

THE GLOBAL ECONOMIC CRISIS: A CHALLENGE TO CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION IN TECHNICAL/VOCATIONAL EDUCATION TECHNOLOGY IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Nigeria, like any other country in transition is faced with a lot of economic challenges. The situation is aggravated by the current global economic crisis. There is an urgent need for the Government to promote the educational sector in order to overcome the present limitations. It is the opinion of this paper that for a meaningful national development to occur technical and vocational education technology must be taken seriously at all levels. The study was based on a review of related literature which was aimed at highlighting the obvious implications of the global economic crisis on the curriculum implementation in technical and vocational education technology. Findings revealed that the implementation would meet some challenges due to inadequacies in the Nigerian educational system. The paper concluded that the implementation policy requires some human and physical resources for it to succeed.

Keywords: Global economic crisis, challenges, curriculum implementation

INTRODUCTION

The components of school academic activities consist of the curriculum which is an embodiment of the syllabus, scheme of work and lesson plan. Each of these sub sections of the curriculum has some stated objectives which must be realized at the end of the learning period. Technical and vocational education is geared towards the acquisition of practical skills as well as basic science knowledge. In this context, technical education has a broad meaning and includes the training of technical and vocational manpower, namely, artisans, craftsmen, technicians and technocrats depending on national needs. The problem of providing practical training to students in the technical and vocational institutions had been recognized long before the present economic crisis for funding by government has been a persistent and long standing problems and it may even be worse following the current global economic crisis. Its effects on the curriculum implementation in Technical and Vocational Education Technology (TVET) calls for serious major concern.

An in-depth assessment of the economy of Nigeria presents a disparaging picture of subsistence and dependence that are contingent upon the beacons of imperialism and neocolonialism driven by multinationals. (Okeke and Ekpe 2002). The virgin market they have found propelled their exploration and exploitation, leaving in its wake, tales of social, economic, cultural and political domination, despair as well as degradation of the highest order. Graf (1988) observes that the Nigerian economy is further stultified by over-dependence on oil. This has accelerated

the rate of failure of government programmes to achieve the set objectives. Quite often the pre-requisite driving forces are not there to back up the lofty goals.

Prior to the Global Economic Crisis, the federal government had already engaged in a cycle of on going review of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment practices. Such reviews were aimed at increasing coherence between different aspects of school practices providing a more focused big picture framing of teaching and learning in the school. Besides, the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) in furtherance of her mandate of enhancing the quality of technical education in Nigeria has organized conferences, on capacity building, the use of technology in the delivery of curriculum for Technical Vocational Education Teachers.

Yakubu (2009) asserts that a major criticism of curriculum delivery of the Technical Vocational Education in institutions has been the issue of poor pedagogical skills of our teachers. He admits too that this criticism is not limited to Technical Vocational Education Teachers alone but along the entire spectrum of the education system. It is initiatives such as those mentioned above that will help us in determining the best way to achieve full implementation of the Technical Vocational Education curriculum in the on-going Global Economic Crisis. It is the duty of the government to provide the support structures, opportunities for professional growth, and financial resources that are necessary for these expectations to be met. It is the concern of this paper therefore to examine the global economic crisis and how it may impinge on the curriculum implementation in Technical Vocational Education Technology. Sulaiman (2001) stresses the need for Nigeria to shift steadily and progressively from traditional time tested methods by education to those based on information technology.

TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION TECHNOLOGY (TVET) AND POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

According to Ibrahim (2008), the countries full realization of the goals of Millinellum Development Goals (MDGS), the 7-point agenda as well as the vision 2020 will solidly depend on how Nigeria's science and technology is evolved for development. As it is entrenched in the National Policy on Education (1998) the philosophy and aims of technical education are:

1. To Provide trained manpower in applied science, technology and commerce particularly at sub-professional grades;
2. To provide technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, industrial, commercial and economic development;
3. To provide people who can apply scientific knowledge to the improvement and solution for environmental problems for the use and convenience of many.
4. To give an introduction to professional studies in Engineering and other technologies.
5. To give training and impart the necessary skills leading to the production of craftsmen, technicians and other skilled personnel who will be enterprising and self-reliant, and

6. To enable our young men and women to have an intelligent understanding of the increasing complexities of technology.

From these stated objectives, it is clear that technical education is that aspect of education that leads to the acquisition of practical skills as well as some basic scientific knowledge. What is obvious too is that this type of education prepares technicians and technocrats and skilled workers. Both technical and vocational types of education are provided in technical or and vocational schools, within the context of the curriculum. It has been claimed that Nigeria has often formulated policies but these get bungled up at the implementation stage (Eminue 2005). As observed by George Honadle & Radi Klauss (1991).

Implementation is the nemesis of designers; it conjures up images of plans gone awry, of social carpenters and persons who fail to build to specifications and thereby distort the beautiful blue prints for progress which were handed to them. It provides memories of a good idea that did not work and place the blame on the second member of the policy administration team.

Ikelegbe (1996), notes that implementation involves the committal of funds, the establishment of structures and methods; the hiring of personnel, the administering and executing of activities, and the security of policy goals, services and other intended outcomes. Said and Brady (1981), Todaro (1977) agree that development connotes certain dynamics in social structures, popular attitudes and institution as well as national economic growth, the reduction of inequality and eradication of absolute poverty. Education as an important aspect of development provides fairness and opportunity for the entire people of a nation and not just the privileged few.

Policy is generally a guide to action for achievement of defined goals (Effiong, 2009). Usually the organization responsible for the implementation of policy is a unit of the government bureaucracy but sometimes, leadership as a major factor, may affect or modify crucial inputs in the implementation of any given policy or programme. In Nigeria, the shortcomings, difficulties and failures that have attended major policies have been traced to certain factors such as political variables, institutional capacities and lack of explicit planning in terms of human and material requirements. An appraisal of the cupious problems associated with Global Economic Crisis under which the fine goals of the Technical and Vocational Education curriculum will be implemented form the major focus of this work.

THE GLOBAL ECONOMIC CRISIS

The late president Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, on assumption of office on May 29, 2007 announced some plans through which he intends to position Nigeria on the list of the largest 20 economies of the world by the year 2020 (Mbanaso 2008). The plans have collectively been tagged 'vision 2020' which have been supported by the 7- point Agenda. In line with contemporary global trends, several appeals have been made to the private sector to partner with the government in providing the needed funds for the actualization of the 7-point agenda.

The reaction come in a number of ways: Notable among the respondent was the capital market community which is seen as the platform for funding the 7-point

agenda. As pointed out by Falomo (2008) in heeding to this call, the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), the Nigeria Stock Exchange (NSE) and the Association of Issuing House of Nigeria (AIHN) invited all stakeholders in the Nigerian economy to a National Conference on Financing the 7-point agenda of the Federal Government through the instrumentality of the capital market".

Besides these domestic economic measures, government has come up with policies that have opened economies internationally, following the current globalization. There is room for a free market economy, increased productivity and new opportunities for international trade and investment. This supposed economic 'boom' is now threatened by the bursting of the financial houses in advanced countries, particularly the United States of America, where a recession now looms. This recession is what is termed Global Economic Crisis. (Roubini 2009). There is this uncertainty everywhere following the high rate of inflation, job insecurity, unemployment etc. and up to 45% of global wealth had been destroyed by the global financial crisis in less than one and a half years? The interconnectedness of these markets, means that an economic collapse in any one given country could not be contained (Charles 2007).

Nigeria as a nation has felt the impact of this global economic crisis and has introduced a number of measures as a means to stay afloat this global economic crunch. Terms such as "VAT" "liquidation of capital market" 'privatization', right-sizing', "wealth creation" etc. have become common parlance in the national economic language. What provoked all these measures is the utmost concern about Nigerian's economic survival in the face of global financial crisis. There is a general fear that curriculum implementation of the Technical and Vocational Education Technology (TVET) may be an uphill task.

THE CHALLENGES

The major challenge is funding. Before the global economic melt-down Nigerian had packaged a number of economic reforms through her loaded programmes such as National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS). The reform programmes covered a wide range of governmental and private sectors such as Telecommunication, Taxation, Banking, Education, Public Sector Procurement (due process) and Civil Service (Afemike 2005). The reform agenda are aimed at reviving and revitalizing the economic development of Nigeria which had tilted all these years. From the above perspective, it is evident that Nigeria had anticipated some economic problems which she tried to forestall with these reform measures. But the actualization of these goals has been a perennial problem in the Nigerian society and one may be constrained to predict that the implementation of the Technical and Vocational Education Technology curriculum may just go the way of other failed programmes.

Specifically, the two fold reforms in the educational sector were aimed at ensuring first, the minimum acceptable international standards of education for all and second, excellence in both tutoring and learning of skills in science and technology by students who will be seen as the future innovators and industrialists of Nigeria

(Yaradua 2007). The contents of these reforms portray government's intention and action that are poised to leaving a legacy in the history of the nation's economy. The actual realization of the goals of these programmes become an issue of utmost concern and the appraisal/experience of the global economic trend will determine the success or failure of the Technical and Vocational Education Technology curriculum. The common problem confronting implementation in Nigeria has been lack of funds or poor funding. The National Policy on Education requires that every technical college has its own production unit which should be run on commercial basis. Students would be attached to such units where they can obtain practical experience as an alternative to the periods that they may have spent in the industry. Sadly enough, government has not provided funds to procure the needed production machinery. For instance, the ocean under-ground welding taught in Nigerian Institute of Oceanography attracts a lot of money as a skill. Nnagu (178) and Ukeja (1979) rightly observe that facilities and equipment are the teachers' tools and it is through school planning and facilities that any curriculum can find its physical expression.

The call on the industrial Training Fund (ITF) did not yield the desired effect financially due to insufficient funding. And this prompted the federal government to provide the 'necessary' funding to meet the practical training allowances of students from universities, polytechnics and technical colleges. Government has failed to inject massive funds into the educational sector as the case may be and in fulfillment of the reform agenda on education. Apparently, the economic melt-down has affected many manufacturing companies in Europe such that a number of them even at local levels have folded up. Money to import science and vocational equipment is not always available. The manpower to produce this equipment is not also in the right proportion. Besides the idea of manufacturing/importation of science equipment is very hazy.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF TEACHERS IN THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT AND CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION IN TVET

The arrival of the information age has come to erode the traditional teachers' boundaries and has challenged all caliber of professionals, teachers alike, to think in new ways bounded only by the limits of their creative imaginations (Umoanwan 2009). At the centre of this technological revolution are the teacher, the school system and the student. The teacher is the strong factor joining the students and the curriculum. Just as the success of the student in learning depends in some respect on the teacher, so does the success of implementation of curriculum depend on the teachers. Barry and Tye (176) suggest that the federal ministry of education should draw up curriculum to include basic amenities put in place for recreational activities and then pass it to the school for implementation.

Quite often the teacher may not always partake in the formation of the curriculum but he interprets analyses and breaks it down to the student's level. The success of the teacher in all these activities can be attributed to the teachers' knowledge of the curriculum, and his resourcefulness. Nigerian's readiness to compete with her foreign counterparts technologically(ensuring acceptable international standards in

education) requires the employment of trained, seasoned and professional personnel to handle the complicated curriculum content required in the Technical and Vocational Education Technology. It is a known fact that the right caliber of teachers are not sent on training.

With the confusion in the educational system, the impact will be enormous and the implementation of the curriculum cannot be fully achieved. The teacher needs to be constantly updated in his knowledge, skills and competences in handling the varied children put under his care (Ushie, 2009). Fafunwa (1974) notes that the quality of education of any country cannot rise above the quality of its teachers since it is the teacher who will translate the curriculum from a theoretical piece of paper to practical terms through provision of learning experience.

Quality teaching depends on the quality of teachers in terms of training, commitment, attitude, sincerity, and academic standing. According to Azeke (1986), some teachers do not use available laboratory facilities effectively due to lack of knowledge and experience. Another impediment is that some teachers in developing countries are asked to teach a subject without the necessary laboratory and equipment (Bajah, 1999). The gradual upgrading of the training facilities, according to Yakubu (2008) in Technical and Vocational Education institutions is not enough. It calls for special training for technical teachers in polytechnics, universities and colleges. The capacity building embarked upon by NBTE since June 2007, has only produced "680 trained staff" (Yakubu, 2008), this is grossly inadequate for a country that is anxious to attain the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The reviewed curricular of Technical and Vocational Education Technology will lead to increase in human and material resource management. Implementation of the curriculum therefore may require extra commitment on the part of government to provide the right platform for its take off in terms of money and material considerations. The board's effort at providing specialized equipment-one in each geo-political zone seems a poor calculation on the part of policy makers. Farrant (1975) is of the view that what remains in the student's memory mostly is not the lesson delivered but the teacher who delivers it and how he does so.

A school environment is a connector that connects, coordinates and links the multitude of activities in a school with the teachers, students and facilities. In many respects this is almost invisible yet everyone experiences its influence. Fraser (1994) notes that a school's physical environment includes the school buildings, the surrounding buildings, the surrounding grounds, attitudes, climate, connectedness, recognition of the needs and success of the individual and support for learning. The source further observed that creating a healthy learning environment requires the involvement of virtually everyone in the school system (students, administrators, teachers, school counselor) as pupils learning needs have changed drastically in recent times. There is widespread agreement that national curriculum provides a means of ensuring consistency across the nation while giving flexibility for schools to meet the needs and interests of their students and communities (Hipkins, Boyd and McGee 2008). Across schools there is variation in the provision of training

facilities in TVE institutions. The distribution of equipment is sometimes done on political basis. Leaders would want to testify schools within their vicinity than those far from them. If the curriculum is to be fully implemented then there should be equal distribution of teaching aids and the resources that facilitate effective learning.

The details of the approach in every school are no doubt influenced by personalities, type of school, location and interest. But there should be a balance between schools if the curricular are to be realized. Balogun (1992) identifies unavailability of equipment as a factor that can hinder the conduct of practical in schools. He observes that part of the objectives of teaching science, example computer studies, is to communicate the operation of equipment to students and this cannot be done effectively without the availability of equipment as it is the case in most schools.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The paper has examined the global economic crisis and the challenges of curriculum implementation in TVET. Its core argument is based on the fact that the Nigerian government had experienced some economic problems long before the current global economic meltdown and had put in place a number of programmes to salvage the situation but such programmes died prematurely. It is one thing to make policies and quite another thing to implement them. Nigeria is not making a conscious effort at revamping the provisions of TVET.

The problem of providing sufficient funds to back up such provisions has become a perennial one. Right caliber of teachers is not often sent on training (pedagogical training). The complicated content of the reviewed curriculum of the TVET calls for training of skilled and experienced teachers. Based on the above, the following general recommendations are made:

1. the strength of the educational sector depends on the quality of human capital at her disposal. Government should be willing to invest reasonable proportion of her income in human capital, recruitment, training and retraining.
2. universities and polytechnics should develop courses with relevant potentials to train manpower for the school system. Government should intensify efforts at manufacturing scientific and technological equipment locally. This would also create job opportunities for some Nigerians.
3. the effect of technology on the nations educational positioning and repositioning cannot be overemphasized as technology helps to increase the perceived equality of her students. the educational sector should equip every technical school and others with modern technological equipment as this is a sure way of achieving increased output.
4. besides, there should be a greater commitment on the part of government to create production units and skill acquisition centres in all technical and vocational institutions
5. government should restructure the present day package of her personnel to attract quality and experienced staff into the system. The gesture would put a stop to the brain drain syndrome.

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