

## NOTES – BERICHTE – COMMUNICATIONS

### THE UTILISATION OF SKILLED ARTISANS AS VOCATIONAL INSTRUCTORS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN EDO AND DELTA STATES OF NIGERIA

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The 6-3-3-4 system of education in Nigeria has placed much emphasis on the teaching of pre-vocational courses at the secondary school level. These subjects include woodwork, metalwork, electronics, auto mechanics, technical drawing, local crafts, home economics and business studies. And among the core subjects are three Nigerian languages: Ibo, Hausa and Yoruba. These are the critical areas where qualified teachers are needed in secondary schools.

The immediate purpose of the pre-vocational subjects in the school curriculum is to prepare boys and girls early in life for occupations which are open to them. These occupations, in general, require some sort of manual skills and hence a practical bias. One of the major constraints to the implementation of the new education system is the acute shortage of teachers for pre-vocational subjects. Experience in Nigeria, however, shows that very many tradespeople are active in the non-formal school system. These practitioners of vocational subjects are experienced and competent in the psychomotor skills required of students in the formal school system.

The only deficiency is their low level of literacy and numeracy. Thus, a more objective and realistic approach to the implementation of the 6-3-3-4 system of education should exploit the possibility of hybridising the existing formal and non-formal systems of education where the cognitive and psychomotor domains respectively have been 'perfected' over the years.

The haphazard implementation of the scheme could be arrested if the skilled carpenters, auto mechanics, welders, craftsmen, experts in textile design and technology, panel beating, plumbing, sewing and tailoring in the society, to mention a few, were employed to teach workshop practicals on a part-time basis under the few highly trained vocational and technical teachers.

While there are virtually no vocational instructors in the formal schools in Edo and Delta States, skilled artisans and craftsmen abound in most towns and villages. Attempts have not been made to integrate these experts into the formal schools because of the sharp demarcation between the non-formal and formal school systems in Nigeria.

Even if enough tradespeople can be identified for recruitment as instructors in schools, there is the need to find out if they would accept a teaching job. And in addition, the great disparity in earning between their workshop profit and the low remuneration in teaching may still constitute another barrier to this new proposal. The problem of this investigation was to find out the willingness of the skilled artisans to teach workshop practicals in schools, and to assess the average monthly cost of employing a tradesperson. Two questions were therefore posed in this study:

- How willing are tradespeople to teach in secondary schools?
- What will be the approximate unit cost of engaging a tradesperson for a month?

### **Related literature**

The preparation of vocational teachers in Nigeria has been criticised by many scholars. Ehiamealor (1989: 32), for instance, frowns at the low number of Colleges of Education and Polytechnics that prepare vocational teachers. Besides, they also have less than the required number of qualified staff. And to Adenubi (1983: 161), the trainees are not exposed to technical work experience. Eze (1989: 340) appears to blame the planners of the new education system for these shortfalls, since according to him, ' . . . there was no elaborate preparation made for the production of technical teachers in Nigeria before the new policy came into effect'.

There is even the problem of retaining the products of the technical institutions in the teaching profession. According to Aina and Beecroft (1982: 358), poor financial and fringe remuneration of technical teachers usually makes them prefer to stay in production work rather than teaching.

It may in consequence be most difficult to meet the planned teacher/student ratio of 1:20 by the year 2000 (Nigeria Educational Research Council 1980: 52).

The only vocational teachers in some urban secondary schools are those of Introductory Technology and Business Studies. The investigations of Etuk (1989: 309) and Ugonabo (1989 :270) both indicate that these teachers are grossly inadequate in Akwa Ibon and Anambra States. The few technical teachers in Anambra State even revealed that they needed retraining in woodwork, electricity/electronics, metalwork, ceramics, plastics and building construction.

Thus, there is enough evidence to show that competent vocational teachers are in acutely short supply. Hence it is almost impossible to agree with Ehiamealor (1989) that roadside technicians should not be utilised for implementing the present education programme. In his words:

Fafunwa had on many occasions instructed us to use roadside mechanics to do the work (practical work) skilled teachers will be required to do in the classroom.

How many Nigerians will entrust their children to the roadside mechanic? It is better to have no teachers than have instructors who have learnt their trade by trial and error. If we do we will end up in a worse situation, which would make the cognitive aspect of learning useless. (Ehiamealor 1989: 33)

This is highly inadmissible. A more progressive idea is to utilise the skilled technicians in the society for the teaching of practical work skills; this is precisely the revolutionary aspect of the present 6-3-3-4 system of education which was absent in the old 6-5-2-3 system.

### **Methodology of the investigation**

The population was made up of all established tradespeople/technicians in Edo and Delta States. A total of 200 tradespeople who had established workshops in the neighbourhood of post-primary schools were located to provide information for this study. There is no registration of these categories of workers in the Ministry of Economic Planning so that a random sampling technique was not possible.