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**VOCATIONALIZING EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: CHALLENGES AND
ENHANCEMENT STRATEGIES**

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Abstract:

The study examined challenges and enhancement strategies for the vocationalization of education in Nigeria. To achieve this, two research questions were asked and two hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. The study was carried out in Nigeria. Descriptive survey research design was used for the study. The study used a sample of 300 respondents comprising 162 male and 138 female vocational educators purposively selected from public Universities in the six (6) geo-political zones of Nigeria. A triangulation technique involving mixed methods of data collection, that is, use of a structured questionnaire and focused group discussions was adopted for the study. The instruments were face validated by three experts in the field of vocational education with a reliability coefficient of 0.74 obtained through Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis. Data collected was analyzed using weighted mean, standard deviation and independent t-test statistic from SPSS version 20 to answer the research questions and test the null hypotheses at $p > .05$. The study identified thirteen (13) challenges and eleven (11) strategies that could enhance the vocationalization of education. It was recommended that the identified challenges be addressed squarely and enhancement strategies adopted by government to ensure that education in Nigeria is fully vocationalized.

Introduction:

A nation's capacity for manpower and technological advancement is heavily dependent on the quality of training given to her citizenry through the education system in operation. Education provides knowledge and competencies needed to address these needs and ensures that a nation develops in terms of progression in human capital and technology. With the spate in unemployment as a result of limited white collar jobs, there is need for a switch to a kind of education that has potentials for reducing the pressure on paid employment. This type of training can be achieved through vocational education.

Vocational education according to Ben (2010) is a training which leads to any occupation, career or profession that requires specialized manipulative training that will culminate at attitudinal change in the learners. To Ibang (2017), it is a kind of training which leads to the acquisition of Knowledge, competencies, structural activities acquired during formal, on-the-job and off-the-job training that provides the trainee with the opportunity of employment in different industries and the capability of being self-employed. Similarly, Adegbulu (2014) conceives vocational education as the preparation of learners for careers that are based on physical, conventional and non-academic activities that are totally related to a specific trade or career. Vocational education as used in this study is that type of training that equips the learner and trainee with requisite knowledge, competencies and attitudes in a particular career or vocation to be self reliant and reduce the pressure in the search for white collar jobs that are grossly inadequate to meet the increasing population of Nigerians. However, for vocational education to be complete, the technical component must be incorporated.

Vocational and technical education (VTE) is defined by Ojimba (2012) as a form of training with the main aim of preparing individuals for engagement in various fields of study in vocational education such as fine and applied arts, agricultural education, business education as well as vocational trades in hair dressing, soap making, computer training among others. The International Labour Organization ILO (2009) described vocational and technical education as a process for the development of saleable and entrepreneurial competencies as well as a hub for development. The Federal Republic of Nigeria FRN (2014) describes VTE as aspects of educational process that involve in addition to general education, the study of technologies and related sciences and the acquisition of the economy and social life. The broad objectives of VTE as captured in the policy are to provide trained manpower in business particularly at craft, advanced craft and technical levels, applied sciences, technology and provide technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for industrial, commercial, agricultural and economic development. Others are to give training in necessary skills that can lead to the production of technician, craftsmen and other skilled personnel who will be innovative and self dependent; give an introduction to professional studies in engineering and other technologies and enable our young men and women to have an smart understanding of the increasing sophistication of technology.

The objectives of VTE are quite laudable and demonstrate government's commitment to guaranteeing that her citizenry is provided with qualitative training that ensures the acquisition of knowledge and competencies to be very responsive to the needs of changing technologies and create necessary jobs to complement government employment efforts. Regrettably, the current trend in the Nigerian education system is more theoretical than practical and thus, leaves learners with the acquisition of knowledge faculty without corresponding competencies that would have

facilitated the exploitation of opportunities outside the box of paid employment. It is very common in Nigeria to see products of VTE wander the streets in hunt of white collar jobs as their counterparts in general education. The consequence of this development has resulted to young graduates becoming political thugs, arm robbers, prostitutes, kidnappers among others as a result of absence of viable alternatives and paid employments. This development in parts is responsible for the insecurity and poverty level experienced at the moment in the country and may assume a greater dimension with population explosion and increase in graduates turned out from Nigerian Universities. To further compound the problem is unit control of administration of education in the country under a single ministry often by non-vocational educators who do not have interest in the growth of vocational education. Olakunri (2006) explains that the Education Trust Fund (ETF) now rebranded as Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFUND) that was set up by law in 1993 was a strategy of government to finance and improve the quality of VTE in Nigeria. In spite of this commitment by government, not much has been achieved in repositioning VTE in Nigeria as the culture of insatiable search for paid employments and other social vices still persist. But ILO (2006) had stated that VTE is an instrument that can be used to cancel out at least in parts the damaging effect of unemployment by promoting better job earnings and guiding against the risks of obsolescence. Similarly, Sheieh, Wang and Chon (2009) stated that enduring vocational education has potentials to advance the economic development of both the people and country at large. There is need therefore, to vocationalize the education system to prepare learners against this ugly development.

To vocationalize education in Nigeria entails making the entire systems functional, inclusive, practical and oriented towards addressing the needs of the learner in particular and society at large. It involves tailoring the curriculum to meeting the changing needs of the industries within the country through the provision of a robust environment for the learner to acquire knowledge, competencies and attitudes to be self dependent and contribute to the development of the country after graduation. Nigeria as a country needs to vocationalize her education system to be in tune with other European Union member States. For instance, Michael (2002) stated that the National Assembly of France accepted the law on social modernization which contains significant measures concerning vocational education and the right to employment. The author also averred that in Denmark, efforts are being made by the government to increase the number of training places and strengthening their practical element. Similarly, in Germany, one of the objectives of the educational programme is the promotion of vocational education of the gifted young people through raising the standard of vocational training. From an African perspective, the Kenyan government had introduced the 8-4-4 system with much stress on vocational and technical education which ensures that graduates at every level have some scientific and practical knowledge that can be used for self paid engagement or further training (Republic of Kenya, 1984). With this moves by nations of the world to make their education system more practical and skill oriented, Nigeria as a country has no choice than to do same to usher a system of education that holds promise for the learner and ensures national development. However, it may not be totally wrong to reason that previous efforts by Nigerian government have not nurtured desired results because of some daunting challenges.

A challenge in the opinion of Alawa, Asogwa and Ikelusi (2014) is any destruction to the environment caused by climate change that affect crop production. Hornby (2001) defined challenge as something that is likely to cause trouble or danger to somebody or something. In context, a challenge is any threat that hinders the vocationalization of Nigerian education system

and impedes the acquisition of practical skills by the learner for individual and national development. Okafor (2011) observed that the abandonment of VTE in areas of financial support, facilities and adequate personnel to enhance contribution of VTE robs the nation of the supposed roles intended to be played by graduates in the development of the economy. To Manfred and Jennifer (2004), the vocationalization of any education system cannot be complete without a critical look at key challenges such as formulation of practical policies and strategies; learning in authentic and real world environments; encouragement coherent guidance and counseling system; advocating for VTE as a key element in the education industry as well as the creation of awareness through image building; development and usage of qualified manpower; vocational attractiveness and participation and sensitizing the Nigerian populace on the need and vision of vocational and technical education. Other teething challenges according to the authors are maintaining approved school age and exit in order to pave way for physical and mental maturity required for acquisition of vocational skills setting up ambitious and realistic goals that will enable Nigeria to be the most competitive and knowledge base economy; tackling the issues of insufficient and lack of up-to-date data for assessment of progress in VTE; encouraging investment in quality VTE system; and adopting uniform standards and certification in VTE. A critical assessment of these challenges revealed that much is needed to truly vocationalize the education system in Nigeria. This no doubt must have informed the submission of Asogwa and Diogu in Okafor (2011) that Nigerian government should urgently redirect her attention towards independent and sustainable means of living that is guaranteed through vocational and technical education. There is need for the evolution of responsive strategies to ensure that Nigerian education is fully vocationalized.

A strategy according to Alawa (2019) is a plan intended to achieve the long term inclusion, delivery and implementation of environmental and sustainable agricultural development contents in agricultural education and training programmes. In this study, a strategy is a long term achievement plan intended to reposition the education system in Nigeria by ensuring that it is completely vocationalized. Okolocha and Baba (2016) had opined that the institution of elastic, practical and innovative programmes; orientation of VTE training to take place in authentic and real work environment, promotion and proper coordination of education; ensuring high quality and appropriately skill professionals; investing in quality vocational programme; encouraging continuing vocational technical education, adoption of standardized regime of preparation and certification and adoption of uniform criteria for assessment of the learners are roadmaps to revamp VTE in Nigeria. Similarly, the Federal Ministry of Education (2018) stated that vocational education could contribute to national development if efforts are made to harmonize industries, institutions of higher learning and other stakeholders annually to exchange views and insights on issues such as skill gap, industrial attachment allowance, curricula, training, research, infrastructure, proper career placement and non-recruitment of young graduates by industries. Thus, vocationalizing Nigerian education system ensures a functional structure where all areas of specialization in vocational education such as home economics, business, computer, industrial and technical education, agricultural education, fine and applied arts among others are backed up with requisite facilities in conducive environments for the learners to obtain practical competencies for self reliance. This education system is also inclusive in nature, provides for special needs learners and equips them for self and national development.

The determination of key challenges and possible improvement strategies as focused in this study using key stakeholders, that is, vocational educators in Universities in Nigeria could set the stage for the vocationalization of Nigerian education system. These vocational educators who are both male and female are experienced enough and have worked with the education system under the prevailing conditions.

Theoretical framework:

This study adopted the systems theory propounded by Ludwig Von Bertalanffy in 1968 as its theoretical backdrop. The crux of system theory is that every organization consists of basics and processes that cooperate among themselves for the attainment of managerial objectives. These basics, that is, events, structures or objects are measurable components that can be bonded jointly whilst the relationships or processes alter the elements in different forms within the system. In an organization, the elements are categorized into subs in order to reduce the complexity of the system. An incongruity in any of the system elements has potentials of affecting the attainment of organizational objectives (Alawa, 2015). Systems theory therefore, classifies the borders of the system and ladder of aggregation levels.

As systems theory emphasizes the working together of system elements for development and accomplishment of organizational objectives, it is thus applicable to this study as it identifies key challenges and enhancement strategies for the vocationalization of Nigerian education system. Vocational and technical education in Nigeria is expected to function as a system with different sub-systems such as administration, policy, resources (human and material) finance, curricula, among others. All these sub-systems must function properly under good implementation checks for the complete vocationalization of education in Nigerian education system. Any dysfunction by any of these sub-systems can lead to a distortion in the system.

Purpose of the study:

The study specifically seeks to:

1. determine the challenges that hinder the vocationalization of education in Nigeria
2. ascertain strategies that could enhance the vocationalization of Education in Nigeria.

Methodology:

The descriptive survey research design was adopted in this study. Descriptive survey research in the opinion of Okeme, Alawa and Akwagiobe (2014) is a design that a set of people or things are considered by obtaining and computing data from a few people or things that represent the whole group. The study was conducted in Nigeria. The sample for the study was 300 respondents (50 each from each zone) comprising 162 male and 138 female vocational educators purposively selected from public Universities in the six (6) geo-political zones of Nigeria, that is, fifty (50) each from each zone. Triangulation technique involving mixed methods of data collection (quantitative and qualitative methods) was used for data collection. The instrument for collection of quantitative data was a 23-item questionnaire tagged Vocationalization of Nigerian Education System Questionnaire (VONEQ) with two parts; A and B. Part A was used for the collection of respondents' demographic data while part B which had two sections soliciting information on challenges and enhancement strategies for the vocationalization of education in Nigeria using a four point agreement scale. The scale was strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree with numerical values of 4, 3, 2 and 1

respectively. The second aspect of data collection (qualitative) was obtained using Focus group discussions (FGDs). The validity of the instrument was ascertained by three validates from Agricultural Education, Business Education and Home Economic Education Units of the Department of Vocational Education, University of Calabar. Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis was used to determine the stability of the instrument and a reliability coefficient value of 0.741 was obtained. The researchers administered three hundred (300) copies of the questionnaire on the respondents with the help of five trained research assistants. The questionnaire were retrieved and analyzed using mean, standard deviation and independent t-test statistic from Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20 to answer the research questions and test the null hypotheses at $p > .05$.

A cut-off point 2.50 on a four point scale was used to answer the research questions. Thus, any item with a score of 2.50 and above was regarded as agreed while items with score below 2.50 were regarded as disagree. The closeness or otherwise in the responses of respondents was determined using standard deviation. Thus, any item with a standard deviation of 1.96 or below showed that the respondents were close and therefore, the item was valid while any item with a standard deviation equal to 1.96 and above indicated that the respondents were far from the mean and therefore, not valid.

The qualitative data collected through Focus Group Discussions was obtained in line with the objectives of the study from key informants in vocational education and training in Nigerian Universities (Professors selected from the six geo-political zones in the country). The rationale for choosing this category of stakeholders as participants was based on experience in teaching content in vocational education in their institutions. The Focus Group Discussions were held only once with the key informants in the selected institutions in each of the geo-political zones. To ascertain the trustworthiness of the qualitative data, the researchers had prolonged engagements with participants. Similarly, peer debriefing, triangulation and collection of data was logically documented as suggested by (Lincon and Guba, 1985). The Focus Group Discussions data generated was later analyzed using codes (themes), patterns, and establishment of relationships to compliment the quantitative data.

Results:

The results of this study were based on research questions and hypotheses that guided this study.

Research question 1

What are the challenges that could hinder the vocationalization of education in Nigeria?

Hypothesis 1

There would be no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female vocational educators in Universities on challenges that could hinder the vocationalization of education in Nigeria. The result is presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1: Mean ratings and independent t-test analysis to compare opinions of male and female vocational educators in universities on challenges that could hinder the vocationalization of education in Nigeria N=300

1 S N	2 Challenges that could hinder the vocationalization of education in Nigeria	3 \bar{X}	4 S D	5 R M	6 Male vocation al educator s		7 Female vocationa l educators		8 p- value
					\bar{X} 1	SD 1	\bar{X} 2	SD 2	
1	Lack of qualified trained professionals with requisite competencies to teach content in vocational education	3.1 1	0.8 5	A	3.2 7	0.7 9	3.1 7	0.8 1	0.38*
2	Absence of policy and improvement framework for vocational education	2.9 7	0.6 8	A	2.8 8	0.5 8	2. 67	0.7 4	0.52*
3	Poor guidance and counseling services to enhance career progress of youths in vocational education	3.2 8	0.5 7	A	3.3 4	0.6 2	3.2 0	0.7 0	0.68*
4	Low perception of Nigerian populace on the image of vocational education and its products	3.1 6	0.6 2	A	3.2 7	0.7 3	3.1 9	0.6 6	0.47*
5	Lack of awareness through image building to enhance societal acceptance and participation in vocational education	2.8 2	0.7 3	A	2.9 9	0.8 1	2.7 7	0.6 5	0.61*
6	Low investment in quality vocational education and training by Nigerian government	3.4 3	0.4 9	A	3.4 7	0.5 2	3.3 4	0.4 8	0.49*
7	Non-alignment of curricula to the needs of society and industries in Nigeria	3.0 6	0.5 6	A	3.1 8	0.6 3	3.0 1	0.5 5	0.28*
8	Poor training environment without enabling facilities to enhance the practical demonstration of content in vocation education	3.1 9	0.5 2	A	3.2 6	0.5 8	3.1 1	0.7 0	0.62*
9	Absence of structures for continuous development in vocational education and training	2.7 8	0.6 6	A	2.9 1	0.7 4	2.7 4	0.6 2	0.53*
10	Weak institutional frameworks for assessing of vocational education programme	3.2 2	0.8 1	A	3.3 4	0.7 5	3.1 5	0.8 8	0.54*
11	Poor records keeping and absence of verifiable data for fast tracking the progress of vocational	3.0	0.6 4	A	3.2	0.7	3.0	0.6	0.67*

education		1	8	0	9	4	
1	Poor collaboration between vocational education	0.5	A				0.35*
2	and industries in Nigeria	3.3	9	3.3	0.6	3.2	0.5
	Unit administration of education in Nigeria with no	2	A	9	7	6	9
1	distinct structures to address the peculiarities in	0.7					0.56*
3	Vocational education and training	3.3	4	3.3	0.8	3.2	0.7
		8		6	0	4	7
Grand Mean		3.1	0.6	3.2	0.6	3.1	0.6
		3	5	2	8	0	7

Key: $N_1=162$; $N_2=138$; \bar{X}_1 = Mean of male vocational educators, \bar{X}_2 = Mean of female vocational educators, SD_1 = Standard Deviation of male vocational educators, SD_2 = Standard Deviation of female vocational educators; $p > .05$, $df = 298$; * = Not significant; A=Agreed

Data in Table 1, columns 3 and 4, presents the mean ratings of respondents on challenges hindering the vocationalization of education in Nigeria. The data revealed that the 13 challenges had mean scores ranging between 2.78 and 3.43 and were above the cutoff point of 2.50. This means that respondents agreed that the challenges hindering the vocationalization of education in Nigeria are lack of qualified trained professionals with requisite competencies to teach content in vocational education; absence of policy and improvement framework for vocational education; poor guidance services, perception of Nigerian populace on the depiction of vocational education and its products; lack of awareness through image building to enhance societal acceptance and participation in vocational education; low investment in quality technical and vocational education and training and non-alignment of curricula to societal needs in Nigeria. Others are poor training environment without enabling facilities to enhance the practical demonstration of content in vocational education; absence of structures for continuous development in vocational education and training; weak institutional frameworks for assessing technical and vocational education programme; inadequate records keeping and poor collaboration between technical and vocational education programme and industries in Nigeria and unit administration of education in Nigeria with no distinct structures to address the peculiarities in technical and vocational training.

Data on standard deviations (column 4) for the 13 challenges hindering the vocationalization of education in Nigeria recorded values between 0.49 and 0.85. This shows that both male and female vocational educators were not far from the mean and from one another in their opinions.

Focus group discussions by the researchers with vocational educators in Universities across the six geo-political zones revealed poor funding, unit control in the administration of education, rejection of vocational education graduates by some industries, low societal perception of vocational education graduates, poor laboratories, classrooms and offices for lecturers, poor incentives for vocational educators as challenges hindering the vocationalization of education in Nigeria. One of the senior vocational educators who specialized in industrial and technical education from one of the Universities specifically had this to say:

“...the education system is not sincere in itself as policies are not implemented and strictly supervised. In my institution, we teach practical content in the classroom without practical demonstration of what is taught to students in the laboratories/workshops. Workshops are filled with obsolete machines that are not functional. I am very sure that the rejection of some

of our graduates by a number of industries may not be unconnected with their inability to perform some of the requisite tasks during recruitment interviews”

Result of the test of hypothesis one as recorded on (columns 6 to 8) showed that the thirteen (13) challenges hindering the vocationalization of education in Nigeria had p-values ranging from 0.28 to 0.68 and were greater than .05. The null hypothesis was retained which indicates that there was no significant difference in the opinions of male and female business educators on the 13 challenges hindering the vocationalization of education in Nigeria. They did not differ significantly in their opinions on challenges hindering the vocationalization of education in Nigeria. This indifference as exhibited by both male and female vocational educators truly demonstrates objectivity and their actual involvement in the teaching of VTE courses in the prevailing circumstance in Nigerian Universities.

Research question 2

What strategies could enhance the vocationalization of Education in Nigeria?

Hypothesis 2

There would be no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female vocational educators in Universities on strategies that could enhance the vocationalization of Education in Nigeria. The result is presented in Table 2.

TABLE 2: Mean ratings and t-test analysis to compare the opinions of male and female vocational educators in universities on strategies that could enhance the vocationalization of education in Nigeria N=300

1 S N	2 Strategies that could enhance the vocationalization of education in Nigeria	3 \bar{X}	4 S D	5 R M	6 Male vocation al educator s		7 Female vocationa l educators		8 p- value
					\bar{X} 1	SD 1	\bar{X} 2	SD 2	
1	Aligning VTE curricula content to the needs of society and industries in Nigeria	3.0 1	0.8 3	A	3.2 4	0.7 6	3.0 8	0.8 5	0.41* *
2	Ensuring that Nigerian government collaborates with non-governmental agencies such as World Bank, UNICEF, UNESCO for funding of VTE	2.9 4	0.6 2	A	3.1 2	0.6 0	3.0 1	0.6 5	0.37* *
3	Provision of guidance and counselling services to enhance proper career choices in schools and reduce stigmatization on the image of VTE students	3.4 0	0.5 8	A	3.5 2	0.5 3	3.4 8	0.6 6	0.22* *
4	Provision of financial incentives to students and graduates of VTE in Nigeria	3.1 0	0.7 4	A	3.1 6	0.8 0	3.0 9	0.7 2	0.44* *
5	Decentralization of administration of education with a separate ministry for vocational education	3.2	0.6	A	3.3	0.7	3.3	0.6	0.17*

	and training in Nigeria	6	2		9	1	6	0	*
6	Enhancing continuous quality training and certification for vocational educators to be skilled professionals	3.3	0.6	A	3.4	0.6	3.3	0.7	0.33*
		1	0		0	5	5	1	*
7	Encouraging investigation in technical and vocational education vocational and technical education for informed decisions and continuous appraisal of the system in Nigeria	3.1	0.5	A	3.2	8	0.5	3.2	0.5
		4	7			2	1	7	*
8	Provision of ideal training environment with requisite facilities for vocational education and training in Nigeria.	2.8	0.7	A	2.9	0.8	2.8	0.6	0.41*
		5	6		6	4	9	4	*
9	Building strong collaboration between VTE programme and industries in Nigeria	2.7	0.7	A	3.0	0.7	2.9	0.7	0.52*
		6	7		1	0	4	6	*
10	Formation of viable and implementable policies for the development of Vocational technical education.	3.3	0.6	A	3.4	0.5	3.3	0.7	0.36*
		0	3		8	8	5	3	*
11	Production of appropriate data-bank and indices for regular assessment of training in vocational education.	3.1	0.5	A	3.1	0.4	3.0	0.5	0.47*
		1	4		8	8	3	7	*
12	Restricting training in vocational education to only people without disabilities	1.0	0.6	D	1.1	0.5	1.0	0.7	0.29*
		8	9		6	3	8	3	*
Grand Mean		2.9	0.6		3.0	0.6	2.9	0.6	0.36*
		4	6		7	4	8	8	*

Key: $N_1=162$; $N_2=138$; \bar{X}_1 = Mean of male vocational educators, \bar{X}_2 = Mean of female vocational educators, SD_1 = Standard Deviation of male vocational educators, SD_2 = Standard Deviation of female vocational educators; $p > .05$, $df = 298$; * = Not significant; A=Agreed

Data in Table 2, columns 3 and 4, presents the mean ratings of respondents of respondents on strategies that could enhance the vocalization of education in Nigeria. The data indicated that the 11 out of 12 strategies had mean values ranging from 2.76 to 3.40 and were above 2.50. This showed that respondents were in agreement that strategies that could enhance the vocationalization of education are aligning VTE curricula content to the needs of society and industries; ensuring that Nigerian government collaborates with non-governmental agencies such as World Bank, UNICEF, UNESCO for funding of VTE; provision of guidance services to enhance proper career; provision of financial incentives to students and graduates of VTE; decentralization of administration of education with a separate ministry for vocational education and training; enhancing continuous quality training and certification for vocational educators to be skilled professionals; encouraging research in VTE for the generation of data for continuous appraisal of the system and provision of ideal training environment with requisite facilities for training in vocational education. Others strategies include building strong collaboration between VTE programme and industries; formation of viable and implementable policies on VTE and generation of appropriate data-bank and indices for regular appraisal of VTE in Nigeria

However, Item 12 received a mean score of 1.08 which was below the cut-off point of 1.50. Respondent therefore did not agree that VTE should not be restricted to people without disabilities but rather inclusive with zero reject for individuals willing to enroll. Data on standard deviations (column 4) for the 12 strategies that could enhance the vocationalization of education in Nigeria (column 4) received values ranging from 0.54 to 0.83. This revealed that both male and female vocational educators were not far from the mean and from one another in their opinions.

Focus group discussions by the researchers with vocational educators in Universities across the six geopolitical zones in Nigeria revealed proper funding and budgetary provisions, formulation of achievable policies, provision of conducive environment with adequate, ensuring that curricula content represents the immediate needs of society and industries, stimulation and funding of research, provision of financial incentives to graduates to set up small industries, proper career guidance for students and creation of a separate ministry of vocational education with vocation educators as ministers and collaboration with industries, companies and non-governmental organizations for funding of vocational education as strategies that could enhance the vocationalization of education in Nigeria. A lecturer said thus:

“...VTE is a broad programme with different objectives from general education. The current structure where the Ministry of Education houses both general and vocational education and training has made it more difficult because often, vocational educators are not appointed as Ministers and those appointed may not be interested in VTE because they do not understand the nature and requirements of VTE. To get it right, vocational education should be administered by season vocational educators who understand the working of VTE and not what it is today”

Result of the test of hypothesis one as recorded on (columns 6 to 8) showed that the twelve (12) strategies that could enhance the vocationalization of education in Nigeria received p-values ranging from 0.17 to 0.52. The null hypothesis was retained which showed that there was no significant difference in the opinions of male and female business educators on the 12 strategies that could enhance the vocationalization of education in Nigeria. Thus, respondents (male and female vocational educators in Universities in Nigeria) are in agreement in their opinions and could not allow gender to influence their responses. It also shows that respondents are truly involved in implementation of VTE in Nigerian Universities and understand the issues involved based on their experience and quest for the development of VTE in Nigeria.

Discussion of findings:

The finding on challenges showed that thirteen (13) isolated challenges hinder the vocationation of education in Nigeria. These Challenges are lack of qualified trained professionals with requisite competencies to teach content in vocational education; absence of policy and improvement framework for vocational education; poor guidance services, perception of Nigerian populace on the depiction of vocational education and its products; lack of awareness through image building to enhance societal acceptance and participation in vocational education; low investment in quality technical and vocational education and training and non-alignment of curricula to societal needs in Nigeria. Others are poor training environment without enabling facilities to enhance the practical demonstration of content in vocational education; absence of structures for continuous development in vocational education and training; weak institutional frameworks for assessing technical and vocational education programme; inadequate records keeping and poor collaboration between technical and vocational education programme and industries in Nigeria and unit administration of education in Nigeria with no distinct structures to

address the peculiarities in technical and vocational training. The finding agrees with Okafor (2011) observed that the abandonment of VTE in areas of financial support, facilities and adequate personnel to enhance contribution of vocational and technical education robs the nation of the supposed roles intended to be played by graduates in the development of the economy. The findings also strengthened Manfred and Jennifer (2004) submission that the vocationalization of any education system cannot be complete without a critical look at key challenges such as formulation of practical policies and strategies; learning in authentic and real world environments; encouragement coherent guidance and counseling system; advocating for VTE as a key element in the education industry as well as the creation of awareness through image building; development and usage of qualified manpower; vocational attractiveness and participation and sensitizing the Nigerian populace on the need and vision of vocational and technical education among others. The result has far reaching implications for VTE in Nigeria. The educational system in Nigeria needs a paradigm shift from the current structure to become more functional and practical in nature which is the core of training in technical and vocational education. The presence of these challenges at the moment does not hold much promise for the smooth operationalization of VTE in Nigeria.

Finding on enhancement strategies showed that eleven (11) out of twelve (12) isolated strategies could enhance the vocationation of education in Nigeria. They are aligning VTE curricula content to the needs of society and industries; ensuring that Nigerian government collaborates with non-governmental agencies such as World Bank, UNICEF, UNESCO for funding of VTE; provision of guidance services to enhance proper career; provision of financial incentives to students and graduates of VTE; decentralization of administration of education with a separate ministry for vocational education and training; enhancing continuous quality training and certification for vocational educators to be skilled professionals; encouraging research in VTE for the generation of data for continuous appraisal of the system and provision of ideal training environment with requisite facilities for vocational education and training. Others strategies include building strong collaboration between VTE programme and industries; formation of viable and implementable policies on VTE and generation of appropriate data-bank and indices for regular appraisal of VTE in Nigeria. The finding agrees with Okolocha and Baba (2016) who had suggested that the institution of elastic, practical and innovative programmes; orientation of VTE training to take place in authentic and real work environment, promotion and proper coordination of education; ensuring high quality and appropriately skill professionals; investing in quality vocational programme; encouraging continuing vocational technical education, adoption of standardized regime of preparation and certification and adoption of uniform criteria for assessment of the learners are roadmaps to revamp VTE in Nigeria. The finding also agree with Federal Ministry of Education (2018) position that vocational education could contribute to national development if efforts are made to harmonize industries, institutions of higher learning and other stakeholders annually to exchange views and insights on issues such as skill gap, industrial attachment allowance, curricula, training, research, infrastructure, proper career placement and non-recruitment of young graduates by industries.

However, respondents did not agree with excluding people with disabilities from vocational technical education and training. This finding agrees with Obi (2020) who stressed that people with disabilities have some abilities in them and advocated for zero rejects in Nigerian education system to ensure equity. The lessons learnt from the finding on enhancement strategies have implication for improvement of the Nigerian education system. Although the educational system at the moment does not reflect the desired structures that could lead to the

full vocationalization of education in Nigeria, all hope is not lost yet. A swift move by the government of Nigeria in the adoption and application of these identified strategies holds much promise for the future of Nigerian education system and her citizens.

The identification of key challenges and enhancement strategies for vocationalizing education in Nigeria has implication for the Ministry of Education and other stakeholders involved in the development of education in Nigeria to urgently have a rethink and provide all enabling conditions for the vocationalization of education in Nigeria. The challenges and enhancement strategies identified further lend credence on the theoretical backdrop that guided the study (systems theory). It therefore suggests that the distortions in vocationalizing Nigerian education systems from the perspectives of funding, resource availability, gender issues among other unarguably account for ineffectiveness in the vocationalization of the Nigerian education system hence, the need for necessary amendments to be timely made for desired results.

Conclusion:

Vocational and technical education provides learners with requisite knowledge, competencies and attitudes for individual and national development. Most nations of the world have adjusted the structure of their education system towards this all inclusive and functional education but efforts made by Nigerian government at vocationalizing education have not really yielded desired results. The study considered the challenges and enhancement strategies for the vocationalization of Nigerian education system. It is the hope of the researchers that if these challenges are squarely address and enhancement strategies applied by Nigerian government, her educational system would be vocationalized. This way only can individuals be well equipped with knowledge, competencies and attitudes to be self reliant, create jobs creators and contribute positively to the improvement of Nigerian economy.

Recommendations

Consequent upon the findings and conclusion reached in this study, the following conclusions were made:

1. Government should collaborate with other stakeholders in the education industry to proactively address identified challenges associated with the vocationalization of education in Nigeria.
2. The identified enhancement strategies should be adopted and applied by government to revamp VTE in Nigeria.

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