

# Trends and Issues in Funding Vocational and Technical Education in Nigeria

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**Abstract:-** With the increasing number of unemployable adult citizens in Nigeria, technical and vocational education appear to be the most effective mechanism for ensuring that citizens of Nigeria are engaged in legitimate economic activity. This is the reason funding of vocational and technical education appears to face enormous challenges and issues in Nigeria. But inadequate, misappropriation, corruption and bribery in the funding of vocational and technical education programmes have been major issues. However, the focus of vocational and technical education with regards to skills acquisition seems to be losing its value. This paper critically examines recent trends and issues in funding vocational and technical education in Nigeria and the way forward for adequate budgetary allocation to vocational and technical educational institutions and suggested needs for administrators of vocational and technical educational institutions to allocate resources equitably between institutional and non-institutional related activities.

**Keywords:** Trends, issues, funding, vocational and technical education

## I. INTRODUCTION

In recent time, there has been an upsurge for the quest for every Nigerian youth to acquire one form of skill, ability and knowledge to be able to live properly as a responsible citizen of Nigeria. This quest aroused the interest of the government to institutionalize vocational and technical education in various parts of the country and in schools such as technical colleges, colleges of education, polytechnics, monotronics and universities. These efforts by the government and non-governmental agencies are to ensure that citizens are adequately nurtured and prepared to fit in at various possible workplaces within and outside their enclave. Consequently, vocational and technical educational programmes seem not to be receiving priority attention in the scheme of the three tiers of government. This attitude of the government became worrisome and disheartening to the public and researchers considering the increased number of Nigerian energetic and willing youths, who do not have required and scintillating skills and abilities necessary for effective workplace performance. As a matter of fact, considering the number of unemployable youths in Nigeria, vocational and technical education seem to be the most effective technique for ensuring the full realization of useful youths with legitimate economic activities in our economics and political milieu.

This above premises justifies the assertion of Dictionary.com in Waleniyi (2018) that education is the act or

process of imparting or acquiring general knowledge, developing the powers of reasoning and judgment and generally, of preparing oneself or others intellectually for mature life. It implies that education aims at enabling men to function according to their natural capacity. It is also the reason Agina-Obu in Alete-Omoni (2015), defined education as the process of awakening the innate but latent potentialities of individual, nourishing and sustaining them for personal social competence. Education includes life experiences encountered by men who are geared towards formation and modification of their behaviour. Education also helps man in the knowledge acquisition, development of desirable skills, values, habits and beliefs which also forms essential component. This view corroborates with the assertion of Fafunwa in Alete-Omoni (2015), that education is the aggregate of the processes by which a child or young adult develops abilities, attitudes and other forms of behaviour which are of positive values to the society in which he lives. The fact that education develops abilities, skills and attitude makes it unique and can take place in a formal or informal setting, as well bring out experience that has a formative effect on the way people feels, thinks and act. These skills and abilities that are gained through formal or informal education are known to be vocational and technical education.

In many nations of the world, reformed strategies to build on the inherent strength of vocational and technical education have been vigorously adopted and it is inclusive in Nigeria. However, the funding of vocational and technical education has been faced with some challenges. The public funding of vocational and technical education is decreasing in real times. Within vocational and technical education, there are no effective concepts, mechanism and procedures for prioritizing and justifying budgetary appropriation. Inadequate funding of vocational and technical education programmes, misappropriation of funds, bribery and corruption in vocational and technical education and education sector in general and other vital issues are the focus of this paper.

## II. CONCEPT OF VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

Vocational and technical education refers to the form of education or training acquired from schools, institutions and educational programmes that specialize in the skilled, trades, applied sciences, modern technologies and career preparation (Edglossary.org in Uta, 2018). Oni in Bayidam (2017) described technical vocational education as that type of

education which fits the individual for gainful employment in recognized career as semi-skilled workers or technicians or sub-professionals. Akerele in Baridam (2017) saw technical vocational education and training as that aspect of education that exposes the learner to the acquisition of demonstrable skills that could be transformed into economic benefits and sustainable livelihood. It can be seen as career and technical education as it also educates and trains citizens to have a good career life. It offers both academic and career-oriented courses which provide the citizens with opportunities for gainful work experience through internships, job schedules, on-the-job training and industry-certification opportunities.

Conversely, vocational and technical education, depending on their size, configuration, location and mission provides a wide range of learning experiences, spawning many different career tracks, fields and industries, from skilled trades such as automotive technology, construction, plumbing, or electrical contracting to fields as diverse as agriculture, architecture, culinary arts, fashion design, film-making, forestry, engineering, healthcare personnel training, robotics or veterinary medicine.

Vocational and technical education may be offered in middle schools and high schools or through community colleges and other post-secondary institutions and certification programmes. At the secondary school level, vocational and technical education is often provided by skilled acquisition centre that serve students from different schools. In some cases, vocational and technical education is provided through a secondary or tertiary institution where it may or may not be an integral part of the school's regular academic programme. Students may also attend separate career and technical institutions as part of the school day, or a regional centre where students undergo academic, career and technical courses. In other hands, vocational and technical education programmes may take place in a formal school system that offers an interdisciplinary or career-oriented programme in which academic course work is aligned with specific career paths, such as culinary arts, nursing or engineering.

Vocational and technical education is seen according to Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) as 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. It is referred to the deliberate intervention to bring about learning which would make people more productive (or simply adequately productive) in designated areas of economic activity (e.g. economic sectors, occupational, specific work tasks) (Tretipedia, 2017). By these definitions, it implies that vocational and technical education is the preparation of individuals to acquire practical skills as well as basic scientific knowledge which produces relevant and desirable manpower for the world of work. It also increases the number of country's workforce which are catalysts for economic and technological development of an economy. That was the reason Okoye and Okwelle (2014) opined that

technical education is a formal training that enables the application of the techniques of applied sciences and mathematical principles for the services of humankind; and vocational education is the educational preparations and training provided to individuals to enable them become specifically qualified for a particular vocation. Vocational and technical education produces individuals with trained and workable skills, knowledge, attitude and competencies required in specific occupations.

However, vocational and technical education may have enormous purposes which might not be unique to it, but may also be applied to other forms of education such as insights, mindsets, special self-consuming knowledge and skills which are deemed to be generally valuable for the learners outside a designated area of economic activity. Other aims might be pertinent for a longer and full time courses for youth in contrast to short and episodic training events (e.g. for persons already at work in the occupations concerned). Vocational and technical education also needs to be treated according to social norms on how learners and people are to be treated by institutions (people should be treated with respect). Worthy of note is the fact that work productivity is not the only aim and concern of vocational and technical education but has distinctive objectives which sets it apart from other forms of education and training. In a nutshell, vocational and technical education in any country - be it a developed or developing, cannot function effectively and efficiently without adequate funding from the government and non-governmental organizations.

### III. CONCEPT OF FUNDING

It is no more a controversy to say that money is cornerstone to every productive venture. In every given society, virtually all productive endeavours require some reasonable amount of funds. Funding is an economic term that refers to the application of money as a resource input to any productive process (Agabi and Onyeike, 2008). Agabi and Onyeike also opined that, the volume of money applied to any productive endeavour depends on the level of importance placed on it.

Vocational and technical education is very pertinent due to the fact that it brings about wealth creation and reduces the rate of unemployment in the society. This account for the reason that spur Agabi and Onyeike to opine that the high level of importance placed on education therefore accounts for the increasing level of funding that the sector has enjoyed over the years. It also accounts for the reason that the United Nation recommend that every member state should commit at least 26% of her annual budget to education.

Success and failure of any productive endeavour, be it business organization, charity organization or educational institutions depend heavily on the volume of funds invested in it. It is the reason administrators of schools seek for assistance from: philanthropists, individual donors, business men and women and alumni members to finance various programmes and projects of the school to achieve various avowed

objectives. Arihen (2012) saw financing as funding a particular project, activity, business, event, institution as well as organization. The Business Dictionary.com (2017) also saw it as the act of obtaining or furnishing money or capital for the purpose of achieving laid out organizational objectives. This implies that the supply of money or pecuniary resources for some purposes is very essential. Funding plays a major role in any educational institution which vocational and technical education can not be exempted. Though, a lot of direction and challenging issues are facing vocational and technical education in Nigeria.

#### IV. CURRENT ISSUES IN VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATIONAL FINANCING IN NIGERIA

Issues are important topics or problems for debate or discussion. Issues in vocational and technical education refer to the highest priority problems affecting a career and technical education, or the problems creating the largest negative impact on vocational and technical education in Nigeria. It also implies prevalent areas of concerns that have the potential to negatively impact vocational and technical education outcomes. According to Arihen (2012), some of the major issues in vocational and technical education include:

- *Budgetary system:* The provision of vocational and technical education cannot take place without the proper resources, and it all starts with money. School budgets and the ways they are financed vary from state to state. States use a combination of income taxes, corporate taxes, sales taxes, and fees to provide for the budgetary need of schools; about 48 percent of the budget for elementary and secondary schools. However, the budgetary allocation system relating to education in general as well as vocational and technical education is inadequate (Arihen, 2012). The recession that started in 2007 took a serious toll on school financing across the country as education budgets are increasing being cut into geometrically and progressively (Park, 2011). Poor budgetary system is a crucial issue of concern in vocational and technical education financing.
- *Misappropriation of fund:* While some school reformers are concentrating on getting more money for vocational and technical education institutions and facilities running, the following questions come to mind: Are schools spending their money intelligently? Are educational funds used for appropriate purposes? The answer to these questions in some vocational and technical educational institutions is “No”. The system has been associated with poor planning of the use of educational funds. Cases of embezzlement of funds meant for the procurement of vocational and technical education facilities have been reported in recent years. Thus, misappropriation of funds is one of the major issue

confronting vocational and technical education financing in Nigeria.

- *Adequacy and equity in educational funding:* One way to better understand school finance is to think of it in terms of the adequacy and equity of resources. Adequacy is based on the principle that States should provide enough funding for all students to be able to meet academic expectations. However, some vocational and technical educational institutions receive more funds than others. According to Arihen (2012), this is associated with the politicization of the Nigerian educational system, bribery and corruption that has eaten deep into the fabrics of the nation’s system and operational details.
- *Distribution pattern of financial resources:* The level of spending is important to consider when evaluating your school. In most schools across Nigeria, there is the issue of uneven distribution of financial resources by school administrators. In most vocational and technical educational institutions, a large proportion of educational finance goes to instruction and instruction-related activities. Instruction and instruction-related activities here refers to teachers and staff salaries. Only a limited proportion of financial resources are assigned to student activities. This is a major issue of concern as students constitute the target of vocational and technical education.

#### V. CURRENT TRENDS IN VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATIONAL FINANCING IN NIGERIA

A trend is the general direction of a market or sector which can vary in length from short to intermediate, to long term. Thus, trends in vocational and technical education financing refer to the general present day direction in financing vocational and technical education in Nigeria. According to Arihen (2012), the trending issues in vocational and technical education in Nigeria include:

- *Poor funding of vocational and technical educational programmes:* Public funding on vocational and technical education is decreasing systematically. Though vocational and technical education contributed immensely to the nation’s economic growth and development in the area of training individuals who have become part of the Nigerian workforce, poor funding of vocational educational institutions and programmes seems to limit its functionality. Vocational institutions of learning turn out poorly equipped graduates as there are no funds to establish standard laboratories, workshops, studios and other requisites for effective vocational institution. Most vocational institutions are poorly staffed and barely have skilled and experienced teachers due to inadequate funding. There is also the issue of poor remuneration of teachers and

difficulties in paying teachers their due salaries associated with poor funding of vocational and technical education. In fact government appears to be indifferent to funding of vocational and technical education in Nigeria. Poor funding has undermined the present day vocational and technical educational system in Nigeria.

- *Overwhelming emphasis on closing the achievement gap for low-income or minority populations:* Financing of vocational and technical education is directed more at achievement, dropout prevention/disconnected youth and education of the very few in the society rather than on the entire population. Most times some segments of the society described as the minority or educationally less developed areas received more funds than others. Thus, there is the issue of inequitable financing of vocational and technical educational institutions across urban, rural, educationally developed and less developed segments of the society. Some schools have well equipped workshops, laboratories and libraries while others do not. This is one of the recent issues in vocational and technical education financing in Nigeria.
- *Inequitable educational funding:* Some areas of education referred to as high-interest funding areas received more financial support than others. Such areas include teaching quality improvement, career readiness, learning opportunities, reading/literacy skills, educational delivery system and designs, early learning among others. To ensure effective vocational and technical educational programmes, institutions of learning should be equitably funded.
- *Limited donor funding vocational and technical education:* Another trending issue in vocational and technical education is the current decline on donor funding of institutions of learning. This has led to the call for revisiting of cost recovery, cost sharing between government and private sectors as it relates to vocational and technical education. It is hard to imagine how the financing needs of secondary, vocational and higher education can be met without financial contributions by the students and their families and without involving the private as well as the public sectors.
- *Decline in international financial of education:* Another trending issue in vocational and technical education financing is the decline in international financing of education. According to Park (2011), the financial crisis has confirmed that, while parents and governments in developing countries have heard the message about the importance of educating their children, the international community does not see education as a high priority for external support.

- *Ineffectiveness of existing vocational and technical education aids:* Most vocational and technical institutions of learning in Nigeria seem ineffective in implementing the educational curriculum. Government most times questions the extent to which the limited funds provided to schools are utilized. This ineffectiveness of schools in utilizing existing vocational and technical education aids, accounts for government's indifference to financing of vocational and technical education.
- *Inadequacy of alternative and innovative sources of vocational and technical education financing:* Most vocational and technical educational institutions of learning do not have alternative funding modalities. There are little or no complementary funding mechanisms for schools. This constitutes a major issue of concern in vocational and technical educational institutions in Nigeria.

## V. THE WAY FORWARD

With a view to enhancing vocational and technical education financing, the following recommendations are put forward as the solution to the present day poor financing of vocational and technical education in Nigeria:

- i. There should be adequate budgetary allocation to vocational and technical educational institutions
- ii. Administrators of vocational and technical educational institutions should distribute resources equitably between instruction and non-instruction related activities
- iii. There should be a policy framework for monitoring the use and distribution of funds meant for vocational and technical educational institutions by the administrators
- iv. There should be equity in distribution of monetary resources across vocational and technical educational institutions across the country
- v. The entire public should show interest and participate in funding of vocational and technical education programmes
- vi. There is the need for innovation and alternative funding modalities for vocational and technical education
- vii. There should be enhanced partnership between governments and non-government agencies in ensuring that vocational and technical education is adequately funded
- viii. International financing of vocational and technical education should be encouraged
- ix. Existing financial aids for technical and vocational education should be made more effective by the government.

## VI. CONCLUSION

Vocational and technical education is an indispensable catalyst for national economic growth and development. It is a tool for individual growth which engenders life expectancy and increases citizens stock of skills for meaningful living. With the increase in the number of unemployed adult citizens of Nigeria, vocational and technical education becomes the antidote for individual wealth creation, self-reliance and sustainable standard of living, which is achievable with the adequate funding by government which should be applied to it.

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