

SUPERVISION AS A VEHICLE FOR VOCATIONALIZING SECONDARY SCHOOL EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The socio-economic status of a nation is greatly dependent on the level of development of the nation. Thus, for any nation to be recognized as wealthy or economically viable, its citizens must be knowledgeable and skilled to positively influence the industrial and agricultural sectors. This simply means that, the society through her citizens must be industrially buoyant, agriculturally sufficient, and technically up to date. These can only be achieved through an effective vocational education programme. It is obvious that, every educational enterprise is geared towards the realization of some specific goals and objectives. How these goals and objectives are attained is the function of the support services that have been put in place in order to ensure desirable outcome, Supervision is one of such services. It is on this note that, this paper discusses supervision as a vehicle for vocationalizing secondary school education in Nigeria. Its focus is on the concept of supervision/vocational education, government effort at vocationalizing secondary education in Nigeria, the role of supervision, and challenges facing vocational education. Recommendations were made to address the challenges of vocationalized secondary education in Nigeria.

Keywords: *Supervision, Vocational Education and Secondary Education*

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Introduction

It is obvious that every educational enterprise is geared towards the realization of some specific goals and objectives. How these goals and objectives are attained is the function of the support services that have been put in place in order to ensure desirable outcome, Supervision is one of such services. Supervision is a management function that tends to look at how well what has been set out to be accomplished, is being accomplished and what assistance is desired. School supervision occupies a unique place in any educational system. It is a major component of quality monitoring system introduced by school administrators to improve educational quality (Eneasator & Azubike 2009). In Nigeria, supervision started from the need to improve the existing mission schools. It was believed that there were many unqualified teachers in the schools, hence, the need for supervision, which will help identify such teachers and help them overcome their teaching difficulties. Adesina (1977) states that the genesis of supervision in Nigeria is one of evolution, tracing it to the beginning of the colonial period when a new educational Ordinance and code, which became effective on May 26, 1926. The main provisions include the keeping of a register of teachers. Voluntary agencies were empowered to appoint supervisors. It was later enshrined in the National Policy on Education as a sure way of improving the standard of education in the country NPE (FRN, 2004).

The global changes in the world provide Nigeria with great opportunity to develop her educational system to meet the challenges of the 21st century. The technological development of Nigeria depends on the available vocational and technical know-how of her citizens. After the Nigerian civil war in 1970s, both the military and civilian regimes in Nigeria have made spirited efforts at vocationalizing secondary school education in Nigeria. The military regime appeared determined to leave its greatest imprint on the education system of the nation. Truly, education was beset with many problems at that period deriving from the past. Among these problems were, educational imbalance, low level of enrolment ratio, shortage of qualified teaching staff, qualitative defects, among others.

At the secondary school level, inadequate exposure of secondary school students to science and mathematics, vocational and technical education and lack of proper supervision of the vocational and technical education programmes in our secondary schools, lack of training equipment and inadequate trained personnel to operate these equipment's and the mismanagement of funds meant for the purchase and maintenance of these equipment, These have contributed to poor quality of educational background of the secondary school products to meet with the demands of modern day technology. It is on this note that this paper tries to look at supervision as a vehicle for vocationalizing secondary school education in Nigeria. Thus, the effective supervision of vocational and technical education programmes in our secondary schools will serve as a vehicle to elevate the nation above subsistence level, provide a solid base for a healthy, vibrant, diversified and indigenous economy, which mitigate the over dependence on foreign economy.

Concept of Supervision

Supervision has been defined in varied ways by different schools of thought. Literally, supervision is a process of overseeing the work being carried out by an individual with the aim of helping other persons achieve a desired target. According to Ogunsaju (1983) supervision is derived from a Latin word "super video" which means to oversee the author further, defines school supervision as the process of bringing about

improvement in instruction by working with people, who are working with pupils. Nwankwo (1992) describes educational supervision as a process or act of seeing to it that, the policies, principles and methods established for achieving the objectives of education are properly and successfully carried out Nwankwo further states that, the process involves using expert knowledge and experience to oversee, evaluate and cooperatively improve the conditions and methods of doing things connected with the teaching and learning in schools.

Ojogwu (2001) explains that, supervision creates the awareness of sound education philosophies in teachers and makes them to be aware of educational policies and reforms in schools. Okeke (2004) sees supervision as an activity whose ultimate purpose is the promotion and development of favourable setting for teaching and learning. In the same vein Nwaogu, (1980) sees supervision as an activity primarily and directly, concerned with studying and improving the conditions which surround the learning and growth of students and teachers. Based on these definitions, it is obvious that, supervision is an indispensable tool in the improvement and achievement of any educational programme, which goes to show the importance of supervision in the attainment of educational goals and objectives. It is on this note that, this paper looks at supervision as a vehicle for vocationalizing secondary school education in Nigeria.

Concept of Vocational Education

The socio-economic status of a nation is greatly dependent on the level of development of the nation. Thus, for any nation to be adjudged a wealthy or economically viable, its citizens must be knowledgeable and skilled to positively influence her industrial and agricultural sectors (Nwabudike 2002). This he said means that, the society through her citizens must be industrially buoyant, agriculturally sufficient, and technically up to date. These can only be achieved through an effective vocational education programme. Vocational Education, according to, Ogwo (1999) is that aspect of general school curriculum designed for the acquisition of knowledge, attitude and skills necessary for securing principles and innovations which are necessary for a given occupation. Olaitan (1986) explains that vocational education is the aspect of education concerned with the development of skills, knowledge and attitude required for success in any useful occupation. In the same vein, Hornby (2005) appreciates vocational to mean, "connected with skills, knowledge and other attributes that one need to have in order to do a particular Job". Vocational education could then mean the teaching and learning connected with the skills, knowledge, habits, and attitudes, needed for performing a job. On the other hand, Fagbemi (1988) sees it as a positive and practical application of science concepts, skills, device, tools and implements for application by labour in the process of production of material needs of the society. To, Awotunde (1994), it is the education that deals with the application of science and mathematics, knowledge, tools and skills in an attempt by man to satisfy his wants by human action on physical objects.

Elsewhere, Taylor (1993) defines vocational-technical education as a field of study which encourages the application of scientific principles and innovations while at the same time promoting the development and application of new sources of power. In the same way, UNESCO (2001) sees vocational and technical education training as:

A comprehensive term referring to those aspects of the educational process involving in addition to general education, the study of technology and related sciences and the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding and knowledge relating to occupation in various sectors of economic and social life(p:150).

In supporting this view, the National Policy on Education (2004) sees vocational and technical education as the aspect of education that leads to the acquisition of practical and applied skills as well as basic scientific knowledge. Vocationalized secondary education, according to Psacheropoulos and Loxley (1985), refers to a curriculum which remains overwhelmingly general or academic in nature, but which includes vocational or practical subjects as a minor portion of students' timetable during the secondary school course. Closely related are "diversified curriculum" For the purpose of this paper, vocationalized secondary education can be seen as that area of study designed to instill in an individual the skills, attitudes and knowledge that will enhance his/her chances of making meaningful contributions to the society after secondary school education.

Government Efforts at Vocationalizing Secondary School Education in Nigeria

Government in practical terms showed its determination to bring education under public control and management, after the Nigerian civil war in 1970s. The military regime appeared determined to leave its greatest imprint on the education system of the nation. Truly, education was beset with many problems at that period deriving from the past. Among these problems were the educational imbalance, low level of enrolment ratio, shortage of qualified teaching staff, qualitative defects among others. At the secondary school level, inadequate exposure of secondary school students to science and mathematics contributed to poor quality educational background for the secondary school products to meet the demands of modern day technology. In an attempt to address the problems facing Nigerian education, the federal government produced a document referred to as, National Policy on Education (1977). This document emphasizes the need to fashion secondary school education towards science and technical education.

As a result of the urgency for technological development, technical education received special attention. Technical colleges showed high rate of development both in the number of institutions and their improvement in facilities. The number of the institutions was 23, and enrolment was about 35, 777 in 1979/80 (Anene, Igboachi & Ilorah, 1998). Other measures taken in the promotion of vocational education included 50% matching grant to states for vocational education institutions, and overseas sponsorship for large number of Nigerians to study technical education (Anene, Igboachi & Ilorah, 1998). The government also supplied technical equipments and machinery to secondary schools, overhauled and reviewed science and technology in primary schools, junior and senior secondary schools.

Above all, the promotion of the National Education Technological Centre, (NETC), the upgrading of the National Science and Technology Development Agency, (NSTDA), established by Decree No.5 of 1977 by the Federal Military government christened Ministry of Technology and the National Board for Technical Education, (NBTE), was established in 1977. The board had 24 members drawn widely from organizations and institutions which do benefit from or provide technical education. It was given wide range of functions which included among others to:

- i. Advise the Federal Government on all aspects of technical and vocational education
- ii. Co-ordinate activities on all aspects of technical and vocation education
- iii. Determine the need of the country on all aspects of skills and manpower
- iv. Receive and allocate grants to Polytechnics and Colleges of Technology
- v. Others included determination of standard certification, conditions of service for staff, review of programmes, propagation of the development of technical education among the populace. The headquarters of the board was located in Kaduna.

In the same vein, in September, 1976, under the leadership of the then military head of state, Lt. General Olusegun Obasanjo, Universal Primary Education (UPE) for the entire country was launched. When the so much orchestrated UPE programme was launched, all eyes were focused on seeing it implemented. The 6-3-3-4 system of education gave much attention to Vocational and Technical Education. Enrolment was put at 70% for Science and technology as against 30% for others. It is generally agreed that its re-launch was indeed the greatest mile-stone in the history of organized education in Nigeria. It was a scheme that was indispensable for progressive leadership and enlightened society. The taking off of the new secondary school structure of 3-3 in 1982/83 marked the beginning of science and technology in our education system.

The implication of the 3-3 structure of secondary education was that, the first three years of secondary would lay the foundation for general, technical and vocational education for junior secondary school level, while the senior secondary would have diversified institutions which would include among others, technical and vocational secondary school institutions. 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 and Shorthand, Principles of Accounts, Commerce, Woodwork, Technical Drawing, Basic Electronics, and Auto-Mechanics came into being in Nigerian secondary schools. However, by the end of this period, the new secondary school structure had hardly taken off except in the then 41 Federal Government colleges and in about five states, nor were there signs that states were seriously preparing for the new system (Anene, Igboachi and Ilorah, 1998).

Another government effort at vocationalizing secondary school education in Nigeria, was with the launching of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) in 1999, by President Olusegun Obasanjo according to NPE (FRN, 2004). This scheme was launched with the following objectives:

- i. The provision of free universal and compulsory basic education for every Nigerian child of school age.
- ii. Ensuring the acquisition of the appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, manipulative, communicative and life skills as well as the ethical, moral and civic values needed for laying a strong foundation for lifelong learning.
- iii. Development in the entire citizenry a strong consciousness for education and a strong commitment to its various promotions.
- iv. Reducing drastically the incidence of drop out from the formal school system (through improved relevance, quality and efficiency) and
- v. Catering for young persons who for one reason or another have had to interrupt their school (p: 13-14).

In recognition of the above objectives, Obanya (2000) explains that UBE is conceived as a programme with a strong emphasis on all round development of its beneficiaries. A critical look at the second objective of the UBE programme, will tell one of the desire of the Government in vocationalizing secondary school education. Among the knowledge needed to be acquired through this scheme is that of manipulative skills, which the only sure way to achieve this is through technical and vocational education. It is also important to note that, government effort has been complimented by well to do Nigerians, corporate bodies, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's), usually through donations, scholarships and giving of grants.

The Role of Supervision in Vocationalizing Secondary Education in Nigeria

Supervision as earlier defined is a process of overseeing the work being carried out by an individual with the aim of helping other persons achieve desired target. It is also a component of quality monitoring. It is an indispensable tool in the improvement and achievement of any educational programme. The success or failure of any educational enterprise depend among other factors, upon the supervision of such enterprise be it a school or an organization. Education has been recognized as a necessary instrument for the development of any nation, for this reason any nation that desires to develop must put in place quality educational system. School supervision is primarily designed to achieve this goal of quality monitoring.

The importance of supervision of instruction at the secondary school level of Nigeria's educational system has been articulated in clear terms by the Federal Government of Nigeria including the roles and importance of the services of the supervisory and inspectorate arms of the ministry at the Federal Ministry of Education as stated in the National Policy on Education (FRN 2004:55) and the working papers relating to the planning and execution of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) Programme nationwide. It should be noted that service to education of supervisory activities are now much more recognized in Nigeria because of the recognized needs for improvement of instruction in all secondary schools throughout the country, such as improvement of the curriculum. The modern environment today is constantly experiencing changes, and such changes demand corresponding changes in things taught in secondary schools throughout the country.

The fact that the National Policy on Education also acknowledges the role of supervision in any school set-up has as well been articulated by authorities. For instance, the comment made by Nwaogu (1980) that:

the Nigerian society in the 1980's is making exciting demand upon the public school in demand for quality education. The continuing explosion of man's desire for knowledge staggers the imagination and forces increasing need for intellectual and vocational specialization in a highly complex society. It is impossible for one to be cognizant of the broad categories of man's knowledge in a life time, let alone master any significant amount of this accumulated knowledge of mankind. And yet man is a total being an entity. He must be able to co-ordinate his various experiences into a meaningful whole if he is to lead a productive live and be reasonably adjusted physically, mentally, socially and emotionally (p:8).

Since the school curriculum represents ideally the distillation of man's most important experiences, ideal attitudes, and hopes, this life blood of the educational institution demands much careful study and decision-making today in Nigeria than ever before. Thus, the need for supervision, as it seems destined to play an essential role in deciding the nature and content of curriculum in selecting the school organizational patterns and learning materials to facilitate teaching and in evaluating the entire educational process.

It is on this note that, Ogunsaju (1983) summarizes the essence of school supervision.

1. To know the performance of the teachers recruited to teach in the school system
2. To determine whether a teacher should be transferred, promoted, retained or dismissed.

3. To improve incompetent teachers.
4. To discover special abilities or qualities possessed by teachers in the school.
5. To provide guide for staff development
6. To know the effectiveness of classroom management by the teacher
7. To know the direction of the school, and
8. To assess the “Tone” of the school and identify some of its urgent needs (p:14)

It is in view of the place of supervision in the attainment of educational goals and the fact that it is the bedrock for quality education, that it becomes pertinent to note that, the vocationalization of secondary school education or the attainment of the goals and objectives of technical and vocational education in Nigeria Secondary schools, to a very large extent, depends on proper supervision.

Challenges Facing Vocational Education in Nigerian Secondary Schools

Vocational education in Nigerian Secondary schools is faced with a lot of challenges. Section 5, sub-section 24 and 25 of the National Policy on Education, (FRN 2004:19-20), reviewed the curriculum for junior and senior secondary schools but the implementation inadequate. It is on this note; this paper will look at other challenges facing vocational education in our secondary schools.

1. **Inadequate Supervision of Schools:** Adequate supervision by technical experts is necessary to reduce such attitude as truancy and absenteeism among teachers. It has been observed that some of the supervisors of secondary schools do not visit schools regularly. For vocational education to develop, supervision must be taken seriously.
2. **Government Commitment can be Unclear and Planning Haphazard:** Planning is very important as the achievement of vocational education at the secondary school level, is dependent on how well the syllabus and teaching methods are planned. Unfortunately, in Nigeria technical education teachers are not consulted adequately in all aspects of planning, organization and implementation of vocational education programmes.
3. **Inadequate Setting Up and Maintenance of Facilities, Equipment, and Tools:** Training equipment such as lathe machines, circular saw machines etc are inadequate and in some cases are not available. Most unfortunately the once available are not maintained, protected or cared for. The students as a result of this situation are ill equipped to face life after school.
4. **Attitude of parents and Society towards Vocational Education:** Vocational education is often seen as a dumping ground for the less privileged. Supporting this view, Olaitan (1978) notes that; there is an absolute discrimination, negligence and bias against vocational education by Nigerian society. This is traceable to the misconception that vocational education is for the handicapped, low intelligence, dropouts, delinquents and the poor.
5. **Inadequate finance:** Vocational Education is very expensive to run considering the cost of facilities, equipment and expendable materials. One than understand why government finds it difficult to fund vocational education.
6. **Lack of Well Trained Personnel (Teachers):** There are no enough trained teachers in this area in the secondary schools. The few once available have no textbooks. Enough publication has not been made in the area of vocational education by Nigerian Authors. Even where the desired textbooks are available, their prices are so exorbitant that most students cannot afford to buy them.

7. **Lack of Well-equipped Library:** One can hardly find a well-equipped library with relevant materials. It is obvious that for vocational and technical education to thrive in our secondary schools, there is need for well-equipped library.

Conclusion

It is obvious that, for any nation to be adjudged as wealthy or economically viable nation, its citizens must be knowledgeable and skilled to positively influence the industrial and agricultural sectors, our secondary education has to be fashioned towards the acquisition of technical and vocational education. To realize this dream, the Federal Government has under several regimes, introduced policies and programmes with the view of vocationalizing our secondary level of education. Among these are; the production of a National Policy on Education first in 1977, the introduction of the 6-3-3-4 system of education in 1982/1983, and the launching of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) in 1999 by President Olusegun Obasanjo. However, it is pertinent to note that, in spite of all these efforts by the government and other groups. Due to lack of supervision, these efforts are in futility. It is in view of this that, this paper recommends that supervision at this level of Education be taken seriously, as indeed it is a vehicle through which the dream and efforts of government at vocationalizing secondary education can be attained.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made:

1. Supervision should be taken seriously by the various bodies concerned with supervision e.g. the Federal and States Ministries of Education, through their inspectorate and supervisory units in the Ministries and the principals of the various secondary schools;
2. Funds should be made available by government to the supervisory bodies of the Ministries of Education for logistics and other assignment for effective supervision;
3. Both individuals and corporate bodies should help the government in funding vocational education;
4. Government must show commitment in provision of adequate infrastructure to schools, and schools also should be properly equipped for teaching and learning of Vocational and Technical Education;
5. Instructional materials for the teaching of technical and vocational-related subjects should be provided by the government and other stakeholders;
6. Libraries should be built in schools, and also well equipped with relevant and current books and Journals;
7. Adequate enlightenment campaigns should be carried out in society generally about the importance of technical and vocational education and the fact it is not just meant for a particular class of people in the society;
8. Students should be sponsored to attend workshops, seminars, conferences, and refresher courses, and should be taken on field trips that are related to vocational and technical education;
9. Vocational and Technical Education teachers should be well remunerated through payment of special vocational and technical education allowance;
10. Professional and experienced teachers should be employed to teach vocational and technical subjects;

11. Regular training and re-training programmes in form of seminars, conferences, in-service training programmes, short courses and workshops, should be organized at regular intervals to simulate teachers' interest in vocational and technical subjects.

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