

# Enhancing Labour Efficiency through Vocational and Technical Education in Nigeria

**Elebe, M. I.**

*Department of Urban & Regional Planning  
Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic  
Ikot Osurua, Ikot Ekpene, Nigeria  
E-mail: mikeelebe@yahoo.com*

## ABSTRACT

*There is a great deal of young people entering the labour force yearly without the appropriate skill for effective performance. Consequently, they are often given on the job training by their employers. Such training is not only time consuming but additional stress on management. "The word in vogue today is technology and if our technology education is not reviewed to meet the needs of this technology age, the product will definitely miss the trend and this will be out of time. The paper therefore examines the place of labour in economic development. It x-rays the role of vocational and technical education in enhancing labour efficiency, problems of vocational and technical education in Nigeria and concluded that skill acquisition man power development and provision of functional workshop by the relevant authorities among others are some of the best approaches to enhancing labour efficiency in Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** *Labour, Skill and Education Policy*

## INTRODUCTION

For development or economic growth to take place, certain factors of production are required. These factors of production include labour; natural resources and certain tools, implement and other capital goods (Udom, 2000). Labour constitutes an important parts of a nation's wealth. Labour is, generally speaking human effort of any kind – manual or mental, skilled or unskilled, scientific or artistic (Lawal 1982). In Nigeria, it is right to say that the productive capacity or a unit of labour will vary from one state to another; reflecting the relative quality of the labour force, its health and the working habits. Therefore, the productivity of a worker would be a function of the amount of effort a man can put forward in a given period of time and of his skill.

These basic skills according to Lawal (1982) are lacking. Skill by nature needs long apprenticeships and since the skill and knowledge which labour acquires through education and training is part of a nation's wealth; it is to be expected that the general quality of labour – skills, technical know-how will account greatly in the basic differences of wealth among nations. It should be noted that Nigerian labour force has a relatively new experience in factory work. Some of the newly recruited workers have no experience with machinery and the routine of factory atmosphere. Accelerated economic development and the desire to achieve a viable and sustainable life have created the need for specialized skills. These competence and

skills needed for labour efficiency can be obtained through vocational and technical education, which is the main focus of this study.

### **Objectives of Vocational and Technical Education**

According to the National Policy on Education (FGN, 2004) the goal of technical and vocational education shall be to:

- (i) Provide trained manpower in the applied sciences, technology and business particularly at craft, advance craft and technical levels.
- (ii) Provide the technical knowledge and vocational skill necessary for agriculture, commercial and economic development.
- (iii) Give training and impart the necessary skill to individual who shall be self-reliant economically.

It could be seen from the aims and objectives of the education policy that vocational and technical education prepares youths for employment in industries, commerce and enterprises by exposing them to experience that provides the manipulative, cognitive and attitudinal skills that make them qualify for it (Onwuchekwe 2000).

### **Uncertified and Certified Sectors of Education**

Omada (2003) posits that science and technical education is being undertaken through the uncertified and the certified formal sector. The uncertified formal sector includes the vehicle mechanics, shoemakers and repairers, battery chargers, painters and other artisans who are involved in the training of the youths. Although he identified these sectors in Kogi State, observation shows the same is applicable in other part of Nigeria. No doubt, apart from providing employment, this group makes important contributions to the economy of the state. The certified formal sector has been guided by the National Education Policy of 1981 in which the State were directed to implement the 6- 3- 3- 4 System of Education.

- (i) A 6 year Primary School
- (ii) A 3 year Junior Secondary School
- (iii) A 3 year Senior Secondary School, and
- (iv) 4 year University/Polytechnic Education

Except for the primary school levels, each level of education is expected to give the graduates the foundation and vocational skills for employment. At the Secondary School Level, science and technology education is aimed at developing the capacity and interest of students to live effectively in our modern age of science and technology. At the tertiary level, it is about skill acquisition and the use of the skill in the society for the benefit of everyone. In other to actualize the goals of the 6-3-3-4 System of Education based on vocational training, many states government have set up Science Secondary Schools, Technical Colleges, Polytechnics and University of Science and Technologies.

### **Rationale for Vocational Technical Education**

According to Okorie (1998) in Amiaya (2005), Vocational education is defined as

the experience or training acquired by an individual to enable him fit into an occupation and become useful to himself and the society. The National Policy on Education (FGN 2004) considers vocational education as that aspect of education, which leads to the acquisition of practical and applied skills as well as basic scientific knowledge. Vocational and Technical Education according to Onwuchekwa (2000) can be said to be the bed-rock of National Development and advancement into self-sufficiency in industrial and agricultural sectors of the economy. He also notes that the importance of Vocational and Technical Education stretches from the individual to the community, to the Nation and to the world. Although the individual is the primary beneficiary of Vocational and Technical Education, the society or the nation is always the better for it. Vocational and Technical Education also reduces drop-out rate since it provide training opportunities for persons who are not satisfied with the form of education that is distant from the realities of the world of work.

If Nigeria is to accomplish its lofty goals in industrialization, Vocational and Technical Education is necessary for those to work in the industry. Technological take-off will enhance mass production of goods and services, but production of goods and services involves technical activities, making technical education a necessity for technological development (Amiaya, 2005). Based on the technical nature of most of our industrial production, employers of labour need school leavers with vocational and technical education to work as technicians to enhance their labour efficiency for the growth and success of their enterprises.

Above all, in assumption of technological world, a vocational and technical education graduate should be versatile. He is expected to be qualified for teaching post, technological, managerial or administrative post both in ministries and industries. Vocational and technical education is desirable and important in the country and most especially in the industrial Establishment.

### **Challenges of Vocational Educational in Nigeria**

The following factors are considered the bane of vocational educational in Nigeria.

1. The inability of the Nigeria education system to establish a relationship between student programme and the world of work.
2. Limited resource available for programme expansion or redirection to enable the programme to make the greatest contribution to the economy and training needs of business and industry.
3. The inability of the Nigerian education system to ensure quality of vocational teacher preparation. This has resulted in the restricted supply of competent teachers.
4. The difficulty of the educational system to accept vocational education as an integral aspect of the total education system for Nigeria.
5. The failure of higher education to provide the diversity and comprehensiveness of educational opportunity needed by millions of students who are entering a changing world of work.

6. The failure of vocational education to achieve the status and prestige it needs to perform its proper and vital role in the Nigeria economy.

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The rate of technological change and the need to upgrade and update existing stock of labour force for skill and efficiency have necessitated the need to view manpower development as a continuous process through the work life and not just a one shot that prepares the individual for entering the labour market with the occupational certificate without regards to his suitability to the needs of the industry. From the foregoing therefore, it can be concluded that skill acquisition and development are among the best approaches to enhancing labour efficiency and for training or education to make commensurate impact on labour efficiency other supportive factors such as functional workshop should be provided by the relevant authority. The following are therefore recommended:

1. **Evaluation of curriculum:** Vocational educational curriculum should be evaluated to make education relevant to life. Njoku (1993) in Amiaya (2005) advocates innovation in the curriculum that would enable students live effectively and productively in tomorrow's world. In other words, curriculum must be constantly evaluated in line with the needs of students for effective performance in a changing world.
2. **Adequate Financial Support:** Education generally is capital intensive. Therefore, vocational programme at any level (primary secondary, tertiary) requires adequate financial support. Funds required for procurement of equipment and for the recruitment and training of vocational educational educators should be made available for vocational education to be effective.
3. **Infrastructural Provision:** Vocational education is about tools and their operators. Many of the Vocational and technical schools lack the needed equipment for daily teaching and learning to acquire the necessary skills. Where the equipment are supplied, they are either left to rust away because of lack of qualified personnel to operate them or they are stolen. Therefore, Vocational and Technical equipment should be procured, installed and made functional at all times including workshops and laboratories.
4. **Training and Re-training of Personnel:** The training and retraining of personnel involved in vocational technical education should be encouraged by Government, either through special grant, scholarship, or workshop and seminars to enable them keep up with latest technological development.

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