

# Re-Engineering Practical Skills Instructional Supervision in Technical Colleges for Reducing Youth Unemployment

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## Abstract

The need for successful acquisition of practical skills in the present society where unemployment saga is obvious requires proper supervision by well groomed personnel. It is necessary to re-engineer the practical skills instructional supervision in the technical colleges to ensure the reduction of youth unemployment. The paper discussed the various challenges of carrying out efficient instructional supervision in the technical colleges. It was suggested that provision of adequate fund to procure teaching facilities, provision of incentives for supervisors, retraining of supervisors to update their supervisory prowess and encouraging them to develop positive attitudes towards their onerous duties would enhance practical skills acquisition. Skills supervision that would help youth at the technical colleges to acquire saleable skills for reducing unemployment was highlighted.

**Keyword:** Re-engineering, practical skills, instructional supervision, youth employment

## 1. Introduction

The phenomenon of youth unemployment has been variously discussed without definite solutions generally accepted among nations especially the developing countries. Unemployment remains a hydra headed problem widely associated with the principal cause of youth insurgencies and other abundant economic under development in the society. Employment is thus the life line of economic development of youths. Obayi and Okafor (2012) stated that human development will definitely be grossly undermined and impaired without requisite youth employment. Unless the issue of employment is pragmatically addressed, low productivity, high inflation and poverty will continue to trail the citizens. It is obvious that the power of government, business individual and organizations to provide employment has dwindled to a deplorable situation and concerted efforts are keenly required to re-dress this scenario to avoid total collapse of the society.

Practical skills acquisition emphasis in the present educational system, stand absolutely essential as part of the solutions to positively address youth unemployment. Theoretical education alone cannot go far in providing any saleable skill to youths. Mkpa (2003) along this thought posited that students need exposure to practical work experience situations in order to be proficient in any job they may be working towards; theory alone will not make for the desired level of proficiency. Staff entrusted with the task of supervision should be encouraged to pay regular visit to the schools from time to time to suggest ways of improving the teaching and learning environment in order to guarantee the production of qualitative youths and graduates for employment or self reliance. In technical colleges, supervisors that are competent in aiding the teachers improve their pedagogy and practical skills teaching are needed to guide both staff and students to enable employment skills be developed.

Supervision of instruction in technical colleges is therefore paramount and basic for successful acquisition of practical skills by students. It is therefore imperative to re-engineer instructional supervision of practical teaching programme for production of skilled graduates of Technical colleges for industries and for enhancement of employment opportunities of youths for self-reliance. Technical college programme including electrical installation works have the potentials to equip her graduates with relevant skills to enable them contribute successfully to economic development in the society. This was observed by Uoudom and Okon (2014) when they stated that these skills are teachable and are thereby improved upon when the individual engages in practice. If technical college programmes are properly harnessed through quality supervision of instruction, it is bound to equip those who benefit from it with skills and competences to be subsequently employed or get self-employment on graduation.

In the this paper, the authors considered practical skills instructional supervision as an effective and reliable means to groom technical college teachers and students through the help of supervisors to acquire saleable practical skills for successful employment of youths . Akpan (2014) pointed out that supervision is an instructional act where the ultimate aim is to improve classroom instruction. Another key objective of

instructional supervision is to ensure that the curriculum content is implemented by the teachers. This full implementation of the curriculum content enables the learners to grasp the ingredients of the skills embedded in that curriculum for optimum performance on graduation. Proper instructional supervision helps to evaluate the teachers and renders them feedback for subsequent improvement in their teaching effectiveness. Igwe (2013) posited that the right supervision is not autocratic but collaborative and interactive. The interaction and collaboration between the ideal supervisors and willingness to learn by teachers improve pedagogy and overall instructional improvement. The authors also averred that constructive supervision supports skills teaching and professional development promotes mutual criticism and contributes to welcoming of emerging pedagogical approaches.

Re-engineering practical skills acquisition supervision is seen by the authors as the supervision that is carried out by technical college supervisors with the fundamental objective of awakening and motivating instructors and students in the colleges towards performing their duties in order to maximally achieve practical skills acquisition for subsequent gainful employment of graduates in the world of work. Obanya (2006) opined that supervision is an educational activity that helps teachers to improve instructions and resolve problems concerning teaching and learning that occur between teachers and the students. Thus effective institutional supervision ensures proper maintenance of minimum standards and quality of desired instruction for practical skills acquisition purposes in Technical colleges. This paper discussed both the challenges and strategies of re-engineering supervision to enhance practical skills acquisition of students in technical colleges for the reduction of unemployment saga in Nigeria.

## **2. Youth Unemployment**

Unemployment among Nigerian Youths in the contemporary period is not a new topic in any facet of the society. Moses, Ezugu and Apagu (2014) pointed out along this line that the present decade especially in Nigeria, there is a marked long-range of unemployment for many middle aged and transparent declining job market for youth who lacked skills for entering world of work. With the level of unemployment in Nigeria, the need to raise specialized work force with requisite skills and knowledge cannot be overemphasized. The ever increasing industrial complexities, production and development have metamorphosed to dare need of technical personnel that would monitor the system for effective production of youths with the required skills to service the work needs in the contemporary society. Obviously the development of technical college programmes is one of the central desired systems that would lead to acquisition of technical skills and knowledge for employment and self-reliance of youths.

Okoro (2008) noted that Technical colleges in Nigeria are the institutions that give full vocational training intended to prepare students for entry into various technical occupations. Thus the institution trains craftsmen in Building construction and woodwork, Electrical Installation and maintenance works, plumbing, auto-mechanics, tiling, carpentry and joinery, welding and fabrication, painting and decorating. In the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004), it was stated that the graduates of this institution obtain jobs in industries or establish their own businesses after schooling. NBTE (2007) stated that the various trades offered at Technical college level in Nigeria, whose aim is to produce competent craftsmen with sound theoretical knowledge and sound practical skills that would be able to diagnose faults and carry out repairs, and maintenance on all types of trades offered in technical colleges. It is expected that youths trained in this area of technical skills would be employed in various fields relating to industries in the society thus reducing youth unemployment and certain insurgencies emanating from lack of employment in the society.

## **3. Challenges of Instructional Supervision of Practical Skills Acquisition in Technical Colleges**

Technical colleges' supervision poses peculiar challenges from those of regular schools that offer general courses. In Technical colleges, practical skills acquisition is emphasized. A graduate of Technical College who is not well equipped with practical knowledge and saleable skills cannot gain employments and cannot be self-reliant as well. Some challenges pose problems to successful supervision of instruction in technical colleges that impede successful skills acquisition. These challenges include among others the following:

### **3.1 Shortage of qualified supervisors**

Supervision of instruction is a serious business which must be undertaken by well trained professionals. However, many supervisors in the present school systems are not qualified and highly inexperienced in their job of supervision of instruction. Udodom and Okon (2014) remarked that instructional supervision has to do with a set of activities which are carried out with the purpose of making the teaching and learning better for the learners and offering possible solutions to problems of declining enterprise in Education. Ezegebe (2013) attributed poor acquisition of employable skills to poor in situational supervision by concerned personnel accredited to carry out such functions in technical colleges. Thus Oganu (2014) noted that a good number of supervisors of schools are not qualified both in academic and successful years of cognate experiences. Many supervisors appointed to supervise instruction in technical colleges do not possess requisite qualifications and experiences, Ezegebe (2013). It is obvious that lack of qualified and experienced personnel in the business of supervising practical skills instructional training in technical colleges today are lacking.

In technical colleges today, increase of population of students out weights the quantity of teachers and supervisors in the system. Ndem (2014) along this line noted that the increase in population of students has led to establishment of more schools making it difficult for the few qualified supervisors to go round the colleges for effective supervision of instruction. This was corroborated by Oganu (2014) who observed that due to acute shortage of qualified supervisors, many schools are not visited by the supervisors. When teachers are aware that they may not be visited by supervisors to monitor their instructional activities, they may likely not give out their best in effectively teaching the students required practical skills that would make them employable on graduation.

### **3.2 Inadequate facilities**

Shortage of instructional facilities hampers effective supervision. Ekpenyong (2008) complained that graduates' unemployment problem is the result of poor acquisition of knowledge and skills occasioned by inadequate instructional facilities at the technical colleges. Without adequate facilities, proper instructional supervision would merely be mechanical and unrealistic. Akpomi (2009) blamed this problem on what he referred to as the mechanistic methodology of teaching and supervising instructional process. Acquisition of practical skills in Technical colleges is necessitated by utilization of equipment, tools and machines for use in teaching. When these facilities are lacking, supervision cannot be realistic neither would such exercise produce any positive improvement to students' practical skills acquisition in the workshops. Lack of practical skills hampers employment opportunities and self-reliance of graduates.

### **3.3 Lack of incentives**

When workers at any sphere of life are motivated, performance on the job is enhanced leading to achievement of the goals in the organization or system served by such workers. Supervisors of technical colleges need to be motivated through provision of facilities that would spur them to work harder in their supervisory work. However, it has been observed by Oganu (2001) that motivating factors such as healthy working environment, transport rebate, leave and traveling allowances, opportunities for professional growth, advancement and regular promotion are not enjoyed by the supervisors of schools in Nigeria. When supervisors are not provided with serviceable vehicles, they depend on public transportation means such as buses and motorcycles popularly known as 'Okadas'. These means of transportation are very inefficient and make the work of supervision burdensome.

### **3.4 Unqualified supervisors**

Instructional supervisors need to be highly qualified both in academic preparations and cognate experiences. Unqualified supervisors would be inept in their work as they would not know what to do to guide both the teachers and students attain their goals. Ndem (2014) noted that a good number of school supervisors are not qualified in academics and in the years of teaching experience. Further observation showed that schools instructional supervisors should possess at least a first degree or masters' degree in relevant fields coupled with reasonable years of teaching experience, but many a supervisor appointed do not possess these qualifications. These situations frustrate efficient supervision in Technical college instructional goals.

### **3.5 Supervisors' poor attitude to work**

Supervisors' poor attitude to work has negatively affected effective supervision of practical instruction in technical colleges. Oganu (2014) stated that supervisors of schools ought to visit schools regularly, correct staff mistakes, encourage and motivate teaching staff, monitor teaching and learning in the classrooms and workshops, ensure that academic activities in the schools are carried out; identify schools weaknesses and make recommendations for improvement. These duties are quite enormous and when neglected as the case presently reveals, achievement of instructional goals elude the learners.

### **3.6 Schools location**

Many schools are located at environment with difficult traveling terrains. To assess such poorly located schools, supervisors find it difficult to achieve because of transportation problems. To access these schools for adequate supervision normally prove abortive as the supervisors would most of time required to finance such journeys with their meager salaries. This further complicates the problems of supervision in the schools.

### **3.7 Insufficient funding**

Presently, Nigeria is yet to meet the world standard of 26% budgetary allocation to national education sub-sector. Ndem (2014) reported that as a result of this ugly situation, schools are affected by lack of adequate fund to prosecute needed activities including supervision. Lack of fund restricts procurement of required tools and machines for practical purposes in the technical colleges. Lack of fund results to inability to purchase serviceable vehicles for supervisors and other relevant equipment culminating to demoralize interest of supervisors making their work ineffectual. Funds are also used to purchase teaching aids, furniture, repair and maintain physical facilities, pay teachers' salaries and supervisors stipends. When fund is lacking, these responsibilities will not be achieved by educational operators.

## **4. Solutions to the Identified Problems**

To re-engineer practical skills, instructional supervision in technical colleges for reducing youth unemployment, it is imperative that certain solutions be proffered. These solutions when implemented are expected to increase the effectiveness of the supervisors in meeting the target of enabling youths in technical colleges acquire practical skills for subsequent reduction of the prevalent unemployment and its attendant ugly effects among youths in the contemporary society.

### **4.1 Recruitment of qualified supervisors**

It has earlier been noted in this paper that a lot of supervisors in the school system are not qualified both in their academic status and experience. Well qualified and experienced teachers should be employed as supervisors. Supervisors in the school system should in addition to at least a first degree holder should as well be experienced in school systems operations. Qualified and experienced supervisors can evaluate competency in terms of teachers' knowledge, skills and attitudes. Consequently the supervisor would be in a position to guide such teachers. Akpan (2014) along this line of thought noted that right supervision supports teaching, professional and development enhances personal and collaborative enquiry, promotes critiques, and contributes to an evolving pedagogy. This in addition connotes that good supervision is not an automatic exercise but collaborative and interactive. When well qualified supervisors are utilized, the purpose of the exercise that hinges on making teaching and learning better for the learners through sensitizing, mobilizing and motivating students and improving the teaching prowess of the teachers are optimally achieved.

### **4.2 Provision of adequate fund**

Hitherto, the United Nation's recommendation of the budgetary allocation of 26% to education sub-sectors has not been met. Mgbodile (2011) noted that in all countries, government is the main source of funding of schools. When schools are adequately funded, requisite teaching facilities would be provided. This will undoubtedly ease the supervisory work of the supervisors in the colleges. When adequate facilities are not provided, the teachers will have excuses to give for not tackling their duties. Technical colleges require a lot of facilities to function.

Unless these facilities are provided, effective teaching of practical skills will be a mirage and the work of the supervisors would be rendered ineffectual. Classrooms and workshops that are adequate in sizes and well equipped can ease practical skills acquisition. Practical skills supervisors would find it impossible to effectively discharge their duties where these facilities are lacking. Teachers on their side will not be motivated to teach and lack of cooperation with supervisors would likely ensue. Adequate provision of fund for the procurement of necessary facilities for effective teaching is therefore a sine qua non to effective supervision of practical skills teaching in technical colleges.

#### **4.3 Retraining of college supervisors**

No matter how highly qualified and experienced a college supervisor might be, he still needs to from time to time update his knowledge to enable him improve and be abreast with current events in his area of specialty. It is imperative that supervisors in order to achieve their goals must constantly get retrained through workshops, conferences and seminars in their areas of specialty. Ndem (2014) suggested that supervisors of schools possessing first degrees as their terminal qualifications should be made to proceed and obtain their masters degrees in educational administration to enable them operate fruitfully. It is evident that no one is all he can be. Supervisors especially in Technical colleges face more challenges because explosion of knowledge is more apparent in areas of Technology and vocational training such as mechanical and automobile technology Building and woodwork Electrical and Electronics, and Agricultural practices. If supervisors are not constantly availing themselves the opportunities of participating in re-training they would become out dated and will not perform their work creditably.

#### **4.4 Provision of incentives**

The supervisors should be motivated to enable them take their work with zest. Supervisors should be provided with serviceable vehicles to enable them maneuver the poor terrains during their visitations. Without adequate mobility, it would be difficult for supervisors to meet up with their assignments. The teachers and students who he interacts with will not fully respect him when he goes on public vehicles and motor cycles. The ego of the supervisors will be dampened since the people they supervise will just regard them as unimportant personnel. Adequate mobility will also serve as a source of encouragement to the supervisors and this would make them carry out their supervisory work at a good pace without hasting up to catch public transport thus doing their job haphazardly.

Supervisors should also be provided with suitable offices, traveling allowances, hazard allowances and leave allowances. Supervisors should also be promoted regularly as a way of boosting their interest in the work. Some times, the supervisors might spend some days in the communities where they are posted to supervise. Igwe (2013) suggests that constant water supply, electricity, good accommodation and medical care should be provided to enable the supervisors become more effective.

#### **4.5 Improvement of work attitude**

The corresponding Ministries of Education should accord the supervisors powers to implement far reaching decisions on their findings during school supervision. This will make supervisors have more authority and will enable them adopt a positive attitude to their work. Also, the state education commission should frequently organize enlightenment programme for the supervisors aimed at encouraging them to develop positive attitude of making regular visitation to their schools and taking their job with confidence and resilience. They should on such occasions be made to realize that effective acquisition of practical skills and other learning activities cannot be realistic without adequate supervision. It has often been said that every individual need some level of supervision to maximally perform his duties. The supervisors therefore as individuals need themselves to be monitored to enable them supervise effectively.

### **5. Conclusion**

It is imperative to carry out instructional supervision to enable students in technical colleges acquire requisite skill for subsequent employment in the world of work. Supervision of instruction in technical colleges presents glaring and special challenges. The challenges stem from the fact that a lot of facilities are needed to effectively

implement technical college curriculum unlike the general education offered in the conventional schools. Other challenges include mobility system that hinders the supervisors from smoothly carrying out their supervision. Most of these challenges as identified in the paper could be surmounted by providing adequate fund by the government for the provision of those facilities, provision of necessary incentives to supervisors, retraining of supervisors, promoting and giving supervisors their required allowances as and when due. With the necessary provisions made, supervisors will undoubtedly carryout their practical skills instructional supervision competently. This will enable students grasp saleable skills that will enable them on graduation become employed in recognized institutions or become self-reliant thus reducing youth unemployment.

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