

IDENTIFIABLE PROBLEMS INHIBITING THE EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAMMES IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES

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Abstract

This study investigated some of the identifiable problems inhibiting the effective management of vocational education programmes in Nigerian universities. It was predicated on the assumption that vocational and technical education programmes in Nigerian universities are saddled with many problems as pointed out by Dokubo (2007) and this is directly responsible why they cannot attain the heights they envisioned as compared to their counterparts in other countries of the world. It was discovered that the Federal Government of Nigeria has made some appreciable impacts to improving the quality and standards of vocational and technical education programmes. Nevertheless, more is still required in order to meet its set objectives in the national policy on education. Onwusonye (2005) also posited that insufficient funding, lack of facilities, brain drain and inadequate number of qualified instructors and facilitators are some the factors inhibiting the implementation of vocational education programmes in most of the Nigerian universities. Therefore, it is recommended among other things that both Federal and States Governments should fund and finance vocational education adequately, more qualified instructors should be trained by encouraging more learners to enroll in the programmes, lecturers and learners should be given conducive teaching and learning climates which will enhance their maximum productivities thereby reducing the high rate of brain-drain and adequate equipment should be provided in the universities workshops/laboratories because vocational and technical education programmes are practical oriented.

Keywords: Effective management, implementation of programmes, funding of programmes, identifiable factors, inhibiting factors

Introduction

Kolawole and Adepoju (2007) remarked that vocational education is the ability to use one's skills gainfully and displays one's intellectual and economic horizon well enough to be able to tackle very effectively many of the economic problems confronting individuals and the country as a whole. From the forgoing, vocational education prepares individuals for the world of work. Work is a very important factor in a man's life. Work has truly enabled man to satisfy his rapidly increasing needs and wants. Education for work had its inception more than four thousand years ago (Akaninwor 2005). The ancient Egyptians were reputed to be among the forerunners in the processes of production.

In ancient Nigeria, individuals were able to provide for themselves and their families the basic necessities of life like food, clothing and shelter. People who were skilled in the various craft specialties were able to construct chairs, tables, beds, etc. Some were involved in blacksmithing, clay-works, weaving, cloth dying, etc. They were able to manufacture simple implements for hunting, fishing and farming. Canoes of various shapes and sizes were constructed to enhance water transportation. War canoes were made readily available in times of disorder. The people were able to distill spirits (drinks) known as "ogogoro" or kai-kai" in local places (Akaninwor 2005). As money was not in existence at that time, goods and services were traded only by barter. There was no central government at that time, so there was no centrally organized system of education. Education depended solely on individual or family approach. Vocational education or education for work was based purely on imitation or apprenticeship programmes.

According to Akaninwor (2005), vocational and technical education is a form of specialized education for the world of work or occupational positions in semi-skilled and skilled areas. It is a secondary type of education that prepares individuals for the craft certificates. Vocational education could be seen as organized educational programmes which are directly related to the preparation of individuals who have tentatively made up their minds to follow a specific line of trade or occupation. Vocational and technical education can also be summarized as one that helps individuals in the acquisition of skills, trades and occupations which contribute high standard of living of that particular country.

Banjoko (2004) also stresses that skill is a major distinguishing aspect of vocational education which makes it outstanding and different from the liberal arts.

From the above definitions, it could be deduced that vocational education prepares individual in acquisition of skills and job positions in skilled areas, and that is why this paper is trying to identify some of the problems that have become a cog in the wheel of progress of vocational education programmes in Nigerian Universities and at the same time proffers some solutions that could be used to improve the effective management of vocational and technical education.

Major Challenges in Vocational Education programmes

The challenges mitigating against the study of vocational education programmes are many. In support of this statement, Onwusonye (2005) said that insufficient finance, lack of facilities, brain drain, staff training and retention, and staff situation are realistic and practical factors inhibiting the implementation of vocational education programme in Nigeria. Too much noise is made on the pages of papers and television about vocational and technical education but little is done to improve the teaching/learning of vocational education programme in Nigerian universities.

Some of the major inhibiting factors are highlighted below:

❖ Funding

Universities in Nigeria are owned by the federal and State governments and recently private individuals. The federal and state government universities rely predominantly on the governments for funding while the private universities obtain their incomes from the fees they charge the students. Other sources of revenue are endowments, investment income, grant and gifts. Over the years, governments' subventions to universities have never been adequate but at the same time governments maintain the policy that universities should not charge fees it deemed adequate to complement the financial effort of the government.

In Nigeria, the allocation to education as a share of GDP, has drastically increased since the inception of a democratic government in 1999 (Uzoma 2002). Then, the Federal ministry of Education's recurrent budget was 38.3 billion Naira (US\$300 Million). In 2006, the ministry was authorized to spend 129.2 billion Naira (US\$1.0 Billion).

The real value of the 1999 budget expressed in 2006 naira purchasing power was approximately 84.6 billion Naira (US\$662 Million). Therefore, the purchasing power of the federal ministry of Education increased by about 53% over eight years (African Human Development Department, 2006).

However, because of the increase in the demand for vocational education and existing high decadence in the infrastructure, the little effect of the increase in funding could not be noticed substantially. Till-date, government funding of vocational education programme has not been impressive as this is a reflection of the non-challant attitude of the

government towards vocational education programme. This is responsible for the gradual extinction of this programme from the various educational institutions in this country.

❖ Facilities

Most vocational education departments in Nigerian Universities do not have well-equipped laboratories and workshops, let alone usable equipment and facilities. Also, where they exist, they are grossly inadequate, as the laboratories only have the items or equipment that were provided when the departments were established. It is however most surprising to know that most vocational education departments still depend on engineering workshops and lecturers to teach vocational and technical education concepts in this 21st century. The available facilities programme as at today are inadequate quantitatively and qualitatively and besides they are obsolete. Opeoluwa (2007) indicated that only 40% of institutions of Higher Education in Nigeria have laboratory or workshop spaces for vocational education programmes. He further stated that 60% of other institutions do not have laboratory or workshop spaces and that this reflects the low quality of technology programmes in higher institutions. He concluded that this situation is partly responsible for the reason why it has been increasingly difficult to run experiments effectively for students and made the teaching and research in science and technology difficult and therefore the country is producing insufficient, unqualified and ill-prepared vocational education graduates. This inadequacy in the field of teaching, laboratory and workshop facilities has contributed to poor performances on the part of students. Consequently, Reyes-Guerra (1989) in Edem (2007), categorized such students into three, namely: *Verbalizers*, *Visualizers* and *Doers*. The Verbalizers are those who learn easily if information is in written or spoken form. They benefit from lectures, tutorials and hand-outs. Visualizers learn easily when information is presented in pictorial or diagrammatic form while the Doers learn more easily when information is presented by practical demonstration by the lecturers.

The inadequacy of facilities both qualitatively and quantitatively has put the visualizers and the doers at a disadvantage. The verbalizers may also have problem in a class with large students' population. The implication of this scenario is that only a small proportion of the students benefit from the current pedagogical system. There are no ICT facilities for the training of students. The high cost of computer and teaching aids ownership is a major constraint to acquisition of the items. Access to affordable and reliable internet connectivity is only available in a few institutions, faculties and offices, even then, power fluctuations have considerably reduced the

reliability of the access and inadequate bandwidth also makes access difficult.

❖ **Brain-drain**

In the context of this paper, brain drain refers to the movement of lecturers of vocational education which are needed for the socio-economic and technological advancement of Nigeria from one university to other universities or to other professional calling for better conditions of service. Akintunde (1989) in Idowu and Rose (2007) identified five different components of brain drain:

- i). Experts in academics who moved to the industry where they get better pay for their services.
- ii). Lecturers and students who leave the country to acquire more knowledge and skill but later refused to return.
- iii). Lecturers who move from one country for better conditions of service.
- iv). Skill professionals who abandon the practice of vocational education in favour of other more lucrative economic activities and political appointments which are not related to their training.
- v). Skilled professionals, although in their field of training, who do not devote their full attention to their job because of their efforts to supplement their earnings through other unrelated economic activities. Banjoko (2005) said that, in the 70s, Nigerian universities were able to attract experts from other countries e.g India because the economic conditions then were favourable. But with down turn of the economy and consequences of the ineffective efforts of the government to resuscitate it, this resulted in the return of the foreigners to their countries and exodus of their Nigeria Counter parts from the shores of Nigeria in order to earn a better living.

Berko (2008) reported that:

- i) About 45% of all Nigerian Professionals including vocational educators have left the Nigerian shores over the decades since colonization.
- ii) Between 1997 and 2007 alone, Nigeria lost over 10,000 middle level and high-level managers to the western economies.
- iii) About 500 Lecturers from Nigerian universities continue to migrate each year, particularly to Europe, America and other African countries where the condition of service is relatively better. These Nigerian in Diaspora contribute 35 times more wealth to Europe, American and other African economies.

❖ Staff training and retention

The training of academic staff is ordinarily a continuous exercise to ensure consistent improvement in the quality of their outputs. The training is in two-fold: training to acquire minimum qualification (Ph.D) and to teach and continued professional-training. Both types of training can be acquired either locally or overseas. Usually, local training within the nation is cheaper than overseas training but more strenuous because of inadequate facilities, literature and distractions arising from the need to meet the necessary demands. Overseas training requires a lot of foreign exchange but the enabling environment exists to achieve success in a record time. However, over time it has always been difficult to get the trainees back to their respective countries after the completion of their study.

Berko (2008) reported that, In the 70s the Nigerian universities were able to recruit foreigners and retain them and the indigenous academic staff because of the low exchange rate. Then, one US dollar (\$1 .00) was equivalent of seventy kobo (70k). But now that a dollar (\$1 .00) exchanges for one hundred and fifty naira (N1 50.00) provides good attraction to move out.

This is not to say that salary is the only issue, self fulfillment in terms of output via research efforts is also part of the driving force. The salary and service benefits paid to vocational education teachers in Nigeria is about the lowest in the world and because of this, they migrate to other countries especially the United States of America or local industry for better pay. Lecturers from within and outside Nigeria also migrate to Botswana and South Africa because of high wages that they pay to the lecturers and the relatively better equipped laboratories available there.

❖ Staff situation

Many universities across the country are inadequately staffed both qualitatively and quantitatively. In most departments especially in vocational education programme, the proportion of staff without Ph.D out numbers those with Ph.D. Uwaifo (2005) in Asika (2006) asserted that it is difficult to get people trained to the level of Ph.D because it is not as attractive and commensurate to the effort put in acquire it. Whereas, a first degree graduate can function well in the industry and politics and earn good money. Most lecturers in vocational education departments in Nigeria universities, who have obtained their Ph.D, have been drained away from the universities where they teach because of the unattractive nature of the lecturing profession in Nigeria (Asika 2006).

In order to spur locally needed Science and Technology activities, it is imperative that Nigerian government should seriously consider proper retention schemes for their best talents by providing special working

conditions including income supplements and adequate research supports to stem this problem of brain drain.

The perception of the society towards vocational Education Programme

According to Dokubo (2013), vocational and technical education programmes are being regarded by some people in negative perspectives: as educational programmes for the *never do well* or drop-outs. It is ranked amongst the lowest by Nigerians. The reason is that careers and training in vocational and technical education are lacking in glamour. The above perceptions by various sectors of our society do not encourage adequate enrolment into this noble profession. Consequently, this low enrolment has given rise to a low output of qualified industrial education instructors.

The society does not accord respect or recognition to the graduates of Vocational Education. They have the impression is that this type of education is meant for the unintelligent and under-achievers. According to Amoor (2009) in Dokubo (2010), most parents do not encourage or guide their wards to take a course in Vocational Education programme in Nigerian universities, this is because the society does not place any significant value or dignity on the programme. This subsequently affects the enrolment of candidates into vocational education programme in Nigerian universities.

❖ Lack of students's interest

Many candidates aspiring to acquire university education do not have interest in vocational education programme. An interaction with prospective universities' candidates revealed that the nomenclature of the degree (B.Ed) in most of the Nigerian universities that offer vocational and technical education programme accounts for their indifference since most of them do not want to end up in the class-room as teachers.

❖ Non-uniformity of Course Contents

Most of the Nigerian universities and colleges that offer Vocational Education Programme do not have uniform course content. The course content for Business Education, Home Economics, Agriculture, for instance in the department of Vocational Education, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, is not the same as in University of Nigeria, Nsukka (Awa 2008). This is applicable too to the Federal University of Technology, Yola and Federal College of Education Technical Omoku Rivers state and host of others. This disparity in course content of vocational education programme in Nigerian universities and colleges poses a great challenge for the standardization of the programme.

It is therefore, concluded that Vocational Education Programme in Nigerian universities and colleges has not attained the maximum level of performance of its potential role of national economic development. This is due to neglect by the Federal Government, outlook of the society and other variables that hinder its development and contribution to growth.

The curriculum designers should harmonize the course content of vocational education programme in Nigerian universities and colleges and change the nomenclature of the degree offered (B.Ed) to (B.Sc Ed) This will go a long way to standardize the programme to make it more efficient and effective, and also entice the youth to enroll for the programme.

Conclusion

Vocational education has an important role to play for economic development, industrial growth, employment generation and poverty alleviation. Based on these facts, there should be a clear mission and vision in articulating and solving the problems facing the effective management of vocational education programme in order to enhance good quality. There should be interest in providing an adequate response to the needs that they cater to obviously includes good “quality”.

The education received should correspond to the skills and competencies demanded in the work. When all these challenging factors are considered, quality management will undoubtedly have positive effects.

Recommendations

It is recommended among other things that:

1. The government should adequately finance and fund the programmes and also ensure their implementations in order to have sustainable vocational and technical education programmes.
2. Adequate facilities should be provided such as well-equipped laboratories, workshops, classrooms, tools and literature for conducive learning.
3. More qualified teaching staff should be trained.
4. Government should provide proper retention schemes for staff and for their best talents by providing special working conditions including income supplements and adequate research supports.
5. The salaries and working conditions should be attractive in order to avoid the issue of brain drains in our tertiary institutions.
6. The education received should correspond to the needs of the learners and those of the society at large.

7. The operators of vocational and technical education programmes should ensure that more people are enrolled in the programmes by making it attractive to the general public

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