



## **Qualitative Study on Vocational and Technical Education Programmes in Nigeria: Challenges and Prospects**

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### **Abstract**

The paper critically examined the concept of vocational and technical education, the objectives, as well as the challenges. The paper also looked at the prospects of the programme and therefore concludes that the laissez faire attitude currently expressed by Nigerian government towards vocational and technical education programme has in no small measure resulted to myriad of challenges hindering the achievement of the programme objectives which include but not limited to the following: Inadequate funding, inadequate workshop facilities and instructional materials, lack of vocational guidance/job placement, poor societal perception and many too numerous to mention hindering the achievement of the curriculum objectives of the programme. The paper therefore recommends among others that government should increase the funding of vocational and technical education programme. Provide adequate tools, equipment and facilities required in the training workshop. Provide basic amenities in all the vocational institutions across the nation. Regular repairs, or replacement of faulty tools, equipment and instructional facilities in the training workshop. Lastly vocational institutions should establish a link with the industries in order to work out the areas of relevant occupational skills currently required in the industries.

**Keywords:** Vocational, Technical Education, challenges, prospects

### **Introduction**

Education is a vital tool through which any nation can experience growth and development. Developing nation such as Nigeria required education for self-reliance and national sustainability. That is, education that prepare the individual for occupational skills as well as equip the recipients to be job creator rather than job seeker. The education that enthrone work and labour as well as enhances human dignity by making individuals acquire employable skills, knowledge and attitudes required for self-reliance and national sustainability. This system of education is achieved through vocational and technical education programme.

Many scholars have given various definitions of vocational and technical education. However, United Nation Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and International Labor Organization (ILO) (2002) defined vocational and technical education as a means of preparing for occupational fields and for effective participation in the world of work. It was also defined as the form of education that places emphasis on the development of occupational skills required for preparation for work (UNESCO & ILO, 2001). That is any form of education which primary purpose is to prepare the recipient for employment in recognised occupations.

Furthermore, UNESCO and NBTE (2003), defined vocational and technical education as an aspect of the educational process involving, in addition to general education, the study of technologies and related sciences, and the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of economic and social life. In a similar development, The National Policy on Education according to Federal Ministry of Education (2013) defined vocational and technical education as the study of technologies and related sciences for the acquisition of practical skills, attitude, understanding and knowledge that lead to occupational field for effective participation in the world of work and also as a method of alleviating poverty.

According to Federal Ministry of Education (20013), the major objective of vocational and technical education is to prepare recipients for self employment and employment for the labour market. Furthermore, the blue-print on education (2004) revised (2013) provided the aims and objectives of technical and vocational education as follows:

1. Provide trained manpower in the applied sciences, technology and business particularly at craft, advanced craft and technical levels.



2. Provide the technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, commercial and economic development;
3. Give training and impart the necessary skills to individuals who shall be self-reliant economically
4. Provide people who can apply scientific knowledge to the improvement and solution of environmental problems for the use and convenience of man.
5. Enable our young men and women to have an intelligent understanding of the increasing complexity of technology
6. Give an introduction to professional studies in engineering and other technologies.

Given the laudable objectives of vocational and technical education programme, as stated in National Policy on Education by Federal Ministry of Education (20013), it is crystal clear that if the curriculum objective of the programme is effectively implemented, it could assist the nation to overcome poverty and its associated problems. For this to be achieved, the programme must be provided with adequate human and material resources as well as functional facilities and equipment in the training institutions. But in reality Nigeria government has neglected this aspect of education that provides the vocational and technical skills required for national development. Therefore, vocational and technical education like every other aspect of educational programme in Nigeria is currently bedeviled with myriads of challenges.

#### **Challenges of Vocational and Technical Education Programme in Nigeria**

Some of the challenges bedeviling the successful implementation of vocation and technical education programme in Nigeria include the following:

1. Dearth of qualified personnel/inadequate personnel
2. Lack of physical resources/inadequate workshop tools and equipment
3. Inadequate funding/ financial constraints
4. Poor remuneration of vocational and technical teachers
5. Wrong/poor societal perception and misconception of the programme
6. Poor Student Motivation
7. Lack of political stability
8. Gap between vocational institutions and Industry
9. Inadequate guidance/job placement
10. Inadequate entrepreneurship education programme

#### **Dearth of Qualified Personnel/Inadequate Personnel**

A walk round most of the Nigeria's vocational training centres, technical colleges and even tertiary institutions revealed that these institutions are not adequate in the quality and quantity of personnel. This situation according to Amaechi, and Thompson, (2016) is partly responsible for the low quality of graduates produced from the programme. Some of the teachers that were sent abroad in the early 1980s for vocational training under the Technical Teacher Training Programme never returned. Some that returned took up more lucrative jobs in other establishments; others established enterprises of their own; thus the incident of lack of qualified vocational teachers continues to affect the nation.

Study conducted by Anayo and Ezeudu (2018) revealed that graduates of vocational education, find it easy to secure employment in various establishments or become self-employed as a result of the versatile nature of the programme. Therefore, instead of remaining in the classroom to train others students, they rather prefer to become self-employed. This tendency is often worsened by poor remuneration and unattractive working conditions of teachers. This has continued to affect vocational education negatively. Wordu, Igrubia and Okotubu, (2018) stated that only a few federal universities presently, offer full-blown vocational and technical education programmes and even some of the few, are yet to mount PhD programmes in this specialized field of study thereby compounding the problem further. Ogbuanya, and Usman (2020) further stated that in most of the institutions, the machinery and equipment supplied several years ago are still lying waste-in their various crates or containers – unopened and unused due to lack of qualified personnel to operate, service or repair them.

#### **Lack of Physical Resources/Lack of Adequate Workshop Tools and Equipment**

Physical facilities include basic infrastructure, such as buildings, laboratories workshops and studios. Mbagu, Sambo and Aminu (2018), stated that most of the schools that offer vocational education courses are not provided with enough and appropriate equipment and materials for training. Babayo and Abdul (2017) also stated that most of the so-called studios, laboratories and instructional materials in vocational institutions are just a caricature of what they should be.

#### **Inadequate Funding/ Financial Constraints**

Technical and vocational education programme is capital intensive programme. Therefore, requires adequate funding by both the government and well-meaning individuals. Masaruf, (2015) opined that funds must be made available and adequate to meet the cost of personnel, building, equipment, laboratories, studios, demonstration farms, etc. However, Oguntuyi (2013)



revealed that the funding of vocational education programme in Nigeria is grossly inadequate. Tijani, Adeyemi and Omotehinshe (2016), also attributed the poor maintenance culture of the tools and equipment in vocational institutions to lack of funding. Therefore, resulting to poor and non-functional facilities and equipment in vocational and technical education institutions in Nigeria.

### **Wrong/Poor Societal Perception of Vocational Education Programme**

Oguntuyi, (2013) revealed that the general Nigerian public tends to give wrong perception to vocational education. Some seem to think of it as education for under-achievers, unintelligent people, school drop outs, and the less-privileged. It has also been wrongly perceived as a “dirty” kind of education due to its practical nature. Adesua, (2022) stated that these wrong perceptions are traceable to our colonial days and lead to the problem of societal stigma. Traditionally, so-called “intellectual” work is often contrasted with “manual” work. Thus there would be, on the one hand, white-collar (office) professions and, on the other, traders, technicians, etc. Nowadays, such a distinction is gradually becoming visible, as society continues to undervalue and minimize technical education. Consequently, pupils are facing difficulties in their studies of vocational streams. From the above point vocational education has for some time now seemed to have received negative stigma. For instance, parents would rather have their wards and children study more “prestigious” and “glamorous” courses such as medicine, law and engineering rather than vocational and technical courses.

### **Lack of Vocational Guidance and Counselling**

According to Animani and Ogunyika (2011), lack of adequate vocational guidance has made it difficult to correct the wrong perceptions pupils have about vocational education programme as well as the consequent of the societal stigma. There is therefore, strong need to mount vocational guidance and counseling programmes for the public and in various academic institutions for appropriate enlightenment on the subject.

### **Lack of Power Supply**

Ibrahim and Abdullahi (2010), revealed that in most parts of the country, effective vocational and technical education programme is hindered by lack of or inadequate power supply to run the necessary equipment and machines. In addition, Okotubu (2022), revealed that most of the necessary spare parts for servicing and repairing the equipment are not readily available. Lack of water supply also pose a problem in some vocational and technical institutions.

### **Poor Student Motivation**

It is common to find that in some vocational and technical education institutions, the laboratories, studios and workshops are often not used. Those that are in use, are used rather infrequently and rigidly as enough time usually is not allocated for practical activities in the workshops or laboratories. According to Eze (2015), students are often not allowed to use the laboratories or workshops at their spare time. All these lead to poor motivation, lack of confidence and uncertainty about the students’ ability to succeed or perform well enough on the programme of the students.

### **Lack of Political Stability**

Studies by Nwana (2018), revealed that as a result of political instability in Nigeria, there have been unstable government policies affecting the funding, administration and management of education especially vocational and technical education programme. Policies initiated by previous administration are often rejected and dumped by another regime of administration. This has in no small measures affected the smooth running of vocational and technical education institutions.

### **The Gap between Institutions and Industry**

Several studies have revealed that there seems to be a disconnect between the vocational skills acquired in the various institutions of learning and the skills required in today industries. For instance, Masaruf (2015) and Ogbu (2015) revealed in their studies that there is a disconnect between vocational skills acquired in the training institutions and the industrial needs of the society. Therefore, there is the need for functional link and co-ordination between the training institutions and the industries. This is because the training institutions produce for the industries. A good Technical and Vocational Education curriculum or programme benefits from the linkage between school and industry. It is the gap between institutions and industry that partly accounts for the high rate of unemployment among graduates of the programme. This is because students are trained based on procedures and equipment that are no longer needed in various industries. The students therefore graduate to discover that they do not actually possess any employable/entrepreneurial skills and competencies expected of them.

### **Inadequate Entrepreneurship Education Programme**

Entrepreneurship education aims at equipping students with occupational skills, sharp business acumen and ingenuity to enable them create employment for themselves and others. It should therefore be an integral part of effective vocational education. It is not enough to just include “Entrepreneurship” as a course for vocational education students. The course content and method of delivery should have a practical orientation to make the programme really beneficial to the students.



### Prospects

From the numerous challenges of inadequate funding, inadequate workshop facilities and instructional materials, lack of vocational guidance/job placement, poor societal perception discussed above, it is evident that Nigerian government have expressed laissez faire attitude towards vocational and technical education programme from the inception of colonial masters. This laissez faire attitude of government towards the programme has in no small measure resulted to myriad of challenges hindering the achievement of the curriculum objective of the program in Nigeria. However, most of these challenges could be surmounted if the government and well-meaning individuals are genuinely committed to change the course of vocational and technical education programme in Nigeria. Once this is done, the future and prospects of vocational and technical education programme in Nigeria will be bright. Therefore, vocational and technical education programme in Nigeria will be overwhelmed with numerous prospects irrespective of the challenges being faced today. Some of these prospects include the followings:

1. Vocational and technical education programme has the capacity to revamp Nigeria economy if given the accorded attention with regards to funding.
2. Vocational and technical education constitutes a vital engine for economic, social, practical and all-round development of any nation.
3. It is an instrument for promoting environmentally sustainable development amongst others.
4. Serve as learning and training centre for the translation of dreams and ideas into successful ventures.
5. Builds technical and conceptual skills in the individual that prepares him for today's world of work.
6. Leads to technological advancement.
7. Reduces poverty and idleness.
  - a. Directs towards self-reliant and sustainable means of livelihood.

### Conclusion

Going by the policy statement of the programme, vocational and technical education institutions in Nigeria have been training people to become craftsmen, master craft-men, technicians and technologist. According to Ndudi and Samuel (2016) the training qualifies them for jobs in both public and private sectors of the economy. In a similar development Wordu, Okotubu, and Ugorji (2018) stated that the training institutions have been training and producing graduates that can perform competently in their chosen vocation without a need for pre-employment training. But because of the current challenges in the implementation of the curriculum objectives of the programme, most of the graduate lack the necessary skills require to be employable in the industries or self employed. Sequel to this, there is need for total overhaul of vocational and technical education programme in Nigeria.

### Recommendations

In light of the above, the paper therefore suggests as follows:

1. Government should improve on the funding of vocational and technical education programme
2. Private sectors and well-meaning individual should partner with the government in the funding and provision of training facilities in needed in vocational and technical education institutions.
3. Government and other education stakeholders should make sure that vocational and technical education programmes at all levels are made relevant so as to provide youth and graduates with the needed vocational and technical skills.
4. Vocational institutions should partner with private sectors and industries in order to provide relevant educational programmes that would enable the graduates of the programme relevant in the world of work.
5. There should be a link, understanding and co-operation between vocational education institutions and industry. Both should work on areas that would make vocational education programmes relevant to industry.
6. Regular seminars and workshops should be organised for vocational teachers in order to keep them abreast of current development in the field of vocational and technical education programme and how best to impact them on their students.
7. Effective vocational guidance and counseling should be carried out at all level of vocational institutions so as to properly guide the trainee in chosen a vocation base on their competence and interest.
8. Effort should be made by government and head of schools to always repair or replace fault tools, equipment and facilities in vocational and technical institutions.
9. Efforts should be made by government to provide basic amenities such as water, electricity, in all vocational institutions across the country.





10. More universities and other institutions should be encouraged to mount full-fledged programmes on vocational education and the graduates of such programmes should be encouraged to stay in the field.
11. Vocational educational curricula should be kept as broad, dynamic and practical-based as possible. The curricula should be designed by experts in the various areas and subjected to periodic review by experts too
12. Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) and entrepreneurship education programmes should be made more meaningful and relevant to the students.
13. Institutions should equip their laboratories, workshops and farms not just for accreditation purposes but also for students' practical use. This will encourage and motivate, as well as build up self-confidence in them

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