
FACTORS AFFECTING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION POLICY IN PRIVATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN EDO STATE

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Abstract

The government policy directive to secondary schools has been to diversify their programs to include vocational and technical education in the 6-3-3-4 system in order to make provision for students with varying aptitudes. This article explores the impact of this policy by examining some factors affecting the implementation of the policy in private secondary schools in Edo state. Subjects for the study were fifty (50) students, fifty (50) teachers and five (5) principals randomly drawn from five(5) private secondary schools in Edo State. The study utilized interviews, observations and a questionnaire to assess the implementation of government policy on vocational and technical education in private secondary schools in Edo State. The findings showed that there was a dearth of qualified teachers for vocational and technical subjects, poor infrastructure, lack of equipment, instructional materials and books. The schools were not adequately financed. It was observed that the federal government did not make adequate preparations before it issued directives for the take off of the programs in the schools. Recommendations were made for the federal government to sensitize the public on the importance of vocational and technical education, as it plays a vital and indispensable role in the economic and technological development of the country.

Keywords: Vocational education, technical education, government policy, implementation, private secondary schools, Edo State.

Introduction

Nigeria's development as a nation cannot be swifter than its program in education. Education is continuously undergoing reforms in the country. Education is in transition, while traditional ways of teaching are no longer appropriate to the culture of today's students.

Technological advancement has resulted in the use of new methods of teaching, at the sametime, government intervention in education has induced constant changes in policies. Schools today face ever-increasing demands in their attempts to ensure that students are well-equipped to enter the workforce and navigate a complex world. This trend of rising expectations is accelerating because of the explosion of knowledge now available to the public and growing demands of the workforce (Roschelle, Pea, Hoadley, Gordin and Meas, 2002). Although the classroom tools of blackboards and books that shape how learning take place have changed little over the past century, societal demands on what students learn have increased dramatically (Roschelle *et al*, 2002). The challenge presented to educators, administrators and educational planners is not only to successfully educate more students but also to do with quality (Cue, 1998).

Education serves as a prime mover of every society especially in a developing country like Nigeria. Advanced countries have improved their standards of living through education which is considered to stimulate economic and technological development. Thus, education can be regarded as an investment that yields dividends in terms of the overall development of

a country (Adesina, 1982). Secondary school education is the bedrock and foundation towards higher knowledge in tertiary institutions. It is an investment as well as an instrument that could be used to achieve a more rapid economic, social, political, technological, scientific and cultural development in the country (Asikhia, 2010).

The National Policy on Education (2004) has stipulated that secondary education is an instrument for development of society . It helps to promote equality of opportunities among Nigerian children irrespective of real or marginal disabilities. Hence the role of secondary schools in the development of education cannot be over-emphasized. The system it provides primary school leavers the opportunity for qualitative education and is the supply base from which higher institutions draw students for admission into their various programs (Ekundayo, 2010).

The education system in Nigeria has undergone various reforms. According to the World Bank Report (2008), in the last four decades, Nigeria has reformed or altered its education system more than four times, that is, 7-3-3, 6-5-4, 6-3-3-4 and now 9-3-4 system of education along with the inclusion of information technology in the school curriculum at both the primary and secondary levels. Vocational and technical education were also introduced in secondary schools as a result of diversification. This was done in order to make provision for students with varying aptitudes. In the view of the World Bank Report, the problem facing education in Nigeria is not with the system, but its implementation. The present 9-3-4 system cannot guarantee success of education in Nigeria unless certain factors, such as human capital development, allocation of 26% of the country's GDP to education, proper monitoring and evaluation are taken into consideration. These can only be achieved with positive political will and a soft spot for education (Adeyanju and Babalola, 2013).

Instability in governance has been a bottleneck to institutional planning and implementation in Nigeria. Frequent change of government has been characterized by non-continuity of policy programs. Since 1946, there has not been a conducive political atmosphere needed for smooth implementation of institutional planning in the country (Ajadi and Adedeji, 2009). The authors also added that the trend of politics in Nigeria has been that new governments come in with different policies for educational institutions. Plans made by previous governments were either disrupted or discontinued.

Diversification of Secondary School Education

The importance of secondary school education made the federal government to state its broad aims as 'preparation for useful living within the society and for higher education' (Ekundayo, 2010). Not all the students in secondary schools may be interested in pursuing university higher education. Some may be interested in some other things or, perhaps, they may pursue other ways of living. Therefore, it is necessary for the Federal Government to diversify secondary school education in order to cater for the interests of all. It may also be argued that the tremendous expansion in the education system, which started in 1976 with the introduction of the universal primary education program and the junior and senior secondary school in 1982, necessitated the diversification of secondary school education.

Thus, diversification of secondary education is the process by which a system becomes more varied or diverse in its orientation from a uniform and rigid system to a flexible one that can accommodate varying demands within the country from a multiplicity of providers (Varghese and Puttmann, 2011). Diversification therefore, consists of multiplication of secondary schools, offering opportunities to pursue post-primary education, diversifying study programs such as the introduction of vocational and technical education in secondary schools, and in the student body as well as diversity in ownership and control of provisions such as in private secondary schools. Diversification therefore is a process necessarily associated with the expansion of a system, on the one hand, and with deliberate efforts to position post-primary education in relation to the demands emerging from the labor markets on the other hand (Varghese and Puttmann, 2011)

Vocational and Technical Programs in Private Secondary Schools

Private education is the responsibility of entrepreneurs, agencies or groups such as religious organisations, communities, universities and corporate bodies. There are also schools run by foreign communities. Majority of private secondary schools offer junior and senior programs. The monitoring and supervision of private secondary schools is the responsibility of the federal and state ministries of education. The structure and content of private secondary education have to comply with the requirements of the National Policy on Education (2004). Private schools use curricular systems which are designed by the federal government, with modifications to meet special needs and interests.

Vocational and Technical skills are important aspects in the 6-3-3-4 system of education in Nigeria. They are intended to develop occupational competence and teach those skills which enable an individual to earn a living. The National Policy on Education (2004) defined vocational and technical education as ‘that aspect of education which leads to the acquisition of practical and applied skills as well as basic scientific knowledge’. The system prepares people for specific trades, crafts and careers at various levels from a trade, craft, technician or a professional position in engineering, accountancy, nursing, medicine, architecture, pharmacy, law and others (Brickman, 2006). Craft vocation is usually based on manual or practical activities, traditionally non-academic, related to specific trade, occupation or vocation. Vocational education has now diversified and exists in industries such as retail, tourism, information technology, funeral services and cosmetics as well as the traditional crafts and cottage industries (Enahoro, 2008).

No society can develop to an appreciable extent without relevant functional technological based on vocational and technical education (Oguntuyi, 2013). Therefore, the need for vocational and technical education in Nigerian schools cannot be overemphasized. Hence, Uwaifo (2009) asserted that full vocational training should be offered by students in the 6 year program of the post-primary schools in addition to the general education courses. This is to enable them develop sufficient skills in their chosen occupations so. It will also help them to obtain employment on leaving school. Universities, colleges of technology and polytechnics should offer post-secondary vocational education courses to students who took vocational courses in secondary school and who wish to increase their level of skills through further training.

According to Sower (1971) vocational and technical education provides various awareness for discovering and developing the individual's potential for work. It has a broadening effect which motivates learners to be more exploratory, realize their capabilities and develop their potentials for success in the world of work. There is every reason for young people to begin the process of being productive in the world as soon as they are capable of doing so (Kennedy, 2011). It is the aim of vocational and technical education to achieve such an objective. Toiling all day in the field with knives, hoes and shovels, as it is presently done, would not feed Nigeria's 170 million people. Mechanized farming is required.

Mechanized farming requires technical skills that could be learnt in technical and vocational schools (Dike, 2014). It is against this background that the Federal Government of Nigeria introduced vocational and technical programs in secondary schools within the countries overall education policy. The National Policy on Education (2014) states that the goals of technical and vocational education shall be:

With these aims and objectives, the national curriculum on Agriculture, Introductory Technology, Home economics, Business Studies (Junior secondary school level), Agricultural science, Clothing and Textile, Home Management, Food and Nutrition, Typewriting and Shorthand, Principles of Accounts, Commerce, Woodwork, Technical Drawing, Basic Electronics and Auto mechanics came into being in Nigerian secondary schools (Puyete, 2008).

The Federal Government of Nigeria issued a directive that both private and public schools should adopt the new curricula. The policy provided for pre-vocational and vocational curricula offerings at the junior and senior secondary school levels, respectively. For the first time in the education policy in Nigeria, vocational and technical education subjects were offered along with the academic courses. There is no doubt about the usefulness of these programs in secondary schools in the country.

For Nigeria to build a highly skilled labor force, it must increase significantly the capacity of its secondary schools, technical and vocational training and academics to teach technical skills. Vocational and technical education and job training have been an integral part of national development strategies in many societies because of the impact of human resources development, productivity and economic growth (Dike, 2007). UNESCO and ILO (2002) underscored this point when they stated that vocational and technical education is;

1. A means of preparing for occupational fields and for effective participation in the world of work.
2. An aspect of lifelong learning and a preparation for responsible citizenship and
3. An instrument for promoting environmental and sound sustainable development.

The development of human capital that has the appropriate skills, right attitude and good knowledge of how to retrieve, process and utilize national resources comes within the purview of vocational and technical education and training for national development. If technicians and technologists are adequately trained, they will fit well in small-scale enterprises, industries, colleges and universities. There will be less dependence on foreign technical personnel in the cottage and main industries. Indigenous technology will be encouraged. There will be adequate work force to handle road maintenance, building, electrification, mechanical works, agriculture and computer (Igweh, 2008). By doing so, the production capacity will increase which will lead to national development.

Structure of Vocational and Technical Education in Secondary Schools in Nigeria

According to the National Policy on Education (2004), at the junior secondary school level (JSS), eight subject areas of pre-vocational curriculum were recommended. Each of these areas was treated in an integrated basis at the JSS level. At the senior secondary school level (SSS), students are required to concentrate on three areas of the program in the first year of the SSS level. This is intended to allow the students to have a more in-depth study and preparation not only for the SSS final examinations but also for entry into the workforce or for furthering their studies.

The following is an outline of pre-vocational and technical subjects. They are all elective subjects except Introductory Technology (Basic Technology) which has been listed as a core subject at the JSS level (Ekpenyong, 2011).

Pre-Vocational Electives for Junior Secondary School Level (JSS)

1. Agricultural Science
2. Business Studies
3. Home Economics
4. Local crafts
5. Computer Education
6. Fine Arts (Culture and Creative Arts)
7. Music
8. Introductory Technology

Vocational Education Electives for Senior Secondary School Level (SSS).

1. Agricultural Science
 2. Applied Electricity
 3. Book-keeping and Accounting
 4. Building Construction
 5. Auto Mechanics
 6. Commerce
 7. Computer Education
 8. Electronics
 9. Clothing and Textiles
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10. Food and Nutrition
11. Home Management
12. Metal Work
13. Technical Drawing
14. Wood Work
15. Shorthand
16. Typewriting
17. Fine Arts
18. Music

The Problem and Importance of the Study

Education system in Nigeria has undergone various reforms in recent times due to unstable government policies. These reforms include replacing the 6-3-3-4 system with the 9-3-4 system of education and the inclusion of Information Technology in the school curricula both primary and secondary levels. Vocational and technical education was also introduced at the secondary level as a result of government policy of diversification of secondary school programs. This was done in order to make provision for students with varying aptitudes at the secondary school level. Vocational and technical education is an important aspect of the educational system under the 6-3-3-4 program.

Nigeria today desperately needs to pay attention to vocational and technical education students, on whom hopes are built for the progress and technological development of the country. Nigeria exerts great efforts to fashion relevant education systems, but the greatest barrier has been implementation. Therefore, it is necessary to identify the factors militating against the implementation of the government policy on vocational and technical education program in secondary schools in Edo State. Most researches often report that implementation of government policy on vocational and technical programs seem skewed towards public secondary schools (Osam, 2013). It is therefore necessary to examine and assess the implementation of the government policy on vocational and technical education in private secondary schools in Edo State.

Purpose of Study

As a result of the information garnered from several sources, the purpose of this paper was to investigate the factors affecting the implementation of government policy on vocational and technical education in private secondary schools in Edo State. To this end, the following research questions were addressed in the study:

1. What is the perception of students about the relevance of vocational and technical education?
2. What are the attitudes of parents about vocational and technical education?
3. Do private secondary schools in Edo State have the training facilities for the implementation of vocational and technical education program?
4. Do the schools have the required technical teachers to teach vocational and technical subjects?

5. Are private secondary schools in Edo State provided with adequate financial resources to implement vocational and technical education program?

Method of the Study

Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design aimed at investigating the factors hindering the implementation of vocational and technical education program in private secondary schools in Edo State. The population for this study comprised all the private secondary schools in Edo State.

The sample for the study consisted of one hundred and five (105) respondents (5 principals, 50 teachers and 50 students) across five private secondary schools in Edo State. Stratified Sampling Technique was used to select the sample for this study. Purposeful Sampling Technique was employed for the selection of the participants in the five secondary schools.

Instrumentation

The instruments for the study included interviews, observations and a structured questionnaire titled, Vocational and Technical Assessment Questionnaire (VTEAQ) to elicit information on the various aspects of the research questions. The instrument was face and content validated by experts in educational measurement and evaluation in the Faculty of Education, University of Benin. They helped to ascertain that the contents of the instrument were in line with the purpose of the study and research questions.

Responses to the questionnaire consisted of four-point Likert Rating Scale of Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Agree (3) and Strongly Agree (4). Descriptive statistics was used to analyze the data collected. A percentage scale of the responses of each item was analyzed and used to answer the research questions. The researcher went to the various secondary schools to administer the questionnaire and interviewed the principals, teachers and students.

Results and Analysis

Table 1: Respondents' rating of the factors affecting the implementation of vocational and technical education in private secondary schools in Edo State

Factor	Sample Size(N)	Percentage %	SD
Students Perception	105	93.6	1.27
Parents Attitude	105	94.7	1.38
Training Facilities	105	96.8	1.45
Funding	105	97.2	1.53
Technical teachers	105	86.3	1.21

Research Question 1

What is the perception of students about the relevance of vocational and technical education?

Table 1 showed that more than 93% of respondents indicated that students were not aware of the importance of vocational and technical education. That could help explain the general lack of interest in the field. During the interviews, students opined that the Nigerian society looked down on vocational and technical education. The society did not accord it the high esteem given to university graduates. Hence, students were not enthusiastic about a vocational and technical career. Thus students' negative perception was affecting the implementation of vocational and technical education program.

Research Question 2

What is the attitude of parents toward vocational and technical education?

More than 95% of the respondents indicated in Table 1 that parents frowned at the mere mention of vocational and technical education. They were not supportive of their wards pursuing vocational and technical education. Such a reaction was not unexpected as nearly every Nigerian family wanted to produce a university graduate. Thus, parental misconception about vocational and technical education was inhibiting the effective implementation of vocational and technical education.

Research Question 3

Do the schools have the requisite training facilities for the implementation of vocational and technical education program?

More than 96% of the respondents indicated in Table 1 that the schools did not have adequate learning facilities such as textbooks, libraries, tools, equipment and, in some cases, classrooms. No vocational and technical education program can be effectively implemented without adequate facilities.

Research Question 4

Are the schools provided with adequate financial resources to implement vocational and technical education program?

Table 1 showed that more than 97% of the respondents indicated that the schools were not adequately funded to implement vocational and technical education program. Hence the lack of equipment and laboratories. As a matter of fact, most of these private schools sprang up every now and then for profit-making reasons. Most of the proprietors did not have the wherewithal for example, to set up a good laboratory and equip it. Only the government could do so. Thus, poor funding and financing were hindering the effective implementation of vocational and technical education in private secondary schools in Edo State.

Research Question 5

Do the schools have the required technical teachers to teach vocational and technical subjects?

More than 80% of the respondents indicated in Table 1 that the schools lack the required technical teachers to teach vocational and technical subjects. It was observed that some of the schools engaged teachers with inadequate practical experience to teach vocational and technical subjects. Thus, the lack of technical teachers to teach vocational and technical courses who affecting the effective implementation of vocational and technical education program. Teachers are the major operators of any educational system and they impart the needed knowledge to the students. There is no gainsaying the fact that vocational and technical field is a challenging field. Therefore, teachers in such a field should be adequately compensated by the government.

Discussion

The findings of this study have serious implications for vocational and technical education implementation. The study found that there was an acute shortage of vocational and technical education teachers that was partly responsible for the non-implementation of the programs. Lack of adequate training facilities and equipment was affecting the implementation of vocational and technical education. Lack of follow-up, monitoring and continuity in government policies were the other factors that affected the implementation of the programs. The poor remuneration of vocational and technical teachers affected the implementation of vocational and technical education in private secondary schools. Poor public impression and apathy were the other factors inhibiting the implementation of vocational and technical education.

For the industrial development of Nigeria, the National Policy on Education (2004) has vested this crucial role on vocational and technical education. It is also for the needed change of orientation of the entire education system in order to place more attention on science, vocational and technical education that will prepare students with skills to be self-reliant and become useful to the society. For Nigeria to achieve its national goals of economic and technological development, emphasis should be given to vocational and technical programs at all levels of the education system. The main beneficiaries of the programs are students (Olaitan, 2007). For the federal government policy to be fully implemented students should be aware of the programs, their importance to the economy and they must become interested in practical skills. Without adequate provision of learning facilities, no effective training can take place.

The facilities needed in schools include textbooks, classrooms, workshops, library, tools and equipment. For the effective implementation of skills training, enough training facilities have to be provided. Teachers can be effective if given the needed stimulus such as providing them with the needed remunerations, incentives, allowances and promotions. The government must realize that the teacher is at the center of implementation of its policies. Therefore, teachers must be adequately compensated by government. Nigeria cannot realize

its goals of economic development if proper attention is not given to teachers of vocational and technical education.

The implementation of any government policy on education rests squarely with government. Therefore, government must assume its responsibility. It should confront the poor public perception and misconception about vocational and technical education. Government must also embark on an aggressive public enlightenment campaign about vocational and technical education. Career guidance, counselling units should be established in all secondary schools, which at the moment are absent. The campaign should be geared towards improving the image of vocational and technical education for the public to appreciate its relevance to the economy and industrial development of Nigeria.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study has sought useful information from teachers, principals and students of private secondary schools in Edo State on the implementation of government policy on vocational and technical education. The Federal Government must champion vocational and technical education as it focuses specifically on providing job-related skills for students. It should also prepare students to be better positioned to create new enterprises. Lack of commitment from the government, teachers and students have seriously affected the implementation of the program in private secondary schools in Edo State.

From the findings of this study, it is recommended that,

- i. Students, parents and the community at large should be well-informed about the importance and the utility of vocational and technical education with regard to technological and economic development of Nigeria.
- ii. Instructional materials for teaching of vocational and technical subjects should be provided
- iii. More classrooms should be built in schools to accommodate increasing student enrolments.
- iv. Teachers of vocational and technical subjects should be well remunerated. They should be motivated by increasing their salaries, fringe benefits and other incentives.
- v. Teachers should be made to undertake various training courses overseas in order to equip them with up-to-date knowledge and skills with a view to imparting these to their students. They should also attend seminars, conferences, in-service programs regularly to further their development.

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