KIU Journal of Social Sciences Copyright©2018
Kampala International University ISSN: *2413-9580*; 4(3): 233–239

Vocational Education: An Instrument for Achieving the Seven-Point Agenda in Nigeria

SAMUEL OGUNWALE OGUNDIRAN
National Open University of Nigeria

Abstract. Nigeria government's 7-Point Agenda focuses on power and energy, food security and agriculture, wealth creation and employment, mass transportation, land reforms plus qualitative and functional education which are the needs to be met in the year 2020. The detailed objectives of the 7-Point Agenda are subsumed in the objectives of vocational and technical education which are considered an instrument for the achievement of the Agenda for national development. Vocational and technical education is capable of training more than the required manpower for Agenda reforms because it covers over one thousand careers which are germane to the national vision. The timing for mission accomplishment appears to be one of the problems facing the efforts. Furthermore, vocational and technical education with its impressive potentials for enhancing reforms in the nation's problem areas faces a lot challenges as explained in the paper. If Nigeria must be a truly industrialized nation, it has to integrate technology in all its ramifications into her culture because the technological development is culture-based.

1. Introduction

The Seven-Point Agenda is the brain child of Yar' Adua's administration in 2007. It is a dream or visualization of an era of prosperity, comfortability and secure living for all Nigerians by the year 2020. The agenda can be thought of as a reform process for Nigeria. There is apparently a link between 7-Point Agenda and Vision 2020 (Susu, 2010.). Vision 2020 is the target while the agenda is the strategy of substance for reaching the target. According to Dike (2009), the Agenda customises the decisions and actions for achieving the vision. The 7-Point-Agenda aimed at achieving certain goals and objectives by the year 2020. The major goals of the Agenda/Vision is to develop a united and secured society by strong democratic principles and a modern industrialized economy which is fair, just and especially socially inclusive, environmentally responsible and a key player in the regional and global economy (Dike, 2009). The Vision is a long-term project but the 7-Point Agenda constitutes the strategy for addressing basic immediate development needs afflicting Nigeria as a nation. The objectives, which the agenda seeks to achieve according to Ola (2009) include:

(a)Address the current development challenges facing the nation.
(b)Make significant progress towards the attainment of MDG's
(c)Propel Nigeria into one of the 20 largest economics in the world by 2020.
(d)Run a responsible, accountable and transparent government
(e)Reform and strengthen the democratic and political process

According to Susu (2010), the contents for meeting

the stated 5 objectives are clearly spelled out in the 7-Point Agenda. The items on the agenda constitute the contents for pursuing the foregoing objectives. The Agenda items are power and energy, food security, wealth creation, transport, land reforms, security and education as qualitative and functional as possible with two special interests or issues such as Niger Delta and Disadvantaged Groups. The question to be raised at this juncture is "why does the Agenda focus oil the foregoing targets"? And what is really wrong in the seven areas identified for attention?

There are two answers to the foregoing questions according to Susu (2010). Firstly, the 7-Point Agenda was one of the president's political campaign promises to the people. Secondly, the seven areas have been problems afflicting most Nigerians over the years. The seven points in the agenda when achieved can be seen as the goals of freedom from the sinister dimensions of the targets.

In the light of the above observations, Ola (2009) has outlined the several problems afflicting Nigeria and needing planned information. In the first instance, Nigeria with a population of 140 million as at the time was experiencing inadequacy in power supply. The current supply then was 200 MW out of the 6000 MW expected. This was by far below what South Africa, USA and other industrialized nations are producing. By virtue of its population, Nigeria should be generating 174000 MW. Power was concentrated in areas where the privileged reside at the expense of the poor majority. In many instances when a community requires over ten transformers, only one is made available. Many factories closed down due to inadequate electricity thereby leading to lay-off of workers. The consequence is increase in unemployment figures. The Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN) staffs are not even improving matters with their gross corruption in the bid to augment their low wages. Electric power became the tonic for national development and in its absence, the nation is at cross roads.

Also, the Land Use Act which was promulgated to make land easily accessible to every Nigerian as at this time was failing in its objective and it's less available to the ordinary Nigerian than it was before. Consequently, majority of the citizens are held in a perpetual state of tenancy of development. The failure of the government, both past and present, to resolve the land use problem caused millions of Nigerians to continue sleeping under bridges and in slums throughout the country (Dike, 2009). Nigeria as an agricultural nation with over 60% of her workforce engaging in farming is still witnessing the use of old or traditional implements like hoes and machetes to cultivate their land. The modem farm equipment are beyond the reach of ordinary farmers. Thus, the pace of farm work is slow with subsequent low productivity. Additionally, 70% of arable land is not used. In the circumstance, agriculture cannot keep pace with Nigeria's population growth. To solve the problem, Nigeria has to rely on import to feed itself (Uhi and Nkanu, 1998 in Susu, 2010).

Eyo and Usoro (2006) cited by Ola (2009) declared that the present state of education in Nigeria is pathetic as Nigeria has a low literacy rate compared to those of the industrialized or newly industrialized nations. He further explained that the present engineering and technical curriculum is unsuitable because it was borrowed from Britain and the U.S.A where there are very substantial technical infrastructures based on more than a century of industrial development. Pupils sit under trees to learn as they learn in roofless buildings and bare classroom floors. Teachers' wages are grossly poor and it is difficult for them to look after their health while they are also not properly trained. Instead of making education free and compulsory at all levels, government have introduced tuition fees in almost all the public schools with standards dropping on daily basis (Evans, 1980 in Usoro and Ogenye, 2002). Students who cannot afford the high tuition become dropouts roaming the street. The literacy rate in Nigeria is at thus becomes less than 20% on daily basis while Asia and Japan record literacy rates of 90% and 100% respectively. In Nigeria's case, the rate keeps on dropping due to improper funding as Nigeria allocates less than 10% of its national budget

to education as against the 26% as recommended by UNESCO and about 80% of her youths are unemployed and 10% are under-employed due to improper education (Spencer, Dygdon and Novak, 2003 in Dike, 2009).

Transportation system in Nigeria is another serious issue which is beset with poor road network. Most roads are death traps and poor transport system has caused high cost of food items which have to be transported with serious difficulties from production sites to consumers (Ola, 2009).

Aslo, Eyo and Usoro (2006) declared that Nigeria has one of the worst environments for doing business in the world. This is inimical to wealth creation. The poverty incidence rose from 15% in 1960 to over 66% in 1996 and this keeps on increasing on yearly basis. Since then, more than 91 million Nigerians are said to live on less than one dollar or N199.00 per day. Higher institutions in Nigeria lack training tools for equipping the students with skills the employers' need. Wealth creation becomes an uphill task under the aforementioned conditions. Factories that are expected to employ people are folding up due to lack of power and high cost of running generators to maintain production 9Dike, 2009; Susu, 2010).

Ola (2009) further noted that the high rate of unemployment among the educated men and women does not guarantee security of life. Armed robbery and kidnapping incidents render security expectation a ridiculous goal. The ruling class in Nigeria is insensitive to the well-being of other fellow Nigerians and this also constituted another major treat to peaceful realization of the Agenda-Vision 2020.

Based on foregoing, the Seven-Point Agenda came into existence even though in a dream state till now. However, time is not on the side of this Agenda if the vision must be achieved in 2020 which is two years from now. The Seven Point Agenda, though in the mind and on the paper is visionary in outlook. Its focus on making Nigeria a Great Nation may not be in 2020 but sometime in the future. Unrelentless efforts by all agents are essential in the pursuit of the dream. One of such agents or instruments is vocational and technical education which has not been given the attention it deserves despite its proven contributions to the manpower needs of Nigeria (Dike, 2009). The neglect of vocational and technical education in the scheme of things has apparently been one of the causes of shooting unemployment and poverty in Nigeria. The potentials of vocational technical education as an instrument for achieving the 7-Point-Agenda are fantastic.

2. Vocational and Technical Education as an Instrument for Achieving 7- Point Agenda

Dike (2009) listed the objectives (identified earlier) of the 7-Point Agenda as those which indicate the certain targets such as tackling the development challenges facing the nation, progress towards attaining MDG's, propel Nigeria into one of the largest economies, run responsible, accountable and transparent government as well as reform and strengthen the democratic and political process.

3. Major Service Area of Vocational Education and Career Training for National Development

Elias(2000),Thompson,(2003), Bias (2001) and Fryklund (2005) have identified some major service areas of vocational education for career development to include Distributive Education, Home Economics Education, Health Occupations, Trade and Industrial Education, Business and Office Education as well as Technical Education. These have been added to computer education which is the eighth member in the family of vocational and technical education. A breakdown of the eight service areas yields well over one hundred occupations. Most of the occupations in vocational education are multi-block in nature while very few others are single block (Roberts, 2001). A multi block occupation of industrial nature is made up of divisions of work each of which is practically an occupation in itself. For example, automobile technology consists of auto

electricity, auto mechanics, auto body repair, vulcanization, wheel alignment, spray painting among others. Each division is an occupation in which training is provided for skills development. A single block occupation just has one division while drafting technology is another multi-block occupation. It has over sixteen divisions which are full careers in themselves with animal production in Agriculture having a multi-block occupation of ten divisions (Elias, 2000; Spencer, Dygdon and Novak, 2003).

Since almost all the occupations in the eight service areas of vocational are multi-block, a breakdown of all the occupations contained therein yields over one thousand careers (Simpson, 2007). Skills training in more than one thousand careers can produce more than the required manpower for reforms in 7-Point Agenda-Vision 2020. Here lies the hope of 7-Point Agenda for national development and vocational as well as technical education being evidently a viable instrument for achieving the purpose (Ola, 2009).

In pursuing the attainment of Vision 2020 through vocational and technical education, the nation must not lose sight of the reality of timing among other constraints and with this vision in mind, in two years from now (2020), Nigeria is to become one of the 20 industrialized nations of the world meaning that Nigerians will enjoy all-round prosperity, good and sufficient food, stable school calendar, steady and affordable power, good health and a host of other blessings of miraculous technologies (Susu, 2010). The question to be raised at this junction is how feasible is it for Nigeria to attain the Agenda or Vision in less than two years from now? The industrial development of a nation is not a magical venture, it requires proper education based on realistic curriculum, talents, patience, commitment and sincerity of purpose. All of these put together consume time which is a commodity no one can pass by. The aforementioned requirements imply that the foundations for the achievement of Nigeria's dream could have been laid long before now. For example, it took European countries several centuries to develop the great technologies that sustain the revolutionary leap from poverty to prosperity while Americans accomplished this within a century. It took the Japanese even less and China and the Asian Tiger countries lesser (Susu, 2010 citing Krathwoth, Bloom and Masia, 1964). These countries according to him were able to jump start the technological hurdle because they all embrace the technological code. He further pointed out that to reap the fruits of technological innovations evolved through centuries, sweat and toils, these countries developed a trend of strategies for rapid integration of science and technology in their national life. In other words, science and technology constitute part of the culture of the foregoing nations. The implication of Susu's observation is that Nigeria must make science and technology the bases of vocational education a part of her culture. Up to this moment, formal technology as offered within the four walls of Nigerian schools is an alien. Children in the said other countries are exposed to technology right from their homes. Technology exploration takes place in the elementary, secondary and tertiary levels of education. Whatever skills the youth acquire are perfected in the world of work. Vocational education as an instrument for national development suffers a disadvantage in the above regard.

The attainment of Agenda-Vision 2020 in the light of the above information according to Dike (2007) becomes elusive as it will take Nigeria beyond 2020 to achieve her vision even through vocational and technical education with its impressive potentials for reforms because the evolution of technologies for solving any nation's economic and industrial problems takes time, hard work and commitment. An acceptance of this point places a big question mark against Nigeria's attainment of 7-Point Agenda and her Vision even in ten years from now. However, the relatively short period before her should not discourage efforts towards the target even if it will be achieved in a later period. The most important concern is to get there like other developing countries have done.

There are other factors that interfere with the efforts of vocational education in its task of enhancing national development. These, as reviewed by Susu

(2010) citing Giachino and Gallinton (1974) are:

a. Low Adult Literacy Rate as Compared to those of Industrialized or Newly Industrialized Countries: The adult literacy rate (15 years plus) is 66.5% for Nigeria as compared to those of China (95%), Singapore (92.5%) and even South Africa (865) exceeds that of Nigeria.

b. The Level of Government Sector Expenditure on Education: Nigeria's total expenditure on education is 0.6% of GDP compared to 43% for South Korea or 4.9% for Mexico, 4.8% and 5.0% for UK and USA respectively.

c. The Percentage of Degrees Awarded in Sciences in the Universities: For example, the figure for South Korea is 48.4%, South Africa is 18% and Nigeria 11%. These account for the number of Scientists and Engineers engaging in Research and Development per million of population. For Nigeria, the number is 15, 165 for Brazil, 459 for China and 158 for India. The above factors constitute the indicators for assessing economic development of nations. It is from the

Research and Development group that a modern economy derives its stock of technological and scientific innovations.

Other problems hindering the contributions of vocational education towards national development according to him include lack of integration of computer service into vocational education related to technical training, unsuitable curriculum, dearth of qualified teachers, large class sizes, lack of indigenous texts, weak dependence on locally produced training materials, lack of training equipment, inadequate teaching aids and so on.

Vocational and technical education has suffered an unnecessary neglect to the detriment of national development. Dike (2007) has observed that not everyone needs University education. In Nigeria, technical degrees are regarded as inferior to regular academic degrees but in the industrialized nations, those vocational and technical degrees are highly regarded. Vocational and technical education system is yet to admit students on the basis of aptitude test into vocational technical institutions. The importance of aptitude test is to identify learners who are likely to excel in vocational and/or technical education pursuits. The current JAMB and aptitude test measures are grossly inadequate for vocational educational system admissions (Ola, 2009).

4. Conclusion

The Seven-Point Agenda-Vision 2020 is a fantastic dream worthy of pursuit into manifestation. The time to achieve the goal is too short beside unserious attitude of the Nigeria government in pursuing the vision in all honesty. Without integrating technology into the Nigerian culture, her strive to belong to the industrialized community of the world is apt to be an uphill task, wasteful or impossible. Technology must not continue to be an alien to Nigeria. Vocational and technical education, on the bases of its skills-based potentials is the engine for economic growth and the progress of Nigeria lies in the productivity and resourcefulness of its citizens, quality education and genuine vocational education programmes, these hold the key.

5. Recommendations

Sequel to the discussion on vocational and technical education as an instrument for national development, the following recommendations are proffered:

(i)The period for the achievement of the Agenda-Vision should be extended beyond 2020 and while extending the time for continued efforts towards Agenda's achievement, the nation must maintain its focus prudently on the target.

(ii)Rising of the level of adult literacy rate is imperative. This is apt to assist those who could not complete their primary and secondary education to acquire basic skills for the retired who constitute greater pail of the unemployed group in the society to be retrained for a second career.

(iii)Vocational education should be made a major point of the business of Agenda - Vision for national development.

(iv)Vocational and technical education should be

accorded the statutory recognition it deserves and properly funded for the well-being of the nation.

(v)The Federal Government of Nigeria should empower its citizens for a prosperous future by laying adequate foundation for it. It is not just enough to predict the future but also to create it. The Nigerian governments should encourage families to establish mini vocational and technical workshops for their children. The strategy will give the children vocational awareness at home. This awareness will lay the foundation for the pursuit of vocational education at primary, secondary and tertiary levels. The skills so developed will be polished at workplace as this is a way of integrating technology into our culture and a dependable foundation for the industrialization of Nigeria.

(vi)Vocational and technical education staff who do not have the depth of training skills necessary for manpower preparation should be periodically exposed to current industrial practices through deliberate school-industry interactions fostered by the government.

(vii) Computer services and other aspects of Information Communication Technology (ICT) should be integrated into vocational and technical education training.

(viii)The present curriculum in vocational and technical education is unsuitable. It was borrowed from UK and the USA where vocational education has undergone more than one century of industrial development. Nigeria should develop a new curriculum based on her culture, types of environment, social needs and the level of technology it is trying to evolve.

(ix)Vocational and technical staff should be encouraged and financially aided to produce curriculum guides to facilitate students' skills' acquisition in the various vocational education careers. Dependence on foreign texts is expensive and can lead to abstract reasoning by students.

References

Dike., V. E. (2009). Technical and Vocational Education: Key to Nigeria's Development. http/www.triumphuewspapes.com/tech3 320og.htm. Retrieved on 26-3-2010.

Dike, V. F. (2009). Vocational Education: Missing Link in Nigeria's Development Policy. nigeriavillagliesquare.com. Retrieved on 26 -3-2010.

Bias, J. E. (2001). Foundations of Vocational Education. Columbia: Department of Practical Arts and Vocational/Technical Education, University of Missouri.

Elias, M. R. (2000). The Perceptual Motor Domain and a Proposed Taxonomy of Perception. A.V. Communication Review 18 (4), 4,9-53.

Evans, J. E. . (1980). Foundations of Vocational Education. Columbia: University of Missouri

Eyo, M. B. & Usoro H. S. U. (2006). Vocational Educational for Manpower Development in Nigeria. *African Journal of Vocational Education and Training in Nigeria 3 (1) 230- 239.*

Fryklund, V. C. (2005). Occupational Analysis: Techniques and Procedures. New York: Bruce.

Giachino, J. W. &. Gallington, R. 0. (1974). Course Construction in Industrial Arts, Vocational and Technical Education Chicago: American Technical Society,

Krathwoth, B. S.; Bloom, B. S Masia, B. A. (1964). Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: Handbook 2, The Affective Domain. New York: David Mckay.

Ola, S.B. (2009). Vocational and Technical Education: Theory and Practice. Journal of Educational Research. Vol. 6, No. 4.

Roberts, R. W. (2001). Vocational and Practical Arts education. New York: Harper and Row Publisher.

Simpson, B. J. (2007). The Classification of Educational Objectives: Psychomotor Domain. Illinois: Teacher of Home Economics 10 (94).

Spencer, H. C., Dygdon, J. T. & Novak, J. E. (2003). Basic Technical Drawing. New York: McGraw -Hill.

Susu, A. A (2010). Science and Technology: Basis for Accelerated National Development. The Nigerian Education Times.

Thompson, J. F. (2003). Foundations of Vocational Education: Social and Philosophical Concepts. Englewood Cliffs. New Jersey: Prentice -Hall.

Uchi, J. U. &. Nkanu, W. 0. (eds) (1998). An Introduction Vocational and Technical Education for Schools and Colleges. Calabar: Centaur Publishers.

Usoro, H. S. U. & Ogenye, S. S. (2002). Introduction to Vocational Education. Unpublished Manuscript. Calabar: Cross River University of Technology.