

# Functional Curriculum in Vocational and Technical Education for Youth Empowerment

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## Abstract

The purpose of this research is to look at technical and vocational education curricula. In Nigeria, vocational and technical education is a programme that aims to give young people long-term empowerment. The importance of vocational and technical education for economic growth and development cannot be overstated. The following paper subheadings addressed the subject: Nigerian technical and vocational education, the use of functional technical and vocational curricula, barriers to functional technical and vocational education in Nigeria, and the promotion of technical and vocational education curriculum for youth empowerment are all discussed. Following the conclusion of the paper, recommendations for improving the vocational and technical education programme were made. One suggestion is that the government appoint inspectors from the Ministry of Education or form an implementation committee to advise it on better ways to monitor, manage, and run vocational and technical education programmes.

**Keywords:** Functional Curriculum, Vocational and Technical Education, Youth Empowerment

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Date of Submission: 24-09-2022

Date of Acceptance: 08-10-2022

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## I. Introduction

Huge investments in the 1985-introduced science and technology core curriculum, which is currently being used in schools all over the country, demonstrate how crucial the use of vocational and technical education is as a requirement for human, material, socioeconomic, and technological growth. Vocational education prepares students for the workforce. It prepares individuals to find rewarding employment.

These preparations are successful when instruction and implementation result in functional learning (Nwachukwu, 2001). Concerns have been expressed at various times by various people and governments about the importance of improving vocational and technical education, as well as its utility and long-term youth empowerment of any nation in essentially all fields of human endeavour.

The child develops the capacity to take charge of his well-being, but he won't do so by simply accepting justifications for why vocational education is crucial for work or by simply preparing factual information about it in a classroom. We must give possibilities for young people to study and adapt to a lifestyle that is strongly based on the vocational and technical education curriculum rather than simply guaranteeing their right to pursue vocational education. The young person must take an active role in the learning process to do this.

Umuru (1999) defined the curriculum as "all of the educational opportunities provided to the student under the guidance of the teacher.". The issue of inadequate curricula and education in such governments is consistently acknowledged as the issue that most developing countries face after gaining independence. The technical college environment offers students a wide range of experiences, including vocational and technical education. Teachers instruct and the curriculum contains these instructions, resulting in diverse staff experiences.

According to Mbaioiga (1992), classroom instruction should focus on providing students with technical, scientific, and technological knowledge. Furthermore, he emphasised the importance of instruction as planned instruction between teachers and students that results in effective learning outcomes. While some educators argue that a solid curriculum is necessary for quality education, others argue that instruction is a component of the curriculum.

### **Technical and Vocational Education in Nigeria**

Many groups and cultures in Nigeria had already created their systems of informal, formal, and vocational education before the arrival of the British. Through the apprenticeship system, young boys and men were connected to knowledgeable craft people and learned a variety of trades and skills such as carpentry, masonry, blacksmithing, foundry, carving, textile design and dyeing, and so on. Depending on the trade, the master's skill, competency, and experience, as well as the ward's ability and performance, such apprentices could spend three to seven years in training. Following the completion of such training, the graduate apprentice was assisted by his family in purchasing the tools and regional equipment required to begin his trade. He intended to hire more apprentices to assist him with his new arrangement. (1995, Odugbesan).

When one examines the history of technical and vocational education in Nigeria, one can see how educational curricula were influenced by social and political pressures to achieve the then-ruling government's political or social objectives (Umoru, 1999). Aiming to further the vested interests of the colonial masters, curricula were adopted and improved upon with the arrival of the British in Nigeria throughout the colonial period. Following Nigeria's independence in 1960, it was shown that the colonial educational system was no longer applicable and suitable for the country's population since it was unable to produce the kind of a workforce needed for the advancement of society. The colonial educational curricula did not accomplish the anticipated sustainable youth empowerment.

The 6-3-3-4" system of the New National Policy on Education was developed to assist individuals in becoming contributing members of society (N.P.E. 2004). The social obligations that technical colleges or other institutions are meant to fulfil should be considered while choosing a model for the vocational and technical education curriculum. The National Policy on Education's national objectives from 2004 state that the curriculum must be relevant to societal expectations.

To achieve continuous youth development and national empowerment for all people to promote change, the Federal Government chose to implement this new educational plan of 6-3-3-4.

### **Functional Vocational and Technical Curriculum Implementation**

According to Nwachukwu (2001), a few elements are essential for the implementation of functional vocational and technical education curricula. The following list and explanation include the factors:

1. Experiences that are fundamental to the learner's life must be the foundation of and included in the vocational and technical education curriculum. Vocational and technical education is divided into stages, and as students progress from pre-vocational to vocational concepts and characteristics, they develop new ideas, shape their beliefs, and can apply these to solve problems. These kids can continuously investigate and try out different routes to their desired destinations. These students will learn in this way, and learning in this way necessitates analytical thinking. These children can learn new information that is pertinent to solving their issues through this method. Given that individuals located the items on their own and found them valuable for addressing their immediate difficulties, they must be intrinsic to them. Because the students have incorporated the knowledge into their repertoire of skills and knowledge, these intrinsic elements will stay internalized in the pupils

2. The vocational and technical education programmes should be customised. Students at technical colleges shouldn't be unfamiliar with the curriculum for technical and vocational education in Nigeria, nor should it be chosen exclusively based on tradition. The topics of today, particularly those that impact our communities, society, and the entirety of the human experience, must be covered in the vocational and technical school curricula. Nwachukwu asserts that modernising vocational and technical education requires modifying the curriculum to reflect current conditions in Nigeria. The youth of Nigeria must be educated for lasting and independent empowerment if vocational and technical education is to become more humane. Materials for this vocational and technical education curriculum should be developed based on the needs and environmental requirements of Nigeria for long-term youth empowerment.

3. The students must be prepared to learn what is being taught. The student's readiness to learn determines their capacity to learn. There is a time when learning is happening in any teaching-learning scenario. Even when exposed to the same learning environment, people have different learning curves. A variety of factors are known to influence children's readiness to learn. Some of the contributing factors are age, family history, dietary status, and fatigue or lack thereof. Others include learners' attitudes and beliefs. Thus, the ability of the instructor to recognise learning-related challenges that students exhibit during classroom and workshop instruction and use that knowledge to structure the curriculum of vocational and technical education in Nigeria is the key to effective teaching.

4. The growth of thought processes must be a goal of educational experiences. Thinking in technical and vocational education is the process of realising issues and coming up with solutions. It has been described as all the cognitive steps a person takes before acting to weigh their options before making a choice. It is described as

the entire problem-solving process, which is particularly important for handling problem-solving scenarios or for carrying out duties in vocational and technical education situations, according to Nwachukwu (2001).

### **Factors Militating Against Implementation of Functional Technical Education in Nigeria**

The availability of technical education is just one of several issues hindering the proper implementation of functional technical education. According to Oranu (1990), one issue with technical education in Nigeria is the dearth of physical infrastructure. Technical colleges and the educational system struggle with a lack of resources and tools required to successfully teach science, technology, engineering, and math subjects (Aromolaron, 1985). According to Okoro (1991), the facilities for technical colleges, which include buildings, furnishings, tools, and materials, are insufficient for the effective application and utilisation of the technical and vocational education curriculum in these institutions. Inadequate instructional facilities and equipment, as well as the effective implementation of vocational and technical curricula, have been a source of concern for various individuals and governments over the years. The National Policy on Education in Nigeria specifies the functional vocational and technical education curriculum for long-term youth empowerment (2004). Technical institutions will use their equipment and other resources for adult and non-formal education, nighttime classes, and other purposes, such as developing a training programme for groups of traders and roadside mechanics, according to the policy. This would make the most of the equipment's use throughout a typical day of instruction. Several factors have a big impact on whether the objectives of a technical education curriculum are accomplished.

For long-term youth empowerment, the National Policy on Education also placed a strong emphasis on obtaining and implementing quality technical education (2004). The goal of the policy is:

- a. supplying skilled labour, particularly at the craft, advanced craft, and technical levels.
- b. Educate and equip those who will be financially independent with the essential abilities
- c. Offer the technological know-how and practical abilities required for the development of commerce, agriculture, and electronics.

Teachers and students are always brought up when discussing challenges that prevent the proper implementation of technical education because it is the teacher who uses the technological tools, resources, and facilities to train the students during the implementation of the technical college curriculum. Msue (1992) investigated the issues confronting secondary schools, technical colleges, and vocational institutions in Benue State, Nigeria. According to Muse, the main issues with the vocational and technical curriculum are a lack of teachers who are qualified to use the tools and equipment available in schools, both in terms of quality and quantity. He believes that teachers should be trained so that they can use the technical equipment in technical colleges effectively.

### **Promoting Technical Education Curriculum for Youth Empowerment**

Ezekwe (1990) contributed to the use of technical and scientific apparatus, as well as the development of technological material management in Nigeria. With this goal in mind, he worked with UNESCO to fund an international workshop on the administration of science tools and technology in Africa in February 1990. The workshop recommended that Nigeria establish an African Network of training institutions in the management and use of science and technology equipment for long-term youth empowerment. The International Project on Technical and Vocational Education (UNEVOC) addressed technical education concerns at Yaba College of Technology in Lagos, Nigeria's largest urban area. It was founded 47 years ago and currently enrolls 14,000 full-time and part-time students in its 24 departments, 5 schools, and 5 schools of engineering, environmental studies, applied sciences, management, and humanities.

About 98% of the National Board's technical education curriculum is accredited (NBTE). For the relevant training programmes and the execution of the curriculum for sustainable youth empowerment, it has been challenging to get equipment spare parts. It is challenging to get genuine spare parts to support the program's implementation and cater to the growing population of young people desiring technical education. It became difficult to meet the demand for equipment at the technical college because spare parts for replacing damaged parts during implementation and practical instruction were scarce.

According to Okorie (2000), many training machines in technical institutes may be inoperable for an extended period until components are obtained from the manufacturer. The Federal Government has already taken a significant step forward in this direction by establishing the Federal Science Equipment Production Centre in Enugu, Enugu State. The government made another effort to realise the goals of functional technical education for long-term youth development in Nigeria by opening a second campus in Minna, Niger State. The factories were supposed to produce over 200 pieces of science and technology equipment for use in primary, secondary, and postsecondary institutions.

According to Abdullahi, the federal science equipment centre in Ijanikin, Lagos, as well as those established by the states and several institutions, offer workshops on repairs, utilisation, maintenance, and ingenuity of technological equipment. This allows for long-term youth empowerment in Nigeria (1990).

## **II. Conclusion and Recommendations**

The goal of this study is to reevaluate the technical education curriculum in Nigeria to sustain youth empowerment. The author examined the goals of technical education in the National Policy on Education (2004). Nigeria's aspirations for vocational and technical education will remain unattainable unless the challenges posed by the current conditions are addressed. Therefore, the country must project emerging ideas for better curriculum implementation to achieve long-term youth empowerment for the country.

The following recommendations were made regarding how to implement vocational and technical education curricula better for the country's long-term youth empowerment.

1. The government should appoint inspectors from the Ministry of Education or form an implementation committee to efficiently monitor, manage, and implement the affairs of vocational and technical education in Nigeria.
2. Scholarships and research grants/loans should be made available to people working in the field of vocational and technical education to advance academically in the technical education programme and the goal of self-sufficiency and sustainable youth empowerment.
3. The government should train professionals and educators in competent vocational and technical education to operate advanced machinery and equipment throughout the delivery of technical college programmes, then utilise the instructors' newly acquired skills to educate and empower Nigerian youth.
4. Firms, non-governmental organisations, and private businesses should provide laboratories, equipment, workshops, facilities, and machinery in current technical colleges as part of the curriculum to ensure that the technical college programme is implemented efficiently.

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Paul Binaebi Igbongidi, Ph.D, et. al. "Functional Curriculum in Vocational and Technical Education for Youth Empowerment." *IOSR Journal of Economics and Finance (IOSR-JEF)*, 13(5), 2022, pp. 60-63.