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# Vocational and Technical Education: Curriculum Issues in Tertiary Institution in Ekiti State for Sustainable Economic Development

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**Abstract**
Vocational and Technical Education has been identified as one of the most effective human resource development that needs to be embraced for rapid industrialization and sustainable technological development of any nations. This paper focuses on the role of Vocational and Technical Education for improving national economy for sustainable development and the curriculum issues in tertiary institution in Ekiti State. Curriculum is based on the needs of the labour market and that government responds to the needs of Vocational and Technical Education through sufficient funding and provision of adequate facilities, equipment and resources. The concepts of sustainable development, challenges, strategies and the role of Vocational and Technical Education as appropriate tools towards development of both individuals and the nation at large are discussed in this paper. This is more so as problems facing others, range from unemployment, high rate of poverty and insecurity of lives and property. The strategies for re-designing Vocational and Technical Education are also discussed. Recommendations were made that would make for sustainable human and national development.

**Keywords:** Vocational and Technical Education, Economy, Sustainable Development, and Curriculum Issue

## Introduction

Education is a right of every individual. It unlocks the development of personal and national potentials of citizens of a country and the world at large. According to Balogun (2010) [8], 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.

Vocational education is defined as any form of education whose primary purpose is to prepare persons for employment in recognized occupations (Okoro, 2013) [26]. It is obvious therefore that vocational education is a term that is more all-embracing than technical education which Okoro defines as post-secondary vocational training programme whose major purpose is the production of technicians. The Nigerian National Policy on Education defines technical and vocational education as a comprehensive term referring to those aspects of the educational process involving, in addition to general education, the study of technologies and related sciences and the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of economic and social life. Technical education can therefore be seen as the formal training of persons to become technicians in different occupations. Thus any education that is geared towards teaching technical skills and attitudes suitable to such skills can be regarded as technical education.

Vocational and technical education is related to age-old apprenticeship system of learning. Apprenticeships are designed for many levels of work, from manual trades to high knowledge work. However as the labour market becomes more specialized and economies demand higher levels of skills, government and businesses are increasingly investing in the future of technical education though publicly funded training organization and subsidized apprenticeship or traineeship initiatives for business.

At post-secondary level, technical education is typically provided by an institute of technology, polytechnics, university or by a local community college.

In his own views, Uwaifo (2009) [33] posited that technical education is the training of technically oriented personnel who are to be the initiators, facilitators and implementers of technological development of a nation. He opined that this training of its citizenry on the need to be technologically literate, would lead to self-reliance and sustainability. He stressed that technical education more than any other profession has direct impact on national welfare. Furthermore, technical education contributed widespread and visible ranging from metal work technology, mechanical/automobile technology, electrical and electronic technology, building and woodwork technology etc. Consequently, technical education can serve as change agents not only for technical systems but also for many other societal changes. The practical nature of technical education makes it unique in content and approach thereby requiring special care and attention. The inputs of technical education are, so visible to the extent that even an illiterate could see when failures occur.

**Concept of Vocational and Technical Education**

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 (2010) [29], 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 vocational education gives general technical knowledge 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.

The term Technical and Vocational Education is a conjoined term made up of Technical Education (TE) and Vocational Education (VE). It is aspect of Nigerian educational system that provide room for vocational training, skill acquisition and adequate scientific competence. Many even in the academia have tried to classify this system of education under the banner of Vocational and Technical Education. In his efforts that draw a dichotomy, Moustafa (2010) [19] postulate that, many educators hardly differentiate between the terms Technical and Vocational Education while society has been led to believe that Vocational Education is for those who are incapable of pursuing technical academic programmes. Against this background, Technical and Vocational Education has made slow progress from its earliest times to date in the developed countries.

**Benefit of Vocational and Technical Education**

The provision of vocational and technical schools has a long history. Before the industrial revolution (1750-1830) home and the 'apprenticeship system" were principal sources of vocational education but societies were later forced by the decline of handwork and specialization of occupational functions to develop institutions of vocational education (Duff, 2017) [14]. Manual training that involves general instructions in the use of hand tools was said to have developed initially in Scandinavia (2016) [31].

Technical education if given the required attentions needed, it can alone transform the nation into one of the leading country in ICT and economic development because of much benefits embodied in it.

**Some of these benefits include**

a. **Creation of employment opportunities:** The issue of unemployment will remain a problem to Nigeria for many years if people are not trained/ educated on how to be self-employed. Technical education is the only sure tool of fighting the rate of unemployment in the country. This can be achieved through educating the people on how to use their brain, body and hands to engage themselves in different productive activities to earn good money and live fulfilled life.
b. **Income/revenue generation**: Technical education has its ways of boastings the economy of the nation through empowering the people technically in one field or the other. For instance, if a man has been trained to manufacture/produce car parts at the end of the day, he will pay his tax to the government and also have some left for his livelihood and maintenance of his household.
c. **Enhancing people's standard of living/poverty reduction:** Technical education improves people lives and living standard through training the youths in useful skills, engaging them in productive works, generation of income and reduction of security votes by the government, creation of employment opportunities thereby increasing the economic and social standards of the citizens.
d. **Nation's self-independence**: If the concept of technical education is properly employed with all its relevance benefits in no distant time Nigeria will not only be independent economically and technologically but will also be among the leading country in ICT and export of goods and services in the world and several ugly and embarrassing situations will be addressed.

**Vocational and Technical Education for Economic growth and Sustainable Development**

Nuru, (2007) [21] stated that changes in a country's economy is required to prepare young people for the jobs of the future and technical and vocational education have important roles to play in this process. Vocational and Technical education has been an integral part of national economy development. According to van Ark, (2012) [6] the Dutch school system is said to pay attention to "high standards in mathematics and the provision of technical education at ages 14-16 for a third of all pupils, and widespread vocational education at 16 +. Unfortunately, Nigeria does not seem to give vocational and technical education the attention they deserve and this appears to be one of the reasons for rising unemployment and poverty in the society. Ajayi, Arogundadade, and Ekundayo, (2007) [3] also suggests that the neglect of vocational and technical education in the area of adequate personnel, financial support and facilities to encourage vocational and technical education are robbing the nation of the contribution their graduates would make in the economy. Furthermore, Asogwa and Diogu, (2007) [7] maintained that there is an urgent need for the people's attention to be redirected towards self-reliant and sustainable means of livelihood which vocational and technical education provides. Youth unemployment appears to be rising-up to the sky because many of them lack "employability" skills that are often

acquired from vocational and technical schools.

As Edukugho, (2004) [15] noted, youth unemployment rose to 4.3% in 1985 to 5.3% in 1986, to 7.0% in 1987 and jumped to 60% in 1997. The report shows that in 2003 primary school accounted for 14.7% unemployment, secondary school 53.6%, and tertiary schools constituted 12.4%. The nation's poverty level was put at 70% and more than 91 million Nigerians are said to live on less than one dollar per day. Most analysts agree that today's employers demand more skills than they did in the past (Yang, 2008). Oranu, (2010) [29] reported the several factors that have contributed to the rising demand for skills in the labor market to include: technological and organizational change, trade, deregulation of key industries, and the decline of unions. Bennell, (2016) [10] observes that all countries, especially developing countries, need balanced development through all of the educational sectors in order to make significant progress in terms of national development. Presently Nigeria is offering education in general subjects, but to achieve development, it must offer a variety of courses for disciplines such as technical, vocational, professional, agricultural, and so on, because the country needs a balanced distribution of manpower for all professions (Alam, 2003, 2007) [4, 5], so that the vast population of Nigeria can contribute to economic growth by participating in different professions.

Vocational and Technical Education (VTE) systems play a crucial role in the social and economic development of a nation. Owing to their dynamic nature, they are continuously subject to the forces driving change in the schools, industry and society. Mechanized farming requires technical skills that could be obtained in technical and vocational schools. The real tests of success of VTE are the employability of the graduates, personal development, opportunities for further education and career development, public acceptance and image. Ultimately, the effectiveness and responsiveness of a VTE system would be measured by its impact on the social and economic development of the nation. Promotion of the Nigerian Economy: It promotes the national economy through foreign exchange by exporting our products. The knowledge of technical and vocational education helps in the conversion of local raw materials, this reduces the importation of foreign goods which lessen our import dependency and encourage exportation of our local products. For instance, Haq and Haq, (2018) [18] observed, unemployment rates in the East Asian economies remained low essentially because the population possessed employable vocational and technical skills. However, the relationship between demand for vocational education and economic development may not be linear. When the economies move away from reliance on its agricultural and manufacturing sectors and in favour of service sector, the demand for VTE may indeed decline.

**Concept of Sustainable Development**

According to Nwogu (2009) [23], the well-being of any nation largely depends on its sustainable economic development. The concept of sustainable development has become a global medium for expressing the need to depart from hitherto dominant models of development that apparently fail to balance the needs of people and the planet in the pursuit of peace and prosperity (Wals, 2009) [34].

Usoro, Usoro, Akpan&Otu (2010) [32], define development in terms of reduction in the levels of poverty, illiteracy, and unemployment and income inequality. However, Dike (2007) [14] emphasizes that, "national development encompasses social and political development as well as economic development defined as the attainment of a number of ideas of modernization such as a rise in productivity, social and economic equity, improved institutions and values". Economic development is thus an important part of general development in any society. The main objective of economic development is to raise the standard of living and the general wellbeing of the people in an economy where almost everybody can be self-reliant.

Sustainable development as defined by Brundtland (2017) [11] is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. National Sustainable Development Strategy, Belgrade (2007) [9] defines sustainable development as targets-oriented, long-term (continuous), comprehensive and synergetic process with impacts on all aspects of life (economic, social, environmental and institutional) at all levels.

**Sustainable Development Principles**

There are many who believe that sustainable development is a complex concept therefore subject to many varying principles. However, the general principle of sustainable development lies in its very definition: progressive and dynamic ways of meeting today's needs and opportunities in ways that will not undermine or jeopardize the integrity of the environmental factors that created that enabling atmosphere so as to be able to meet tomorrow's needs, opportunities and challenges. These needs include economic development, social equality, environmental protection, availability and accessibility of quality health care delivery, housing and accommodation, banishment of poverty, and adequate food for all (Word web Dictionary, 2016) [36].

Due to the conflicting challenges in striking a balance between processes of economic and technological advancement and the processes of protecting and preserving the environment, nations are expected to draw out a national sustainable development strategy that will serve a guiding principle. A template on ways to have a progressive national economic development at the same time protecting environmental degradation, inequality and poverty that may result from these processes of advancement (Webster online Dictionary, 2017) [35].

According to Abubakar (2011) [2] discuss major principles of sustainable development as follows:

1. Everyone has the right to healthy and productive life in harmony with nature.
2. Present and future generations are equally entitled to this right.
3. Environmental protection must be seen as an integral part of any developmental process.
4. Each country has the right to utilise its own resources, without affecting the environment beyond its borders.
5. The polluter must compensate the damage caused to the environment – "polluter pays" principle.
6. Economic activities are combined with the principle of acquiring preventive measures for environmental protection.
7. States must cooperate for environmental protection.
8. The alleviation of poverty and living standards, inequity in the different parts of the world are an integral part of sustainable development.
9. States must limit and extinguish the unsustainable modes

of production and consumption, and enhance the appropriate demographic policy.
10. The most efficient way of solving environmental problems is the involvement of all interested parties.
11. States must develop and encourage the informed participation of the population in decision-making process (participatory democracy).
12. States must develop and implement effective legislation for environmental protection.
13. Environmental protection must involve all social groups.
14. Peace, development, and environmental protection are inter dependent and indivisible

**Vocational and Technical Education and Sustainable Development**

The development of any nation hinges on the socials and economic contributions of her citizens Education, vocational and technical training play a major role at promoting community and national development [Oguntuyi, 2013] [24]. Vocational and technical education promotes and facilitates the acquisition of applied skills and basic scientific knowledge. It is planned programme of course and learning experiences that begin with the exploration of career options, supports basic academic and life skills and enables the achievement of high academic standards, leadership, preparation for industry and continuing education [Ozoemena, 2013] [30]. It cannot be over emphasized that technical education is the engine of economic growth. No nation can fight a war without the army. In the same vein, Nigeria cannot develop without well-equipped technical and vocational institutions. Unfortunately, Nigeria does not seem to give vocational and technical education the attention it deserves. Technical Education has been described as the "missing link" in Nigeria development policy [Dike, 2005] [5]. Because of poor training and ineffective institutions, Nigeria suffers from low productivity in all aspects of economic and technological endeavours. This appears to be one of the reasons for rising rate of unemployment and poverty in the society. The growing problem of unemployment in the country has contributed largely in the worsening problem of poverty among the populace. This is because the youths and graduates from tertiary institutions are not equipped with adequate skills that will enable them to exploit the natural resources that abound in Nigeria. Scholars like [Olaitan, 2018] [18], posits that unemployment leads to frustration and disillusionment which may result in crime or drug abuse in a futile attempt to escape from humiliation and insults associated with poverty and lack. The problem of unemployment, he further stated has worsened as millions of school leavers and graduates of tertiary institutions are not gainfully employed. The reason is that they lack the necessary skills that would enable them to be self-employed and effectively function in today's world of work. However, [Okirie, 2001] in stressing the importance of technical education asserts that technical and vocational education in a comprehensive term refer to those aspects of education process in evolving the acquisition of practical skills, attitude, understanding and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of economic and social life.

**Implementation of Vocational and Technical Education Curriculum**

According to Nwachukwu, (2001) [22] stated that certain factors are crucial for functional vocational and technical education curriculum implementation. The factors are as follows:

- The vocational and technical education curriculum must be humanized: The curriculum for vocational and technical education in Nigeria should not be something foreign to technical college students, and should not be chosen just because it is traditional. The vocational and technical education curriculum must speak of today, of real-life problems facing our communities and society and the process of living in its entire ramification. Nwachukwu explained that humanizing today's vocational and technical Education means making the curriculum responsive to the present situation of Nigeria. Humanizing vocational and technical education means training the youths for sustainable and self-reliant empowerment in Nigeria. Materials chosen in this vocational and technical education curriculum to be taught and utilized for learning should be derived from the need and environmental requirement of Nigeria for sustainable youth empowerment in the nation.
- Trainees must be ready to receive what is taught. : The ability of the trainees to learn depends on that student's readiness to learn. In any teaching-learning situation, there is a period when effective learning takes place. This learning period varies among individuals even when they are exposed to the same learning environment. Many factors are known to influence the readiness to learn among students. The factors include age, family background, nutritional status, fatigue or lack of it. Others are belief and attitudes of learners. It therefore means that the art of good teaching lies in the ability of the teacher to find out those learning related problems, which students exhibit during classroom and workshop instruction, and utilizing the knowledge about it to structure the curriculum of vocational and technical education in Nigeria.
- The learning experiences must provide the development of the ability to think: In vocational and technical education, thinking is the process of realizing and finding solutions to problems. It has been defined as all those cognitive actions taken by an individual in advance of an action as a preliminary to deciding among alternative thinking. According to Nwachukwu, (2001) [22], it characterized the whole process of solving a problem, which is very essential for handling problem-solving situation or for carrying out tasks in vocational and technical education situations.
- The vocational and technical education curriculum must be based on and contain experiences intrinsic to the life of the learner: There are stages in vocational and technical education and when students pass through the pre-vocational to the vocational concepts and characteristics, they develop new ideas, shape their values and can by so doing, solve their individual problems. These students can constantly undergo the process of exploring and testing out ways of getting to where they want to go. In this manner, these students will learn, and this learning process requires direct thinking. These students can in this process discover new materials relevant to the solution of their problems. Such materials must be intrinsic to them because they discovered the materials themselves and found it useful for solving their immediate problems. These intrinsic materials will remain internalized in the students because they have

fixed the knowledge into the repertoire of their abilities and understanding.

**Vocational and Technical Education and Curriculum Issues**

Vocational Technical Education Curriculum according to Grubb, (2015) [17] has always had to battle against not only the resistance of academic curricula, but also the suspicion that they provide second-class education and tract to some individuals' of lower class. Today, the innovative system of the current time is shifting towards skill acquisition courses, which are capable of making the youths and adults self-dependent. There is an established positive linkage between economic growth and investment in human capital. The establishment of National Business and Technical Education Board and a resultant coherent national policy for technical education and vocational training is expected to be a key driver of Nigeria's economic growth. Nigeria's global competitiveness depends on ability of our VTE system to adapt and innovate. The curriculum of a subject with practical content is generally organized into an average of 67% for the theoretical classes and 33% for laboratory. Olunloyo, (2002) [28] noted that one of the issues confronting the design of appropriate curriculum for technical education is preparing students for the shift from the fordist to ICT paradigm in technology practice. However, some problems inherent in curricular include:

- They are based on a foreign model
- There is a basic lack of textbooks and available ones are illustrated with examples from outside the local environment.
- There is usually a shortage of highly competent indigenous teaching and support staff with sufficiently wide practical experience of technology.
- The curricular are adjudged to be too academic and over-loaded with intellectual content in pure science and mathematics at the expense of basic engineering and technology.
- The teaching approach follows the conventional method of transforming knowledge across through the lecturer reading out to students, who would then take down notes. The educational system continues to place considerable value on this method of teaching.

Despite the best intentions of successive Nigerian governments, vocational and technical education programmes are still fraught with problems, including: administrators' misconception of the nature of vocational education, inadequate political will by the government, deficient educational monitoring and evaluation procedures, poor funding, poor incentives for teachers and a rapid rate of technological changes. I will not expand on these problems, but be enough to state that the problems have to varying degrees, affected the advancement of vocational and technical education. Precisely certain problems have related directly to the curricula of vocational and technical education. These problems include among others: inadequate emphasis on pre-vocational subjects at the primary and junior secondary levels, inadequate facilities, and short fall in recruitment and exodus of teachers, low student morale, poor funding and examination-oriented approaches to curricula implementation. Teaching pre-vocational subjects in the primary and junior secondary schools should be taken more seriously to raise the interest of students for these vocational programmes. All stakeholders, especially those within the private sector, should provide more funds for the purchase of instructional facilities.

The Educational Tax Fund should consider vocational education a priority area for funding. There should be less emphasis on certificates/examinations in implementing the curricula content of the various programmes. Acquisition of practical skills should be stressed on the final outcome. Ezekwe, (2010) made his contribution towards the promotion of vocational and technical, science equipment utilization and technological, management of materials in Nigeria. In this regard, in collaboration with UNESCO, he hosted the international workshop on the management of science equipment and technology in Africa, in February 1990. The workshop recommended the establishment of an African Network of training institutions in science and technology equipment management and utilization for sustainable development in Nigeria.

Okorie, (2001) [25] stated that many machines for training in the technical colleges may be out of use for a long time until parts of the equipments are ordered from country of manufacture. The Federal Government has already taken a gigantic step in this direction by setting up the Federal Science equipment manufacturing centre at Enugu, Enugu State. The establishment of second one in Minna, Niger State was another attempt made by government toward achieving the objectives of functional technical education for sustainable youth empowerment in Nigeria. The centres were expected to manufacture over 200 items for science equipment and technology tools to meet all level of educational system from primary to tertiary institutions. Abdullahi, (2010) [1] further stated that as an on-going project, the federal science equipment centre, Ijanikin, Lagos and those set up by the states and some universities organize workshops on repairs, utilization, maintenance and improvisation of technical equipment for sustainable youth empowerment in Nigeria.

**Conclusion**

The aims of vocational and technical education will remain unachievable if the challenges posed by the contemporary needs are not met. Ekiti State must therefore look ahead and project evolving strategies for a better improving national economy for sustainable development and the curriculum issues in tertiary institution. Based on the foregoing, it is observed that vocational and technical education occupies an important position in the sustainable development of the nation. For progress to be made in State the challenges confronting technical education must be recognized and fought vigorously. Adequate resources should be allocated to the programmes in order to achieve positive outcomes. A comprehensive reform towards technical and vocational education and a deliberate attempt to uplift the programme is the only panacea to a technological end era do in the state.

**Recommendations**

The following were suggestions for improvement on vocational and technical education for improving national economy for sustainable development and the curriculum issues in tertiary institution in Ekiti State.

- Government should organized the team of inspectors from Ministry of education or committee that will advise government on better ways of monitoring, controlling and implementing the affairs of vocational and technical

education as it relates to our immediate situation in Ekiti State.

- A training plan that states clearly what the student is expected to learn and what the employer is expected to provide, should be developed as an integral part of national strategy.
- The government should train qualified vocational and technical education teachers and experts to operate the complex machines and equipment during the implementation of technical college programme and use such skills acquired by teachers to educate and empower the youths of Ekiti State.
- Regular seminars and workshops should be organised to keep teachers abreast of current development in the field of vocational and technical education and how best to impact them on their students.
- Government should provide fund to enable the principals and teachers install the machines and equipment not installed in the different technical colleges and also to provide other facilities for effective implementation of the vocational and technical education curriculum.
- Accreditation should be carried out on regular basis in technical colleges to check the dwindling situation in our technical colleges.

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