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Assuring Quality in the Implementation of Vocational and Technical Education for Independence

Paul Binaebi Igbongidi^{*1}, Ofongo Biobelemoye¹, Awu Tonbara¹¹Department of Vocational and Technology Education, Niger Delta University, Wilberforce Island Bayelsa State, Nigeria

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Abstract: *The emphasis in vocational and technical education is on developing skills. A concept known as quality assurance in vocational and technical education is concerned with good performance in areas related to these types of programs, including teaching, learning, infrastructure, student behavior, and the entire academic process. Quality vocational and technical education refers to the program's input and output, which are the manifestations of the standards by which certain objectives can be attained. As the performance indicators of Vocational and Technical Education still need considerable attention, the notion of quality assurance and its implications for university education cannot be overemphasized. A high-quality education is crucial to a student's overall development since it guarantees proper growth, employment possibilities, and the accomplishment of academic goals and objectives. The implementation of high-quality vocational and technical education at our institutions today is being hampered by a number of problems. The purpose of this study is to emphasize the idea of quality assurance in vocational education, the barriers to it, and the techniques that were suggested to enhance quality assurance.*

Keywords: Vocational and Technical Education, Quality Education and Independence.

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INTRODUCTION

Vocational and Technical Education is an area of education that focuses on educating and preparing individuals for competent and skilful performance on any work put in front of them. It is a kind of educational training or retraining that aims to increase productivity in the learner or pupils through performance in paid work or self-employment. It must serve as the foundation upon which a nation's socioeconomic, technical, and cultural growth is to be established. The fundamental goals of this sort of education focus around the socio-economic, industrial, and technological objectives that will be obvious in a higher standard of life for individuals as well as in economic stability, industrial growth, and technological advancement. Therefore, vocational and technical education prepares a person for financial independence, self-actualization, and being creative in a variety of academic subjects. Societal advancement and socioeconomic security may result from this. The emphasis is not just on the provision of skilled labor for a dynamic environment, especially one with changing social demands for technological growth. It also plays an economic role by enabling individuals to use sophisticated technology, which results in the provision of qualified workforce (Ulinfun, 1986).

Idialu (2007) emphasized the importance of giving students the chance to learn from instructors who uphold strict professional standards and continue to do

so throughout their careers in order to guarantee high quality in the teaching, examination, and improved learning in vocational and technical education. The achievement of a quality standard in vocational and technical education is a continuous process that is concerned with pre- and post-service education, monitoring, professional development, and certification. The main objective of vocational and technical education is to create and improve opportunities for high quality learning, which is measured through output/performance. The significance of vocational and technical education in Nigeria has been emphasized, and the new national strategy on education in Nigeria (1981) outlines the following functions:

- To provide manpower in applied science, technology and commerce particularly at sub-professional levels
- To provide the technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agriculture, industrial, commercial and economic development
- To provide people who can apply scientific knowledge to the improvement and solution of environmental problems for the convenience of man
- To give an introduction to professional studies in engineering and other technologies
- To give training and impart the necessary skills leading to the production of craft men, technicians and other skilled personnel who will be enterprising and self-reliant, and to enable young men and women to have an intelligent

understanding of the increasing complexity of technology

Vocational and Technical Education cannot run smoothly without high quality teaching standards, resources, instructional strategies, and program assessment of students. The evaluation of high-quality instruction is a continuous and multifaceted process that need to be based on both procedure and product.

Events have demonstrated that nations and individuals are unable to effectively utilize human and non-human resources toward the achievement of particular socioeconomic and technological goals, which brings us to the realization that a high-quality vocational and technical education program is required. Any educational program's ability to be implemented successfully and its ability to accomplish objectives depend greatly on the quality of the materials and resources available. The realization of the philosophy of vocational education may be greatly influenced by the input on persons and educational institutions.

As a measure of something perfection in relation to other things, quality might be defined as standards. The excellence or efficacy of teaching or instruction that can lead to student learning and satisfaction is referred to as high quality teaching or instruction. Thus, effective vocational and technical education ensures that students get the information, abilities, and competencies necessary for their particular area of responsibility. To record and acknowledge successful teaching, it is necessary to create rigorous assessments and establish teaching standards. To ensure effective vocational education programs in our schools and to meet the goal of skill acquisition and manpower development in our communities, quality assurance is a crucial instrument.

Therefore, quality assurance may be defined as a management strategy for the educational sector, a service offered to guarantee that they are maintained at a high standard that will benefit its products. While acknowledging that achieving zero faults in the work process is challenging, Crosby (1979) maintained that it is possible by using a quality assurance system that establishes guidelines for how work should be carried out to meet a certain standard. In order to ensure that the final products reach a certain level, it entails introducing quality into the training process from the very beginning. Vocational and Technical Education must follow defined processes and criteria set by regulatory bodies in order to achieve quality.

The National Universities Commission (NUC), the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE), the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE), and many more exist in Nigeria, as an example. These serve as quality control mechanisms for vocational education. Actually, it is the professors and

lecturers who are in charge of carrying out the educational programs who have the responsibility of assuring quality. The requirements for entry into the program, its length, the caliber and quantity of teachers and lecturers, facilities, instructional materials on hand, the school environment and accommodations, examinations, results, certificates, grading systems, exam question types, supervision, moderation, and other factors must all be considered when ensuring quality in vocational and technical education.

To guarantee a worthwhile product, it must be a whole bundle. Monitoring of education is essential to the idea of quality assurance. It is a whole idea designed to logically connect planning, analysis, and control. Therefore, to ensure effectiveness and the desired result, quality assurance must include both internal and external impact.

MEASURES FOR VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION QUALITY ASSURANCE

These factors can be utilized to determine how teaching and learning activities should be carried out. They can also be used to assess how well the goals stated in this respect have been accomplished. The following are some crucial factors that can aid in tremendous success:

Quality of Teachers/Trainers

The assessment of quality in our institutions is significantly impacted by the quality of the lecturers and trainers. The teacher/trainers must possess the principles and practices of vocational education, and this parameter focuses on their training, experiences, competencies, capacities, and acquisition of desirable skills to perform certain tasks. The teacher/trainers must also be adequately qualified for the job of imparting knowledge.

Instruction

The quality of education must be supported by effective teaching techniques, sufficient teaching and learning environments, equal learning opportunities for all students, and community support for both students and instructors. Adegoke (2007) emphasized that without sufficient manpower and qualified instructors who are the results of high-quality teacher education, no real progress can occur. A solid preparation in science, specialized knowledge, and vocational skill acquisition is necessary for theoretical and practical vocational teacher education. The vocational educational program's curriculum must adhere to the established requirements in order to raise living standards.

Accreditation of Programme

For the purpose of assuring quality assurance, program accreditation is preferred. In Nigeria, a number

of institutions and regulatory authorities have established minimal requirements to serve as a guide for system operators. Among these is the accreditation of courses and the qualification or certification that is provided to students at the program's conclusion. The regulatory body established to ensure minimum standards in Nigerian universities, NUC, looks at accreditation model, awarding body, accreditation status, industry/social partner development, for example. According to Amadike (2007), the document for the minimum academic standard by consultative forum provided specifications for floor space and holdings, staff to student ratio, for effective teaching and learning. The minimum academic standard for universities became the basis for accreditation of all degrees and programmes for all universities in Nigeria.

Inspection/Monitoring

Every country on the planet includes some form of auditing in their Vocational and Technical Education programs at some point or another as part of the ongoing process to guarantee quality in the system. The majority of the time, designated agencies are given this responsibility to do. Monitoring requires institution management teams to work hard to adhere to predetermined criteria.

Evaluation

These include learner user surveys, internal and external appraisals, validation, moderation procedure, input process – output for accessing quality, etc.

Factors Militating Against Quality Assurance in Vocational and Technical Education

Programs in vocational and technical education are intended for those who will benefit from them and advance as a result. Quality must be the main focus to get these results. There are several issues plaguing the program right now, some of which are noted below:

Inadequate Funding of Vocational and Technical Education

A very important problem impacting programs for vocational and technical education is inadequate finance. Despite the enormous sums of money spent and the numerous attempts made by the various administrations of the federation to provide funding for higher education, higher education still lacks the resources to carry out various programs, according to Amadi (2007). The consequence of inadequate financial resources in higher education is to constrain both state and local government policies for educational growth. Our institutions lack basic facilities, and some schools do not offer workshops for the program. Even where they are present, they are either barren or filled with stale goods. Without capable vocational teachers, the rigorous execution of Vocational and Technical Education would remain unattainable. Due to inadequate financing, many institutions that would

otherwise be able to train vocational instructors are unable to do so. As a result, these institutions often lack the tools necessary to execute their jobs, including training materials, workspaces, and equipment. According to Ebenebe (1991), the government should enhance financing for these programs because well operating educational and training institutions can develop individuals of the correct caliber who can earn the respect of business and the general public.

Vocational and Technical Education is practical oriented and the absence of infrastructures, equipment and materials due to poor funding is bound to affect the competence of the products and the subsequent implementation of the programme.

Staff Quality and Quantity

The caliber of lecturers/teachers engaged by universities and other organizations in charge of preparing instructors of vocational and technical education is extremely important. One of the markers of standards in teacher education, according to Adegoke (2002), is the caliber of the trainer. The growth and quality of vocational and technical education in Nigeria and other areas of the world are significantly impacted by the ongoing scarcity of professionals in certain fields. The majority of the machinery and equipment at certain schools is easily abandoned since there aren't enough skilled people to operate it. The need for technical manpower in the present stage of development is very important as one strives towards being a self-reliant nation, it is noted that no meaningful development can take place without a conscious effort to develop manpower in vocational areas. Quality cannot be guaranteed when the quality and quantity of personnel are inadequate to meet the desired expectation.

Lack of Facilities

The relationship between current facilities, the course curriculum, and minimum standards is crucial to take into account for quality assurance to be maintained. Since many institutions offering Vocational and Technical Education programs struggle to have enough facilities, it is difficult for them to acquire the necessary equipment for the program, which results in an excessive use of the existing facilities. It is important to note that no curriculum can replace the need for adequate facilities, so it is important to keep in mind that no curriculum can replace the need for adequate facilities. Salisu (2000) in her study of the influence of school physical resources on students' academic performance, conclude that there is significant difference in the academic performance of students in schools with adequate facilities and those with inadequate facilities.

Retraining the Trainers

Today's sociocultural and socioeconomic requirements are numerous and diverse. To address the

complicated industrial demands of the modern world in the field of vocational education, new equipment and tools are needed every day. The practical abilities displayed by professors and lecturers in general today may not be sufficient to fulfill the expectations of the future for technological advancement. Retraining of instructors and lecturers is also necessary due to the present bodies of knowledge and skills. The success of today's vocational teachers depends heavily on on-the-job training, which is also a mechanism for assuring the quality of vocational education.

Poor Societal Attitude

This relates to the negative perception that the Nigerian public has of vocational and technical education. Due to the low prestige that vocational and technical education carries, individuals still choose to search for white occupations (Gambo, 1980). Due to some parents' disdain for vocational and technical education, students' enthusiasm in learning in schools has declined, and some parents want their kids to become physicians, accountants, attorneys, administrators, or politicians. The teacher then faces the challenging job of engaging students who have little interest in the material or subject being taught.

Poor Remuneration of Vocational Teachers

In most States in Nigeria and other areas of Africa, this is a severe issue that has an impact on the quality of our educational system. Salary, allowance, and entitlement payments are occasionally late or not made at all. This aspect has recently contributed to brain drain as hundreds of academics and university residents move to other nations in pursuit of better working circumstances without a successor. According to Amadike (2007), underpaying employees results in a negative attitude toward their jobs as they tend to take care of their own affairs rather than focusing on ways to raise the standard of Vocational and Technical Education in the school. This explains the obvious inefficiency and has an impact on quality control.

Poor Administration and Regular Supervision of Vocational and Technical Education Programme

Lack of coordination between the various Federal and State agencies responsible for the administration of the Vocational and Technical Education program has led to expensive duplication of efforts and the inability to design appropriate curricula for the Nigerian youth. Poor administration and supervision of the Vocational and Technical Education program can greatly affect the quality assurance in schools (Osuala, 1981). Internal and external oversight is not taken seriously at the institutions by the government, administrators, or owners.

Possible Ways of Ensuring Quality Assurance in Vocational and Technical Education

To ensure quality assurance in Vocational and Technical Education there is need to identify possible

strategies that could bring about quality in teaching and learning of vocational education. Some of these strategies include:

Skill Acquisition and Competency

Vocational and Technical Education teachers must put a focus on students' development of skills. Lectures must be well-stocked with the knowledge, skills, and competences necessary for having an impact on knowledge in the teaching and examination of Vocational and Technical Education subjects in schools. Competency should be evaluated based on performance on examinations as well as the acquisition of usable and valuable skills.

Adequate Funding

A significant issue with vocational and technical education in many developing nations, including Nigeria, is inadequate finance. Since vocational and technical education is one of the surefires method of delivering growth to any country, it is a costly endeavor that needs to be adequately supported in order to realize and accomplish its goals. Vocational and technical education have huge demands that must be handled right away. These needs include the acquisition of instructional aids and equipment, equipment maintenance, and allowance payments. The government should provide funds for the Vocational and Technical Education to have a meaning in the real sense. Quality can be more so achieved in an atmosphere of financial sufficiency which will help in the provision of infrastructure, laboratories, chemicals, classrooms etc.

Accreditation

Due to its valued significance, the system of academic program accreditation in vocational and technical education in higher education is a crucial tool for maintaining academic standards and excellence. It should be conducted on a regular basis to maintain and ensure quality assurance in vocational education. In Nigeria, two major areas have been recognized for meaningful standards in schools: infrastructure and curricular content. According to the Maryland Higher Education Commission (2006), accreditation is a system of self-policing and peer assessment used by the academic community. It emphasized that accreditation guarantees a fundamental level of educational excellence. If lecturers and other personnel are adequately monitored and overseen, the quality of education will increase since they will be devoted and effective in their tasks. This will further strengthen the quality of teaching and learning in schools. Authorities of institutions must adhere to findings and recommendations of accreditation teams.

Adequate Staffing/Staff Development

In vocational institutes, enough teaching staff should be made available. Teaching and support personnel should be knowledgeable, dependable, and qualified. The National Universities Commission

(NUC) mandates that a master's degree is the prerequisite for instructing or teaching in a university. Vocational courses shouldn't be taught by unqualified instructors. According to Odor (1995), staff development is the process of retraining and educating employees in a company to raise their academic or professional knowledge, skills, and competencies so they can perform their primary duties more effectively and advance their careers. It is very important that institutions prescribe a suitable programme for training and retraining of its staff. This will ensure maximum contribution to developments and the progress of vocational programmes in the institutions.

Provision of Adequate Facilities

To teach courses in Vocational and Technical Education effectively there must be adequate provision of facilities in terms of space, equipment, infrastructures, and physical facilities. The lecture halls must have instructional materials and be conducive for learning. The training environment should be as advance as the work environment. Teaching with real materials and real situation can help to encourage the students to learn and can greatly enhance quality. Lack of facilities to poor service conditions can also lead to self-dissatisfaction and stress making them less efficient and lack commitment to work.

Enhancement of Societal Attitude towards Vocational Education

Having a positive attitude about any subject helps to guarantee quality assurance. The poor prestige associated with the majority of vocational schooling, according to Gambo (1980), is the reason why there is still a significant propensity towards white collar occupations. There should be greater public awareness of the value and benefits of Vocational and Technical Education and what role it is expected to play in the nation's technological development in light of the importance of Vocational and Technical Education and to improve societal attitude, government should work to raise the socioeconomic status of the vocational teachers.

Motivations/Remunerations of Teachers/Lecturers

Lecturers in vocational and technical education should be encouraged to love their work rather than tormentously endure it. For instance, they should be encouraged to pay their wages on time and get their benefits promptly, including promotions, in-service training, conference participation, and other pertinent terms of employment. Only when employees are encouraged to do their best work on the job, can quality instruction in schools be ensured.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the above, it is clear that quality assurance in vocational and technical education is

essential since the program's performance metrics still leave a lot of concerns unanswered about output quality, marketability, entrepreneurship, and technological and educational strategies. Given the importance of education to a country's growth, all institutions and stakeholders should work together to ensure that education is of a high caliber. The following suggestions have been made to provide quality assurance in vocational education in light of the importance of high-quality vocational education:

- The government should make it a point of duty to fund and provide the necessary facilities and equipment for vocational education.
- The government who is a major stakeholder in the education sector should appreciate the strategic position of Vocational and Technical Education and increase its budgetary allocation to the sector.
- National Universities Commission should be given the authority to penalise universities that flaunt accreditation report and continue with denied programmes and other regulations on quality assurance.
- Teachers/lecturers should endeavour to prepare adequately for their lessons by employing the use of real or concrete materials as instructional materials.

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