

Constraints to the effective implementation of vocational education program in private secondary schools in Port Harcourt local government area

SUOBERE T. PUYATE

Department of Science & Technical Education, Rivers State University of Science & Technology, Nkpolu, PMB 5080, Port Harcourt, Nigeria

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The main purpose of this study was to identify the constraints to the effective implementation of vocational education program in private secondary schools in Port Harcourt Local Government Area of Rivers State. The research work was limited to four randomly selected private secondary schools and addressed the following research questions: What students' factors affect the non-implementations of vocational education program in Nigerian private secondary schools?; What facilities factors affect the non-implementations of vocational education program in Nigerian private secondary schools?; What teachers' factors affect the non-implementations of vocational education program in Nigerian private secondary schools?; and, what government /parental factors affect the non-implementations of vocational education program in Nigerian private secondary schools? The main instrument for data collection was a questionnaire administered to about 20% of the target population of teachers (N=24) and students (N=72) in the Rivers State area. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics including the sample mean and grand population mean. The findings reveal a dearth of professional and qualified teachers for the teaching of vocational/technical subjects; inadequate infrastructure and equipment in schools; insufficient instructional materials and books in schools; and that schools are generally poorly financed. Two key recommendations are that adequate infrastructure should be provided in schools so that they are properly equipped for functional teaching and learning, and that an 'enlightenment' campaign should be carried out in the society to emphasize the importance of technical and vocational education. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education*, 2008, 9(2), 59-71.

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Adesina (1982) comments 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. Advanced countries have improved their standard of living by education, which is considered to stimulate economic and technological development; thus, education can be regarded as an investment that yield dividends in terms of overall development of a country (Adesina, 1982).

Formal education started in Nigeria during the colonial period. It developed from the early forms of reading, writing, and arithmetic (i.e., the three 'r's) to a stage where the London General Certificate of Education, Ordinary level syllabus (the so-called O-Level) was used to guide instruction in secondary schools (Fafunwa, 1974). These secondary 'grammar schools' were fashioned in such a way that did not accommodate the vocational technical subjects, and as a consequence trade centers and colleges were established. Here, the City and Guild (Intermediate) syllabus was used to guide instruction and upon completion, successful students were awarded the City and Guild (Intermediate) Certificate of London. The Federal Craft Certificate, or the Ministry of Labor Trade Test Certificate also were awarded to successful candidates. The Federal Craft and Trade Test Programs were put in place by the Federal Government of Nigeria mainly to improve the understanding and competencies of artisans and technicians.

In view of the fact that most of our youths pass through the secondary grammar schools (as the trade colleges were fewer in number), following the political independence of Nigeria,

Correspondence to Suobere Puyate, email: revpuyatest@yahoo.com

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, administration, evaluation, and so forth. According to Ezeobata (2007), this period saw a state of affairs in Nigerian education where every subject had to 'prove its usefulness' to retain a place in the school curriculum. Probably, this was what led the then National Educational Research Council (NERC) to convey an historic curriculum conference at Lagos in 1969, which Okeke (1981, p. 10) has described as "a culmination of people's dissatisfaction with uncertainty of the aims of education." This conference recommended new set of goals and provided directions for major curriculum revision upon which the National Policy on Education of 1977 and the revised policy in 1981 was based.

Against this background of national aspirations, a new educational system commonly referred to as the '6-3-3-4' system of education emerged. Among other innovations, the system provided for pre-vocational and vocational curricular offerings at the junior and senior secondary schools respectively. For the first time in the history of education in Nigeria, vocational and technical education subjects were, as a matter of national policy, to be offered side-by-side, and hopefully, enjoy parity in esteem with the 'more academic' courses hitherto run by the secondary grammar schools under the old colonial-based system of education.

To this end, 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 & Shorthand, Principles of Accounts, Commerce, Woodwork, Technical Drawing, Basic Electronics, and Auto-Mechanics came into being in Nigerian secondary schools. As one of the innovations that should distinguish the products of the new system from the old, school work was now based on these curricula in both private and public schools from 1982 - driven by the government's directive that post-primary schools should be more comprehensive, which the National Policy on Education had earlier proposed in 1981.

There is no doubt about the usefulness of these programs in secondary schools provided errors or specific weaknesses of the 'process' (if any) are identified, and remedial measures taken for improvement. There is the fear that, most research reports about the implemented curriculum favor the patronage of public schools, with little or no regard to private secondary schools.

Furthermore, in some earlier studies like *Relevance of Education, A Myth Or Reality?*, Taylor (1961), stated that as a result of curriculum integration in the Nigerian New System of Education (NPE, 2004, Revised), Nigerian Students and Teachers were asked questions to determine their attitude to vocational/technical subjects as it affects their teaching and learning in a typical Nigerian Technical School. From a more general perspective, Taylor (1961) also reported on students' expectations of their teachers in different kinds of school settings. Teachers, according to the report, seem to work within a framework of expectations. They may respond to some of these expectations, and reject others. Kay (1971), argued that, the teacher's role must broaden in scope to parental functions if curriculum integration of teaching and learning is to become a reality.

Kay (1971) stated that, the general outlay over the depreciating/falling standard of education in Nigeria and incessant poor performance of student in schools, calls for a proper and continual study of educational system in order to identify the constraints to the effective

implementation of vocational education program and that we should tryout a variety of possible solutions to the problems that have resulted in this malaise. Advocates of curriculum integration in the Nigerian New System of Education, for example, Adesina (1982), find elements in the current situation in Nigerian schools, which vindicate these problems, centering around the uncertainties of curriculum implementation.

Ajakaiye (1991) states that, training for industrial occupations in vocational/technical schools is comparatively a recent phenomenon. Until the 19th Century, apprenticeships and informal training developed skills for most manual occupations, largely through association with a master - often for many years. In recent times, technological advances, analytical and communication skills were required in vocational education and training, as well as more theoretical knowledge.

Uyanya (1989) stated that, the most important thing that ever happened to Nigeria is the 1981 National Policy on Education, which emphasizes the acquisition of vocational skill and self-reliance. This trend helped make teachers, students, and the public in general, become increasingly aware of the need to develop skill to operate our various industries. According to Maduewesi (1985), the New Policy (6-3-3-4 educational system) on education enables individual students to spend 6 years in primary school, 3 years in junior secondary school, 3 years in senior secondary school and 4 years in a tertiary institution. Sower (1971) observes that vocational/technical education is a means towards industrialization of Nigeria. Olaitan (2006) defines vocational/technical education as that aspect of education which is a skill acquisition-oriented form of training, based on application of mathematics and scientific knowledge in specific field for self actualization and development. Sower (1971) goes on to state that vocational/technical education is a social process, concerned primarily with people and their part in doing work that society needs alone - which is concerned with preparing the people for work and improving the work potential of the labor force. Now, the world drifts to science and technology to fit into the society in the nearest future, requiring an indispensable knowledge of vocation education.

STATEMENT OF THE PROLBEM

For Nigeria to excel technologically there is the need for the effective implementation of vocational education program in government owned secondary schools and private secondary schools.

In spite of the importance of vocational education to the development of both individuals and the society at large, there is no much emphasis placed on the effective implementation of vocational education programs in Nigeria. The frequent occurrence of low students' participation in vocational education courses has been a great concern to all-well-meaning individuals, institutions and industries. It is in the light of the above, that the present study was carried out to ascertain if there are factors responsible for the non-effective implementation of vocational education program in private secondary schools.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purposes of this research were to:

1. Identify the constraints to the effective implementation of vocational education program in Nigerian private secondary schools;

2. Ascertain the availability and use of teaching aids in teaching and learning of Nigerian vocational/technical courses;
3. Identify the student and teacher factor that might inhibit the effective implementation of vocational education program in Nigerian private secondary schools; and to
4. Ascertain the effort being made by the government, teachers and parents towards enhancing the effective implementation of vocational education program in Port Harcourt.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

For the purpose of this research, the following research questions are posed:

1. What student factors affect the non-implementation of vocational education programs in Nigerian private secondary schools?
2. What facilities factors affect the non-implementation of vocational education programs in Nigerian private secondary schools?
3. What teacher factors affects the non-implementation of vocation education program in Nigerian private secondary schools?; and
4. What government/parental factors affect the non-implementation of vocational education program in Nigerian private secondary schools?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a survey design. The population of the study consists of 360 students offering vocational/technical subjects, and 600 teachers teaching vocational/technical subjects in four) randomly selected private secondary schools in Port Harcourt Local Government Area of Rivers State.

A total of 72 students and 24 teachers were chosen randomly for this study, and the sample size out of the total target population of students offering vocation/technical subjects and teachers teaching technical/vocational subjects in four randomly selected private secondary schools located in the study area - representing about 20% of the population. The method of sampling adopted was a systematic random sampling process under a pilot test-re-test method, and this gave an average value of .96 reliability coefficient - which was considered adequate for the study. A structured questionnaire for the study, consisting of a five-point rating scale, ranging from agree to strongly disagree, was employed in the data collection.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Research Question 1

What student factors affects the non-implementation of vocational education programs in Nigerian private secondary schools?

Results presented in Table 1 indicate the following: that students are not aware of the importance of vocational education programs with a grand mean of (3.94); students in private secondary schools feel that vocational education is meant for technical colleges (mean 4.25); students are always afraid of practical work (mean 2.82); and that students are afraid of vocational education due to fear of calculation (mean 2.63). The implication of this is that students should be aware of the importance of vocational education in private secondary schools, students in private secondary schools should not feel that vocation education is meant for technical colleges only.

TABLE 1
Teacher (N=24) and student (N=72) factors influencing the implementation of vocational education programs in Nigerian private secondary schools

	Student factors	Teachers	Students	Grand Mean	Decision
1.	Students are not aware of the importance of vocational /technical education	4.00	3.88	3.94	Accept
2.	Students in Private Secondary School feel Vocational Education is meant for Technical Colleges	4.50	4.00	4.25	Accept
3.	Students are always afraid of practical work	2.00	3.63	2.82	Reject
4.	Students are afraid of vocation education due to fear of calculation	2.00	3.25	2.63	Reject

Source: Field Survey, 2004, means based on five point Likert scale, 1=strongly disagree 5=strongly agree

TABLE 2

Facilities factors influencing the implementation of vocational education programs in Nigerian private secondary schools – teacher (N=24) and student (N=72) views

S/N	Workshop, materials and textbook factors	Teacher	Student	Grand Mean	Decision
5.	There is lack of adequate textbooks in the library	4.50	4.40	4.45	Accept
6.	Materials for teaching and learning are not readily available	4.75	4.15	4.45	Accept
7.	Teaching aids are always used in class	1.75	1.88	1.82	Reject
8.	Lack of adequate workshop equipment	4.50	4.40	4.45	Accept

Source: Field Survey, 2004, means based on five point Likert scale, 1=strongly disagree 5=strongly agree

TABLE 3

Teacher factors influencing the implementation of vocational education programs in Nigerian private secondary schools – teacher (N=24) and student (N=72) views

S/N	Teacher factors	Teacher	Student	Grand Mean	Decision
9.	Lack of professional and experienced teachers	4.50	3.63	4.07	Accept
10.	Teachers are provided with enough allowances	1.25	2.00	1.63	Reject
11.	Teachers are not motivated	4.75	4.25	4.50	Accept
12.	There is cordial relationship between teachers and students	2.25	3.13	2.69	Reject

Source: Field Survey, 2004, means based on five point Likert scale, 1=strongly disagree 5=strongly agree

TABLE 4
Financial influencing the implementation of vocational education programs in Nigerian private secondary schools – teacher (N=24) and student (N=72) views

S/N	Financial factors	Teacher	Student	Grand Mean	Decision
13.	Lack of fund enhance the non-availability of instructional aids	4.75	4.40	4.58	Accept
14.	Funding of vocational subjects at present level is not adequate.	4.75	4.50	4.63	Accept
15.	Lack of fund affect the running of vocational education programs	4.50	4.00	4.25	Accept
16.	Your school is currently facing financial difficulties.	4.25	3.88	4.07	Accept

Source: Field Survey, 2004, means based on five point Likert scale, 1=strongly disagree 5=strongly agree

TABLE 5

Government and parental influencing the implementation of vocational education programs in Nigerian private secondary schools – teacher (N=24) and student (N=72) views

S/N	Government and parental factors	Teacher's mean (TM)	Students' mean (SM)	Grand mean (GM)	Decision
17.	There is lack of co-operation from parents	3.50	4.00	3.75	Accept
18.	Government appreciation on vocational education generally is poor	4.75	4.40	4.58	Accept
19.	Parents cannot afford to buy necessary books for the course you would have preferred.	3.50	3.00	3.25	Accept
20.	Vocational education program lack support from government	4.75	4.25	4.50	Accept

Source: Field Survey, 2004, means based on five point Likert scale, 1=strongly disagree 5=strongly agree

Research Question 2

What facilities factors affect the non-implementation of vocation education programs in Nigerian private secondary schools?

Results presented in Table 2 indicate the following: there is lack of adequate textbooks in the library (mean 4.45); materials, for teaching and learning are not readily available (mean 4.45); there is a lack of adequate workshop equipment (mean 4.45). These all are seen to affect the effective implementation of vocational education programs, while teaching aids are always used in class (mean 1.82). The implication of this is that, textbooks should be provided in the library, teaching and learning materials should be made readily available, teaching aids should be used in class, and that adequate workshop equipment should be provided in private secondary schools.

Research Question 3

What teacher factors affect the non-implementation of vocational education programs in Nigerian private secondary schools?

Results presented in Table 3 indicate the following: a lack of professional and experienced teachers (mean 4.07); teachers are not provided with enough allowances (mean 1.63); motivation of teachers by government is high (mean 4.50), and there is a cordial relationship between teachers and students (mean 2.69). All of these are seen as exerting some affect on the implementation of vocational education programs in private secondary schools. The implication of this is that teachers should be professionals and experienced in the teaching of vocational subjects, teachers should be provided with enough allowances, teachers should be motivated to teach, and there should be cordial relationship between teachers and students.

Research Question 4

What financial factors affect the non-implementation of vocational education program in private secondary schools?

Results presented in Table 4 indicate the following: a lack of funds to enhance the non-availability of instructional aids (mean 4.58), funding of vocational subject at present level is not adequate (mean 4.63), a lack of funds affects the running of vocational education programs (mean 4.25), and schools are currently facing financial difficulties (mean 4.07), all of which affect the effective implementation of vocational education programs in private secondary schools. The implication of this is that, schools should be properly funded to enhance the availability of instructional aids; finance should be made available so as to fund vocation subjects and vocational education programs effectively.

Research Question 5

What government and parental factors affect the non-implementation of vocational education program in Nigerian private secondary schools?

Results from the Table 5 indicates indicate the following: a lack of cooperation from parents (3.75), a lack of government appreciation for vocational education (mean 4.58), parents are unable to afford to books for courses offered (mean 3.25), and vocational education programs lack support from government (mean 4.50).

Principal Findings

From the results obtained in the tables of analysis of the data, the following principal findings are presented:

1. Student attitudes is partly responsible for the non-implementation of vocational education programs in Nigerian private secondary schools;
2. A lack of adequate training facilities is one factor affecting the implementation of vocational education programs in Nigerian private secondary schools;
3. Teacher attitude affects the implementation of vocational education programs in Nigerian private secondary schools;
4. Inadequate provision of finance and funding contributes to problems in the implementation of vocational education programs in Nigerian private secondary schools; and
5. Poor government and parental attitude are factors inhibiting the implementation of vocational education programs in Nigerian private secondary schools.

DISCUSSION

The analysis of data in Table 1 suggests that many student attitudes or factors affect the non-representation of vocational education programs in private secondary schools. The main beneficiaries of the programs are assumed to be the students (Olaitain, 2006). Thus, for the vocational programs to be fully implemented, students as stakeholders have to be made aware of such programs and their importance; they must become interested in practical skills-oriented lectures, and cognitive skills at the same time. If the students are to become employable on graduation, they must appreciate learning with their hands.

No effective vocational training can take place without the adequate provision of learning facilities (Puyate, 2004). Facilities needed include textbooks, classrooms, workshops, library, tools, equipment and so on. No vocational program can be complete without adequate facilities. Hence, for skills training to be implemented effectively, enough training facilities have to be provided.

According to Olaitain (2007), teachers who are the major operators of educational systems or programs, are expected to effect and impart the needed knowledge to the trainees. This can only be effective if the teachers are in their right frame of mind. This needs stimulus such as providing them with the needed remuneration, incentives, allowances, promotion and so on. If government places much importance on vocational education programs, then 'the horse that muzzles the corn', must not be neglected because the teacher is the centre of the implementation of any education program.

Funding and financing are two major factors facing the Nigerian nation. Much funds are directed to funding political events rather than to education. For the past few decades, the Academic Staff Union of Nigerian Universities (ASUU) and the Nigerian Union of Teachers (NUT) have been at loggerheads over a lack of funding from education Federal Government and Academic Staff Union of Universities (FG/ASUU, 2001). It is unfortunate that this trend has lingered for years. Most of the equipment, tools, and workshop facilities are either broken down or damaged or dilapidated, are not replaced neither renovated (Puyate, 2006).

The government's attitude towards education is a very key factor in the effectiveness or otherwise of the education system. The process of provision and implementation of any national education program lies on the shoulders of the government. The Nigeria nation is rich, but has no clear plan or program for education in general, and vocational education in

particular. Thus, for the education programs to be implemented effectively, the government has assume responsibility.

CONCLUSIONS

In this study, an effort was made to examine some of the issues encountered in the effective implementation of vocational education programs in private secondary schools in the Port Harcourt Local Government Area of Rivers State. From the findings of the study the researcher concludes that, planning of adequate and suitable vocational/technical educational programs should not be for the sake formality, but should be implemented effectively. Those subjects which are practically-oriented should be accorded appropriate recognition, which they deserve in the realm of educational activities.

The bedrock of technological advancement in any country lies in the effective implementation of educational policies. Therefore, government should emphasize technology-transfer through its educational policies. Students in particular, should be enlightened on the importance and advantages of science and technology-related subjects, as well as vocational/technical courses as a way of reducing the present high unemployment prevailing in the country.

This research has highlighted some of the issues encountered in the implementation of vocational/technical education programs in private secondary schools in the Port Harcourt Local Government Area of Rivers State. The researcher provides the following recommendations stated below with the intention of facilitating the effective implementation of vocational/technical education programs in private secondary schools in Port Harcourt Local Government Area of Rivers State, and potentially in the Nigerian setting more broadly.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made based on the findings of the present study:

1. Adequate infrastructure should be provided in schools, and schools also should properly equipped for teaching and learning;
2. Instructional materials for the teaching of technical and vocational-related subjects should be provided;
3. Libraries should be built in schools, and also well equipped with books;
4. More classrooms should be built in schools to cater for increasing school enrolments;
5. Adequate enlightenment campaigns should be carried out in society generally about the importance of technical and vocational education;
6. Students should attend workshops, seminars, conferences, and refresher courses, and should be taken on field trips;
7. Students in private secondary schools should be made aware that vocational education is not meant for technical colleges only;
8. Teachers should be well remunerated. Their salaries should be increased, and be paid on time;
9. Teachers should be given fringe benefits, and other incentives due them, to boost morale;
10. Professional and experienced teachers should be employed to teach vocational/technical subjects;
11. There should be a cordial relationship between teachers and students;
12. Regular training and re-training programs in form of seminars, conferences, in-service training programs, short courses and workshops, should be organized at regular intervals to simulate teachers' interest in vocational/technical subjects;
13. Vocational/technical schools should be located in regions accessible to the target population;

14. Parents and teachers should encourage students to develop a positive attitude towards science, and vocational/technical-related subjects;
15. Guidance and counseling sections should set up in vocational/technical schools to encourage students into vocational/technical subjects;
16. The curriculum of vocational/technical schools should be planned such that the graduates will find it easier to get into higher institutions in their specialist areas;
17. Government should develop a soft loan scheme that enables proprietors of vocational/technical schools to fund and provide facilities and infrastructure. Such a loan scheme must be monitored by government to ensure that the monies are invested for the purpose for which it was granted;
18. The skills developed in vocational/technical education programs must such that they ensure that graduates who engage in self-employment have the skills needed for things such as the production of goods and services for local and international markets;
19. Private secondary schools should 'package' their vocational/technical education programs in such a way that they are interesting and attractive to students; and
20. Further comparative research should be carried out on, for example, the academic achievement of students in both vocational/technical schools and traditional schools. This may enlighten students on the importance and intricacies of vocational and technical education.

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