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Coping with the Global Economic Crisis: A Challenge to Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Nigeria (Pp. 165-175)

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Abstract

There is rapid transformation of the economics of the developed countries of the world-in the last two decades. This has resulted in global economic crisis affecting both the developing and underdeveloped countries of the world. The erratic changes have been creating new demands for more adaptable, multi-skilled and creative labour. To meet the demands, it has become necessary to reduce the gap between academic education and vocational education; to develop competence-based curriculum development mechanism; to strengthen the co-operation between education authorities, government/employment organizations as well as industries, to decentralize the delivery system and to involve employers more in the process of TVET. This paper is an attempt to x-ray the Nigerian situation in this time of Global Economic Crisis and the Challenge to TVET in Nigeria.

Key words: TVET, global economy, globalization

Introduction

The notion of crisis as adopted in this work is as defined by the Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, eleventh edition of 2003; where it states thus⁷- crisis is an unstable or crucial time or state of affairs in which a decisive change is impending; especially one with the distinct possibility of a highly undesirable outcome. Global economics crisis refers to an economic scenario where the economics of countries the world over have taken a beating and the Gross Domestic Products (GDP) of countries are going down and are in negative zone. It is when there is severe liquidity crunch and countries and government around the world are frantically taking steps to combat the issue. Global Economic Crisis may as well be referred to as Global Economic Recession. In economics, a recession is a general slowdown in economic activity over a long period of time, or a business cycle contraction (Merriam Webster Online 2008). During recession, many macroeconomic indicators vary in a similar way. Production as measured by Gross Domestic Product (GDP), employment, investment spending, capacity utilization, household incomes and business profits all fall during recessions. Governments usually respond to recessions by adopting expansionary macroeconomic policies, such as increase money supply, increase government spending and decreasing taxation.

However, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) regards periods when global growth is less than 3% to be global recessions (Kenneth, 2002). The IMF estimates that global recessions, seem to occur over a cycle lasting between 8 and 10 years. During what the IMF terms the past three global recessions of the last three decades, global per capital output growth was zero or negative. Economists at the International Monetary Fund state that a global recession would take a slowdown in global growth in three percent or less. By this measure, four periods since 1985 qualify: 1990-1993, 1998, 2001-2002 and 2008-2009.

In 2008, a major financial upheaval pushed the world economy into its worst crisis in decades. The causes of economic recessions among other include: crisis theory, tendency of the rate of profit to fall, currency crisis, energy crisis, war, under consumption over production and financial crisis. The consequent effects manifest as bankruptcies, credit crunches, deflation (or disinflation), foreclosures and unemployment among other (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Recession>).

Globalization is affective, everything from the way people communicate to the way they handle money. So taking a quick at the definition of economic globalization, from a few different sources, economic globalization can be defined as the process of increasing economic integration between two countries, leading on the paradigm, globalization can be viewed as both a positive and a negative phenomenon. Whilst economic globalization has seen occurring for the last several thousand years (since the emergence of transnational trade), it has begun to occur at an increased rate over the last 20-30 years. This recent boom has been largely accounted by developed economics integrating with less developed economics, by means of foreign direct investment, the reduction of trade barriers and the modernization of these developing cultures (<file://c:/docume1/AMAIN/21/LOCALS2/temp/R39BNYD.htm>). Wikipedia's Economic Globalization definition states that it "pertains to deeper integration and more rapid interaction of economics through production, trade, and (unregulated) financial transactions of banks and multinational corporations, with an increased role for the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, as well as the more recent world trade organization.

Background

In the last three decades Nigeria has been frequently described as having enormous potentials to transform from a poor country to a rich and prosperous one. On a continuous basis, discoveries of new resources in the mineral and other sectors have tended to reinforce this perception. However, there has been an ironic twist between the discovery of new potentials and the rate of development in this potentially great nation now generally referred to as the paradox of development in Nigeria. "The more the potentials are revealed, the more the country descends into the abyss of under development". This has tended to portray the country as a land of mixed blessings (Akindoyeni, 2008). Also, Nigerians have become cynically apprehensive and doubtful about the future of this beloved and potentially great country. In the midst of this seemingly hopelessness and cynicism are some rays of hope held by a few Nigerians who believed that despite the tribulations, viz:

1. An experienced civil war
2. Despotic and corrupt leaders
3. Unfaithful and unconcerned followers and
4. Religious and unwarranted violent crises.

Nigeria remains one country and is still being expected by some concerned citizens and even by some foreigners to become great. It stands to reason therefore why Nigeria embarked on vision 2020/20 and the Seven Point Agenda.

Various reform processes in Nigeria gave rise to programmes and agencies such as the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), which provides an ideal platform for implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), a United Nations Programme for development. The preliminary reports and the outcome of reforms, for instance, in the banking industry was an encouragement as regards government's development strategy. The great spurt theory was also fused into the doctrine of balanced growth which has been on since 1999 to ensure a faster but stable and steady growth into the 2020 and to be among the best 20 economics in the world by that year, with a development strategy in place. The great spurt theory usually infuses attention, focus and finances on selected sectors of the economy thus creating an economic upsurge in those sectors. For Nigeria, this theory is being used in the implementation of Mr. President's Seven-Point Agenda. The seven priority areas of intervention are as follows:

- i. Energy,
- ii. Security,
- iii. Wealth creation,
- iv. Education,
- v. Land reform,
- vi. Mass transit,
- vii. Niger Delta.

The Big Question: “Can Nigeria make it from 158th position to at least 20th position in a period of twelve years?”

The answer is Yes and No. Yes because Nigeria can learn from her past mistakes and assuage all past derailment summarized under 15 headings:-

1. Instability in Government
2. Inconsistent Policies
3. Lack of a viable aspiration and vision
4. Fraudulent and uncommitted leadership

5. Mercenary activities of public servants
6. Half hearted belief in Nigerian Project
7. Endemic Corruption
8. Erosion of good morals and values in the society
9. Bloated appetite for luxury and imported goods
10. Lack of courage by leaders and followers to take painful decisions in the long term interests of the country.
11. The tendency by leaders to behave as colonialists who where in Nigeria to exploit Nigerians.
12. Endemic illiteracy/e-illiteracy tending to a huge depreciation in the value of the franchise.
13. Fraudulent electoral process
14. Endemic hostility for intellectualism and academic
15. A penchant for glorifying mediocrity and ignorance at the expense of excellence.

One the other hand, Nigeria cannot make it. How possible would Nigeria make it, when a major priority area of intervention in the Seven Point Agenda is neglected? Education according to the National Policy on Education 4th Edition (2004) is an instrument “per excellence” for affecting national development. Any modern economy is built on knowledge, skills and expertise (Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET). More Nigerians would need to acquire entrepreneur skills to be able to convert knowledge and other resources into goods and services that will attract income. Ever before now, the educational system has been adduced to have failed and there has remained an urgent need to intervene in order to produce the urgently needed human capital to drive the new development strategy.

The educational system in Nigeria has continued to suffer unnecessary hurdles due to unconcerned attitudes from the Federal Government and unfaithful citizens. Patriotism is thrown away by most of the government representatives. Justice to crucial issues comes very late after unimaginable damages and losses must have been caused. How possible is it for Nigerians to pursue the noble project called Nigeria? It does seem ripe for Nigerians to join the fight by any group such as the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) to re-position the education system in Nigeria; insist that Government should preserve public universities and not to run them down as they have done primary and secondary schools; take whatever political actions they consider necessary to ensure that due priority is accorded

education. In the present circumstance, is it possible to reconfigure Nigeria's educational sector to meet the challenges of the huge manpower requirements? Could what is happening now be termed remunerative reward for excellence in vocation activities that should be the employers' (Government) watchword? Sincerely, the actualization of the vision 2020/20 and the Seven Point Agenda will be impossible without Nigerians seeing the re-positioning of the education system in Nigeria as a collective responsibility.

With a population of one hundred and forty million (140,000,000) people, life expectancy of about 57 years for males and 59 years for females respectively, and under estimated illiteracy rate of sixty percent (60%), unemployment at thirty percent, a doctor to people ratio of one to thirty thousand (1:30,000), and GNP per capital of less than \$300, Nigeria is yet to break the development jinx and remains endemically poor (Akindoyeni, 2008). Also Nigeria still imports most of the finished goods it requires and a substantial quantity of its rice needs. Using these indices from all the sectors of the economy, Nigeria was ranked 158th out of 192 countries in Human Development Index. With its health sector prostrate, and educational system in shambles and having an installed electricity generating capacity of 6,000 megawatts as against the 15,000 megawatts required, the morale of Nigerians is at an all time low he continued. If Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) must be used to solve the Nigerian problem, which indeed is unavoidable; the starting point for reengineering the new Nigerian project should be to ensure the pre-eminence of the rule of law and discipline in conducting public affairs by leaders, followers, government officials, children, parents, teachers, students, workers and employers. It behoves therefore, that the national attitude should be reappraised and strategies evolved to compel a change of perception from the present *laissez-faire* attitude to one of serious mindedness and the greatest sense of responsibility by all and sundry. It will then be possible to commence the new Nigerian project with a frame of mind that will guarantee success without reverting to old ways. The issue of national discipline, law and order is therefore of utmost priority and must be pursued vigorously with a great sense of urgency. It is only then that Nigeria can take advantage of TVET in coping with the problems of global economic crisis.

What is TVET?

Technical Vocational Education and Training is the provision of skills, knowledge, attitude and values needed for a place of work. TVET as a system prepares people for the world of work. In contrast to general education, learning in TVET is centred on 'applied' as opposed to 'academic'; 'Practical', as opposed to 'theory', and 'skills' as opposed to 'knowledge'. All the same, it should be noted that during this learning process, the underpinning knowledge, attitude and values are imparted to the learners. Broadly, it would be said that TVET prepares people for the world of work and that

- Through TVET people acquire skills, knowledge, attitude and values.
- Skills, knowledge, attitude and values help people participate in production of goods and services.

TVET is part of the total education offerings in technology education in the national education system. Its province is technology education below the university level and is delivered mainly in two modes: formal and non-formal modes; the formal mode of delivery occurs in the formal institutions where curriculum is hierarchically structured and chronological arranged from primary to tertiary levels of education. In Nigeria the non-formal mode of TVET has the larger share of the training market. It consists of the various forms of apprenticeship scheme, custom and tailor-made programmes meant to impact types of the educational process. There is the informal approach to TVET-the apprenticeship system whereby a self-directed individual acquires attitudes, values, skills and knowledge for learning and doing work as part of living experience. As informal TVET cannot be statistically defined, it cannot come under planning consideration for this purpose, the Federal Ministry of Education in the National Master-plan for (TVE) development in Nigeria in the 21st century focused on formal and non-formal TVET (FME, 2000). TVET is about work (occupation) and training for work.

Occupations and occupational training are not only the means of livelihood but man's defining characteristics, the cause of personality development and source of social identify and stability. Consequently, a nation or society that has not adequate means for occupational training of its citizens in the prevailing occupations of the time cannot develop competitively with other nations. It is TVET therefore that must transform the Nigerian populace of

the 21st century into knowledge based workforce able to power the economy and advance the cause of economic production and service for national prosperity. If TVET must so do, it must be free from the current hindrance to its development and practice (such as inadequacies in

- Access and equity,
- Curriculum and curriculum delivery,
- Facilities: rehabilitation and expansion,
- Teacher production and certificate,
- Teacher remuneration and incentives,
- National Assessment and certification,
- Monitoring, research and evaluation,
- Status of TVET institutions,
- Academic and professional progression of trainees and
- Marketing of (TVET);

and must carry the future of Nigeria in its organization, operation and production of skilled and technical manpower in the context of the character of the 21st century world of technical imperialism and trade liberalization. TVET thus is expected to enhance Nigeria's international competitiveness in production and service. It must reinforce the capacity of the populace for entrepreneurship and job creation. And it must improve the capacity of Nigeria for self-determination in technical development.

TVET as a tool for coping with the global economic crisis in Nigeria

Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is very cardinal to any economic development of the country. Training in general has potential benefits which accrue to the individual, to an organization and to the country as a whole. To individuals, training enhances their future earning potential, career, progression and employability. To the unemployed, training offer them capacities to find ways of earning a livelihood. This can be through self-employment or setting up of business. At organizational level, training results in company productivity, profitability and competitiveness. This in turn enhances its existence. With productivity and high profits, the company will contribute to the wealth of the country through taxes. TVET serves to prepare learners with the skills they need to succeed in the workforce. Technical (vocational) Education and Training is the candle of hope lighting the darkness of political inefficiency, poverty and human degradation. It could be truly said that a country's development and progress (ability to

combat global economic crisis) largely depends on the availability and quality of its human resources, people with the right skills and the right attitude (TVET skills).

In a world that is radically transformed by information communication technologies (ICTs) it is imperative to include ICT training in TVET. Acquiring skills and knowledge on ICT is important for educators to teach their students. This calls for a successful policy in ICT in TVET-which must provide a vision and medium – term strategic framework for the expected use of ICTs in Nigerian schools. The implementation of such a policy will further facilitate students learning in all subjects and enhance the development of ICT-specific skills which are essential for both future employment and lifelong learning. Such a policy must embrace all key ICT components: hardware, software, electronic content, teacher professional development, promotion of learner-centred instruction, assessment, technical support, investment and recurrent financing needs. In addition, the policy should tap the respective comparative advantages of different players in the public and private sectors, so that all knowledge and resources which can be brought to bear can be integrated. However, it must be remembered that the real key to ICTs in TVET is the “human-ware”, not the hardware of software, because it is extent and nature of the use (or non-use) of ICTs by teachers and students which will determine the success of investing in ICTs in TVET. The World Bank hopes to ensure that the focus of technology-induced education remains on students learning and skill development, rather than on procurement and installation of thousands of computers in school (Carlson, 2002).

Conclusion

The concept of globalization has been used to connote internationalization, liberalization, universalization, westernization and deterritorialisation (Scholte, 2007 cited in Ogwo, Onweh and Nwizu 2009); some of these various ways of viewing globalization tend to evoke apprehension among some peoples of the world. For instance, the notion of globalization as liberation of trade places low income countries at a disadvantage since they only export raw materials that are always of less value while westernization denotes neo-colonization and many former colonies are scared of it. The notion of globalization as adopted in this study indicates the need of deterritorialization which entails a reconfiguration of geography, so that social and spaces are no longer wholly mapped in terms of territorial places, territorial distances and territorial borders (Smith 2002 cited in Ogwo,

Onweh and Nwizu 2009). In this respect, all policies and actions at local levels are influenced by their transnational impact such that one thinks globally and acts locally. Being a systemic concept, its success would rely on reconciling effectively the functioning of the various subsystems. For this world order to be sustainable, every member of the global village should be empowered to be proficient in the use of the present lingua franca which is e-literacy. The workforce needs capacity building in e-TVET among others in order to be competitive and secure decent jobs that would make them responsible global citizens-capable of facing the challenges of global economic crisis. In Nigeria today, education is in crisis, teachers' salaries are unrealistic, quality of teachers is low. So naturally is the quality of what they deliver. This is principally the result of broken and unfulfilled promises by policy makers. Instructional materials and facilities are scarce and sometimes not available at all. This presents a severe obstacle for the teachers, and forbiddingly limits the efficiency of the learning process. It stands to reason therefore that all stakeholders must cooperate and work together to make sure that in the next eleven years, Nigeria makes the giant leap into the future that is the realization of vision 2020/20.

Educational implication

Poor funding of education inhibits the acquisition of skills in TVET and introduction of new methods and techniques in teaching and learning process. As such, Nigeria continues to lag behind and is yet to wake up to the reality of information technology, and the imperatives of science and technology in a globalized world.

Recommendations

In order to cope with the global economic crisis through TVET, it is imperative to recommend among others that Nigeria:

1. Trains quality human resources with TVET skills.
2. Evolves successful policies in ICT in TVET
3. Rehabilitates and expands facilities/makes provisions for them where none exists.
4. Connects to internet and makes access hitch free.

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