

# **ENHANCING VOCATIONAL, TECHNICAL AND SPECIAL EDUCATION IN EKITI STATE.**

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## **Introduction:**

Our collective vision in Nigeria, as captioned in our vision 20:20:20, is make Nigeria one of the top twenty best world economy nations by the year 2020.

Currently, Nigeria faces a myriad of development challenges such as the need to promote good governance and human rights, rapid socio-economic development, poverty eradication, universalization of basic education and capacity building for development management. Obviously, education is the master key to the solution of such problems all over the globe. Our great concern in Nigeria is that our educational system seems to be perpetually crisis-ridden. For instance, there is the crisis of values, crisis of quality assurance, crisis of resource management, crisis of access and equity and even crisis of relevance and inclusion (Durosaro, 2010). There is therefore a dire need to ensure the educational system is aligned and made responsive to the yarning and changing context of Nigerians of today and tomorrow (Adesina, 2005).

Undoubtedly, education is the largest industry in Nigeria and particularly in Ekiti State. Also, the educational institutions engage more personnel than all other modern industrial and commercial sectors put together. Education could be aptly viewed as a process of cognitive, affective and psychomotor development of an individual. As a matter of

cultural compulsion, the children born in a community must be socialized for peace and progress to exist in the community. Thus, education is universally considered a fundamental human right. Education is associated with plenty of individual and collective benefits, in terms of improving opportunities and increasing the well being of the individuals and groups. The strong faith of nations in education for development is evidenced by the huge proportion of public and private expenditure on the sector annually. For instance, the United Nations stipulated that 26% of each nations budget should be spent on education.

Table 1: Trend of Ekiti State Government Budgetary Allocation to Education, 2007 – 2009

Years	Total budget #	Allocation to Education #	%
2007	36,253,155,012.78	7,710,751,131.68	21.27
2008	80,713,885,080.94	15,461,623,446.00	19.16
2009	58,296,833,837.83	11,368,888,519.23	19.50

Source: Ekiti State Ministry of Finance.

In fact, education contributes greatly to human capital development and it determines the fate of many political leaders and their parties. Certainly, development means changes, which connotes growth; hence, for any nation to develop there is the need for constant review and appraisal of our social systems and subsystems, including education. This would help to reposition them for greater effectiveness and efficiency.

National development is now being measured by the propensity of each nation and indeed each citizen's ability to provide for felt needs and for a worth-while living. For education to make this possible therefore, it must be functional. A qualitative and functional basic education is a veritable tool for rapid social, economic and political growth. It is our desperate search for the best form of functional education system that led to some reforms and restructuring of our national system of education.

The objective of this paper is to appraise the development of vocational, technical and special education in Ekiti State with a view to suggesting some strategies for enhancing the growth of these forms of education in Ekiti State.

### **The Profile of Ekiti State**

Ekiti State was created out of the old Ondo State on 1<sup>st</sup> October 1996. The State covers the former 12 Local Government Areas in the Ekiti Province of the old Ondo State. Ekiti State, with about 2 million people spans over 7,000 sq. km and lies south of Kwara and Kogi States, east of Osun and south of Ondo State. The State is endowed with tropical climate, rain forest and Guinea savannah. The people of Ekiti State, though predominantly agrarian, embrace education warmly. Cash and food crops are grown extensively in the State. Cocoa and Timber are the main cash crops. There are quite a lot of solid minerals like alkaline, silicon, iron ore, clay, uranium and gold yet to be tapped.

There are artisans and traders as well as some cottage industries. There is a textile mill at Ado-Ekiti and a ceramic factory. The speed and degree of development in the State are however limited by some inadequacies of social infrastructure like electricity, pipe borne water, road

network and the need to ensure functionalism, quality, relevance and inclusion in the States educational system.

By 2010, there were 450 pre-primary schools with 28,737 pupils enrolled in the state. Ekiti State had 1,068 primary schools with an enrolment of 128,313 pupils and 9,935 teachers. The State also had 312 Junior Secondary schools with an enrolment of 50,212 pupils and 4,044 teachers. At the Senior Secondary level there were 176 schools with 41054 students enrolled and 4101 teachers. Currently, the state can boast of being home to 3 colleges of Education, 2 Polytechnic and 5 Universities.

With this rich profile of Ekiti State, the sky is the limit of the level of development the State can witness, if only, these resources can be tapped and developed through promotion of sound Vocational, Technical and Special Education. Historically, Ekiti State has had a sound, non formal, functional, traditional, basic education. The curriculum of the traditional basic education included vocational and technical training, character molding, and history of the community, dance, food and culture of the people, oratory, religion, numeracy and local crafts. The education of the people was fashioned to build an egalitarian and self-reliant society.

The advent of western formal education tailored to the needs of the missionaries and colonial administrators, the system of education got derailed and dysfunctional. The result is the creation of large pool of white-collar- job seekers. However, in the late 1960's the threat of poverty and massive unemployment led to the clamor for reform which led to the birth of a new National Policy on Education that brought in the 6-3-3-4 structure of Education and the pre-vocationalization of the junior secondary school curriculum? It is strongly felt that a functional basic education should give

the learners a vocation and create a pool of job creators who could even be self-employed and rather than job seekers.

### **Vocational and Technical Education in Ekiti State**

Vocational education refers to a scheduled programme of courses designed to prepare pupils for jobs in the commercial and industries sectors at the completion of the courses, while technical education refers to any type of education in technology (offered at any level of the education system) that aims at producing various types of technological manpower required by the economy (FME, 2003).

Obviously, there can be neither significant nor sustainable transformation in the society nor any significant reduction in poverty until the children, receive a qualitative all round basic education. This is the education needed to make them contributing partners in social development. Fundamentally viewed therefore, education will be incomplete if it fails to cover the three domains of knowledge: cognitive domain, effective domain and psychomotor domain. The psychomotor domain takes care of the manipulative skill acquisition. This forms the basis for the two tier secondary education we now have. The Junior Secondary is prevocationalized to expose learners to vocational and technical training at an introductory level. But the structure appears to be ineffective in Nigeria in the sense that the products are still not properly oriented to a vocation. They only have faint and rudimentary ideas and training for the vocations and many can't practice successfully after graduation. Also, the emphasis is not on our local craft and familiar trades like vulcanizing, motor wiring, bricklaying, hair dressing, photography, plumbing, ceramics, tailoring and automobile mechanics. The new Secondary school curriculum recently

presented to the public by the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) has attempted to address this. I believe this Summit is about brainstorming on how we can implement it in Ekiti State.

The need to have vocational and technical education taken in our secondary schools is incontrovertible. This is because it is a sure way to endow children with specific sellable skills that can get them self employment. It is also a way of functionalizing our secondary school curriculum as well as being a strategy for poverty alleviation. Moreover, it offers children opportunity to learn the local craft and to turn some wastes to wealth. Vocational and Technical Education give room for more interactive teaching and participation learning in schools. Above all, pre-vocationalization of education is mandatory at the Junior Secondary level in Nigeria and Ekiti state can not afford to be an exception. (FGN, 2004; NERDC, 2011)

The maintenance of high quality Vocational and Technical Education in Ekiti State is the Stationary responsibility of the Ministry of Education through the states Quality Assurance Commission or State's Inspectorate of Education. There is a standardized curriculum for each vocational and technical subject prepared by Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council. The State must ensure adherence to such standardized curricula. Also, there should be prescribed standards for teaching and learning facilities and equipment. The State would also require adequate supply of qualified specialist teachers in the various vocational and technical subjects. The educational planners must set at work to assess existing stock of teachers and project the future requirement with a view to taking necessary steps to ensure the production and development of such teachers.

Table 2: Teacher Demand and Supply for Secondary school vocational and technical subjects in six states of Nigeria, 2003.

Subjects	Teaching staff available	Teaching staff required
Business Studies	871	629
Home Economics	677	521
Music	50	42
Local Craft.	1	177
Auto Mechanics	12	95
Book Keeping	390	452
Building Construction		109
Electronics		117
Food and Nutrition	342	465
Fine Art	488	168
Introductory Technology	654	546
Metal Work	69	114
Wood Work	59	98
Tech. Drawing	25	390
Total	3638	3923

Source: FME (2003) Education Sector Status Report.

The production of vocational and technical teachers could be stepped up through establishment of more Colleges of Education (Technical) in the state. The Vocational and Technical Education in Ekiti State would be made of high standard if the entry qualification to the

College of Education in the programmes could be a minimum of five credits at Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination of National Examination Council or West African Examination Council. Also, to ensure adequate academic and professional standard, the cognate professional bodies must be involved in the curriculum design, course accreditation, student's assessment and student industrial attachment.

The question of who funds Vocational and Technical Education at the secondary level has an obvious answer in the Universal Basic Education law which stipulates that basic education is free and compulsory in Nigeria. Hence the state funds the Junior Secondary aspect while the Senior Secondary aspect would be a combination of both public and private funding. The State would need to solicit Public–Private Partnership (PPP) because Vocational and Technical Education is capital intensive. There will also be the need for more workshops, equipment and other facilities which the state may not be able to fund alone. There may also be the need to seek the intervention of Education Tax fund, Petroleum Trust and Development Fund and even some International Development Partners (IDP).

The world and our social phenomena are changing rapidly. It is this world dynamism that has led to the concept of globalization. Globalization is the current process by which regional economies, societies and cultures are integrated through a globe-spanning network of communication and trade. Globalization is known to be driven by a combination of educational, economical, technological, socio-cultural, political and biological factors. There is therefore the need to make our vocational and technical education relevant in today's fast moving world. For instance, to be relevant our workers and technicians must be able to identify, formulate and solve new technical problems and must understand the impact of their solutions in a

global and societal context. They must have effective communication skills and understand their professional and ethical responsibilities. To equip them with such skills our technical and vocational schools must be ready to amend their curriculum (to include Biomechanics), teaching methods and delivery modes. Other problems that may require both advocacy and government's intervention include, inadequate supply of qualified teachers with specialization in the vocations and technologies, inadequate funding of programmes, irregular or even non-availability of electricity and water supply to institutions, low regard for dignity of labor with resultant low social rating of artisans and inadequate information.

To enhance Vocational and Technical Education in the State, there is the need to ensure functional a link between the industries and the institutions. The schools should find out the specific training needs and job requirements of the industries to guide their curriculum design and implementation. The industries should also be ready to make their facilities available to the institutions to provide the industrial work experience for the learners. The industries should also be willing to provide financial assistance to the schools to complement Vocational and Technical Education.

A way of encouraging students to show interest in Vocational and Technical Education is by government assisting to provide empowerment for vocational and technical school graduates to enable them create job for themselves. The empowerment could be in the form of grant or soft loans to buy equipment and build workshops. Students in vocational and technical institutions should as a matter of urgency be made to enjoy generous scholarship from the state Government. This would serve as a major incentive and motivating factor for enrolment in this type of education.

The determination of minimum standard varies across the educational levels. At the secondary level, for instance, the learners are expected to acquire the rudimentary knowledge of the vocation so that in case they cannot further their education, they will be innovative enough to be able to set up basic practice by the road side to earn a living. Since vocational and technical education are practical subjects and require adequate workshop and equipment, the class size should not be large. A class of 15 to 25 students per teacher would be ideal. The current practice is to have vocational and technical institutions existing on their own aside from the secondary schools. But the Universal Basic Education scheme requires that the Senior Secondary schools should integrate them so that students of technical and vocational subjects too could do the Senior Secondary Certificate Examination or sit for NABTEB examinations.

### **Enhancing Special Education in Ekiti State**

The National Policy on Education defines Special Education as the education given to children and adults who have learning difficulties owing to different kinds of challenges such as blindness, deafness, hardness of hearing, mental retardation, mal-adjustment, physical handicap due to circumstances of birth, inheritance, social position, mental and physical health pattern or accident. These are individuals who may be challenged by the normal school organization and method. Also included in this list, are the specially gifted and talented children who are precocious and who find themselves insufficiently challenged by the programme of the normal school. (FGN, 2004). These categories of children are relatively fewer, but must be catered for in line with the idea of equalizing educational

opportunity for all. It will enable this category of children and adults to play their roles in the development of the nation.

Since these children and adults are bonafide citizens of their nation, the most realistic form of special education is the one that will integrate them fully into the society. The required special classes, special teachers and equipment should be provided in the regular schools to enable them mix with the other students. In fact, article 55 section (d) of the National Policy on Education states categorically that the Federal Ministry of Education shall set up a committee to coordinate special education activities in collaboration with the Ministries of Health and Social Welfare and Labor to ensure there is no segregation nor discrimination, nor apathy against challenged people either in private or public establishments (Ibrahim, 2006; Usikpedo,2007).

In similar way we recommend for technical schools, the schools for challenged learners should be integrated into the regular schools to cater for all learners at the secondary level. The idea of specialized schools for technical, vocational and special education should be reserved for the post-secondary institutions where highly skilled manpower is being produced. The products of secondary level vocational, technical and special education are expected to acquire the basics knowledge in their fields of specialization that will launch them fully into higher education in such fields. The issue of market competition cannot be overemphasized. If well educated, they should be able to operate well at the “first aid” level. At best they could fabricate minor tools and teaching aids for their schools’ and societies’ patronage.

To enhance special education, Ekiti State would need to project and produce more of highly trained and efficient personnel in the area of special Education. In view of the dearth of training institutions for Special

Education teachers, the State may wish to deliberately establish specific departments for this in the existing Colleges of Education and Universities in the State.

As a matter of utmost urgency, the State Ministry of Education should direct all schools to provide special classes and unit for special education to cater for the physically challenged learners. The education of the challenged learners should be free at all levels. Special education is very vital in the achievement of the goals of Education For All (EFA), Millennium Development Goals and poverty eradication. Consequently and in order for special education to meet these goals in Ekiti State, the following steps should be taken.

- i. The secondary school curriculum should be modified to accommodate learners with diverse physical and emotional needs.
- ii. More special education specialist teachers should be recruited to serve in the schools and serving teacher should be sent on training in those areas of specialization.
- iii. The school physical environment and facilities must be learner friendly and adapted to meet the special needs of the physically challenged people in the areas of stair cases, walk-ways, furniture, books, toilets, transportation, etc. and
- iv. Teachers of the various subjects would have to modify their methodologies of teaching to be more practically oriented and interactive. They also need to put emphases on problem solving that effectively focus on intervention skills that could benefit the challenged people (Osundina, 2006). Towards this end, there would be a need for a robust staff development scheme for special education

teachers in the State to acquaint them with the current and on-going developments in the field of special education around the globe.

## **Conclusion**

Ekiti state is blessed with abundance of rich human and material resources that need to be harnessed for development. Since the State is determined to meet the targets of the millennium development goals, universalize basic education and poverty eradication, there is a need to make education, particularly at the secondary level, functional, qualitative and inclusive by enhancing Vocational, Technical and Special Education. Some of the measures that could be taken to achieve qualitative vocational, technical and special education delivery in the state should include: mainstreaming vocational, technical and special education in all secondary schools in the State, reviewing the curriculum in the various vocational subjects, supplying of more teachers with specialization in vocational, technical and special education, providing adequate facilities and fund for schools to run sound vocational, technical and special education.

All these are possible steps but which would require some development assistance and increase in budgetary allocation to education sector by the State government. It would also require strategic planning, resourcefulness and prudence in resource management.

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