

Improving on Supervision as an Innovation in the Teaching and Learning of Vocational Education: A Road Map for Better Working Conditions

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Abstract

This paper examined the influence of supervision on teaching and learning working conditions as relating to the quality of Vocational Education. The aim of this paper is to analyze on supervision as an innovation in the teaching and learning of vocational education as a road map for better working conditions. It is to reveal the area that needs improvement in supervision of vocational education. It analyzes supervision as far as Vocational Education is concerned. It also delved into teaching in vocational education to examine the progress so far, and to examine the contributions and expectation of vocational education supervision, specifying on conditions and quality of supervision in vocational education. A conclusion was drawn that favourable working and learning conditions lead to increased job and learning practices while unfavourable conditions affect negatively. An educational implication of the article indicated that if quality supervision is not effectively carried out in the teaching and learning of vocational education due to poor working conditions, a lot of negative outcomes are bound to occur in this area. It was suggested, among others, that educational policy planners should provide adequate funds and conducive teaching and learning environment for programmes implementation.

Introduction

Teaching and learning in vocational education in Nigeria in recent years has witnessed increased attention backed up with Action Plan. The contending issue has been whether the Federal Government of Nigeria has set up effective machinery for monitoring and supervising the programme relating to teaching and learning input and output to ensure proper implementation. Oloruntoba and Ajayi (2003) believed that quality supervision of vocational education could greatly be enhanced if teachers and students perform under

good working conditions. They agreed that good working condition variables have been identified as motivating factors in boosting the quality of productivity of personnel in any work environment, educational institutions included. Managers in organizations who want to succeed employ good working conditions to implicitly elicit effective performance from their employees (Van den Ban & Hawkins, 2009). This should be the case for educational institutions' leaders. One important responsibility of the stakeholders in the Ministry of Education would have been their capability to effectively employ efficient working condition variables to induce quality of supervision in vocational education sector.

However, authorities on workers' productivity have disagreed that working conditions may not be the only factor that determines a person's performance level. Herzberg (2001) pointed out in his work, "the two factors theory" that what influences how well a person performs in a given situation are the individual's abilities and the individual's understanding of what behaviours are necessary in order to achieve high performance of teachers and students. The latter can be called "role perception". Conversely, working and learning conditions are commonly observed to increase and sustain the quality of satisfaction of teachers and students, with subsequent increase in quality of productivity and performance respectively. These conditions may include high remuneration, fringe benefit, welfare services, in-service training, study-leave-with-pay, promotion opportunities for advancement, recognition, retirement benefits, getting paid as and when due, management of staff and students' problems and discipline.

The current initiative by the Federal Government of Nigeria to draw up an Action Plan (Immediate actions, February 2001 to July 2001, Medium Term Actions 2002-2005, and Long Term Actions, 2006 – 2010) on Technical/Vocational Education to set up goals and objectives that ascertain the extent of implementation of policy were planned. This initiative which was also meant to make adjustment and correction based on the outcome/output has made quality supervision of vocational education programme very necessary (Federal Ministry of Education, 2000). Programme supervision is widely recognized as an important strategy adopted to ensure that its objectives and outcomes are strictly monitored so as to achieve its goals and objectives as were planned (Acheson & Gall, 2002).

With the growing awareness by both the Nigerian government and individuals aimed at producing a blueprint for revamping and repositioning technical and vocational education (TVE) in Nigeria, quality of vocational education supervision becomes inevitable (Obasanjo, 2000). According to Obasanjo, serious effort was made some 44 years ago when Federal Advisory committee on Technical Education and Industrial Training, with Dr. Skapski as Chairman, was set up and charged with the responsibility of charting a course for Technical/Vocational Education. What was lacking in that effort at that time, according to him, was planned and systematic supervision and implementation of the recommendations of the committee's report, titled "A National Plan for Vocational Education in the Federal Republic of Nigeria".

It becomes logical, therefore, that apart from providing good working conditions to workers in vocational education unit, quality supervision aimed at strengthening the level is apt to make attainment of goals and objectives of vocational education realizable.

Vocational education and supervision

The quality of supervision on vocational education still remains a mirage because of non-recognition of good working condition as a factor for enhancing the achievement of effective teachers' and students' performance. A literature search reveals that quite a little has been done to investigate the extent to which quality teaching and learning execution and supervision in vocational education facilitate effective implementation of its policies and programmes. Negative outcome is still being recorded in the programme implementation of vocational education. This is substantiated by the fact that results of the Senior School Certificate Examination (SSCE) and National Examinations Council (NECO) are not encouraging. The number of students who gain admission into high institutions to read business and technical education related courses points to the fact that not much has been done to sensitize people on the vocational education offerings and programmes.

Supervisory personnel in the Ministry of Education are not carrying out their functions effectively. Some opinions attribute blame on this to lack of well-drawn out plan of action on monitoring and failure to execute quality supervisions. Despite the Federal Government's declaration of 2000 – 2010 as "the decade for Technical and Vocational Education in Nigeria", not much impact has been felt in terms of policy implementation of National Master-plan for Technical and Vocational Education. There is also an assumption that poor quality supervision of the programme is caused by lack of conducive teaching and learning working conditions. This has had a negative effect on the programme in the institutions. The inefficient implementation of the vocational education programmes is also blamed on lack of quality supervision and appraisal of the programme.

Teaching and learning in Vocational Education

Efficient working condition is essential for increased productivity of personnel in any establishment (Oyesola, 2000). According to this source, teachers and students who are exposed to dissatisfying and shabby treatments perform poorly on their job and exams respectively. The physical working condition has a high correlation with vocational education teaching and learning performance. Research by Edem (2000) revealed that a pleasant and attractive environment forms part of the resource power, which manifests in performances. This confirms the assertion by Oludare et al. (2006) that workers require sufficient classroom and laboratories, adequate curriculum resources, computers, audio visual aids, constant electricity, tables, chairs, desks, to be able to function effectively. Availability of these educational inputs determines, to a large extent, the quality of productivity of personnel as well as students' educational outcomes.

Research evidence indicates that working conditions and job performance are inseparable (NUT, 2009; Inyang, 2002). Onwuakpa (2008) stressed that the failure to provide enough

materials to vocational education execution has greatly hampered the growth and expansion of the programme. Participants in vocational education are not sufficiently equipped for high productivity results. Studies also revealed that individuals tend to work well when they are happy within their work environment. Ngu (2000) emphasized that the physical facilities in which the person works must be both comfortable and secure, the people with whom he works should be friendly and capable of creating good social atmosphere for interaction among them. The machines, tools and equipment with which he performs his duty must be safe for his use. A descriptive survey of working conditions of vocational education programme showed that no good welfare scheme is provided. Workers and students enter into the programme and leave without a well-defined welfare package such as health services scheme, contingency and relief packages, rent subsidy, wardrobe allowance, fringe benefits and the likes which could give them incentive to increase their productivity (Inyang, 2002). They really need to be motivated.

Writing on motivational variables and workers' performance, Rao and Rao (2007) reiterated that promotion is another means of motivating an employee for higher performance. Personnel in vocational education are not promoted as and when due. Rao and Rao further added that promotion puts new life into the individual and activates his knowledge, skill and attitude, while the worker strives harder to be effective in his job; students also strive to advance in their skill acquisition method.

Apart from good working conditions, individuals have inner needs that they are driven, pressured or motivated to reduce or fulfill. For example, they need security, achievement, recognition and self-fulfillment. According to McClelland (2008), these needs could be actualized through payment of good salary, bonus, workman's compensation, and retirement benefits like gratuity, pension and other welfare services. But the reverse has been the case for personnel in vocational education because most of the highly trained are not placed on their rightful positions. This has culminated into brain drain which has now become a national issue with many people moving out in search of greener pastures.

Examining the contributions and expectations of Vocational Education supervision

The contributions of vocational education in sustaining the complex structure of modern civilization and economic progress and the needs of individuals within the society have been widely acclaimed by many writers. Zahraddeen et al. (2006) noted that vocational/technical education is the core of both the individual's and the society's economy. They explained that through acquisition of skills, individuals could explore their environment and harness the resources within it, which could serve them and the society. Osuala (2004) reiterated that vocational education prepares individuals for gainful employment as semi-skilled workers or technicians or sub-professionals in recognized occupations and in new emerging occupation. It also prepares individuals for enrolment in advanced technical education programmes. Osuala further stressed that vocational education enables individuals to develop skills, knowledge and attitude needed for success in a specific occupation. This is in line with Osisioma's (2005) assertion that vocational education helps to upgrade skills of individuals within the society and this leads to

acquisition of better career opportunities. According to Osisioma, the course offerings in vocational education help to improve methods and approaches in order to prepare students not only with current and necessary skills, but also prepares them for new occupations. It serves as a means of national defence against poverty factored by lack of jobs skills and underdevelopment. This is in agreement with Olaitan in Obijole (2006), who stated that vocational education provides occupational and career orientation and exploration of job opportunities and requirements in business. It prepares students for entry into an advancement in job within business, and prepares them to handle their own business affairs and functions intelligently as consumers and citizens in a business economy.

Writing on policies, programmes and action plan for a decade of Technical and Vocational Education in Nigeria, Okebukola (2000) stressed that Vocational/Technical Education is an area of high impact of globalization. The economic and technical technology dimensions of globalization are driven largely by vocational/technical education. To Okebukola, it is one of the pillars of economic enterprise of nations. Also, without vocational education, the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) hub around which globalization is built cannot be easily sustained.

Vocational education inculcates entrepreneurial skills in students which result in the establishment of small and medium enterprises. It contributes to the achievement of society's goal of greater democratization, social, cultural and economic development while at the same time developing the potential of individuals for active participation in the establishment and implementation of these goals (Osuala, 2004). In agreement with Osuala (2004) and Maher (2002), "Technical and vocational skills empower young people and adults to play active roles in a development paradigm that seeks to narrow economic and gender disparities while reserving the integrity of the environment. It is no exaggeration to say that in the future the backbone of robust social and economic development in a nation will be the technical professionals". Indeed, vocational education holds the key to poverty alleviation as it is the only education that addresses the occupational needs of all (Adeniran, 2000).

Commenting on the contributions of vocational education, Aino (2000) asserted that it improves the quality of life by permitting the individual to expand his intellectual horizons and acquire constantly improved professional skills and knowledge while allowing society to utilize that fruits of economic and technological change for the general welfare. It permits the harmonious development of personnel and character and fosters the spiritual, human values, the capacity of understanding, judgment, critical thinking and self-expression. Aino further added that individuals are prepared continuously by developing the necessary mental tools, practical skills and attitudes. It develops individuals' capacities for decision making and the qualities necessary for active and intelligent participation, teamwork and leadership at work and in the community as a whole. For Zahraddeen et al., vocational education is interested in good leadership. According to them, anybody who distinguishes himself or herself in an acclaimed field of endeavour in the society is looked upon as a hero or potential leader. The same is true of

any nation that could develop effectively her vocational and technical education and harness it; such nation would develop fast in wealth and power and will be recognized as a leader among nations. However, the expectations of vocational education are varied. It is aimed at producing skilled workers not only with high level of technical proficiency but with general skills that will enable individuals meet the ever changing complex demands emerging from modern technologically growing social-economic environment. The 21st century thinking demands that the policies of vocational education should address unemployment and other socio-economic challenges such as social security currently being perpetuated by unemployable youth that tend to heighten by the day (Lewis, 2007).

On the expectation of vocational education, Oduyemi (2000) stressed that vocational education should produce skilled and proficient workforce that must function at the growing edge (state of the art) of technology in their various vocations and must also live as effective, self-realizing and self-fulfilling citizens of Nigeria concerned with quality and beauty in the performance as well as the common good of all in the society. Basically, vocational education was intended to stimulate interest and curiosity in technical things - the use of tools and materials. It was to provide training on safe work habits and manipulation of machines for different production processes. It was to provide skills for employment and retraining for continuous professional development (Mbaba & Eko, 2007).

Stressing on the expectation of vocational education, Bartel (2006) observed that vocation education curricula are specially planned and designed to prepare individuals to enter into selected jobs, positions and occupations; as well as to provide upgrading skills for those who are already employed in the selected occupations. It is not only concerned with manual skills involved in an occupation, but also with developing all competencies needed to function, effectively in employment, including the cognitive, psychomotor and affective skills in that particular occupation.

According to Undie and Udida (2006), if properly organized, vocational education should encourage and promote upward mobility, and that vocational education is not a terminal education. A good vocational education programme should not only equip the graduate for the job market but should also enable them to use the skills and knowledge in providing solution to their daily problems wherever they find themselves (Lewis, 2007). To Lewis, it should constitute education for living and education for job.

In recent years, there has been considerable investment by the World Bank, in particular, to support educational system to collect standardized measures of achievement (Sigurdson & Schweitzer, 2004). Thus, it would seem reasonable to expect that the capacity of developing countries, like Nigeria, to monitor and supervise the development of their educational systems would have improved greatly. Yet, this is not the case, especially, in vocational education field. Very little or no progress has been made in the establishment of sustainable administration and supervision capacity, in part due to weak investment designs by the Nigerian government.

According to Zepeda (2003), supervision is concerned with the process of monitoring educational programme from the formative state in order to see that objectives and goals of the programme are successfully implemented as were planned. It also allows for finding ways of correcting imbalances in the system. Supervision is, therefore, necessary not only for the realization of the project's goals and objectives but for its capacity to develop and sustain continuous improvement in the programmes of vocational education. Supervision will help provide feedback from a wide range of supervisors to vocational education policy makers so as to assist them in ascertaining the level of implementation of the planned programmes. Esu, Eukoha and Umoren (2006) recommended a more comprehensive supervision of programme covering the input, process and output variables of vocational education. This includes curriculum evaluation which involves a systematic and scientific approach aimed at generating and maintenance of data used for assessing the strength and weaknesses of the curriculum.

However, the supervision of teaching and learning in vocational education as presently practiced cannot be said to have achieved success due to many fundamental problems which include inadequacy of trained vocational education supervisors. Other problems are that the supervisory criteria are not followed strictly and streamlined by the stakeholders, lack of adequate planning and monitoring at the national level, absence of professional orientation of the supervisors, some complex tasks faced by supervisors in the field and insufficient training materials. More so, teaching aids are fast becoming pedagogically unmanageable and unavailable.

According to the Federal Ministry of Education (2000), vocational education administration comes under a wide spectrum of various authorities and interest groups which include:

- ❖ Ministries of Education both (Federal and State)
- ❖ Other relevant Ministries, for example, Labour and Productivity
- ❖ Ministry of Commerce, Mines and Power
- ❖ Stakeholders – professional bodies, labour union, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), parents and tax payers.
- ❖ Specialized agencies
- ❖ National Business and Technical Education (NBTE)
- ❖ National Universities Commission (NUC)
- ❖ Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC)

These various bodies have not impacted sufficiently on supervision of teaching and learning of vocational education programmes. Killick (2005) has suggested that participatory supervision approach, involving community members at school and village level, would bring about fruitful result on both teachers and students.

Conditions and quality of supervision in Vocational Education

Research conducted on working conditions and work performance suggested that good working conditions are instrumental to high performance level. This can be associated to both teachers and students. Herzberg as cited by Ofuoko, Uloko and Ajobo (2008) has

identified “the two factors theory,” which are individual’s abilities and individual’s understanding of the contents of the job, as affecting teaching and learning. The latter is regarded as “role perception”. An individual in work environment is willing to undertake a task which he feels he can perform, and when the job is associated with some incentives. Consideration is also given to physical working and learning environmental conditions which Herzberg, regarded as “hygiene factor.” According to him, these include poor pay, lack of job security and interpersonal relations experiences or factors that dissatisfy workers. Those job experiences which produce positive attitudes from the workers are psychological needs and these he regarded as the content of the job.

Oloruntoba and Ajayi (2003) indicated that good working conditions are the key factors that dictate man’s attitude to work and good salary is the most significant element. Consequently, quality of supervision of vocational education has been greatly influenced by working conditions. Supervision in the vocational education would have been carried out through development of curriculum, organization of instructional package, staffing, provision of materials, rendering of special services that would enhanced successful implementation of programmes, developing public relations and evaluating programmes outcomes against targets and panning (Olaitan, 2007).

Studies have revealed that very little has been done in the field of supervision and monitoring of vocational education programme to ensure its proper implementation (Ahmed, 2000). To him, quality supervision of vocational education seems to be debilitated due to dissatisfaction experienced by supervisors in the course of doing his work. This is demonstrated in many ways including non-payment of transport allowance, delay in promotion, irregular payment, lack of conducive physical working environment (McClellan, 2008; Etudor-Eyo & Etor, 2009).

According to Rao and Rao (2007), good working conditions constitute a means of motivating employees for higher productivity. It is often noticed that when workers are exposed to favourable working conditions, they feel satisfied and encouraged to put in more effort in performing their jobs efficiently. For as Rao and Rao put it, working conditions may include bonus, good housing policy, medical services, canteen services, educational facilities, recreation facilities, good remuneration, retirement benefits like gratuity, pension, workman’s compensation and cooperative credit.

Once any of these conditions is lacking, employees are more likely to be dissatisfied and express same, they concluded. Van den Ban and Hawkins (2001), Greson and Liversey (2006), confirmed that this is why the desired objectives of vocational education supervision has not been realized. Writing on working conditions and workers’ performance, Ekpo (2006) and NUT (2009) revealed that a pleasant and attractive working condition forms part of the worker’s resource power, which manifests in is personal power. Also contributing, Oyesola (2000) lamented that workers who are exposed to dissatisfying and shabby treatment perform their job poorly; this explains why supervision of vocational education is grappling at the formative stage. Studies confirmed

that vocational education supervision has suffered setback and this has adversely affected its effective implementation (Olaitan, 2007; Osuala, 2004). This goes to confirm that there is strong correlation between working conditions and quality of vocational education supervision.

Conclusion

On the basis of the reviewed literature, it can be concluded that favourable working and learning conditions lead to increased job performance and learning practices while unfavourable conditions affect negatively. Also poor working conditions of supervisory personnel have greatly hampered effective implementation of vocational education programmes.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are offered:

1. Educational policy planners should provide adequate funds and conducive teaching and learning environment for programmes' implementations.
2. Those involved in the supervision of vocational education should be given well drawn-out plan of action and time frame to guide them in performing their job.
3. Ministry of Education should adequately monitor and supervise the progress of implementation of supervision of vocational education programme.
4. Policy planners on vocational education should find out problems arising from the supervisory practices and deploy strategies to solve them.

Educational implications of the work

Given the fact that quality supervision is not effectively carried out in the teaching and learning of vocational education due to poor working conditions, a lot of negative outcomes are bound to occur in this area. Firstly, teachers will not be able to impart required knowledge to the students since they are not properly supervised. The quality of education given to students would be sub-standard and this would make them irrelevant and non-functional in the world of work as demanded in this era of technological advancement and socio-economic environment. Furthermore, inadequate supervision of vocational education programmes will not make for effective implementation.

Another important implication of this work is that millennium development goal of Nigeria becoming technologically developed and internationally relevant in the world of work and the global environment by the year 2020 has not been realized.

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