

## ASSESSMENT OF THE VOCATIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAMMES IN NIGER STATE: AN OVERVIEW

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### ABSTRACT

*This study was designed to assess the vocational education programmes in Niger state. The study covered all vocational training centers in the state. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data from 63 respondents which comprised of 54 teachers and 9 administrators of these vocational training centers. Three research questions guided the study. Mean and standard deviation were used to analyze the data collected. The cut-off point for the mean to be accepted was fixed at 2.50. The result indicated that vocational training centers have inadequate equipment and infrastructure for practical work; student enrolment in the programme is decreasing over the years; parents do not encourage and support their children to undertake vocational education programmes; the general societal attitude towards vocational training is not encouraging; vocational educational programmes in Niger state are grossly underfunded. Based on the findings, the following were recommended among others: The state government should partner with the community in the provision of adequate facilities, infrastructure and equipment for vocational programme, the state government should improve in funding of vocational education, parents should encourage and give their children sufficient financial support in the programme.*

### INTRODUCTION

Vocational education is as old as mankind. This is so because since the creation of mankind, there have been concerted efforts to meet the changing demands of the society via manipulative skills. Vocational education according to Makama (2005) is that type of education that deals with the development of abilities, understanding attitudes, work habits and appreciation needed by a worker to enter into and to progress in an employment in useful and productive basis. Vocational education includes preparation for employment in any occupation for which specialized education is required, for which there is a societal need and which can most appropriately be done in schools (Osuala 2004). It therefore means that, the establishment of any vocational education programme should be based on the needs of the society and that of the individual in particular. Consequently, graduates of any vocational programme can be assessed by finding answer to the following questions:

- Are the individuals trained in these programmes able to find employment in occupation in which they have been trained?

- Are they doing well in their place of employment?

Vocational education facilitates the provision of skills and knowledge of mankind in order for him to cope with the changing demands within the society. Olaitan (1996) asserted that this form of education is deliberately designed to help man improve his skills in a chosen occupation. Vocational education is crucial in creating employment, improving the quality of life and limiting the incidence of social vices due to joblessness. It is stated in the National Policy on Education (FGN, 2004) that this type of education is understood to be a means of preparing for occupational field and a method of alleviating poverty.

The type of education described above can only be effectively provided when specified minimum standards are followed. These standards commonly referred to as principles of vocational education according to Ogwo and Oranu (2006) must be given serious consideration in the development and implementation of vocational education curriculum. They include the following:

- The training environment is the working environment itself or replica of the working environment.
- The training jobs are carried on in the same way as in the occupation itself.
- The trainee is trained specifically in the manipulative and thinking habits required in the occupation itself.
- The training helps the trainee to capitalize his/her interest and abilities to the highest possible degree.
- The training is given to those who need it, want and are able to profit by it.
- Adequate repetitive training in experience from the occupation enables right habits of doing and thinking to the degree necessary for employment.
- The instructor is himself a master of the skills and knowledge he/she teaches.
- Training is given on actual jobs and not on exercises or pseudo jobs
- The content of the training, which is taught, is obtained from the master of the occupation
- Training should be oriented to the manpower need of the community.
- Vocational education at the secondary level is concerned with preparation of the individual for initial entry into employment; and
- Their needs not be a dualism between vocational and general education in terms of total exclusion of one from another.
- For any type of vocational education to be able to effectively prepare learners for entry into employment and advancing in chosen career as well as meeting the manpower needs of the society. Therefore,

it must adhere to the principles above as well as possess some characteristics which according to Asuquo (2005) include the following:

- Instructions in vocational education are received in the classroom on the job under the guidance and supervision of a teacher.
- It has a well planned and structured curriculum.
- There is an accepted and standard method of assessing performances of the learner.
- Relevant equipment /facilities are used to facilitate learning.
- It has a wide variety of vocational /occupation areas.

Formal vocational educational programme have been mounted in Niger State schools for the purpose of providing skill necessary for employment. However, this programme seems to have been deficient in developing requisite skills and abilities of the greater majority of its recipients. This is because the impact of many years of vocational educational delivery on students has not been adequately felt by the consumer public, especially the industries judging by the feedback in terms of the appreciation and absorption of vocational education products into the labour force. It has become obvious that the product of vocational education programmes in the state are no longer market friendly. Thus there is the need of programme assessment. Assessment according to Olaitan, Igbo, Ekong, Nwachukwu, and Onyemachi (1999) is a process that seeks to identify area of strengths and weakness of a particular programme. It is against this backdrop that it becomes necessary to assess vocational programme in Niger State with the aim of making the programme more relevant for the ever changing needs of the state.

#### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Experience has shown that the rate of unemployment is on the increase in Niger State



and Nigeria at large. The phenomenon is further compounded by changes in the labour market in Nigeria today. For instance, there are changes in the nature of work, shift in market demands, declining number of jobs requiring only physical strength and untrained mind, and the increasing number of jobs requiring perfect skills and special training. The state government has set up vocational programmes in schools aimed at creating jobs and reducing poverty. Non-governmental organizations in the state have tried to follow suit by establishing some short duration skill acquisition scheme. However, there seems to be no evidence of any adequate positive impact of these programmes on the society. Hence, this study was an attempt to assess the vocational programmes undertaken in vocational schools in Niger State.

#### **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The role of vocational educational in national development can not be overemphasized. Therefore, the overall objective of this study was to assess the vocational education programme in Niger State. Specifically, the study investigated:

1. The current state of vocational education programmes in Niger state
2. The constraints of vocational education programme in Niger state
3. The modalities to be adopted to improve vocational education programmes

#### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the current state of vocational education programmes in Niger state?
2. What are the constraints of vocational education programme in Niger state?
3. What are the modalities to be adopted to improve vocational education programmes in Niger state?

#### **HYPOTHESIS**

The following Hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance

1. There is no significant difference in the mean responses of vocational education administrators and teachers concerning the current state of vocational education programme in Niger State

#### **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

It is hoped that the findings of this study will provide information for vocational school administrators and the government on the best way to improve on the delivery of vocational school management through providing adequate facilities and infrastructure toward the realization of the overall aim of vocational education.

The study will also be of importance to the immediate community as they will be sensitized on the need for them to embrace vocational education which will make them to be actively involved in the establishment, maintenance and sustenance of vocational education programmes and institutions.

#### **SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

The study covered only the formal government vocational schools in Niger State. These include vocational training centres in Minna, Sabon Bwari, Katcha, Jebba and Rijau.

#### **METHODOLOGY**

The study assessed the vocational education programmes in Niger state. The research work covered all vocational training centres in the state which include vocational training centre in Minna, Sabon Bwari, Katcha, Jebba and Rijau. A survey research design was employed in the study. All teachers and administrators of these vocational training centres were used as respondents for the study. A 39 item questionnaire was used to collect data from respondents. The questionnaire was structured using a four-point scale response options. Mean and standard deviation were used to analyze the data collected. The cut-off point

for accepting or rejecting an item was fixed at 2.50. Therefore, items with mean rating below 2.50 were rejected and items with mean rating of 2.50 and above were accepted. The hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance using the t-Test statistic.

## RESULTS

Research Question 1: What is the current state of vocational education programme in Niger state?

**Table 1: Current State of Vocational Education Programme in Niger State.**

S/No	Item	$\bar{X}$	S.D	Remark
1	Vocational training centers have adequate equipment for practical	1.78	0.71	Rejected
2	Necessary facilities for effective programme are available	1.85	0.55	Rejected
3	There is adequate provision of infrastructure for effective teaching.	2.24	1.35	Rejected
4	Infrastructures provided are Adequately maintained.	2.32	1.41	Rejected
5	Instructional materials are adequately provided for the programme.	2.18	0.95	Rejected
6	Instructional materials are adequately Maintained.	2.42	0.95	Rejected
7	Teachers improvise tools and materials where necessary.	3.27	0.57	Accepted
8	Adequate personnel are provided for the programme	2.75	0.86	Accepted
9	Qualified personnel are available in the programme.	3.02	0.90	Accepted
10	There is good rapport between the administrators and the personnel	3.30	0.66	Accepted
11	Student enrollment in the programme is increasing over the years.	2.16	0.88	Rejected
12	Parent Teachers Association are in place and contributing to the success of the programme	2.76	0.78	Accepted
13	The training programmes are evaluated periodically to ensure that they are satisfying the need for their establishment.	2.90	00.87	Accepted

The results as can be seen in Table 1 shows six mean scores ranked above the cut-off point of 2.50 with the least standard deviation of 0.57 while seven mean scores ranked below 2.50

with the least standard deviation of 0.55. These indicated that greater number of respondents disagreed with the items identified as the current state of vocational education programmes in Niger State.

Research Question 2: What are the constraints of vocational education programmes in Niger State?

**Table 2: Constraints of Vocational Education Programmes in Niger State**

S/No	Item	X	S D	Remark
1	There is inadequate material resource input in the programme	3.08	0.79	Accepted
2	The utilization of available materials resources is not adequately monitored	2.15	0.88	Accepted
3	Human resources in vocational training centers are inadequate	2.41	0.86	Rejected
4	Student admitted into the programme are academically poor	2.86	0.96	Accepted
5	Student of vocational training centers do feel inferior to student of secondary schools	3.14	0.88	Accepted
6	Graduates of vocational training centers in the state do not easily find jobs in the labour market	2.60	1.01	Accepted
7	Graduates of vocational training centers are not self employable	2.06	0.91	Rejected
8	Parents do not encourage their children to undertake vocational education programme	3.06	0.91	Accepted
9	Parents do not adequately support their children financially in the programme	3.06	0.86	Accepted
10	The general societal attitude towards vocational training is not encouraging	3.24	0.80	Accepted
11	Teachers are ill-motivated to do their training work	3.16	0.76	Accepted
12	Curriculum of the vocational training programme is not relevant to the need of the immediate community.	2.55	0.93	Accepted
13	Vocational education programmes in Niger State are grossly underfunded	3.49	0.69	Accepted

As shown in Table 2, the mean rating of the responses of respondents ranges from 2.05 to 3.24. All the items, except items 20 & 25 ranked above the cut-off point. This is an indication that the respondents were in



agreement with the items posed to them as constraints of vocational education programmes in Niger State.

Research Question 3: What are the modalities for improving vocational education programmes in Niger State?

**Table 3: Modalities for Improving Vocational Education Programmes in Niger State.**

S/No	Item	X	S.D	Remark
1	The State government should partner with the community in the provision of adequate facilities, infrastructure and equipment for vocational programmes.	3.67	0.57	Accepted
2	Available tools, facilities and equipment should be properly maintained.	3.65	0.48	Accepted
3	Vocational programme teachers should improvise practical materials where necessary	3.18	0.82	Accepted
4	The State government should improve in funding of vocational education.	3.17	0.55	Accepted
5	Vocational schools should involve non-governmental organizations in generating fund for vocational education programmes	3.39	0.69	Accepted
6	Student given admission into vocational education programmes should be academically good.	3.22	0.75	Accepted
7	Parent should give their children sufficient financial support in the programmes.	3.70	0.46	Accepted
8	Community days should be organized periodically in which the society is re-oriented towards a better appreciation of the importance of vocational education training	3.70	0.46	Accepted
9	The community should be actively involved in the initiation, establishment, maintenance and sustenance of vocational education programmes.	3.50	0.50	Accepted
10	Vocational education teachers should be adequately motivated to increase productivity	3.81	0.40	Accepted
11	There should be a good human relation and rapport existing between the management and	3.66	0.48	Accepted

	personnel to aid smooth running of vocational schools			
12	Vocational training programmes should be evaluated periodically to ensure that they are satisfying the need for which they were established	3.67	0.48	Accepted
13	Results obtained from vocational programmes evaluation should be utilized in fine tuning the programme for more effectiveness.	3.68	0.47	Accepted

Table 3 revealed that all the items ranked above the cut-off point with the least mean and standard deviation of 3.22 and 0.40 respectively. This mean that respondents agreed with all the items identified as modalities for improving vocational education programmes in Niger State.

**HYPOTHESIS 1**

There is no significant difference in the mean response of vocational education administrators and teachers concerning the current state of vocational education programmes in Niger State.

**Table 4: t-Test of Mean Responses of Administrators and Teachers to the Current State of Vocational Education Programmes in Niger State**

Respondents	X	S D	N	df	t-cal	t-table
Administrators	2.54	0.80	9	61	0.18	2.00
Teachers	2.49	0.67	54			

The result in the table above shows the opinion of respondents on the current state of vocational education programmes. It can be seen that t-calculated value of 0.18 and table value of 2.00 were obtained. It is clear that t-cal value is less than t-table value. Therefore, the null hypothesis was upheld. Consequently, there is no significant difference in the mean responses of vocational education administrators and teachers concerning the current state of vocational education programmes in Niger state.

**FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**

The following are the findings based on the

data collected.

1. The current state of vocational education programmes in Niger State indicated that equipment and infrastructure necessary for the programme are inadequate which leads to decrease in student's enrolment in the programme.
2. The major constraints of vocational education in Niger State are lack of adequate funding and negative societal attitude towards vocational education.
3. Provision of necessary equipment infrastructure and re-orientation of the society towards a better appreciation of the importance of vocational education training were discovered among others as modalities for improving vocational education programmes in Niger State.

## DISCUSSION

Analysis from Table 1 revealed the current state of vocational education programme in Niger State. As shown, the present state of infrastructure and equipment in vocational schools in Niger State leaves much to be desired. There is gross inadequate facilities and infrastructure necessary for effective delivery of vocational education. The only available equipment are in a state of disrepair. It is obvious that teaching of most vocational subjects cannot be effective without workshops, classrooms, equipment and instructional materials. These findings are buttressed by Presser (1949) in Okoro (1993) when he noted that effective vocational training can only be given where the training jobs are carried out in the same way, with the same operations, the same tools and the same machines as in the occupations itself. If necessary tools and machines are not in place, students will be ill equipped to gain or retain employment on graduation. It was also revealed that though adequate and qualified personnel are available in the programme, student's enrolment in the programme is decreasing over the years. This trend may be due to lack of adequate facilities and poor

infrastructure as revealed in the finding of the study.

Table 2 revealed the constraints of vocational education programmes in Niger State. The finding showed that there is the problem of poor societal attitude towards vocational training. The community has not shown enough will-power to support vocational training. This is due to the fact that over the years low prestige is being accorded vocational education. This is supported by Adigun (1997) who asserted that technical education (which is a subset of vocational education) was believed to be for the drop-outs or low intelligent students. It may be because of this trend that parents do not encourage and support their children to enroll into vocational education programme. However, with the problem of poverty and unemployment in the society, parents will realize the importance of vocational training over time. It is in this regard that Ogwo and Oranu (2006) noted that the higher the unemployment rate among school leavers, the better recognition that will be accorded vocational education.

Another issue is the lack of adequate equipment and facilities necessary for the programme which have been persistently aggravated by poor funding and consequently low quality students. It is worthy of note that the poor funding of vocational education has created a wide gap between the intended and the implemented policies of the National Policy on Education.

The results emerging from Table 3 revealed that respondents agreed with all the items presented as the possible modality to be adopted towards improving vocational education programmes in the state. These modalities as revealed in the result include the following among others: The state government should improve in funding of vocational education, parent should give their children sufficient financial support in the programme, community days should be organized periodically in which the society is re-oriented toward a better appreciation of the importance of vocational education training; and the



community should be actively involved in the initiation, establishment, maintenance and sustenance of vocational education programmes. These responses are in total agreement with the assertions of Okoro (1993) who stressed that effective vocational education cannot be offered when minimum standards are not met.

The t-Test of the hypothesis proved that there is no significant difference between the mean ratings of vocational education administrators and teachers on the current state of vocational education in Niger State. This mean that both groups agreed on the current state of vocational education in the state and thus data generated is valid for the study from both points of view.

### CONCLUSION

The vocational education programmes set up by Niger State government are aimed at providing skills necessary for employment and poverty reduction. This study found out that this objective is not being achieved due to constraints ranging from poor societal attitudes, insufficient funding to decay in infrastructure among others. The study further revealed that partnership between the state government and the community, towards the provision of adequate facilities, improved funding by the state government and the involvement of the community in the initiation, establishment, maintenance and sustenance of vocational education programmes will definitely lead to the success of the vocational education programmes in the state.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The state government should partner with the community in the provision of adequate facilities, infrastructures and equipment for vocational programmes.
2. The state government should improve in funding of vocational education.
3. Parents should give their children

sufficient financial support in vocational education programme.

4. Community days should be organized periodically in which the society is re-oriented towards a better appreciation of the importance of vocational education.
5. Vocational training programmes should be evaluated periodically to ensure that they are satisfying the need for which they were established.
6. Results obtained from vocational programme evaluation should be utilized in fine tuning the programme for more effectiveness.

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