

STRATEGIES FOR ENHANCING STUDENTS' ENROLMENT INTO TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION PROGRAMME IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The enrolment trend of students into Technical Education programme is gradually sliding downward. This downward trend is becoming worrisome. Therefore, if it is not checked, the dream of having more trained craftsmen, technicians, technologists or technical educators to meet the manpower needed in the nation for technology growth and development may be endangered. It is because of the aforementioned reasons that the papers seek to review the strategies of enhancing students' enrolment into Technology Education programme in Nigerian schools. Sequel to the aforementioned the paper recommends among others school public relation, scholarship programme, accessibility and proximity to school environment, provision of adequate and functional instructional facilities, improved instructional techniques, providing education for self-reliant, public private partnership system of education intervention as some of the strategies of enhancing students' enrolment into Technology Education programme.

Keywords: Strategies, students' enrollment, technology education programme

Introduction

Education has been affirmed globally as one of the greatest tools for national development. It is seen as one of the unique forces that can be used to achieve desirable change in nation's economic, political and sociological development. Muideen (2019) stated that Education is the strongest forces for bringing about positive changes in the society. It involves the interaction between the teachers, students and curriculum content to bring about permanent change in learner behavior through the experience gained from learning activities. However the current educational system needed in this new age especially in Nigeria, is the educational system that trains its recipients to acquire skills to earn a living and be self-reliant. Thus, Vocational and Technical Education programme provides such platform for its recipients.

Technology Education also known as Industrial Technology Education, Technology or Industrial Technical Education is one among the Vocational Education programmes that prepare its recipients for the acquisition of practical skills, attitude, understanding and knowledge that lead to occupational field for effective participation in the world of work. It is a term that comprehensively refers to in addition to general education, the study of technologies and related science, the acquisition of knowledge, practical skills and attitudes relating to occupations in various sectors of economic and social life (UNESCO, 2016).

The objectives of the programmes as contained in the National Policy on Education is aimed at preparing the recipients to acquire relevant skills and knowledge for sustainable livelihood and employment through the production of skilled workforce to revitalize and sustain the nations' economy and reduce unemployment. Furthermore, the programme enhances the acquisition of relevant and adequate skills crucial for enhancing the industrial development and economic productivity of many nations. In many societies Technical Education is perceived as a veritable tool for national development strategies because of the enormous impact on the development of human resource, productivity and economic growth (Dike, 2007).

Although Technical Education programme contributes significantly to the development of the nation's economy, it has been observed that there is a downward trend in the enrolment rate of students into the programme. For instance, Abiodun-Oyebanji and Michael (2016) revealed a downward trend into Vocational and Technical Education programme in Nigeria. Similarly, Oviawe (2017) revealed that Technical Education has remained detested by the majority of Nigerian parents and the students themselves resulting to low' enrollment rate of students into the programme at post basic school level. In addition Auta et al., (2023) affirm the down turn of students' enrolment into Technical Education programme.

However, studies from Adelabu (1998), Ndukwu (2002), Ileuma (2008) and Dokubo and Deebom, (2017) have revealed that some of the factors causing the down turn of students' enrolment into technical education programme are parental influence, student/child factors, school/environmental factors, socio-economic status, government/political factors, social cultural background and poor societal perception.

Statement of the Problem

Sequel to the aforementioned it has become glaring that several factors influences the enrolment rate of students into Technical Education programme. If these factors are not properly addressed, the dream of having more trained craftsmen, technicians, technologist or technical educators to meet manpower level needed for technological growth and development of the nation may be endangered. It is because of the aforementioned reasons that the paper seeks to review some of the strategies of enhancing students' enrolment into Technology Education programme. Some of which are: School public relation, vibrant school and host community relationship, private public partnership system of education intervention, crafting an effective communication of value proposition for technical education, strong alumni association network, scholarship programme, accessibility and proximity of school environment, innovative curriculum, provision of adequate and functional physical and instructional facilities and teaching techniques for improving enrollment rate of students.

School Public Relation

School public relation is one among the appropriate ways of increasing awareness in schools. Dokubo and Deebom (2017) stated that through the activities of the school public relations, effective communication of the missions, goals, accomplishments challenges and accountability of the school to the entire public is achieved. Therefore, it has become imperative for administrators of schools and vocational institutions to effectively utilize the school public relation in enhancing students' enrollment in technical education programme. Abiodun-Oyebanji and Michael (2016) stated that effective school public relation can be achieved through the two-way comprehensive communication system such as internal public and external public. The goal of the two-way communication process is to stimulate a better understanding of the roles, objectives, accomplishments and needs of the school. Base on the assertion above, it is therefore obvious that both teachers and students of TVE institutions at all levels are important school public relations agents that could enhance the enrolment rate in technical education programme. This is achieved through the correction of the poor societal attitude about technical and vocational education which has not encouraged enrolment of students into TVE programme.

Vibrant School and Host Community Relationship

Another unique way that students' enrollment can be increased in technical education programme is through a vibrant school and host community relationship. By fostering a sense of belonging and inclusivity in the community hosting the school, it will create an environment where students feel supported, valued, and connected. This sense of community school relationship can enhance the overall educational experience and contribute to students' personal growth and development which in turn enhance student's enrolment.

Private Public Partnership System of Education Intervention

Private Public Partnership System refers to the voluntary and collaborative relationship between the various organ of government or various government agencies and well meaning individual in private sectors in the funding and management of

educational institutions. It is a system of partnership between the private and public sector. Both sectors partner in funding and managing educational programme with the aim of improving the quality of educational system and enhancing productivity in educational sector.

In this system the various participants involved agree to come together to pursue a common goal or undertake specific tasks and to share risks, responsibility, resources, competencies and profits gained. Due to resources committed by both parties and the profits they stand to gain from the growth of the programme, both parties are committed to ensuring quality and productivities of their graduate which in turn attract more students into enrolling for the programme.

Crafting an Effective Communication of Value Proposition for Technical Education

Crafting an effective communication of school value proposition is another vital method of enhancing students' enrolment into school programme. It is a method of communicating to the general public what makes the school programme special. It defines how the school programme can provide an educational experience different from others. A well value proposition is a key element for successful marketing of school programme. It articulates the reasons prospective students should choose the school programme over others. It entails identifying and communicating the special benefits, advantages, and opportunities that the programme offers.

Communicating school value proposition can be carried out through the brochures, school's website, marketing, social media platforms, and open houses. Effective communication of school value proposition should use powerful and persuasive language to articulate and highlight the benefits that students should expect at the end of the programme. For instance: academic excellence, personalized attention, extracurricular opportunities, career development support and a strong sense of community. They can create a sense of excitement and interest which could in turn increase student enrolments in the programme.

When crafting a strong value proposition for Technology Education programme, it's important to go beyond the basics of highlighting the academic programmes and delve deeper into what makes the programme different from other programmes. For instance, the unique selling point of Technical Education programme is that, it has an innovative curriculum that are tailored to provide an exceptional educational experience that prepares students to acquire skills required to meet the needs of today's society. It offers cutting-edge courses and programmes that are required to succeed in the modern world of work.

Strong Alumni Association Network

An alumni association is a community that brings former students together, helping you stay connected with both the university and other alumni. Smith, (2021) opined that an alumni network is an excellent opportunity for establishing potential long-term, mutually-beneficial relationships and stay connected with others who have experienced earning a degree with your university. An alumni network connects you

with a number of professional contacts and other alumni across broad industries and interests. The alumni network can be incredibly beneficial to those that leverage it after graduation; it can offer career support and guidance, networking opportunities, charity involvement and more. Alumni share experiences with others in the network. Beyond making connections, an alumni network can serve as a resource for mentorship and guidance. Experienced alumni can provide insights into navigating career challenges, exploring new opportunities and achieving personal growth. This sense of community and shared experience can be instrumental in helping you reach your goals and grow along your professional journey. "It enables one to have an instant connection with others in their field that has gone through the same schooling or programme.

Therefore, strong alumni network is also another way to make your school attractive to prospective applicants. The highlight of the achievements and success stories of the alumnus can demonstrate the long-term value of the programme and the opportunities that await graduate from the programme.

Scholarship Programme

Scholarship plays a crucial role in enhancing the overall enrolment of students in school. Brown (2022) opined that scholarship reduces the financial burden on students and their families. It enhances the accessibility of qualitative education by those who might not ordinarily afford it. More so, offering scholarships brings great opportunities to students especially for those from under represented background. Government through its various programme such as TETFund, bursary, grants, endowment have been providing aids to educational institution, currently most graduates of technical education programmes are sponsored to PhD level but more effort should be intensify by Government to extent such programmes to prevocational and vocation level of the programme. If this is done, it could increase the interest of students into enrolling for the programme and encouraging more students to apply. By so doing the students interest in technical education programme will be captured from the prevocational level.

Accessibility and Proximity of School Environment

Accessibility and proximity to the school environment is an influential factor that determines the number of students that register in the school program. By accessibility it means mean ease of entry requirement and reduction in cost of fees. While proximity means that schools are located within a reasonable distance from the people. When schools are located close to the people, their daily commute becomes easier and manageable. It makes students daily commute more feasible. It can reduce transportation costs and time. It also enhances **safety and comfort**. Easy accessible to school environment often foster stronger ties with the host community, encouraging enrollment of students in the school programme. Lastly, accessibility and proximity to the school by the students and the people allows for better access to support services.

Innovative Curriculum

Curriculum refers to all the subjects or courses that a student takes in the course of an educational journey. It is the totality of a student's experience in the educational process. It includes its recent research, change and innovation; instructional practices,

performance assessments and learning experiences. Auta, (2022) revealed that curriculum plays a crucial role when seeking to enhance the quality of education and promote innovative educational sectors. This is because it is the driving force through which knowledge, skills and values are continually and consistently transferred to students. Based on the above assertion, we can therefore define curriculum innovation as the process of updating or renewing the current curriculum, either through new techniques or implementing new educational ideas. It is the systematic introduction of new and improved concept, practices and methods into what students should be taught and how students should be taught. It entails both planning and implementation that involves different actors such as the learners, teachers, guardians, and education experts, among others.

Sequel to the fact that our society is rapidly changing, it has become so imperative therefore for educators and educational institution through curriculum innovation to also evolved with the dynamics of the society in order to avoid preparing students for a society that is no longer in existence. Through curriculum innovation the mismatch between the curriculum and real-world needs is ameliorated. It also fosters the development of current educational and learning needs, keeping pace with the times and aligning with expectations and standards. It is believed that when a better and more responsive curriculum for Technology Education programme is created through innovation process to meet the current societal developmental needs, it would automatically enhance the enrolment rate of students into the programme.

Provision of Adequate and Functional Physical and Instructional Facilities

The classroom, administrative and workshop buildings are regarded as the physical facilities while the equipment, tools and teaching aids housed by the buildings and used for teachings are referred to as instructional facilities. Okotubu (2022) revealed that in addition to an innovative curriculum and well qualified staff, availability of adequate facilities can also be a strong selling point for technical education programme. The availability and adequacy of both the physical and instructional facilities within the school environment plays a crucial role in achievement of the curriculum objective of educational programme. They help teacher to convey the learning objectives effectively such that the learner receive, understand, retains, and applied the experience gained during instructional process. They help to actualize the curriculum objective of educational programme. Through the provision of adequate and functional physical and instructional facilities in technical education institutions, the learning environment will become a replica of the work environment thereby making recipient of the programme to become useful to themselves and the society after graduation. Subsequently more applicants would prefer to enroll in the programme so as to emulate the successful graduates.

Teaching Techniques for Improving Enrollment Rate of Students

One among the complex issues currently bedeviling educational sector in developing nations like Nigeria is determining the effective strategies for implementation of educational policies in order to achieve the national goals.

According to Okotubu (2020) the use of effective strategies by teachers to enhance the achievement of educational objective in schools plays a major factor in addressing the diverse needs of students in educational sectors. When effective teaching strategies are used in school it enhances academic achievement and skill acquisition. The use of effective instructional method will enhance graduate employability. Subsequently it will attract more enrolment of applicants into technical education programme.

Conclusion

It is evident that Technical Education is a programme that prepares its recipients to be self-reliant and increase earnings in a chosen occupation through the acquisition of relevant skills, knowledge and attitude required for utilization of natural resources needed for national economic development and for personal betterment (Gambari et al., 2023). However, the economic benefit of Technical Education programme for national development has been thwarted over the years because of the aforementioned factors. Therefore, to mitigate the effect of the aforementioned factors through an increased enrolment rate of students into Technical Education programme, the paper therefore recommends among others the following strategies of enhancing the enrolment rate of students into Technical Education programme.

Recommendations

Based on the foregoing the paper recommends among others the followings:

1. The administrators of technical education programmes should create website to tell the stories, for technical education programme through several platform such as UNEVOC e-platform and UNESCO e-platform to access opportunities.
2. The administrators of technical education programmes should write a proposal to apply for grants from local and international donors for institution skills development funds.
3. The administrators of technical education programmes should introduce award system for industries, companies, schools that participate successful public private partnership.
4. The administrators of technical education programmes should carry out intensive awareness campaign in the media for public awareness on PPP intervention in Technical Education programme
5. TVE institutions should have a well-coordinated public relations units with responsibilities of staff and students well defined.
6. Parents, guardians and prospective students should be given proper orientation on the importance of Vocational and Technical Education programme as a long term strategy for personal and national development.
7. Physical and instructional facilities should be made available in schools including transportation to encourage students commuting from far distance.
8. Government should also encourage stability in educational policies by introducing and maintaining a curriculum which will cater for learners' interest and make them self-employed after school

9. Principals and head of vocational and technical institutions should regularly call for PTA meetings to discuss on the modalities to improve the standard of the school and increase the quality of learning.
10. School management should endeavour to share of physical and workshop facilities with the host communities to strengthen school community relationship.

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