria and other Disease
- Goal 7: Environmental Sustainability
- Goal 8: Global Partnership for Development

Technology Teachers Role in Achieving the MDG in Reduction in Poverty and Hunger in Nigeria

Since teachers are important in education led development, it is important that the curriculum of teacher education should be comprehensive and be continuously updated to reflect emergent needs in the society. There is no doubt that the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, especially goals 2 and 3 (Universal Primary Education and Gender Equity) will greatly lead to the realization of the other goals (Goals: 1, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7) which are the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger; reduction of child mortality and the improvement of maternal health; combat HIV /AIDS, malaria and other diseases and ensure environmental suitability (Adawo, 2011).

The achievement of these will only be possible if teachers that implement the policies are adequately informed, knowledgeable and possess the professional skills to infuse learners with the expected knowledge, competences and skills to face the challenges in the society. A

situation where these emergent issues like the MDGs are not integrated, it will adversely affect the quality of teachers produced as well as the quality of the educational system. The implications of these trends for TVET at all levels are that teachers and instructors must be transformed from those who impart knowledge to those who facilitate learning. This transformation necessitates a change from the didactic rote-learning heritage of TVET to an experiential and facilitative approach by teachers and instructors (Addisson, Hulme, and Kanbur, cited in Aliyu, 2015). Consequently, teaching and learning in TVET should be transformed from an emphasis upon procedure learning to manipulative practices to knowledge, understanding and application.

Table 1: The Relationship between TVET and MDGs

| S/N | Components of TVET | Occupations Taught | Economic Goal Served | Related MDGs |
|-----|--------------------------------|--|--|--|
| 1 | Agricultural Education | Agricultural products, supplies, ornamental horticulture, and related services. | To maintain a profitable viable and efficient agricultural production sector capable of meeting all food and fibre demands while providing satisfactory income to farmers for factors of production. | Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, and by implication all others. |
| 2 | Business and Office Education | Accounting and computer occupations, business data processing, filing, office mechanics general and occupations, keyboarding and related occupations. | Prepares workers for the labour force, offers instruction for economic understanding, and personal economic competencies. | Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, and achieve universal primary education. |
| 3 | Computer Education | Computer basis, Microsoft: excel, printing procedures, windows operations, maintenance, etc. | World processing, programming, desktop publishing, printing, and internet operations. | Eradicate poverty, develop global partnership and others. |
| 4 | Education | Making, human development, food and nutrition, family health and shelter, car and guidance of children and elderly, food management, production and services, home furnishing, equipment and services. | Services, wiser consumers of goods and services, residential care, and decision makers and producers of knowledge, skills and attitude. | Environmental sustainability. |
| 5 | Trade and Industrial Education | Appliances repairs, maintenance of aircraft and business machines, construction and maintenance trades eg: carpentry, electricity, masonry, plumbing and pipe filling and pipe filling and drafting. | Provides manpower with employability skills in the use of functional technology related to the occupation areas. | Eradication of poverty through the skills acquired. |

Source: (Aqua, 2009)

Though Nigeria had been making some strides in every realm of development since the return of -democracy, yet reversing the vestiges of a weak economy, poor political governance, incidence of corruption, and high level of poverty due to several years of military rule had proved a daunting and overwhelming task. On this note, we are afraid that Nigeria did not achieve its MDG targeted goals. Nevertheless, it appeared that the federal government was making concerted efforts to meet the MDGs quantitative targets by launching reform agenda in May 2004, four years later, designed to be implemented and monitored by the National

Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) and State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategies (SEEDS) collaborating with Department for International Development (DFID). But it appeared that all the efforts were to naught because some of the programmatic remedies were not sustained.

Conclusion

Developing the education sector, therefore, is imperative for this nation to have any chance of meeting the goals of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Therefore, it cannot be overemphasized that managing technical and vocational education and training is the engine for economic growth. No nation can fight a war without an army. In the same token, Nigeria cannot develop without well-equipped technical and vocational institutions. In fact, it is the missing link in Nigeria's development policy. However, the progress of any society lies in the productivity of its citizens. Higher productivity gives a nation advantage of economies of scale and lowers the costs of production and prices of goods and services. Nigeria should begin now to take very seriously investment in managing technical/vocational education and skill training as no nation can compete effectively in the emerging global market place with merely literate but unskilled workers. The leading factors of production in the emerging global economy are said to be technology, knowledge, creativity and innovation. Finally, a balanced skilled workforce plays a more holistic role in national development.

Recommendations

Based on the presentation, it is therefore recommended that:

1. Nigerian government should have had genuine programs anchored on rigorous monitoring and evaluating systems.
2. Teacher educators must be sensitive to the emergent needs and problems of the society and tailor their teaching to satisfy such needs.
3. Seminars and workshops should be organized for teachers regularly to enlighten them on the Millennium Development Goals and how they will contribute to their achievement.
4. Need to re-introduce and adequately framed technical education in Nigeria.
5. Teachers should be trained on how to implement the new curriculum trend or skills acquired to drive away poverty and hunger.
6. Curriculum should be continuously updated in line with emergent needs of the society.

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