

## **SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES AS FRONTIERS FOR NATIONAL GROWTH AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The article reviewed and discussed skills and competence as a frontier for national growth and sustainable development in Nigeria. Skill and competence to boost sustainable, practical skills acquisition are essential to national growth development. In the introduction, the paper defines terminologies such as skills, competence, national growth development, and sustainable development. It shows that skills provide the students who are leaders of tomorrow with skills in which they can be self-reliant because human resources through knowledge-based capacity are cornerstones for effective management and utilization of national resources. The paper further highlights the teaching of skill competence in Nigeria and examines significant challenges inherent in vocational-technical Education. It also explores the component of sustainable development and how skill and competence are enhanced. Lastly, the paper discusses some impediments to skill acquisition in Nigeria and concludes by recommending how such impediments can be reduced.*

*Keywords: Skill Competence, National Growth, Sustainable Development.*

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Practical skills acquisition and competencies are essential aspects of vocational and technical education programs at the various level of Nigerian Education. Spring (2015) sees Education as functional and analytical skills that increase one's access to the labor market and be a source of income for both people and communities, whereas education for sustainable development is centered on a new conception of Education that equips students to take charge of building and enjoying a sustainable future. In general, Technical Education is a discipline that equips students with constructive, analytical skills, information, and critical thinking to develop their craftsmanship, practical experience, and problem-solving abilities.

UNESCO. (2011) states that technical and vocational Education and training realize the aim of eradicating poverty at all levels of government; the National Policy on Education. (2013) provided a roadmap for the requirement of preparing the young for gainful work. This is why higher institutions now have the legal authority to provide beneficiaries with competent employable skills training through vocational Education. This may be based on the supposition that vocational Education is still a viable option for addressing Nigeria's national issues of poverty, unemployment, incompetence, and a lack of hard work, closely related to corruption and other social vices like armed robbery, kidnapping, etc. The study of technologies and related sciences, the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding, and knowledge relating to occupations



in various sectors of economic and social life, and general Education are all included in the definition of technical Education provided by UNESCO. (2015). Technical Education prepares human resources for the always-evolving workplace. The paper further highlights the teaching of skill competence in Nigeria and examines significant key challenges inherent in vocational-technical Education. It also explores the component of sustainable development and how skill and competence are enhanced. Lastly, the paper discusses some impediments to skill acquisition in Nigeria and concludes by recommending how such impediments can be reduced.

## **THE TEACHING OF SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES AS FRONTIERS FOR NATIONAL GROWTH AND TRANSFORMATION**

Since Education, technology, skills, and competencies were previously seen as the cornerstones of economic, social, and political mobility and progress, the continual inventive changes worldwide have demonstrated that the future is uncertain. The professional abilities of technical education instructors significantly impact the quality of Technical, Vocational Education and Training (VET) (Avis & Orr, 2014; Gamble, 2013). Supporting vocational instructors as they develop their professional abilities is a crucial topic in Technical Education today.

However, for the assistance provided to be effective, it must be based on a thorough knowledge of both the learning requirements of technical education instructors and the essential professional competencies they require to do their jobs effectively. Researchers have consequently looked into the qualifications of technical education teachers. and have how capable vocational instructors believe themselves to be and how one's view of one's competence affects one's desire for and engagement in continuing professional development (CPD) (Andersson & Köpsén, 2015).

Despite the lack of a comprehensive definition of competence, conversations and studies on the topic have persisted. Different sets of competencies have been discovered concerning teacher competencies Shulman. (1986) may have created the most thorough and commonly utilized classification of teachers' professional abilities. Shulman emphasized knowledge as the cornerstone of the skills that good teachers possess.

According to his study, the three primary knowledge domains that effective instructors need to possess are subject content knowledge (SCK), pedagogical content knowledge (PCK), and general pedagogical content knowledge (GPK). Teachers in vocational subjects use the same approach. Except for mentioning that vocational instructors' topic matter knowledge includes both theoretical and technical/practical parts, this statement has not changed much (Gamble, 2013). Due to the fast change brought about by scientific advancement, these technical and practical components, technical education teachers must stay current with changes in scientific theory, industrial trends, and workplace norms (Andersson & Köpsén, 2015).

## **THE NATIONAL POLICY ON EDUCATION AND THE IMPACT OF TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT.**

The National Policy on Education. (2008) outlined the following objectives for Technical Education in Nigeria:

- (i) We provide skilled labor in subprofessional grades, notably in applied science, technology, and commerce.
- (ii) Provide the specialized information and practical abilities required for advancing agriculture, industry, commerce, and the economy.
- (iii) We supply individuals who can utilize scientific knowledge to address environmental issues and enhance the environment for human use and convenience.
- (iv) We are introducing professional studies in engineering and other fields of technology.
- (v) Giving instruction and passing on essential knowledge will create artisans, technicians, and other skilled workers who will be entrepreneurial and independent.
- (vi) They are allowing young people to comprehend technology's growing complexity in an informed way.

### **PROBLEM AND OPPORTUNITY IN TECHNICAL EDUCATION IN NIGERIA**

According to (Attah *et al.*, 2020), technical Education aims to teach, practice, and perfect skills for sustainable development. To address the personnel requirements for national growth, technical education programs were developed to teach people the practical skills, fundamental scientific knowledge, and attitudes needed as artisans at the subprofessional level. Most technical education graduates in Nigeria perform well on the theoretical side of the program but could be better on the practical side. Because there is no established policy or strategy for comprehensive policy activities of school-industry collaboration in various trade areas, a more significant portion of the issues facing the technical education system in Nigeria today are due to technical Education's inability to impart the necessary skills, knowledge, and attitudes through the collaboration of policy initiatives between schools and industry for gainful or self-employment upon graduation. The enhancement of the quality and relevance to the labor market through adopting competence standards, competency-based training, and encouraging industry- and school-based collaboration is another significant problem. Once again, schools should expand their total ability to teach technical skills to everyone in various trade areas in Technical Education for an adequately skilled workforce. This is part of an inclusive approach to skill development for sustainable development.

### **KEY CHALLENGES TO VOCATIONAL TECHNICAL EDUCATION (VTE) IN NIGERIA**

Osundahunsi (2019). State that the difficulties facing vocational-Technical Education and training have harmed our national progress and quality of life. The difficulties include:

- i. **Poor Public Perception and Apathy to Vocational Education:** To gain popular approval, vocational and Technical Education in Nigeria has to change its negative reputation. Observations have revealed that many parents, especially the elite, the wealthy, and the political class, do not encourage their children to pursue a career in VTE. Those individuals who, likely by accident or choice, choose to enroll in the program are not motivated or encouraged because society does not accord the program any real value or dignity.



- ii. **Government Lukewarm Attitudes/Poor Funding:** Even though it is a crucial instrument for combating unemployment and poverty in society, Nigeria's three government tiers have yet to realize the contributions that vocational and Technical Education makes to national economic growth. This is because previous administrations did not see the need to sufficiently fund the nation's programs for standard and sustained vocational and Technical Education.
- iii. **Shortage of Qualified Vocational Technical Teachers:** Numerous academic institutions nationwide need more qualitative and quantitative staffing. There need to be more skilled VTE teachers. Only with qualified VTE teachers will the practical work that is a crucial part of the program be easier to implement. Attracting qualified staff into teaching and teacher preparation in technical and vocational Education was a problem for most countries, including Nigeria.
- iv. **Lack of Adequate Equipment and Training Infrastructure:** Most vocational education programs at our higher education institutions need better-stocked labs, functional workshops, and appropriate infrastructure. What is seen and referred to as vocational education laboratories in various universities nowadays are eye sores since the laboratories only contain things or equipment supplied during the period the departments were founded. When they exist, they are woefully inadequate.

#### **STRATEGIES FOR VET EDUCATION CHANGE AND MANAGEMENT IN NIGERIA**

Osundahunsi., (2019). Outlined the following possible techniques for solving the identified challenges for Technical Education in Nigeria:

- a. **Orientation:** The government should ensure an orientation in the form of sensitization to the non-vocational principals to modify their attitude towards vocational topics related to the execution of the VTE curriculum.
- b. **Having high-quality teachers** who can convey the information, skills, and competencies needed in vocational and Technical Education is essential for ensuring that the instruction of students in these areas is of the highest possible caliber. The goal of teacher preparation should be to create high-quality educators with the necessary tools to effectively teach in both school and non-school environments. Additionally, there should be a chance to retrain the experienced and train the inexperienced. A feedback system should be developed to track the shortcomings of vocational teachers and the efforts taken to correct them through seminars, workshops, in-service training, etc.
- c. **Provision of Facilities:** To guarantee the quality of Education in VTE, there must be sufficient space and equipment for teaching vocational and Technical Education. The setting for training should resemble the workplace. Real-world examples and circumstances may be used in class to motivate students to learn and improve instruction.
- d. **Vocational and Technical Education (VTE)** must be appropriately supported for the program to succeed in empowering students after graduation. VTE has significant financial needs that must be addressed right once. These needs include the procurement of teaching tools and supplies, equipment upkeep, support for student work-experiential programs, and the payment of allowances to vocational and technical instructors. Additionally, the government should

allocate finances for vocational Education to be worthwhile in the nation. The Parents Teacher Association (PTA), hosting community donations, etc., should all be used by the schools to raise money.

- e. Teachers' Motivation: Teachers in vocational and Technical Education should be encouraged to love their jobs rather than suffer through them through their pay, benefits, and entitlements like promotions. They should also get in-service training when it is required.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study reviewed to determine what skills technical education instructors deemed necessary for their jobs, how competent they believed themselves to be, and whether they felt a need for more training. Continual Professional Growth Unexpectedly, instructors discovered that although knowledge of the subject is assumed to translate into practical teaching abilities, good teaching skills are considered crucial for technical education teachers. There is little question that increasing skill development via vocational, and Technical Education will address Nigeria's numerous issues with economic instability, unemployment, and the development of human capital Vocational and Technical Education in Nigeria depends on effective planning, timely execution, sufficient financing, and motivation. The federal, state, and municipal governments the three levels of government need to re-access and strengthen the application of the VTE policies. The world has come to understand that when most of the population is unemployed, there can be no real social or economic growth. Because of this, nations, including Nigeria, are working to find solutions to the problem of young unemployment. From those above, it is clear that vocational Education is essential to any country's growth. This may be demonstrated by acquiring the necessary skills, knowledge, and talents for self-employment or a waged job. It was determined that Nigerian vocational teachers undervalue the importance of pedagogical subject knowledge.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

The following recommendations were made for implementing vocational and Technical Education curricula better for the national economy's sustained growth.

- Secondary schools and technical and vocational institutions require trained instructors of technical and vocational Education. For these instructors to perform their tasks successfully, they also require proper professional development. Government should hire additional instructors for technical and vocational Education, and institutes specifically designed to train teachers in technical Education should be developed to provide in-service technical education teachers with professional development opportunities. To improve the preparation of technical education instructors and conduct high-quality research in technical Education, the current Federal Colleges of Education (Technical) should be outfitted, supported, and upgraded to technical education universities.
- To implement the technical college program effectively, businesses, non-governmental organizations, and private businesses should supply labs, equipment, workshops, facilities, and machinery in the current technical colleges as stipulated in the curriculum. Scholarship

and research grants/loans should be given to individuals in the field of vocational and Technical Education to assist the Technical Education program to grow academically and also to meet the target of sustainable youth empowerment and self-reliant individuals.

- The government and other interested parties should make significant investments in the creation of cutting-edge facilities for vocational Education.
- To address the services provided by informal roadside apprentice operators who need more expertise, there should be direct contact between programs such as the ITF and the informal roadside apprenticeship practiced throughout the nation.

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