

Impact of Organizational Structure on the Delivery of Quality Education in Public Technical and Vocational Education Institutions in Nigeria

(A Case of Alvan Ikoku College of Education, Owerri)

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Abstract

The aim of the study was to investigate the impact of organizational structure on the delivery of quality education in public technical and vocational education in education institution in Nigeria with Alvan Ikoku College of Education, Owerri, Imo state as a case in hand, the study adopted a descriptive survey research design while target population was 1,904 employees of the institution comprising both the academic and non-academic staff. Proportional stratified random sampling was used to select 279 non-academic staff and 171 academic staff. Data was collected using structured questionnaires and personal interview schedules. Data was analyzed using mean score standard deviation and grand mean. A mean score of 3.50 and above was considered and accepted while any score below it was not accepted. The study established that various vocational and technical programmes are available in the institution and the vocational programmes are mounted, biannually, annually and half yearly while the Non uniformity of course content, Lack of adequate equipment and technical training infrastructure and apathy to vocational education remain the most challenges confronting the delivery of quality of education in Nigeria. The study recommended that the technical education should be restructured to suite the particular reform process for effectiveness by encouraging course content uniformity and provision of adequate equipment for training programme in other to achieve the desired results so as to enhance the quality of technical education.

Keywords: *Organizational Structure, Delivery and Quality Education.*

1.0 Introduction

Change has been an integral part of human development with knowledge and education at its core (Kennedy & Lee, 2008; Jamilia, 2012). The thirst for knowledge and the need to explore have brought enormous change in the human situation and its physical and socio-economic environment. This occurs as a result of the increased values attached on education as an essential instrument for development.

According to Ojiambo (2009), educational development would lead to accelerated economic growth, more wealth distribution, greater quality of opportunity, availability of skilled manpower, decline in population growth, long life, better health outcomes, low crime rate, national unity and political stability.

Furthermore, it is imperative to note that education all over the world have been responsible for knowledge generation and transfer in the society, the need to regulate the regular occurrence and

complex association between change and knowledge has been underway at different levels of reform with changing degrees of implementation success (Haris, 2009; Levin, 2009). The motives behind these regulations have always been pristine, especially in the presence of political expediency (Gunter, 2008; Hargreaves, 2005; Haris, 2011; Levin and Fullan, 2008; Levin, 2010), market ruthlessness (Cheng, 2010; Hargreaves and Shirley, 2009; Hill, 2009) and even religious predispositions in some education system (Kennedy and Lee, 2008).

According to the study by Abati (2010), the first educational reforms in Nigeria was introduced in the year 1989 by Professor Babs Fafunwa where he lay emphasis on the 6,3,3,4 system of education which was conceived under the Gowon administration by Somade commission on education. Since then no one, however, has been more vocal and more determined in raising the quality of Nigeria's education system than Fafunwa. The 6,3,3,4 represents six years in primary school, three years in junior secondary school, three years in senior and four years in the university, until in 2005 when the federal government reintroduced Basic 1-9 categorization which merges the first six years of primary education with the first three years of secondary school education. Jubril Aminu says it is still the 6,3,3,4? But how? It is partly this confusion that has compelled many middle class families to patronize American British and Turkish-style educational institutions, which are all available in Nigeria.

In Africa, educational reforms were done for various reasons and with mixed levels of success. In Nigeria, educational reforms were tailored towards achieving quality because of the existing standard already set by the colonial masters. The reforms focused attention on changing the economic, social and political situation in Nigeria. The global changes in the social and economic context (Obioma and Ajagun, 2006), coupled with the economic situation of the country, led to the adoption of National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) in 2004. NEEDS, according to Obioma and Ajagun (2006) have the major targets of value re-orientation, poverty reduction, job creation, and wealth generation. This led to the need to re-define the country's education system, as exemplified in the reforms which are meant to move Nigerian education from the theoretical orientation to practical and knowledge orientation. In addition, educational reforms have been embarked upon by the developed, the developing, and the less developed nations of the world. Bello (2007) highlighted some of the major reasons for reforms in education to include the need to have education relevant to the need of the country equip staffs with the relevant knowledge to change their private and professional lives, make education accessible to more people, and pay more attention to science and technology. Others include to: intimate staffs with contemporary information and communication technology skills, equip schools with adequate resources, improve teaching methods and educational practices, improve the school assessment system, improve financing and management of education and prepare the citizens of the country to face the challenges of globalization.

The Fafunwa report (1974) recommended the 6,3,3,4 system of education through a curriculum conference held in Lagos in 1969. The conference recommendation led to the first post independent educational policy, tailored to meet the local needs of the nation. The national policy on education (Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN), 1977, revised 1981, 1998, and 2004) made radical departure from the educational policy bequeathed by the colonialist. Other major reform policies include: the federal government takeover of regional universities in 1975, the universal primary education programme of 1976 (Adamu, N. D.); the universal basic education programme of 2000, among others.

The role of technical educational institution in Nigeria is concerned with qualitative technological human resources development directed towards a national pool of skilled and self-

reliant craftsmen, technicians and technologists in technical and vocational fields. The two key phrases, which readily come to mind in this type of education, are competency – based skill – acquisition and second scientific knowledge. In order to cope with the requirement of fast developing economy, to gear up employment generation and meet the challenges of globalization, it was absolutely imperative to realign technical and vocational education system in the country to cater for these requirements. This paper attempts to appraise the effects of organizational structure on the delivery of quality education in public technical and vocational institutions in Nigeria.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Technical and vocational education in Nigeria has been characterized with a lot of difficulties, as a result of problems narrating from unemployment, poor public perception and apathy to vocational education, government lukewarm attitudes/poor funding, shortage of qualified vocational technical teachers, lack of adequate equipment and training infrastructure, non-uniformity of course content. The expected number of staffs in the institution has been quite low despite the fact that the institutions are expected to absorb the remaining staffs that are unable to get accommodated by the universities. These problems actually prompted the need for reforms in the technical and vocational educational training in Nigeria which were aimed at addressing these challenges. For example, Okolocha and Baba (2016) recommended boosting the image of vocational and technical education, involvement of VTE professionals in VTE policy decision, matching VTE policies with needs assessment and proper planning, enrich laboratory/workshop, exchange programmes within and outside country, staff training and funding.

Also, expansion in the Nigerian universities has also necessitated the takeover of the existing technical institutions by the National Universities Commission such as Alvan Ikoku College of Education, Yaba College of Education, etc. This has resulted in the dying of the vocational college, which fed the manufacturing industries with skilled labour (Okolocha and Baba, 2016). This begs the question as the commitment of the government to the achievement of the industrialization goal and the fate of staffs who are not admitted to the universities (Verghese, 2013).

Inability of the government in the implementation of the reforms in the education sector in general and technical education in particular has been attributed to lack of political goodwill, lack of consultation of the stakeholders and resistance to change among others (Obonyo, 2012). Reforms processes in the education sector are largely change management issues. Studies by Kaminski (2000), Senge (1999) and Moran and Brightman (2001) revealed that effective change management required constitution of proper organizational structure among others. Kessler (2009), Van Sant (2008) and Tropenbos (2007) found out that the product of effective management should be better problem solving in an institution that leads to improved quality service to customers. It was against this background that this study sought to evaluate the change management capacity with regards to the organizational structure on the quality of education in the technical institutions in Nigeria.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to find out the impact of organizational structure on the delivery of quality education in public technical and vocational education in Nigeria. Specifically, the study intends to;

- 1) Identify the type of vocational and technical programme available in AIFCE, Owerri,

- 2) Ascertain how the vocational and technical programmes are mounted for staff in the study area,
- 3) Challenges of effective delivery of quality education in technical and vocational institutions.

1.3 Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

- 1) What type of vocational and technical programme available in AIFCE.
- 2) How often is vocational and technical programme mounted for staff in AIFCE.
- 3) What actually hinders the effective delivery of quality education in AIFCE.

2.0 Review of Related Literature

2.1 Theoretical Framework

The study based its theoretical foundation on the Kurt Lewin (1951) three step change model which views behaviour as a dynamic balance of forces working in opposing direction was used. According to the model, driving forces facilitated change because they push employees in the desired direction. Restraining forces hinder change because they push employees in the opposite direction. Therefore, these forces must be analyzed and Lewin's three-step model can help stuff the balance in the direction of the planned change.

According to Lewin, the first step in the process of changing behaviour is to unfreezing the existing situation or status quo which is considered the equilibrium state. Unfreezing is necessary to overcome the strains of individual resistance and conformity. Unfreezing can be achieved by the use of three methods. First, increase the driving forces that direct behaviour away from the existing situation or status quo. Second, decrease the existing equilibrium. Third, find a combination of the two methods listed above. Some activities that can assist in the unfreezing step include; motivating employees by preparing them for change, building trust and recognition for the need to change, and actively participating in recognizing problems and brainstorming solutions within a group (Robbins, 2003).

Lewin's second step in the process of changing behaviour is movement. In this step, it is necessary to move the target system to a new level of equilibrium. Three actions that can assist in the movement step include; persuading employees to agree that the status quo is not beneficial to them and encouraging them to view the problem from a fresh perspective, work together on a quest for new, relevant information, and connect the views of the group to well-respected, powerful leaders that also support the change.

The third step of Lewin's three-step change has been implemented in order for it to be sustained or "stick" over time. It is likely that the change will be short lived and employees will revert to their old equilibrium (behaviour) if this step is not taken. It is the actual integration of the new values into the community values and traditions. The purpose of refreezing is to stabilize the new equilibrium resulting from the change by balancing both the driving and restraining forces. One action that can be used to implement Lewin's third step is to reinforce new patterns and institutionalize them through formal and informal mechanisms including policies and procedures (Robbins, 2003).

Lewin's model of change fitted the study because as motivation is important for the unfreezing state. Organization structure is important in unfreezing of the process because according to Chandler (1962), change management is dependent on the organizational dimension such as structure. This is explained in the model where firms decide on change strategy that points in

structure, system, reward, and process to support the strategy. Fair and consistent policies are useful ingredients in minimizing turbulent resistance to change experience in Lewin's 2nd stage of change process (Tushman, Newman and Romanelli, 1997).

2.2 Organizational Structure

The organizational structure is seen by Hrebiniak (2006) as overreaching factors that impede change. The study is of the view that managers are always trained to execute strategies rather than planning. The top managers are therefore always reluctant to "soil their hands" in the messy tasks of change implementation. This is as a result of the behavioral nature of change in the areas and is therefore multifaceted and messy in nature and their execution always created the need to manage change in complex organizational contexts (Kazmi, 2008).

For the successful reforms the responsiveness of the whole organization is critical for an organization to avoid the difficulties available with this change (Al-Mashari & Zairi, 2000). Organizational structure plays an important impact in assisting management to achieve its objectives and follow the firm's strategy (Robbin & Decenzo, 2005). Many studies have found a significant relationship between organization structures and enhanced performance (Enz, 2008). Maffei & Meredith (1995) recommended that organizations adopt a flexible structure to encourage greater staff participation, which in turn can improve problem identification and resolution and enhanced performance and quality. Tarigan (2005) employed organizational structure as a moderating variable in analyzing the relationship between business strategies and performance. This study intends to investigate the impact of organizational structure on the effectiveness of change in the technical and vocational institutions and its effects on the quality of education in Nigeria. Ministry of Education (MOE) is responsible for providing education to its citizens and its main tasks include controlling the quality of education in the country through the supervisory role of the inspectorate services department within the ministry, developing curricular and syllabuses at the national level in conjunction with other bodies, harmonizing educational policies and procedures of all the states of the federation through the instrumentalists of the National Council of Education and formulating a national policy on education. The Nigerian educational research and development council is responsible for promoting the development of curricula at all levels of the education system and they have over the years developed teachers' handbook for the implementation of the basic education curriculum (BEC) and the development of 3000 sign language for implementing BEC for impaired. The essence of this is to provide quality, relevant and affordable education and training programs in response to a changing social, economic and technological environment.

This study sought to find out how the organizational structure influenced the reforms process in the education sector and technical institutions in particular and how this has affected the quality of technical education in Nigeria.

3.0 Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research. According to Nworgu (1991), descriptive surveys are those studies which aim at collecting data, and describing in a systematic manner, the features and facts about a given population. The population of study is made up of academic and non-academic staff of Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Owerri in Imo state. As at the time of study there are 1,189 non-academic staff and 715 academic staff with a total of 1,904 staff in the College (Source: Personnel Department of AIFCE, Owerri).

Table 1: Population of Non-Academic Staff

S/N	Unit / Department	Population
1	Registry	378
2	Provost Office	339
3	Bursary	89
4	Health services	45
5	Library	26
6	Staffs Affairs	240
7	Works	72
Total		1189

Source: Personnel Department, AIFCE, Owerri

Table 2: Population of Academic Staff

S/N	School	Male	Female	Total
1	Agriculture & vocational studies	55	61	116
2	Arts	50	52	102
3	Education	68	128	196
4	Natural sciences	80	54	135
5	Social sciences	75	30	105
6	General studies	22	27	49
7	Library	6	6	12
Total		357	358	715

Source: Personnel Department AIFCE, Owerri.

A sample population of 450 was used for the study. Proportional stratified random sampling was used for computing the sample size.

Table 3: Composition of Sample for the Study

S/N	School	Population	Male	Female
1	Non-Academic Staff	1,189	0.62	279
2	Academic Staff	715	0.38	171
Total		1,904	1.00	450

Source: Authors' work (2016)

The sources of data were both extracted from primary and secondary sources. The primary data were collected through administration of questionnaire supported by personal interview while secondary data were obtained from journals, textbooks and internet. Four hundred and fifty (450) copies of the questionnaire were administered, duly completed and returned. The questionnaire items were responded on a 5 point Likert scale quantified as strongly Agree (5), Agree (4), Undecided (3), Disagree (2), Strongly Disagree (1). The data generated from the questionnaire responses were analyzed using mean scores, standard deviation, and grand mean. A mean score of 3.50 and above was considered and accepted while any score below it was not accepted.

4.0 Discussion of Findings

4.1 Research Question One

What type of vocational and technical programme is available in AIFCE. Question item 1-8 were used to analyze the first research question. The analyses of data collected for this research question are presented in table 4. Employees of AIFCE are exposed to various vocational and

technical programmes in different relevant fields. According to the respondents, the upliftment of status of the college to a Federal status and the introduction of TETFund have provided staff with opportunities of equipping themselves vocationally, professionally and with the necessary skills required for increase in productivity.

Table 4: Vocational and technical programmes available in AIFCE, Owerri

S/N	Available vocational and technical programmes	Mean (x)	Standard Deviation	Decision
1	Welding programme	4.16	1.16	Accepted
2	Carpentering programme	3.64	1.34	Accepted
3	Woodening programme	2.42	1.46	Rejected
4	Plumbing programme	3.77	1.09	Accepted
5	Block moulding programme	3.81	1.33	Accepted
6	Sewing/factoring programme	4.56	0.86	Accepted
7	Head dressing/Barbing salon programme	4.36	0.86	Accepted
8	Mechanic programme	2.33	0.89	Rejected
Total		3.6		Accepted

Source: Field survey, 2016.

Since 3.6 is above the criterion mean, staffs are given the opportunity to attend vocational and technical programmes of various kinds. A close look at the table reveals that there are available programmes for staff of the institution in the area of welding, carpentry, plumbing, block moulding, sewing/tailoring and head dressing/barbing salon. The table also shows that the following programmes are not available for staffs of AIFCE, woodening and mechanic programme.

4.2 Research Question Two

How often is vocational and technical programme mounted for staff of AIFCE, Owerri.

Question 9-13 were used to analyze the second research question. This research question was answered using mean rating given by the staff in the institution in Table below:

Table 5: Regularity of vocational programs mounted to staffs in AIFCE, Owerri.

S/N	School	Male	Female	Total
9	Bi-Annually	4.16	1.16	Accepted
10	Annually	4.56	0.86	Accepted
11	Half yearly	4.50	1.20	Accepted
12	Quarterly	2.44	1.58	Rejected
13	None of the above	2.97	1.56	Rejected
Total		3.7		Accepted

Source: Field survey, 2016.

Table 5 shows that the grand mean is 3.7 and is above the discussion rule of 3.50, which means that the staff accepted that they usually receive vocational and technical training on Bi-annually, Annually, and Half yearly basis.

4.3 Research Question three

What are the challenges of hindering the delivery of quality vocational and technical education in the study area.

Question 14-18 were used to analyze the third research question. The analysis of data collected for this research question was presented in table 6.

Table 6: Challenges of delivery quality vocational and technical education in AIFCE, Owerri.

S/N	School	Male	Female	Total
14	Non-uniformity of course content	4.56	0.86	Accepted
15	Lack of adequate equipment and training infrastructure	4.12	1.26	Accepted
16	Aparthy to vocational education	4.54	0.64	Accepted
17	Government lukewarm, Attitudes/Poor funding	3.95	1.24	Accepted
18	Poor Public Perception	2.97	1.56	Rejected
	Total	4.02		Accepted

Source: Field Survey, 2016

The result summarized in table 6 shows that non-uniformity of course content, lack of adequate equipment and training infrastructure, aparthly to vocational education and government lukewarm attitudes/poor funding are the major challenges hindering the delivery of quality vocational and technical education in AIFCE. The grand mean is an indication that the level of program do not correlate with the number of staff in the institution because of the identified challenges.

5.1 Conclusion

From the findings of the study, the researcher concluded that the availability of vocational and technical programmes been mounted by the institution should be more structured in line with the reform of vocational and technical education curriculum and should be done more often than before.

5.2 Recommendation

The researcher recommends as follows:

- 1) Uniformity in the course content of vocational and technical evaluation curriculum.
- 2) Provision of adequate equipment for training programme.
- 3) Increase in government funding of vocational and technical education in Nigeria, and finally
- 4) To encourage more publicity in the area of vocational and technical education in Nigeria.

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