

Funding of Vocational and Technical Education (VTE) in Nigeria for Graduates Global Competitiveness

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Abstract

This paper investigates the funding of Vocational and Technical Education (VTE) in Nigeria, for Graduates Global Competitiveness. The Paper highlighted the significance of adequate funding in providing students with practical skills, empowering individuals, and promoting entrepreneurship. The article reveals that insufficient funding hinders VTE's effectiveness, perpetuating a cycle of poverty, skill gaps, and economic stagnation. suggestions include increased financial support, policy reforms, and improved resource allocation to unlock VTE's potential for driving sustainable economic development, reducing unemployment, and fostering innovation in Nigeria and enhance Graduates Global Competitiveness

Keywords: Funding Competitiveness Global, Graduates, Vocational and Technical Education

Introduction

The trend in the global economy is an increase in the demand for skilled workers, Vocational and Technical Education (VTE) meets this demand with training that imparts practical skills and knowledge to enable people to excel in the various industries. Vocational Education is connected to growth, wealth, and modern opportunities. Vocational and technical education, however, remains one important strand of education. Baridam (2017) defined technical vocational education and training as a form of education that equips learners with skills that can lead to economic benefits and sustainable livelihoods. It offers the practical skills and a specialized knowledge in preparation for a modern workforce. Vocational and Technical Education (VTE) is a transformative approach to learning that prepares students for real-world challenges and equips them with essential skills for various industries.

However, the effectiveness and accessibility of VTE in the modern era are heavily reliant on sufficient funding. Programmes like automobile/ automotive repair, computer programming, welding and fabrication, healthcare, and construction nurture proficient professionals to meet global market demands. It therefore requires both human and material resources to put the programme together. However, VTE's relevance and agility require substantial investments in facilities, equipment, and industry-aligned curricula. Adequate funding is crucial for recruiting and retaining qualified instructors. In an era of rapid technological progress and globalization, the need for skilled labour is paramount and is only

possible through conscious funding. The importance of funding VTE cannot be overstated, as it is a strategic investment in the future, demonstrating our collective commitment to nurturing talent, fostering innovation, and building a society where every individual can thrive. Adequate funding will enable VTE to supply a steady stream of talents to fuel the nations' economic growth and community vitality.

Statement of the Problem

Vocational and Technical Education (VTE) holds promise in meeting workforce demands and fostering economic growth. However, it is faced with several obstacles that impede its effectiveness. These challenges encompass insufficient funding, negative societal perceptions, a disconnect from industry requirements, issues of accessibility and equity, and low student retention rates. These hurdles undermine VTE's ability to adequately prepare individuals for successful careers and address the dynamic needs of the job market. Overcoming these challenges requires increased financial backing, efforts to reshape public attitudes, stronger collaboration between educational institutions and industries, initiatives to ensure equitable access, and strategies to enhance student engagement and persistence.

Concept of Vocational and Technical Education

Vocational and technical education is a specialized approach to learning that focuses on practical skills and scientific knowledge, preparing students for various sectors like manufacturing, agriculture, and commerce. It encompasses a diverse range of principles and practices vital for equipping students with practical skills and theoretical knowledge essential for modern workplaces (Uta, 2018). Vocational education equips students with not just vocational information but also the talent and confidence essential for various fields. It is particularly vital within higher education, especially in specialized fields such as electrical and electronic technology, building technology, auto, metal and woodwork technology. This form of education focus on the integration of theory and practice (Zhao, Liang, Ma, and Qi, 2021), while exploring innovative teaching that fosters critical thinking. Such education plays a significant role in developing personal and professional competencies essential for success in diverse fields. Educational technologies can significantly enhance teaching and learning experiences, particularly in developing crucial vocational skills (Horvitz, Mitchell, Garcia, and Singleton, 2020).

Adebayo and Olubodun (2017) underscore the role of vocational and technical education in contributing to sustainable national development. The most critical aspect of vocational and technical education is equipping individuals with the skills and attitudes necessary for employment and global competitiveness. Bayidam (2017) opined that vocational and technical education prepares individuals for gainful employment in recognized careers as semi-skilled workers, technicians, or sub-professionals. According to Odike, Brighten and Ngozi (2020), VTE spawns many different career tracks, fields and industries, from skilled

trades such as automotive technology, construction, plumbing, or electrical contracting to fields as diverse as agriculture, architecture, culinary arts, fashion design, film-making, forestry, engineering, healthcare personnel training, robotics and veterinary medicine.

Funding of Vocational and Technical Education in Nigeria

Funding involves allocating financial resources towards the establishment, maintenance, and improvement of vocational and technical education institutions, programs, and initiatives. Funding vocational and technical education in Nigeria has been a long-standing challenge. The principal problem of attaining the objectives of VTE in Nigeria is that of inadequate finance, which has been exacerbated by the global economic recession (Oviawe, 2020). Despite Nigeria's government investment in vocational/technical education, there is still significant funding shortage arising from lack of workshop, tools equipment, laboratory and other training equipment for the institutions.

Inadequate funding for vocational/technical education in Nigeria has hindered its development, falling short of international standards. Given the need to equip individuals with practical skills relevant to various industries, funding vocational and technical education in Nigeria is a crucial aspect of national development. Oviawe (2020) suggests a range of other strategies for funding TVET programs, including alumni donations, foreign assistance, and public-private partnerships. Afolabi and Adebowale (2019) emphasised the call for contributions from all citizens and the exploration of innovative funding mechanisms as a need for a reliable and adequate funding platform. Mubanga, Hock, Karim, and Mulenga (2019) identified several funding sources for TVET and entrepreneurship education to include government grants, student fees, private sector investments, company contributions, employee contributions, regulation fees, donor grants, NGOs, and loans from cooperating partners.

Inadequate funding is responsible for the numerous challenges facing VTE in Nigeria including inadequate technical teachers, inadequate provision of instructional materials, low **students'** enrolment, lack of collaboration of private sectors, terrorism/insecurity, weak monitoring and evaluation, epileptic power supply, among others. Okoye and Arimonu (2016) and Idris and Mbudai (2017) both highlighted lack of teacher motivation and poor workshop facilities as challenges facing technical education in Nigeria. Public perception of vocational and technical education is often negative (Ayemhenre, 2019); most views it as an option for the less privileged and less able students, leading to low enrolment and contributing to high youth unemployment. Ineffective VTE is majorly as a result of lack of funding.

Ineffective vocational and technical education aids, insufficient financing sources, and a lack of policy framework for monitoring education fund usage and distribution are also major issues. According to UNESCO (2019), TVET is constrained by inadequate and obsolete educational facilities including practical laboratories, workshops, and lecture rooms, hindering

institutions from keeping up with technological advancements. Poor implementation are also challenges hindering its progress (Samoilenko, Dubaseniuk, and Levchenko, 2021). The underfunding of Nigerian education has resulted in inadequate institutional facilities and services, thereby affecting the development of technical and vocational education (Afolabi and Adebowale, 2019). Despite the numerous roles of VTE towards the development of the nation, efforts by the government to addressing funding challenges remains elusive.

Need for Funding Vocational and Technical Education for Graduate Global Competitiveness

The critical significance of funding Vocational and Technical Education (VTE) in Nigeria cannot be emphasized, as discussions over the years have highlighted the role of VTE towards the economic development of any nation. It's widely acknowledged that a nation's development is intrinsically linked to the quality of its human capital. Ogbuagu (2017) underscores that industrial development hinges on a workforce equipped with the right skills, knowledge, competencies, and attitudes, with Vocational and Technical Education serving as a crucial pathway to cultivate such a workforce. Ayeni and Olowe (2015) further emphasized that VTE equips individuals with the essential skills and knowledge needed to enter the workforce and actively contribute to societal progress. However, the current state of VTE in Nigeria is marred by disparities in the availability of high and intermediate-level labour, particularly within vocational and technical education institutions, largely attributed to insufficient funding.

Importance of funding Vocational and Technical Education

Poverty and Unemployment Reduction

Vocational education serves as a powerful tool for poverty reduction and economic development. An education system that focuses on practical skills and knowledge helps to decrease the poverty percentage within a nation. (Asaju & Adagba, 2014). Vocational education is acknowledged for its role in creating employment opportunities by equipping individuals with specific in demand skills (Fuller, 2015). Hence, Individuals who have quality vocational training are better positioned to find work or start their own firms. This in turn reduces unemployment and injects growth into such country's economy

Skill Gap

Investing in VTE would help address the skills gap. As companies evolve and become more reliant on technology, there is a greater demand for individuals with specific skills in areas such as information technology, healthcare, manufacturing, and construction. Providing

everyone with the necessary digital skills is vital for inclusive labour markets and boosting innovation, productivity, and growth. (OECD, 2015).

Entrepreneurship and Innovation:

VTE programs can equip individuals with not only technical skills but also entrepreneurial knowledge. This encourages graduates to start their own businesses, creating jobs for themselves and potentially others. This fosters innovation and economic growth (OECD, 2015).

Empowering Individuals

Funding vocational and technical education is capable of empowering individuals by providing them with viable pathways to career success. Giving students a good foundation in vocational training is like giving them the tools they need to build a strong economy. As Ayeni and Olowe (2015) likely point out in their research, when students have the right vocational skills, they become valuable assets to the country. However, not every student follows the traditional academic route, and VTE offers an alternative avenue for those who prefer hands-on learning and practical skills development.

Enhancing Workforce Resilience

A well-rounded workforce is essential for weathering economic fluctuations and industry disruptions. VTE plays a crucial role in enhancing workforce resilience by diversifying skill sets and preparing individuals for a range of career opportunities. In times of economic uncertainty, industries may shift or evolve, but skilled workers remain in demand across various sectors. By investing in VTE, countries can create a more skilled, adaptable, and entrepreneurial workforce, leading to sustainable economic growth and development (Cedefop, 2008).

Conclusion

A well-funded VTE system can provide a pipeline of skilled workers who are prepared to meet the demands of the modern workforce, ultimately closing the skills gap and contributing to a more robust economy. By investing in VTE, governments and educational institutions can unlock the full potential of individuals, strengthen communities, and drive sustainable economic development. As we continue to adapt to an increasingly complex and competitive global economy, prioritizing VTE funding remains paramount for building a skilled and prosperous workforce of tomorrow.

Suggestions

The following suggestions were made;

1. Administrators should include entrepreneurial training in VTE programs and support start-up initiatives.
2. Develop policies to monitor the use of funds and the effectiveness of programs
3. Improve and maintain VTE workshops and equipment.
4. Provide scholarships and support for marginalized groups to ensure everyone can participate.
5. Advocate for more financial support from the government and NGOs to improve VTE programs.
6. Finally, administrators should offer training and incentives to attract and retain good VTE instructors.

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