

GLOBALISATION AS A CURRICULUM THEORY FOR VOCATIONAL-TECHNICAL EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines globalization within the context of curriculum theory for Vocational-Technical education (VTE) with a particular focus on Nigeria. Attention is here given to Nigeria because as a part of the global village, Nigeria seems slow in her efforts to globalise her educational policies and practices. It has been claimed that globalization has impacted tremendously on all aspects of education and its influence will continue as society evolves. This seemingly endless process of change in education has assumed a global dimension as different nations now have similarities in terms of the curriculum content of their educational programmes and mode of delivery. This situation clearly highlights the need for Nigeria to reposition her VTE curriculum in line with the dictates of globalization so that products of VTE can cope with the challenges of surviving in a globalised economy. It recommends the development of relevant curriculum theories, policy reforms in VTE curriculum in line with the latest development around the world, adequate funding of Vocational technical institutions for capacity building by stake holders in the educational industry and the inclusion of more specialized areas in VTE.

Key words: *globalization; curriculum theory; vocational-technical education*

Introduction

One of the inevitable phenomena identified as a fundamental dynamics of change in the world today is globalization. Globalisation refers to the growing integration of various parts of the world into a global economy... (Dickson, 1992). It implies world wide interdependence on different aspects of economic and cultural life. This include education, politics, culture, technology, military, legal and strategic impulses that are collectively and progressively being promoted throughout the world. The world has thus become a global village as decisions taken on any aspects of the economy by a developed nation affect markedly many nations across the globe either positively or negatively and vice versa. Globalisation is a multi-dimensional phenomenon which pervades many disciplines including Vocational-Technical education. It has economic, political; cultural and social dimensions. Economically, globalization is viewed as a process which facilitates the free movement of goods and services, the flow of financial capital, human capital, information and technology resulting in increase relations and deeper integration of world economies.

From the political perspective, globalization is considered as a new world order where the world is no longer separated in social, economic and political ideological lines, but one where global problems are jointly resolved by all nations in the bid to maintain world peace and order (Ebaye, 2008).

Cultural globalization exist where western values are adopted and practiced by a greater part of the world. It is thus the transmitter of values which are essentially western and liberal in form but is progressively propagated internationally as universal values.

Globalisation is also considered an accelerator of social change and a catalyst for social connections among people and communities in distant localities in a way that events particularly those occurring in the educational system of advanced economies will help a great deal in shaping events happening in developing countries. The foregoing clearly indicates the need for a paradigm shift from mono-cultural approach to education to multi-cultural approach with implications for curriculum reforms and attendant practices if Nigeria must move along with other nations of the world in their efforts towards globalization.

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Concept of Globalisation

As a concept, globalization has inspired many definitions and interpretations. Scholte(2000) has equated the term globalization with internationalization. In this link, globalization is seen as an adjective to describe cross-border relations between countries. It describes the growth in international exchange and interdependence. Apologun (2005) further observe that globalization agenda is firmly rooted on internationalization of issues and programmes such that they cut across national boundaries. Scholte (2000) also considers globalization as universalisation. In this context, the word “global” is used in the sense of being “world wide” and globalization is viewed as the process of spreading various objects and experiences to people in all parts of the earth. A good example of which is the spread of information and communication technology. Globalisation is the intensification of world wide social relations that link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa. (Giddens, 1990). This is a dialectical process because such local happenings may move in an inverse direction from the very distanced relations that shape them. Local transformation is much more a part of globalization as the lateral extension of social connections across time and space could dictate policy directions. Viewed from this perspective, one agrees with Apologun (2005) that globalization is the creation of a common international morality conceived in terms of specific national political situations, philosophies, education and social movements in different parts of the world that contribute to the formation of the present globalised civil society... Thus, a globalised world is one in which political, economic, social, educational and cultural events become more and more interconnected and equally one in which the impacts of events in developed countries affect markedly the lives of people in developing countries and vice versa. Kalu, Asimand Ani (3003) see the contemporary world as a “global village”. Nigeria is a subsystem within the large globalised international system and to keep pace with the trend of events, her Vocational-technical education is bound to be influenced by the international system particularly in curriculum content and mode of instructional delivery and as such must be tailored towards preparing its recipients especially the younger generation with skills and competencies with which to cope with the challenges of globalization as well as attain the much desired goals of education. This situation undoubtedly necessitate the emergence of an innovative curriculum in Vocational-technical education.

Concept of Curriculum Theory

The word theory in Vocational-technical education falls within the scope of philosophy of education which covers principles and concepts concerning the knowledge of goals and objectives of schooling, human nature and the society. Though such philosophies may not be in tandem with the result and descriptive theories of behavioral sciences but represent value positions upon which Vocational-technical curriculum is predicated. Theory as used in every day affair refers to a set of system of rules which guide or control actions.

Miller (2005) appreciated a theory as a system of principles which directs and guide man’s practical actions. Theory is believed to be a set of original principles, rules of inference that can be deductively arrived at to describe the interaction of social affairs (Tanner and Tanner 1975). Seen in the same light, Kliebard (2004) view a theory as a set of interrelated constructed concepts, definitions and propositions that proceeds for systematic view of phenomena by specifying relations among variables with the purpose of explaining and predicting phenomena. Thus theory provide the philosophical tenets, value positions or results of empirical studies of scientific theories to predict and validate the goals and objectives of social events. Theory in relation to curriculum serves as a source for generating knowledge about better ways to enhance teaching, learning resources and teaching methods and how the effective application of such materials and techniques during instructions could lead to possible change in the behavior of the learners. In this regard, curriculum theory represent the value position that forms the basis for action in the school setting regarding curriculum decisions affecting all disciplines.

Implicit in the foregoing is the notion that for any discipline to function effectively and efficiently, the scope and contents of its specialized areas must be predicated on a well defined theory to guide activities. Hornby (2000) gives the meaning of theory as a set of reasoned ideas intended to explain facts or events and a statement of principles on which a subject is based. In his opinion, Zais (1976) viewed a curriculum theory as generalized set of logical interrelated definitions, concepts, propositions and other constructs that represent a systematic view of curriculum phenomena. Curriculum theory may be seen as a set of beliefs that provides the basis for making decisions about the curriculum content as well as actions necessary for its implementation within and outside the class room. Such beliefs are derived from the study of the learner, learning theories, the society,

different specialists and the organized body of knowledge. It is thus a policy or a guide for action employed by curriculum makers for the purpose of planning, development, implementation and evaluation of the curriculum. The function of curriculum theory is to describe, predict and explain curricular phenomena and to serve as a policy for guidance of curricular activities. In other words, curriculum theory guides how curriculum is constructed and implemented. Curriculum theory serve as the backbone for the development of the curriculum and thus plays a significant roles in determining knowledge in terms of content and transfer (Alebiosu, 2005). This further implies that all decisions concerning the content, strategies, learning resources and evaluation of the curriculum must be predicated on recognized and valid curriculum theories. Since the functions of curriculum theory are those of guiding, policies, actions and decisions, it follows that a valid curriculum theory for VTE must make assumption that are philosophically sound, morally acceptable, testable and verifiable in terms of the effectiveness of educational resources and instructional strategies.

Concept of Vocational-Technical Education

Vocational-technical education (VTE) is that aspect of education that gives its recipients an opportunity to acquire practical skills as well as some basic scientific knowledge (National Policy on Education, 2004). Vocational-technical education is a comprehensive term referring to the educational process when it involves in addition to general education, the study of technologies and related sciences and the acquisition of practical skills and knowledge in relations to occupations in various sectors of economic and social life (Akpan,2010). It is that type of education which fits the individual for gainful employment in recognized occupation as semi-skilled workers or technicians or sub professionals. (Puding,1994)Viewed from this perspective, Vocational-technical education forms a practical segment of education that involves skills acquisition.

Vocational-technical education constitute two distinct educational sub-sectors which are characterized by their purposes, level of institutions, course offerings, organization and control. The primary role of vocational education (VE) is to train low-level manpower such as operatives, artisans, craftsmen and master craftsmen for commerce, industry, agriculture, and

ancillary services. Those institutions that are concerned with VE includes Technical colleges and Business and Engineering Skills Training (BEST) Centres called Vocational Training Centres. BEST are lower in status than technical colleges. This is so because their primary role is to train operatives and artisans. Training programmes offered by the Vocational Training Centres last between one and three years depending on the skill or vocation. Conversely, institutions in technical education (TE) sub-sector are of tertiary level and their major role is to produce technicians, middle level manpower at lower tertiary and engineers and technologists at the university for higher management positions in commerce, industry, health care, agriculture and teaching. This sub-sector includes polytechnics, monotchnics,colleges of technology and colleges of education.

Vocational education is often used interchangeably with technical education. Apparently they are not strictly the same, but yet similar in some respects. When used separately, each term takes on a restricted meaning. Supporting the above, Olaitan (1996) describe vocational education as that type of education which is concerned with the development of skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary for success in an occupation. In the same vein, Olumse (2004) highlighted that vocational education refers to that aspect of education that acquaints the learner (trainer) with the practical skills. It focuses basically on psychomotor. Vocational education can be explained in terms of training designed to advanced an individual proficiency in relation to his or her present or further occupation, training or retraining which is given in school under public supervision and control, provision of systematic training experiences which are designed to fit individuals in recognized occupations. The components of VE includes general education, practical trainings for the development of skills required by the chosen occupation and related theory. The proportion of these components may vary markedly but the emphasis is usually on practical training.

Technical education (TE) refers to the intellectual involvement of a conscious rational being in the field of applied industrial sciences focused on practical skills (Olumese,2004). The components of TE includes general education, theoretical, scientific and technical studies and related skill training. These components may vary considerably depending on the type of personnel to be trained and the level of education.Thus both vocational and technical education have development of practical skills as their basic under structure. With such skills the individual become abreast of the challenges that will boast his career stability and fulfillment in a globalised highly competitive world. To argue that VE and TE are not comprehensive term is to deny that the noun is not a generic term. Technical education is

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therefore a component of VE that provides both theoretical and practical instruction. Such instruction is usually given to people in any type of enterprise that requires the application of skills, technologies, tools and other machinery to enable them earn their means of their livelihood.

However, survival in the ever changing globalised world requires more than the acquisition of basic vocational-technical skills from the components of VTE already highlighted in the preceding paragraph. The implication is that experts in VTE must continually review the content and scope of VTE curriculum according to the dictates of globalization the life (skills) jacket which the products of VTE must wear in the turbulence of a globalised civil society can only be made possible through an innovative curriculum.

Globalisation as a curriculum Theory for Vocational-Technical Education

In the era of globalization, change appears to be a permanent feature of human civilization. Thus the propensity to learn and the adaptive capacity of schools becomes the major mission of institutions of learning the world over as globalization symbolizes a paradigm shift not only requiring the re-thinking of beliefs and structures in traditional consciousness but also a shift from mono-cultural approach to education to multi-cultural approach with attendant implication for curriculum reforms and attendant practices. What is required today and in the future is that Vocational-technical institutions needs innovative approaches to support learning activities that will enhance better comprehension and adaptation of knowledge in various contexts and problem situations. This is necessary if schools are to properly prepare students for a life-long reality of problem-solving, knowledge adaptation and constant adjustment to changes. Innovative curriculum approaches introduced by most developed countries are perhaps part of attempts at ensuring schools do not fail in adequately preparing youth and children for life realities (Boyer, 1995). Such innovative curriculum emanating from the realization that effective reasoning and problem-solving are vital survival skills in the perennially changing cultural milieu of globalization. This is so because an effective citizen of the globalised world must be an effective thinker and a problem solver.

However, the implication of the foregoing to curriculum planners in VTE is that they must strive to provide well conceptualized, designed and implemented teaching learning and research programmes that will enable students to graduate not just as certificate holders but as intellectuals, professionals and critical citizens who can think theoretically, analysed with vigor, gather and process empirical data and engage in sustainable production of goods and services. VTE must develop in its recipients the culture of sound scholarship for knowledge production and the unfainting desire to continue to learn even after graduation. VTE must develop in the students the capacity to be job creators rather than job seekers. It must transmit adequate knowledge to eliminate illiteracy and must be tailored towards human capital development in all careers in VTE. It is in this sense that globalization becomes a curriculum theory for planning, design, development, implementation and evaluation.

CONCLUSION

The process of globalization describes the increasing interconnectedness of nations of the world in virtually all facets of world economies, this clearly highlights the need for Nigeria as a component of the global village to globalize her VTE curriculum. By so doing, Nigeria can reap the benefits of globalization and also provide other countries the opportunity *to adopt and apply vital parts of our VTE curriculum in developing their own programmes.*

RECOMMENDATIONS

Sequel to the discussion of this paper, the following recommendations have been advanced:

1. Vocational-technical educators should develop relevant curriculum theories to guide the planning, design, development, implementation and evaluation of VTE curriculum.
2. Nigeria should adopt and apply western ideologies which are relevant to the Nigerian situation. Thus, the teacher and learner in VTE practice must seeks to reconstruct their experiences in the positive sense and in the light of local situations in line with the dictates of globalization.
3. Federal and state government should make adequate financial provision for vocational technical institutions for capacity building, research, seminars, workshops and conferences. This will enable the vocational technical educator and its recipients to be well equipped for survival in a globalised civil society.

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4. More specialized areas should be included in VTE the purpose of which is to increase the job prospects of its products.
5. Vocational educators should remain in touch with the latest development in VTE around the world and utilise such information and knowledge in the development of the programmes.

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