

Challenges of Implementation of Technical and Vocational Education Policy in Benue State

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ABSTRACT

This study focused on the assessment of technical and vocational education and training policy implementation in Benue State. A cross-sectional survey design was adopted for the study and the population was 159 respondents. The study utilized the entire population, so there was no sampling. A 15 item structured Technical and Vocational Education Policy Implementation Assessment Questionnaire (TVEPIAQ) was used for data collection. The data collected was analyzed using statistical mean and standard deviation. The analysis of data revealed that: There exist a shortage of professional and experienced technical and vocational teachers, students do not understand the value of technical and vocational education and the government does not adequately fund Technical and Vocational Education programs. Based on this findings, recommendation were made which include: Qualified vocational and technical education teachers should be recruited and posted to all technical schools; students should be made to understand the value and importance of vocational and technical education through adequate vocational guidance and counseling measures; and government should adequately fund vocational and technical education programs.

Keywords: Vocational Education, technical education, policy implementation

INTRODUCTION

It is no longer novel that Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is one of the major means through which Nigeria as a developing nation can achieve the desired level of growth and sustainable development. Most of the countries which are now referred to as developed nations – USA, Japan, Great Britain, India and a host of others, achieved their present status through evolving a national outlook to technical and vocational education. According to Agbulu and Olaitan (2002), "Nigeria's quest for self-sufficiency in food production,

production of raw materials for our home industries and security against the invading countries triggered off a total overhaul of her education system from the inherited legacy of colonialism to include the productive and utilitarian type of education (technical and vocation education)''.

Folashade (2010) observed that education at all level is a delicate issue, which serves as a way forward to every society-especially in a developing nation like Nigeria. Similarly, Puyate (2008) noted that following the political independence of Nigeria in 1960, there was a realization that the type of education our colonial masters left with us needed a critical re-examination of the worth: of content, objectives, relevance, methods of administration, as well as evaluation. Ezeobata (2007) opined that this period saw a state of affairs in Nigeria schools where every subject had to "prove its usefulness" to retain a place in the school curriculum. It was against this background that a new educational system commonly referred to as the '6-3-3-4' system of education emerged. Among several other new inputs, the system provided for pre-vocational and technical curricular offerings at the junior and senior secondary schools respectively. For the first time in the history of Nigeria, vocational and technical subjects were as a matter of national policy, to be offered side-by-side, and hopefully, enjoy parity in esteem with the 'more academic subjects hitherto run by the secondary grammar school under the old colonial-based system of education (Puyate, 2008). According to Osam(2013), the National Policy on Education document published in 1977 was the first document to streamline education concepts and goals and to prescribe uniform operation of the country's educational system. This document has undergone series of revisions thus – 1981, 1989, 2004, 2013 and 2014. It is the National Policy on Education that has given vocational and technical education programs in Nigeria a scheme of place with clear focus on its operations.

TVET have evolved over time, largely keeping pace with the changing employment needs of different societies as they pass through various

stages in their social, economic and political development. Although, there is a myriad of the definition of TVET by several experts, Olaitan cited in Agbulu and Olaitan (2002) defined vocational education as that aspect of the total experience of the individual whereby he learns successfully to carry on a gainful occupation. The American Vocational Association (AVA) sees vocational education as education designed to develop the skills, abilities, understandings, attitudes, work habits and appreciation needed by workers to make progress in employment on a useful and productive basis. According to Ojo and Edem (1998), the three main goals of vocational education are: meeting society's need for workers, increasing individuals options related to work, and conveying knowledge and or the relevance of general education in work. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2014) through its National Policy on Education, defined Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) as a comprehensive term "referring to those aspects 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." Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is to cover (i) Technical Colleges, (ii) Vocational Enterprise Institutions (VEIs) and (iii) National vocational Qualifications Framework (NVQF). The FRN (2014) in the national policy on education, further outlined the goals of TVET as to: provide trained manpower in the applied sciences, technology and business, particularly at craft, advance craft and technical levels; provide the technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, commercial and economic development; and give training and impart the necessary skills to individual for self-reliance economically.

Benue State is one of the strategic states in North central geo-political zone of Nigeria, and is richly blessed with abundant resources mostly agriculture. As of now, these resources have not been properly tapped to

the benefit of the state and the country at large. Part of this could not be unconnected with the dearth in technical and vocational skills among majority of the populace in the state. Folashade (2010) observed that the ability of individuals within a community to acquire skills and knowledge effectively is the key to the growth and development of the society. Technical and vocational education and training is that aspect of education that gives its recipients an opportunity to acquire practical skills as well as some basic knowledge (Oseni, Ehikioya and Ali-Momoh, 2011).

Akerele (2007) corroborated that the best form of education that exposes individuals to the acquisition of demonstrable skills that could be transformed into economics benefits is technical and vocational education. One of the means through which Benue indigenes will be able to effectively utilize the resources within their environment is when they are empowered with relevant technical and vocational competence. The desired competencies can be acquired through technical and vocational training institutions and centers. The contents in TVET are passed to the recipients through effective and efficient implementation of the TVET policy. Benue State on her own does not have a separate TVET policy but rather subscribes to the aims and objectives of TVET as rightly stipulated by Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2014) through its National Policy on Education (NPE) and tries to implement this through the establishment of technical colleges, colleges of education, monotechnics/polytechnics and universities. The successful implementation of TVET policy in Nigeria and Benue state in particular is been faced with many challenges. Even though, the problem of TVET policy implementation is not peculiar to Benue state, experts have lamented that it is a general problem in the country, because overtime, good policies have been formulated not just in the educational sector but implementation has often been the problem.

CHALLENGES IN TVET IMPLEMENTATION

Puyate (2008) in an attempt to find out the constraints to the effective implementation of TVET programmes in private schools within Port Harcourt, observed that the factors responsible for the poor implementation of TVET among private schools is due to the dearth of professional and qualified teachers for the teaching of vocational and technical subjects; inadequate infrastructure and equipment in schools; insufficient instructional materials and books in schools and poor funding. The study recommended that adequate finance and facilities/infrastructures be provided for functional teaching and learning of TVET subjects.

Furthermore, Olufunwa (2009), in looking at the challenges of vocational and technical education in achieving the aims of entrepreneurship education program for self-reliance, noted that vocational and technical education programs are designed for people who can profit and progress by it. Olufunwa (2009) further noted that unfortunately the program is bedeviled by organizational and implementation problems. Some of these challenges noted include: poor societal attitude, low level of funding, lack of equipment and infrastructural facilities for training and shortage of qualified teachers. Olufunwa therefore recommended awareness campaign to educate the public on the importance of vocational and technical education, proper funding by government and recruitment of more teachers.

In another study, Osam (2013), examined the implementation of TVET programmes in Rivers state and found out that the quality of teaching staff in vocational and technical schools is moderately high, but relatively inadequate; vocation and technical school facilities are inadequate and in poor condition. The study recommends among others that only professionally qualified technical and vocation teachers be recruited into the system.

Similarly, Gwembire and Katsaruware (2013), conducted a study on the challenges of implementing the technical and vocational education policy in rural Zimbabwean secondary schools, considering training level of teachers, and availability of relevant teaching materials and their usage. The study revealed that poor policy implementation was due to engagement of majority of untrained teachers with a minimum academic qualification of ordinary level to teach vocation subjects; absence of staff development for effective teaching of vocational subjects; lack of relevant resources; overloaded time tables; high staff turnover; negative attitudes of heads of institution and lack of industrial attachment of pupils to effectively implement the curriculum innovation as the challenges militating against TVET policy implementation.

A review of relevant literatures showed that researchers have identified lack of teaching and learning facilities/infrastructure, poor training of vocational and technical teachers, inadequate funding and poor attitudes of school heads towards TVET policy implementation as the major cause of non-implementation of TVET policy. However, the attitudes of students towards vocational and technical subjects and government efforts towards monitoring and supervision of TVET curriculum implementation in schools has not been exhaustively talked about. More also, the inadequacy of literature addressing this issue with regards to Benue state in particular calls for a similar study to be conducted. The implication of this review is that though TVET is desirable its implementation has challenges as noted by different authors. This study therefore looks at the implementation of TVET policy as it affects Benue State and the challenges encountered since previous study is not seen on implementation challenges of TVET in Benue State.

Statement of the Problem

Benue State is richly endowed with both human and material resources. The potentials of the state, if properly harnessed, can project its economic development. Resources become of benefit if they are tapped

into. The only means through which this can be achieved would be through empowering individuals with the relevant vocational and technical competence as only skillful individuals possess the weapon to surmount the challenges within their environment. Literature has shown that implementation of TVET programs in many areas faced serious problems. The problem of this study therefore is to find out challenges faced by Benue State in the implementation of TVET programs. The study thereafter gives some recommendations.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to identify challenges to the implementation of TVET policy in Benue State. Specifically, the study determined:

1. The teacher factors militating against the implementation of TVET policy in Benue state.
2. The attitudes of students towards technical and vocational subjects.
3. Government efforts towards implementation of vocational and technical education curriculum in Benue state.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised for the study:

1. What are the teacher's factors militating against the implementation of TVET policy in Benue State.
2. What are the attitudes of students towards vocational and technical subjects?
3. What are the efforts of government towards the effective implementation of TVET policy?

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the cross-sectional survey research design. The justification for this design was that the study collects data on existing situations and describes them as they are without the manipulation of any variable. The population for the study was 159 respondents which

comprised of 138 technical teachers and 21 administrators drawn from thirteen (13) science and technical colleges within Benue state. The entire population was utilized as sample for the study. A 15 item structured Technical and Vocational Education Policy Implementation Assessment Questionnaire (TVEPIAQ) was developed and used for data collection. The instrument was faced and content validated by two (2) senior lecturers in the department of Vocational and Technical Education, Benue State University, Makurdi and one measurement and evaluation expert from University of Agriculture, Makurdi. The researchers administered 159 questionnaires and 139 were returned thus, representing 84% return rate. The data collected was analyzed using mean and standard deviation. Items with a mean score of 2.50 and above were considered to be agreed upon and those with mean score of 2.49 and below were disagreed.

RESULTS

Research Question One

What are the teacher's factors militating against the implementation of TVET policy?

Table 1: Administrators and Teachers mean response and Standard deviation on Teachers factors militating against TVET policy implementation

S/No	Statement/ Remarks	\bar{x}_a	\bar{x}_t	\bar{x}_m	SD
1.	Lack of professional and experienced teachers Agreed	3.40	2.80	3.10	1.49
2.	Teachers are not motivated Agreed	3.30	3.40	3.40	1.27
3.	TVE teachers love their job Disagreed	2.20	2.50	2.40	0.48
4.	TVE teachers relate cordially with their students	3.00	3.50	3.20	0.25

	Agreed				
5.	TVE teachers are aware of TVE policy Agreed	3.50	3.50	3.50	0.98

$N = 159$, \bar{x}_a = mean of administrators, \bar{x}_t = mean of teachers, \bar{x}_m = average mean

Table 1 shows that item 1, 2, 4 and 5 were agreed upon with average mean of 3.1, 3.4, 3.2 and 3.5 respectively. However, item 3 with an average mean of 2.4 was disagreed.

Research Question Two

What are the attitudes of students towards vocational and technical subjects?

Table 2: Administrators and Teachers means response and Standard Deviation on Students Attitudes towards TVE Subjects

S/No	Statement/ Remarks	\bar{x}_a	\bar{x}_t	\bar{x}_m	SD
1.	Students are not aware of TVE importance Agreed	3.40	3.80	3.60	0.98
2.	Students are uninterested in practical works Agreed	3.50	3.30	3.40	1.45
3.	Students think TVE is for only the old people in the society Agreed	3.40	3.60	3.50	1.68
4.	Students think TVE involves a lot of mathematics and sciences Agreed	3.50	3.40	3.40	1.28
5.	Students accord low prestige to TVE Agreed	3.40	3.60	3.50	1.34

$N = 159$, \bar{x}_a = mean of administrators, \bar{x}_t = mean of teachers, \bar{x}_m = average mean

Table 2 shows that item 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 were all agreed upon. This is an indication of the fact that students perceive vocational and technical subjects in negative manner.

Research Questions 3

What are the efforts of government towards TVET policy implementation?

Table 3: Administrators and Teachers mean response and Standard Deviation on Government efforts towards TVE policy Implementation

S/No	Statement/ Remarks	\bar{x}_a	\bar{x}_t	\bar{x}_m	SD
1.	TVE programmes are adequately funded by government Disagreed	2.00	2.10	2.05	2.04
2.	Government often organize seminars, workshops and conferences for TVE teachers Disagreed	2.40	2.50	2.45	0.64
3.	Government regularly monitor and supervises the implementation of TVE policy in schools Disagreed	2.00	1.80	1.90	0.78
4.	Government rewards TVE teachers and students who excel Disagreed	1.00	1.40	1.20	0.48
5.	Government often sponsor TVE exhibitions Disagreed	1.50	1.60	1.55	0.29

$N = 159$, \bar{x}_a = mean of administrators, \bar{x}_t = mean of teachers, \bar{x}_m = average mean

Table 3 shows that item 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 were all disagreed upon. This is to say that, government has to intensify efforts towards making TVE a success.

Principal Findings

From the results obtained in table 1, 2 and 3, the following findings are presented:

1. There exists a shortage of professional and experienced TVET teachers.
2. Technical and Vocational Teachers are not motivated.
3. Students do not understand the value nor the importance of TVET.
4. Students are uninterested in practical works as obtainable in TVET.
5. Technical and Vocational Education programmes are not adequately funded by government.
6. Government does not motivate TVE teachers and students who excel.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings show that teacher factors affect the implementation of TVET policy. This is in line with the study of Puyate (2008), Osam (2013) and Gwembire and Katsaruware (2013) which observed that vocational and technical subject teachers are key factors to the successful implementation of TVET policy in schools. According to Olaitan (2007), teachers who are the major operators of educational systems or programmes, are expected to effect and impart the needed knowledge to the trainees. Puyate (2008) noted that this can only be effective if the teachers are in their right frame of mind, and most qualified. This needs stimulus such as providing them with the necessary motivation and training them on the job.

The study also revealed that students' attitudes or perception towards vocational and technical education is not encouraging. The main

beneficiaries of any educational programme are assumed to be the students (Agbulu and Olaitan, 2002). Thus, for the TVET programme to be fully implemented, students as major stake holders have to be made aware of such programmes and their importance; they must become interested in practical skill-oriented lectures, cognitive skills, and if the students are to become employable on graduation, they must appreciate learning with their hands (Puyate, 2008).

The findings of the study further revealed that government effort towards the implementation of TVET policy is also not encouraging. Principally among this, is the issue of funding. Puyate (2008), however has noted that government attitude towards education is a key factor in the effectiveness or otherwise of the educational system. The provision and implementation of any national education program lies on the shoulders of government. This finding is therefore in line with that of Olufunwa (2009) who also decried government's low funding of educational programs. Olufunwa further noted that absence of equipment and facilities due to poor funding is bound to affect the competence of products. Olufunwa (2009) therefore recommended that Federal government should give special allocation to run the programme and this allocation should be integrated into her annual budget. For the technical and vocational education policy to be implemented effectively, the government has to assume a major responsibility.

CONCLUSION

Technical and vocational education policy is not efficiently and effectively implemented. However, if properly implemented, it will propel the nation to greater height of economic development. No matter how best or good policies are stated on paper, the only way the nation can benefit from the policies is when they are efficiently and effectively implemented. Technical and vocational education policy as spelt out in the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014) National Policy on Education (NPE) is not being adequately implemented. This is because the

government has consistently refused to make tangible and deliberate efforts towards strengthening this vital type of education. The circumstance surrounding technical and vocational education policy implementation as of today is not encouraging, political, and if Nigeria must come out of her numerous challenges – ranging from economic, security, social, it must begin to implement the aims and objectives of TVET evolving a holistic approach.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made to improve the state of technical and vocational education policy implementations:

1. Qualified and experienced vocational and technical education teachers should be recruited and posted to all technical schools.
2. Vocational and technical education teachers should be adequately motivated through adequate remuneration by way of giving them incentives and allowances etc.
3. Students should be made to understand the value and importance of vocational and technical education through adequate vocational guidance and counseling measures.
4. Government should adequately fund vocational and technical education programmes.
5. Special reward packages should be given to teachers and students who show high commitments to vocational and technical studies.

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