

Proper Funding Of Technology Education Institutions: A Condition For Sustainable Development Of Nigerian Youths

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Abstract

This paper identifies the funding needs of technology education, which include purchases of new equipment, training and retraining of technology education teachers among others. It also considers the tragic consequences of improper funding of technology education institutions on the sustainable development of Nigerian youths. Constraints to proper funding were explored. It was observed that poor image and sole funding of technology education by government constitute a cog in the wheel of development and advancement of technology education in Nigeria. Finally, a call was made for involvement of the communities, foreign aids, industries, and technology education institutions in funding technology education.

Introduction

The economic depression that has trailed Nigeria since 1982 has been a mixed grill to technology education. It has become a great limitation to the achievement of qualitative technology education. The funding of technology education has become difficult even though it is that same form of education that holds the greatest guarantee for economic survival.

Technology is important because it provides new insights into ways of

making or doing things. It is the way of doing things, the application of knowledge derived from systematic investigation of natural forces and materials (Akinsinde 1998). Many people call technology the life wire of human existence and the only power house of any economy, hence many nations are laying emphasis on technology education, examples of such countries include: Japan, U.S.A, Nigeria, China, German. Any nation that desires to have technological development must give

adequate attention to development of technological education and it usually has serious consequences on the individuals and the environment of such a country. Suffice it to say that those who can adjust to technological changes as well as socioeconomic and cultural impacts on a rational basis, are those who develop high level of technology which will promote tech-economic pace for all.

Technology education is an important part of the education for all people. It is a comprehensive action-based programme that is concerned with technical means, their evolution utilization, and significance with industry, its organization, personnel systems, techniques, resources, processes, products and their communication impact. It enables all persons to adjust to the changing environment, develops individual talents and guides them in making career choices. Technology education is the study, mastering and utilization of manufacturing and industrial methods, systematic application of knowledge to practical tasks in industry. Its primary purpose is to prepare persons for employment in recognized occupations, which provides the skills, knowledge and attitude on the job.

In the past, the funding of technology education was a joint responsibility of the federal government and some foreign agencies with greater subventions from federal government. Presently, the Federal Government is complaining of too many responsibilities

that are facing her and the difficulties in meeting her financial obligations to other sectors. The depreciation of Naira and the global inflation has made it difficult if not impossible, for government to implement its numerous developmental projects successfully, particularly that of funding its technology education programme (Egbule and Ingorgbor, 2002). It is therefore necessary to examine the funding needs of technology education, consequences of improper funding and constraints to proper funding of technology education institutions for the development of Nigeria youths.

Funding Needs of Technology Education Programme in Nigeria

Generally speaking, the thing that first occurs to an ordinary person when an educationist talks about funds for education is salaries. It should be noted that funds for education go into several capital and recurrent expenditure besides salaries. Also, worthy of note is the fact that education at whatever level or form needs to be properly funded to achieve the goals set for that educational programme.

According to Olaitan (1992), a good technical education programme should be adequately funded. The funding needs of technology education are quite different from those of general education. One of the principles of vocational-technical education says that there is minimum level of funding below which vocational education cannot be effective and should not be attempted. Thus, unlike

some other forms of education, technology education is expensive.

Funding needs of technology education programme are numerous. They include: purchase of new equipment, funding of students' work experience programme, regular supply of expendables among others.

Purchase of New Equipment:

Technology education institutions should be able to train students on old and emerging skills in various occupations. Fund is needed to acquire new model and more efficient machines instead of relying on obsolete machines and equipment which are unacceptable and retrogressive in the world of work.

Funding of Student's Work Experience Programme:

Supervised work experience is a component of a good technology education programme, as it exposes the learners to various industries and organizations where they are most likely to be employed after graduation for practical demonstration of the acquired knowledge/skill. Work experience is expensive but necessary for a qualitative technology education.

Regular Maintenance of Equipment

Equipment and machines for training should be in sound working condition all the time. This implies that workshop equipment and machines have to be put through routine checks, servicing

and repairs when they break down. Maintenance of equipment also costs money even though it is less expensive in the long run.

Consistent Supply of Expendables

Machines for technology education are provided to enable students practice. This does not mean running the machines to see how they are operated but using them to perform the functions for which they were designed. The students cannot practice with woodwork equipment unless wood, nails, etc are provided. The same is applicable to other trades.

Training and upgrading Technical Teachers

Other efficient ways of using the financial resources for sustainable development of Nigerian youths in technology education institutions is by training the needed manpower for this purpose. The fund should be used for training more technical teachers who will in turn impart the needed technical knowledge and vocational skills to the students (youths). Teachers should, also be allowed to go for refresher courses and in-service training to update their knowledge. Mkpa (2000) agrees with the opinion that the teacher is incontrovertibly the fulcrum on which the curriculum lever revolves. He is the heart and soul of the educational enterprise, indeed, the live wire of the school system.

Consequences of Improper Funding of Technology Education on the Development of Nigerian Youths.

Technology education is not growing progressively in Nigeria with the rate of global technology in other nations (Osuji, 2004). Osuji further suggested reforms in the funding system of technology in Nigeria with the rate of global technology education.

Poor funding has implications for efficiency, which translates to poor quality of output. With poor quality output, neither the beneficiaries nor the society gets maximum benefit from the education system. Technology education institutions, where the manpower needs are expected to be taken care of for sustainable development of the nation's youths, have become places of discontentment to both lecturers and students due to dilapidated infrastructure. Where infrastructure exists, inadequate learning/teaching facilities, such as poorly equipped workshops and laboratories hinder learning of technical skills. Technology education graduates are often described as half-baked by employers. When they go for higher education in foreign countries they are subjected to tests and examinations to determine the credibility of their certificates. What a shame! The root of this problem is improper funding of technology education and perhaps other sectors of education in Nigeria.

At the inception of the 6-3-3-4 education system all secondary schools in

the nation were expected to start offering various technical subjects which will immensely contribute to the sustainable development of Nigerian youths. Shortage of technical teachers has been a serious limitation to the realization of the objectives of the new system. During the late 1980s, many polytechnics, universities and colleges of education established departments of technical education with the view to producing enough technical teachers for effective implementation of the 6-3-3-4 system of education.

In the post independence era, the government progressively assumed the role of sole financier of technology education. Presently, the funding of technical teacher training in the country is entirely government affair with virtually no participation from communities and industries and no foreign aids. This is happening at a time when the government has embarked on an aggressive Technical Teacher Training Programme (T.T.T.P) across the nation and also when the financial allocation by the government has become glaringly insufficient to foot the bills of technology education. This inadequate funding for training the manpower needed in technology education institutions will adversely affect the development of the nation's youths.

Constraints to Proper Funding of Technology Education Institutions in Nigeria.

Generally speaking, the funding of education in Nigeria is far below the level desired. The situation is even more critical with the funding of technology education programmes, which is affecting the development of Nigerian Youths. Some of these constraints include: Poor image of technology education, Merger of technology and science education in ministries, sole funding of technology education by government and others.

Poor Image of Technology Education:

The Nigerian society of our time regards technology education as a form of education meant for people who are backward academically. People and communities would rather invest or contribute to liberal education rather than invest in technology education.

Merger of Technical and Science Education in Ministries:

All the tiers of government have been almost entirely responsible for funding technology education and this is achieved through the ministries of education. Olaitan (1986) traced the stunted growth of technical education in Nigeria to the merger of general and technical education. The merger resulted in a situation where administrators of technical education are those who have little or no understanding of the peculiar funding requirements of technical

education. Consequently, they are either under-estimating the needs of technical education or diverting funds for technical education into areas which appeal to them. Endemic problem of lack of accurate, comprehensive and up dated statistics on expenditure is a constraint since such records are essential for realistic budgeting (Okeke 2005).

Misappropriation of Technology Education Funds:

When some of the money appropriated for technology education needs is misappropriated/mismanaged, inadequacy of funds sets in

Sole Funding of Technology Education by Government:

The sole dependence of technology education institutions on government for all their needs has also contributed to the problem of under funding. Because of the nation's poor fiscal base, the government alone can no longer meet the funding requirements of technology. Institutions therefore require the participation of communities, industries, organizations and agencies outside the government's usual contribution.

Alternative Strategies for Funding Technology Education

Finance constitutes a serious limiting factor to the successful implementation of programmes of technology education in Nigeria.

Governments have had difficulty meeting the costs of technology education and training, which can be two to three times higher than those of general academic education because of the high costs of facilities, equipment, and instructional materials and the need to pay higher salaries for competent instructors. When those costs are not met, training outcomes are inadequate and the employability of graduates reduced. Adeyemi (2000) noted that technology education institution should explore other sources outside government to support funding. Some of the strategies suggested include commercializing institution workshop and laboratories, seeking cooperation and aids from international agencies, leasing out workshop to some skill workers outside the institution and increasing support for VAT and educational tax fund (Okeke 2004).

Okorie (2000) further added an increased involvement of communities, parents, philanthropists and voluntary organizations in the funding of vocational technical education programme. Government and technology education institutions should intensify efforts to ensure foreign aids for funding technology education programmes and establishment of national fund for vocational technical education. The proceeds should be distributed to the states to enhance their funding of various technology education programmes.

Conclusion

The Nigeria youths enjoying sustainable development through technology education will be effective and will yield maximally only when this facet of education is properly funded. Technology education is geared towards preparing persons (youths) for employment in recognized occupations which provides the skills, knowledge and attitude on the job.

Consequences of improper funding of technology education institutions is grievous on the development of youths as the funding needs of technology education programmes are uncompromisingly expensive/purchasing new equipment, manpower training and retraining and funding of students work experience programme. Furthermore, there exists some constraints to proper funding of this programme. Some of which include - poor image of technology education, merging of technical and science education in ministries, sole funding of technology education by government. Therefore, proper alternative sources of funding - contributions from industries, agencies, communities, foreign aids and internally generated funds from within the technology education institutions is advocated and should be encouraged.

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