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Funding of Vocational and Technical Education in Nigeria in Times of Global Economic Recession

Offiong, A. Anthony

Department of Vocational Education

University of Uyo, Uyo, Nigeria

Akpan, A. Godwin

Department of Vocational Education

University of Uyo, Uyo, Nigeria

Email: akpanga2020@yahoo.com

&

Usoro, S. Hogan

Department of Vocational Education

University of Uyo, Uyo, Nigeria

Abstract

Funding has been the bane of education in Nigeria. The global economic recession eventually came to complicate the matter. This notwithstanding, the focus of Vocational and Technical Education with regard to skills acquisition cannot be compromised. This paper x-rays the education funding pattern in Nigeria, assesses the methods of funding of Vocational and Technical

Education in Nigeria as well as the need for and ways of adequate funding of Vocational and Technical Education in Nigeria in times of economic recession. The work recommends among others, the need for endowment fund raising by educational institutions for the provision of facilities and equipment for Vocational and Technical Education Training, establishment of a cordial school/community liaison to raise funds to promote Vocational and Technical Education as well as that the Parents-Teachers Association and the Alumni Association should help out through cash and kind donation to foster Vocational Education Training in Nigeria.

Key words: Vocational and technical education, Global economic recession, internally generated revenue, Endowment fund, and Structural adjustment programme

Introduction

The economic recession which first hit the United States of America has become a global issue, the consequence of which is the reduction in budgetary allocations in an effort of governments to cut down on spending. It has also resulted in most countries laying off their workers both in government parastatals and private organizations to conserve funds.

Though the full effect of economic recession is not felt in Nigeria as reported in other nations of the world, it does appear that economic recession has always been here with us. This is because ever since the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) Structural Adjustment Programme of General Ibrahim Babangida led administration in the 80s, Nigeria does not seem to come over its effect as its continuous tippy influence seems to leave the education sector, in particular comatose ever after due to poor funding. This is because this programme came with such harsh trademarks as:

- (a) Privatization of public enterprises and utilities
- (b) Deregulation of social services i.e. withdrawal of government support for education, health care, housing, agriculture, etc
- (c) Devaluation of currency
- (d) Trade liberalization
- (e) Debt servicing.

Even in the 90s, long after Structural Adjustment Programme had ended officially in Nigeria, the education sector continued to experience a progressive decline in its annual budgetary allocation far below the 26% benchmark recommended for education by the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). This has been seen in the budgetary allocation to education over the years. Between 1997 and 2002 for instance, the budgetary allocation to education respectively stood as 11.53%, 10.94%, 11.12%, 8.36%, 7.0%, and 5.9%. This notwithstanding education in the 2003 National budget was allocated 1.8% which resulted in stiff protest and resultant strike action by the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) in Nigeria (ASUU, 2003). This has not been good news for Vocational and Technical Education which places a heavy demand on skills acquisition. Skills acquisition is not limited to psycho productive dimensions. It includes affective, cognitive and perceptual skills all of which constitute a balanced work behaviour.

So far, education in Nigeria has received more of quantitative and less of qualitative impetus. But the truth is that both quantity and quality are necessary if education is to produce the right calibre of human resources needed for national development. Considering Vocational and Technical Education as the key for national development (Dike, 2009) it is imperative for this sector to be adequately funded to make it result- driven. This is because Vocational and Technical Education by its comprehensive nature provides the beneficiaries with knowledge, competencies, skills and aptitudes necessary to be useful members of the society. The increasing demands for quality vocational education, better management and competent teachers to Vocational and Technical Education imply a need for substantial and consistent resource allocation. While hoping that one day, the situation of gross under funding of education in Nigeria will be a thing of the past, the question is: How can Vocational and Technical Education at present be funded in Nigeria at this time of financial stress? This is the question to which this paper seeks to provide answers.

National Education Funding Pattern in Nigeria

In 1945, the Commission for higher education in West Africa recommended Vocational and Technical Education for Nigeria and further proposed establishment of handicraft centres, trade centres and technical schools. According to Fafunwa (1991), the sum of £400,000 was accordingly granted

through the Colonial Development and Welfare Scheme (CDWS) to the voluntary agencies which established vocational institutions and were directly responsible for the funding of Vocational and Technical Education. But in the Second National Development Plan (1970-1974), the Federal Government provided grants to State Governments for the development of technical schools and the upgrading of existing schools at an estimated cost of ₦1.8million. In the Third National Development Plan (1975 – 1980), the sum of ₦12.291million stood as a collective budgetary allocation by the State and Federal Governments to Education.

However, during the Fourth National Development Plan (1981-1985), Vocational and Technical Education received a boost of ₦400.2million. This was the second largest share of the allocation in that plan period which indicated that government had realized the importance of Vocational and Technical Education. This was in fulfilment of the commitment of the clause in the National Policy on Education Section 7, Number 52 which states inter alia that “a greater proportion of education expenditure will continue to be devoted to vocational education at Federal and State levels” (FRN, 2004). In view of the foregoing fact and in recognition of the importance of Vocational and Technical Education, the formula for collaboration and joint responsibility is well designed for sharing the funding burden between the public and private sectors. The Industrial Training Funding (ITF) is the government agency for this purpose. The ITF provides a link between academic institutions and the world of work through the students Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES). It also manages funds attracted from organizations. Under statutory obligation, every organization with 25 workers and above is expected to register with ITF and contribute one percent of its total annual earning to the fund.

Evaluation of the Methods of Funding of Vocational and Technical Education in Nigeria

It is difficult to deny government’s role in the funding of Vocational and Technical Education especially after independence. The National Policy on Education had recognized that Vocational and Technical Education form the bedrock of Nigeria’s technological advancement; the Federal Government, therefore had substantially improved expenditure in this area in the third and fourth National Development Plan period in addition to establishing such

agencies as the ITF and the erstwhile Petroleum Trust Fund (PTF) to assist in the development of technological education in the country.

In spite of these efforts, under-funding is still the bane of Vocational and Technical Education in Nigeria as could be seen in the inadequacy of infrastructure, human resources and equipment in many institutions at the secondary to tertiary levels. It is unfortunate that, vocational education has always been given the shorter end of the stick when it comes to statutory allocation of finances to the agents of government. It is unfortunate because there is money for Nigeria to sponsor free primary and secondary education (Fafunwa, 2010). According to Fafunwa (2010), Nigeria has money but lacks the ability to use it judiciously. Vocational education holds the key for the solution of Nigeria's developmental problems, yet it is the worst applied instrument for national development (Dike, 2009).

Needs for Adequate Funding of Vocational and Technical Education in Nigeria

Proper funding of Vocational and Technical Education need not be over emphasized if Nigeria is to provide for adequate training of persons who can proffer solution to our industrial apathy and technological backwardness. The importance of proper funding of Vocational and Technical Education has been acknowledged by many educationists like Adesina (1977), Ukeje (1977), Akpan (2010). They all agreed that since the programme is capital intensive, proper implementation and actualization of its set goals will not be achieved without adequate funding.

At present, there are fluctuations in the supply of high and middle level manpower requirements in the nation's institutions of learning especially in the areas of Vocational and Technical Education. This is mostly due to inadequate funding. The poor funding is shown in ill-equipped, workshops, laboratories, farms, and typing pools/computer laboratories in the schools. Definitely the goal of Vocational and Technical Education cannot be achieved without them. The official hypocrisy occasioned by lip service paid by government in the funding of education particularly Vocational and Technical Education has resulted in the current political proliferation of institutions of learning without any concomitant provision of relevant equipment and infrastructures. Besides, the infrastructures in schools that were established in the early 1970s are mostly dilapidated due to poor maintenance. There is, therefore, the need for effective funding to facilitate

maintenance and put the equipment in the laboratories and workshops in good working conditions through routine checks, servicing and repairs.

Funding of Vocational and Technical Education in Times of Economic Recession – The Way Forward

Since it has been clear that Government cannot (or has not shown enough goodwill to) single handedly fund Vocational and Technical Education, it becomes imperative to explore the avenue of public-private-partnership (PPP) in an effort to put all hands on deck for the task of delivering the programme from its present quack mire, redeem the nation from technological backwardness and save our children from a bleak future.

A wide array of various sources of funding exists that can be explored for the benefit of vocational education growth. They include:

1. **Endowment Fund:** This is money donated to provide income for the execution of some projects. During school functions like prize giving day, inter-house sports competitions, etc, appeals can be made by the school to governmental agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), philanthropists and wealthy individuals as well as organizations to donate funds for the execution of some specific projects that will assist Vocational and Technical Education to achieve its mission for Nigeria. As a means of spurring up interest on the part of donors, some specific structures, laboratories, or farms could be named after such donors. Considering the honour and title-crazy society that we have, this would encourage more of such people to even single handedly fund such projects.
2. **Collaboration with Companies and Non-Governmental Organizations:**

Most companies particularly the multi-nationals are sleeping-giants when it comes to funding of Vocational and Technical Education. This possibly accounted for why Ogumka (2002) remarked that the multi-national companies are not social welfare syndicates but hard-line profit motivated corporations. It becomes pertinent therefore to wake up these sleeping giants through effective collaboration so as to make them alive to their social responsibilities, particularly in the provision of structures, equipment and facilities in schools. Such

collaboration could be initiated by the school principals or the Parent-Teachers Associations. The result would be amazing if organizations like the Oil Companies, communication service providers, financial institutions, the hospitality industry are contacted for this purpose.

3. Establishment of Internally Generated Revenue Projects

This is another avenue that could be explored to facilitate funding of Vocational and Technical Education in times of global recession. In this regard, the vanishing school livestock farms should be restored. If livestock and crop farms re-surface in schools, income from there could be ploughed back to ameliorate some of the teething problems of Vocational and Technical Education. Even in the area of technical education, students can be made to engage in product manufacturing for their assessment under the guidance and supervision of their teachers. By this approach, technical education institutions in Nigeria are likely to be revenue yielding to the favour of their continued and productive existence. A management committee could then be set up to liquidate these products to the public in a widely publicized open day in order to generate revenue for the school for the purpose of further promoting vocational education. Instructors of Technical Education subjects should desist from giving assignments which only require mere reproduction of theoretical facts and production of pseudo jobs by the students. Schools should go into rental services by procuring and hiring out to the public items such as tents, canopies, plastic chairs, plastic tables, plates and spoons. The products from the home economics unit of the department of Vocational and Technical Education should also be placed on the shelf for the general public to buy. Also, services of the staff and students of such unit like Home Economics Education should be marketed as caterers and event managers, all in a concerted effort to generate revenue internally to promote Vocational and Technical Education.

Furthermore, school halls could be rented out for public functions like, weddings, church activities, conduct and marking of external examinations and other social meetings. In addition to these, the school could embark on remedial educational programmes like extra mural classes, Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination

preparatory classes, external and internal school certificate preparatory classes in an effort to improve their internally generated revenue base.

4. **Parents-Teachers Association (PTA):** Parents-Teachers Association is a body of parents and teachers of a school with the common goal of promoting development in the school. In line with this the Parents could raise funds internally among themselves, and could also seek external financial assistance from wealthy individuals, corporate organizations and NGOs to execute projects like provision of equipment, facilities and structures in the school to promote Vocational and Technical Education.
5. **Alumni Association:** This is a body of every alumnus or old students of the school most of whom are well placed in the society, politics, and some are captains of industries. This avenue could be employed to get them to donate and make meaningful contribution in cash and in kind to their alma mater with the aim of promoting Vocational and Technical Education.

Conclusion

Vocational and Technical Education as a workshop-based and skill development oriented programme is capital intensive as it places a heavy demand on equipment, tools, personnel and special workshops to accommodate the emerging technologies associated with vocational technical training. The singular effort of government in funding Vocational and Technical Education has so far not paid off considering the serious dearth of equipment, tools, manpower and structures which could have helped to salvage Nigeria from her present technological backwardness. The fact remains that since government alone cannot adequately fund Vocational and Technical Education, supplementary funding has to be sourced from elsewhere if the system must survive and saleable entrepreneurial skills imparted to the Nigerian youths. This will no doubt stem the rising tide of youth restiveness, kidnapping, armed robbery, political thuggery and other vices that remain the bane of the nation.

Recommendations

In a bid to improve on the funding status of Vocational and Technical Education in the face of the present economic downturn, this paper recommends the following:

1. Secondary/Technical schools as well as the department of Vocational and Technical Education in tertiary institutions should establish a deliberate school/community liaison by seeking financial assistance from companies and financial institutions, communication service providers, non-governmental organizations as well as hospitality industries located in their area of operation. SIWES should be re-engineered to improve the future of vocational technical education programme products.
2. Schools and departments involved in Vocational and Technical Education should from time to time organize endowment fund raising to muster funds for provision of facilities, equipment and structures for vocational education.
3. Institutions involved in Vocational and Technical Education should showcase their products for public sale on open-days organized by them to get supplementary funds.
4. Institutions involved in Vocational and Technical Education should market their manpower through consultancy services as well as operating hiring and rental services of school halls, canopies, plastic chairs, tables, and school buses for supplementary fund generation.
5. The Parents – Teachers Association should help out by providing the required facilities, structures and infrastructures for Vocational and Technical Education.
6. The Alumni Association should also help to provide additional funding of Vocational and Technical Education in cash and in kind.
7. As much as possible, emphasis should be shifted from funding in cash to funding in kind through direct provision of the required facilities for Vocational and Technical Education to check cash abuse through embezzlements.

8. States and Federal Governments should increase their budgetary allocations to education to the 26% recommended benchmark by the UNESCO.

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