



Evaluation of Vocational Education in Nigeria: A Review of the Roles of the Regulatory Bodies

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Abstract

Vocational education holds the key to the economic and industrial revolution of Nigeria in that it emphasises employable skills needed for self-reliance. It is currently gaining high level of acceptance in Nigeria. This is due to the increased commitment on the part of government to the proper management and evaluation of this all important type of education which holds the potentials for the socio-economic development of the nation. Much has been said and written on the need to train Nigerians to develop and acquire employable skills for self-reliance in the absence of white collar jobs for the teeming population of graduates from the conventional types of education hitherto provided by our tertiary institutions. This work examined the management of vocational educational right from the upper basic level to the tertiary level of our educational system. The roles of the various regulatory bodies viz: NUC, NBTE, NCCE and NABTEB were examined to give insight to the popularity of this skill-based education and as a way of determining the commitment of government to training Nigerians in employable skill conclusion was drawn that the regulatory bodies have fared well in their regulatory roles. Recommendations were made amongst which was the need for proper funding of vocational education programmes in Nigeria tertiary educational institutions.

Keywords: Vocational, Education, Skill-Based, NUC, NABTEB, NCCE, NBTE.

Introduction

Education is rightly perceived as the vehicle for effective human and national development. Wards in Ovbiagele and Igbinedion (2012) believe that “education is essential motive force for progress”. The duo is in agreement that educational institutions are centres for human betterment. There is no gain saying that education plays indispensable roles in the social and economic development of any nation. That education generally, plays a vital role in the socio-economic development of a nation reaffirms its perception as a social function.(UNESCO 2000)

According to Okoye (2002), an educated man is the gentleman who is socially, morally, intellectually and physically equipped to fit into, and is useful to himself and to the society. It follows therefore that to be able to fit into the society and be fully integrated into it, one need to acquire some vocational skills and competencies for self-reliance. This fact makes vocational education popular as a panacea to the social and economic challenges of nations, Nigeria inclusive.

Vocational education as contemplated in the Nigeria’s National Policy on Education is concerned with qualitative technological human resource development which is directed towards a national pool of skilled and self-reliant craftsman, technical and vocational fields (Okafor, 2011). This type of education is competency-based and aims at the acquisition of skills and sound scientific knowledge to be able to cope with the emergent demands of technology driven world.

Vocational Education is education based on occupation or employment. It is also known as Career and Technical Education or Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET). It is a type of education that prepares people for specific trades, craft and career at various levels from trade, craft, technician or professional positions in engineering, business, accountancy, nursing, medicine, architecture, secretary ship (Office Technology and Management) etc.

Craft vocations are usually based on manual or practical activities, traditionally non-academic, related to a specific trade, occupation or vocations. It is sometimes referred to as Technical Education as the trainee directly develops expertise in a particular group of techniques. In a sense, it may be used to refer to teaching in procedural knowledge. This can be contrasted with declarative knowledge as used in education in broader scientific fields which might concentrate on theory and abstract conceptual knowledge characteristic of the conventional tertiary education in Nigeria.

Vocational education could be at secondary, post-secondary or tertiary levels of education and may interact with the apprenticeship system. It is related to the age old apprenticeship system of learning which may be designed for many levels of work from manual trade to high knowledge work.

Over the years in Nigeria in particular, vocational education has gradually been given the attention it deserves. A number of government policies tend to justify the assertion that vocational education has come to stay and that it is a panacea to some of the nation’s economic and social problems. The recognition given vocational education has led to its introduction at both the secondary (upper basic) and tertiary levels in the nation’s educational system.

A number of agencies have been created also by the government to regulate vocational education in Nigeria. These agencies are so obvious and their activities affect everyone in the society directly or indirectly that one is interested in accessing their roles in the growth or popularity of vocational education in Nigeria both at the secondary and tertiary levels.

Unfortunately, many Nigerians may not be aware of this intervention by the Federal government through the various regulatory organs to standardize the dispensation of vocational education in Nigeria. A number of the

population through ignorance still patronize sub-standard training houses such as Computer Training Schools, Secretarial Colleges, Skills Acquisition Centres that have no proper certification of the appropriate agency. The consequences of this are that many of the trainees are not able to gain the required competencies needed by the industries, to be self-reliant or pursue programmes of further academic pursuit in their career line.

This work shall therefore, x-ray the expected roles of the various regulatory bodies of Vocational Education in Nigeria. It shall specifically highlight and give insight into the roles of:

- National University Commission (NUC)
- National Board for Technical Education (NBTE)
- National Commission for College of Education (NCCE), and
- National Business and Technical Examination Board (NBTE)
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National University Commission (NUC)

The National University Commission (NUC) was established in 1962 as an advisory agency in the cabinet office. However, in 1974 it became a statutory body and the first Executive Secretary, in the person of Prof. Jibril Aminu was than appointed by the Federal Government of Nigeria. The NUC is a parastatal under the Federal Ministry of Education (FME). It has a Governing Council and an Executive Secretary who is presently Prof. Julius Okojie who assumed office on August 3, 2006.

In the over forty-seven (47) years of its existence, the commission has transformed from a small office in the cabinet office to an important arm of government in the area of development and management of university education in Nigeria.

The Main Functions of the NUC

The NUC as a major Quality Assurance Agency in Nigeria performs the following functions:

- Granting approval for all academic programmes in Nigeria universities
- Granting approval for the establishment of all higher educational institutions offering degree programmes in Nigeria.
- Ensuring quality assurance of all academic programmes offered in Nigeria universities, and acts as the
- Channel for all external support to Nigerian universities.

The operations of the NUC is carried out through well-structured twelve (12) departments namely; Academic Standards, Inspection and Monitoring, Management Support Services, Students' Support Services, Research and Innovations, Information and Communication Technology, Finance and Accounts, Quality Assurance, Physical Planning and Development, Open and Distance Education, Liaison Office Department and the Executive Secretary's Office. Each of these departments is headed by a director.

As a quality assurance agency, two departments are very critical to its functions viz

- Quality Assurance Development and
- Inspection and monitoring.

Through the Quality Assurance department, the NUC plays the following roles.

- Co-ordination of accreditation visits to academic programmes at under-graduate to postgraduate levels.
- Co-ordination of Institutional accreditation in Nigerian universities
- Co-ordination of the development of new instrument used for accreditation exercises
- Periodic review of instruments used for programmes and institutional accreditation in Nigerian Universities and other degree awarding institutions.
- Promotion of institutional culture of quality assurance and self-analysis by encouraging universities to conduct internal 'mock' accreditation exercises.
- Responding to unique and advising the National's Universities Commission on all issues that relates to accreditation of academic programmes in Nigerian universities

The NUC through its Inspectorate and Monitoring Department set standards for the Nigerian university system. The department ensures continuous compliance with set standards. It ensures quality input, process and graduate input with the view to achieving National development and global competitiveness. The role of this department of the NUC is critical to ensuring the delivery of quality education at the university levels which includes vocational or skill-based degree programmes by:

- Monitoring and evaluating all universities with focus on such areas as academic briefs and master plan implementation, institutional management and governance, students and staff numbers, staff quality and mix, teaching and research quality, infrastructural inputs and other issues pertinent to quality assurance.
- Monitoring and inspection from time to time, the certificates awarded on approved programmes in order to maintain quality and standards.
- Collection and collation of information from universities that may assist in the inspection and ascertainment of compliance with standard prescribed by law.
- Facilitate and promote monitoring of newly established Universities by older ones.
- Development of database of students, staff and facilitate the monitoring and inspection activities of the Nigeria universities.
- Advise the universities on how to achieve efficient quality assurance in their activities.
- Advise universities on how to take advantages of the development of quality academic programmes, funding and research initiatives.

Beside these broad-based functions, it is clear that the NUC plays the under listed roles in the Nigerian university system:

- Monitors the level of compliance of with the provisions of the Bench-mark Minimum Academic Standards (BMAS) and other quality guidelines that may be laid down by government through the Commission from time to time.
- Undertakes regular inspection visits to universities in order to assess the levels of compliance with government policy on matters such as admission of qualified candidates through JAMB, Science/Arts ratio in admission, adherence to carrying capacity in curriculum implementation.
- Provide information on the state of universities and inter-university centres on area that requires remedial measures.
- Facilitate the emergence and development of centres of excellence in Nigerian universities through the promotion of best practices in University teaching, learning and research.
- Monitors compliance with government policy on satellite campuses and other illegal degree awarding institutions in Nigeria.
- Prepares periodic report on the state of the university education in Nigeria.

The National Board for Technical Education (NBTE)

Paragraph 2(1), 8(2) of Act No16 of 1993 captured the essence of the establishment of the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) in Nigeria. It states that “the responsibility for the establishment of Minimum Standards in Polytechnics, Technical Colleges and other Technical Institutions in the federation shall be vested in the Minister after consultation with the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) and thereafter the Board (NBTE) shall have responsibility for the maintenance of such standards.” “The board shall have powers to accredit programmes of all institutions mentioned above for the purpose of the award of National Certificates and Diplomas and other similar awards, and for entry into National and zonal examinations in respect of such institutions”

In tandem with its mandate, the Board is expected to play the under listed roles in the management of Vocational and Technical Education in Nigeria:

- Advise the Federal Government on and co-ordinate all aspect of Technical and Vocational Education falling outside the universities and to make recommendations on the National Policy necessary for the training of Technicians, Craftsmen and other middle level skilled manpower.
- Determine after consultation with the Nation Manpower Board, the Industrial Training Fund and such other bodies as it considers appropriate, the skilled and middle level manpower needs of the country in the industry, commercial and other relevant fields for the purpose of planning training facilities and in particular to prepare periodic master plans for the balanced and coordinated development of Polytechnics and such plan shall include:
 - The general programmes to be pursued by the polytechnics in order to maximize the use of available facilities and avoid unnecessary duplication while ensuring that they are adequate to the manpower need of the country.
 - Recommend for the establishment and location of new Polytechnics as and when considered necessary.
 - Inquire into and advice the Federal Government on financial needs, both current and capital of Polytechnics and other Technical Institutions to enable them meet the objectives of producing the trained manpower needs of the country.
- Receive block grant from the Federal Government and allocate them to Polytechnics in accordance with such formula as may be laid down by the Federal Executive Council.
- Act as the agency for channeling all external aids to Polytechnics in Nigeria.
- Advise on and take steps to harmonize every requirements and duration of courses at technical institutions.
- Lay down standard skills to be attained and to continually review such standards as necessitated by technological and national needs.
- Review methods of assessment of students and trainees and to develop a scheme of National Certification for technicians with ministries and organizations having technical training programmes.
- Undertake periodic review of terms and conditions of service of personnel in Polytechnic and to make recommendations thereon to the Federal Government of Nigeria.
- Collate, analyze and publish information relating to Technical and Vocational Education.
- Consider any matter pertaining to technical or technological education as may be referred to it from time to time by the minister
- Carry out such others activities as are conducive to the discharge of its functions.

The NBTE has five departments

- Human Resources
- Programmes
- Planning, Research and Statistics
- Finance and Accounts
- NBTE centre of Excellence for TVET

The Programmes of department constitute the main operational arm of the National Board for Technical Education in executing its key function of Quality Assurance and maintenance of National Academic Standard in Technical/Vocational Education and Training (TVET). Its function includes:

- To lay down and review as necessary entry requirements, durations of courses and skills attained in Technical and Vocational Institutions.

- To prepare guidelines on curriculum and course content and procedure for the evaluation of programmes, and National certification of Technicians, Craftsmen and Artisans.
- To propose ways of encouraging Technical and Vocational subjects in secondary schools.
- To advise on ways of enlightening the general public on the importance of Vocation and Technical Education.
- To lay down guidelines for and advise on programmes, to be accredited in all Polytechnics, technical colleges and other technical institutions in the Federation for the purpose of awarding of National Certificates and Diplomas and other similar awards, and for entry into National Examinations in respect of such institutions.
- To advise on ways and means of improving and developing the resources and materials for teaching and production in technical institutions.

National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCC)

The NCCE was established by Decree (now Act) of 17th February, 1989 (amended Act 12 of 1993) as a completion of tripod of excellence in the supervision of higher education in the country. The establishment of the commission was a resultant effect of the utmost importance accorded quality teacher education. Since its inception, the commission has continuously pursued goals of quality assurance in higher education. The pride of the commission is based on the seminal philosophy in the National Policy on Education which states that no education can rise above the quality of its teachers.

Functions of the Commission

The functions of the Commission shall be to:

- advise the Federal Government through the Minister and co-ordinate all aspects of teacher education programmes below degree levels;
- make recommendations on the national policy necessary for the full development of teachers education and the training of teachers;
- lay down minimum standards for all programmes of teachers education and accredit their certificates and other academic awards after obtaining therefrom prior approval of the Minister;
- approve guidelines setting out criteria for accreditation of all colleges of education in Nigeria;
- determine, after consultation with the National Manpower Board and other bodies it considers appropriate, the qualified teachers' needs of the country, for the purpose of planning training facilities and in particular, prepare periodic master plans for the balanced and coordinated development of Colleges of Education and such plans shall include:
 - the general programmes to be pursued by colleges of education, in order to maximise the use of available facilities and avoid unnecessary duplication, while ensuring that they are adequate to the manpower needs of the country;
 - recommendation to the Minister for the establishment and location of new Colleges of Education, as and when considered necessary;
 - recommendation to the Minister for upgrading of any College of Education to or derecognition of any College of Education, as a degree awarding institution;
- inquire into and advise the Federal Government on the financial needs, both recurrent and capital, of Colleges of Education to enable them to meet the objective of producing the trained qualified teachers for the country.
- receive block grants from the Federal Government, and allocate them to Colleges of Education in accordance with such formula as may be laid down, from time to time, by the President;
- act as the agency for channeling all external aids to Colleges of Education in Nigeria;
- advise on, and take steps to harmonize entry requirements and duration of courses at the Colleges of Education;
- lay down standards to be attained and continually review such standards;
- review methods of assessment of students and trainees and develop a scheme of national certification for the various products of Colleges of Education;
- undertake periodic review of the terms and conditions of service of personnel in Colleges of Education and make recommendations thereon, through the Minister, to the Federal Government;
- collate, analyze and publish any published information relating to teachers education in Nigeria;
- recommend to the Visitor of a college that a visitation be made to the college as and when it considers it necessary;
- consider any matter pertaining to teacher education as may be referred to it, from time to time, by the Minister; and
- carry out such other activities as are conducive to the discharge of its functions under this Act.

Supplementary functions of the Commission

In its role of advising on all aspects of teachers education, the Commission shall make recommendation as to how best to:

- stimulate and encourage pre-vocational technical, agricultural, business and home economics education and such other additional subjects considered necessary by the authority, as the case may be, in the primary schools and in junior and senior secondary schools, not only as a basis for creating early technological awareness, but also to provide suitable orientation for further education and training in technology and direct practical skills for earning a living;
- advise on and take measures to improve the immediate and long-term prospects of technical and business education teachers with respect to status and remuneration;

National Business and Technical Examination Board (NABTEB)

The National Business and Technical Examination Board was established in 1992 to domesticate craft level examination which were hitherto conducted by City and Guilds, Pitman's and Royal Society of Arts all of United Kingdom in accordance with the provisions of the National Policy on Education. Its establishment was the climax of an evolutionary process which span fifteen years from 1977 to 1992 and in which four governments panels at different times were set up to review the place and structure of public examinations in our educational system.

Each of the panel advocated and justified the multiplication of the Examinations Bodies and in particular, a separate body to perform the functions which NABTEB now performs. The process began with the findings of Justice Sogbetun Commission of Enquiry (1978) which was set up in response to public outcry on perceived inefficiency and unchecked leakages of public examinations. This was followed by the Angulu Commission which was set up as a result of WAEC's presentation to the House of Representatives Committee on Education in 1981 in which WAEC advocated the setting up of other Examination Boards in Nigeria "to reduce the burden of WAEC". The third was the Okoro Panel set up in 1989 to review Angulu Report. The fourth was the Prof. Akim Osiyalo's task force set up in 1991 "to develop a strategy to reduce the burden of WAEC and bring about greater efficiency in the conduct of public examinations in Nigeria.

The NABTEB under decree 70 of 1993 and other Examination bodies were thus established. Since its establishment, the findings of the Etsu Nupe Panel (1997), the Shonekan's Vision 2010 (1997) Report and the harmonized Report of the Estu Nupe Panel and Vision 2010 reports have supported, directly and indirectly, NABTEB existent.

Main Functioning NABTEB (Decree No. 70 for 1993)

NABTEB is charged with the following responsibilities:

- Conduct of Examination leading to the award of the:
 - National Technical Certificate (NTC)
 - Advanced National Technical Certificate (ANTE)
 - National Business Certificate (NBC)
 - Advanced National Business Certificate (ANBC)
 - Modular Trade Certificate (MTC): This is for persons who need to acquire skills in the following areas; motor mechanics work trade, catering craft trade, secretarial studies trade, book keeping trade.
- Take over the conduct of Technical and Business examinations hitherto conducted by the Royal Society of Arts of London, City and Guild of London and the West Africa Examination council.
- Issue results, certificates and make awards on examination conducted by the Board
- Conduct other specified examinations on behalf of or in collaboration with other examination bodies or agencies such as the London chamber of commerce or the institute of chartered Accountants of Nigeria etc.
- Conduct Common Entrance Examinations into Technical Colleges and allied institutions.
- Monitor, collect and keep records of continuous assessments in Technical Colleges, allied institutions towards the award of National Business and Technical Examinations.
- Conduct research, public statistical and other information in order to develop appropriate examinations, tests and syllabi in Technical and Business Studies.
- prepare and submit to the Secretary and annual report on standard of examinations and other related matters, and
- Carry out such other activities as are necessary or expedient for the full discharge of all or any of the functions conferred on it under the decree.

Conclusion

Generally, it can be stated that the various controlling bodies of vocational education in Nigeria; NUC, the NBTE, NCCE and NABTEB have had to rely on support from the Federal and State Governments and other stakeholders in its bid to improve on the quality of tertiary education and that of the graduates in Nigeria's university system and at the post basic level of the Nigeria educational system. They have performed very well in their monitoring and evaluation activities at the various levels. Controlling bodies have fared well and contributed immensely, though, not without some challenges.

In particular, the National Commission for Colleges of Education has ensured that teachers' education contributed immeasurably into National Development in pursuit of its objective. The NCCE had standardized and cautiously reviewed the curriculum of Colleges of Education. This constant review of the curriculum has strengthened the capacity of NCE graduates. The NUC, NBTE and NCCE lays down the minimum requirements for the University, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education and goes ahead to accredit their courses where such minimum standards are met. At the upper basic level, one can say that the certificates awarded by NABTEB are gradually gaining acceptance with increased awareness of their activities after initial resistance by some players in the educational sector.

Recommendations

Arising from this review and based on the observations and practical experience of the author, the following recommendations are offered:

- The activities of the various regulatory bodies should be properly publicized to create the needed awareness on their activities.
- The bodies responsible for evaluation of vocational education at the tertiary levels should address the incessant strike or restiveness in the affected institutions.
- The duration for study programmes should be standardized especially at the post-graduate levels

- Since these bodies are the channels of support for tertiary education, they should ensure proper and adequate funding of vocational education across programmes in Nigeria
- The criteria for appointment and elevation of Technologists, Instructors and Lecturers in vocational institutions should be standardized.
- Qualifications issued by NABTEB should be accepted for further academic pursuit in all vocational programmes across the country and beyond.

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