Challenges and Reflections of Implementing the Technical and Vocational Education Policy: A Case for Secondary Schools in Rural Communities of Rushinga District, Mashonaland Central Province

By

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ABSTRACT

The impact of vocational education policy to secondary schools of Rushinga District rural communities in Mashonaland Central Province was studied. The study considered training levels of teachers, availability of relevant teaching material and their usage. Seventy respondents comprising of sixty and ten teachers and heads respectively participated. Purposive sampling was used. Data collection involved questionnaires, interviews and document analysis. Data was presented as frequency tables. Findings revealed that there has been very little effort in rural secondary schools towards implementation of vocational education. Poor policy implementation was due to engagement of majority of untrained teachers with a minimum academic qualification of Ordinary Level to teach vocational subjects. Some inexperienced teachers had no vocational education qualification. No staff development for effective teaching of vocational subjects, lack of relevant resources, overloaded timetables, high staff turnover, negative attitudes of heads and lack of industrial attachment of pupils to effectively implement the curriculum innovation. Major recommendations are that Higher Education Examination Council, through Curriculum, Research and Development Unit should mount re-orientation workshops to vocational education teachers. Syllabuses and additional learning resources of vocational education should be made available in schools. There is need for reduction of corporate taxes for companies that support vocational education.

Keywords: implementation, technical and vocational policy, secondary school and rural communities.

INTRODUCTION

In 1990, the policy on “Rationalisation of Vocational and Technical Education in Zimbabwe” was adopted (Ministry of Higher Education, 1990). The aim of this policy was to stop unstandardised accreditation and training which resulted from democratisation of the education system at independence in 1980. The multiplicity of courses that were being offered in private institutions, parastatals, local authorities and government institutions were to be administered by the National Examinations Council for Higher Education (NEXCO). In 1994, the Higher Education Examinations Council (HEXCO) was established. As recommended by the new policy of 1990, vocational and technical education was structured into five levels namely: Pre-vocational Certificate (PVC), National Foundation Certificate (NFC), National Certificate (NC), National Diploma (ND) and Higher National Diploma (HND). This new structure aligned vocational education to the school system.

The concept vocational education has different names such as career education, industrial education or in some cases education for employment. Vocationalisation of the school curriculum may mean different things to different people depending on the context. Mavhunga, (2002), Coombs (1968), Stenhouse (1975), Urevbu, (1985), Maravanyika, (1989) and King (1991) are of the view that vocations such as theology, teaching, medicine and law are a direct result of academic-oriented curriculum. King (1991) further argues that general education or academic education provides with four “core worker skills” such as communication, problem solving, initiative and ability to work in teams. He further argues that such skills are seen as being more broadly vocationally useful than those acquired from vocational schools.

Middleton, Ziderman and Van Adams in King (1991) provide an opposing view that these characteristics or core worker skills are useful for all occupations, and their acquisition broadens the range of entry-level employment options for school graduates. Urevbu (1985) however observes that academically - oriented
curriculum leads to white-collar occupations whereas vocationally-oriented curriculum leads to blue-collar occupations.

Vocational education and technical education overlap in meaning to some extent because they both refer to training which is directed in some way towards work of production. However, technical education implies training in skills and the scientific knowledge relevant to such skills, but this training may be applied to more than one occupation. An example is training in agriculture, which might lead a trainee into occupations such as ornamental horticulture, animal husbandry and crop farming. Thus, vocational education is more specifically concerned with a particular occupation than technical education. Nziramasanga (1999) adds that vocational education is effective in producing graduates capable of job creation and entrepreneurship.

The rationale of vocationalising the secondary education in Zimbabwe is used as a tool for human resource development and is also a critical factor in any economic development initiative (Williams, 1977; Chung, 1989; Lawton and Gordon, 1996; Mavhunga, 2002). Vocational education is a curriculum innovation that was introduced in Zimbabwe to replace the immensely unpopular F2 vocational curriculum for blacks during the colonial era (Mavhunga, 2002). This suggests that vocational education also came as an intervention strategy to correct historical imbalances in Zimbabwean education system which was predominately in the hands of few minorities.

The relativist position of Maravanyika in Mavhunga (2002) on the introduction of vocational education in Zimbabwe believes that vocational education also came to meet the needs of its society as it accommodates both academic and vocational education since both attempt to meet the needs of society as determined by society itself. Thus, the combination of academic and vocational education enables learners to have a broad knowledge base.

For vocational education to be a success story in Zimbabwe, quite a number of factors come into play. These factors include human resource, material, time and financial resources and others.

In the absence of adequate textbooks and even when these are in abundance, teacher plays a very crucial role in promoting learning. Caillods (1988) believes that in most developing countries where textbooks and teaching aids are in short supply, teachers are the prime agents for the transmission of knowledge. With specific reference to vocational education, Hollinshead (1990) argues that more specialised teachers are needed than in general education, suggesting that the vocational teacher occupies a most important place in modern society. Vocational teacher is a link between industrial society (real world) and the education system. Thus, the vocational education teachers are uniquely placed for contributing to the goals of binding humanism and technology.

Since independence in 1980, effort has been made by the Zimbabwean government to train teachers, particularly technical subjects' teachers. Technical education teachers are vital in their role of transforming the economy (Chivore, 1992 and Mandebvu, 1996). The assumption in training teachers is that qualified teachers are more effective than unqualified teachers. Several studies seem to indicate that qualified teachers teach better than unqualified teachers do. Hawes (1979) also argues that correct syllabus interpretation as a result of professional training of teachers helps teachers to determine the concepts to be taught, skills to be developed, approaches to be used and depth of the subject matter at various levels. Furthermore, Nyagura and Reece (1993:329) in their study found out that untrained teachers lack basic knowledge in the foundations of education.

Sadly most rural secondary schools in developing countries are still manned by untrained teachers.

Material resources are also vital for successful implementation of vocational education. In this context material resources imply textbooks, infrastructure, equipment and consumables. In a study on assessment of Teacher Needs for implementation of Zimbabwe New 'O' Level Science Syllabus Hodzi (1989), found out that textbooks are still a basic source of information in any subject. Their availability contributes substantially to the teaching-learning situation if they are used judiciously and with the realisation of their limitations. Nyagura and Reece (1990) also found out that student textbooks are the predominant instructional resource in secondary school classrooms and shortage of these textbooks adversely affects implementation of curriculum.

Textbooks are not the only necessary material in the teaching and learning process, but infrastructure and equipment as well. Hollinshead (1990) observes that vocational education requires more adequate infrastructure and facilities than general education. Vocational subjects require specialised workshops or workrooms where practical equipment could be kept. The specialised equipment is paramount in promoting effective transfer of skills. Such practical skills are very important in preparation of learners for the world of work. This is because vocational subjects require a lot of practical skills and as such they require special equipment and infrastructure so that the pupils are trained sufficiently (Mandebvu, 1991, Mandebvu, 1996 and Mavhunga 2002). This hands-on approach enables the graduates to lead a productive life after schooling. Thus, infrastructure such as workshops and computer rooms are essential.

Vocational education requires extensive practical work. Caillods (1989) posits that allocated instructional time is important in that the more time children study, the more they will learn. Research evidence from studies by Karweit (1982:15) on "Time on Task" and Rosmiller (1987:11) on "Effective Schools in less Developed Countries" confirm that time spent on task in learning activities increase the students' academic achievement.

Availability of adequate financial resources is also important for successful implementation of a vocational education programme. There is a weak relationship between level of expenditure and achievement. The implication of this statement is that money is not a sufficient condition for pupils' learning, although it is
necessary. In fact it is the specific resources purchased with the money available and the utilisation of such resources that matter. Trends in the Zimbabwean education indicates that high fee paying schools are better placed in that they can be able to purchase adequate resources to enhance quality of education (Nyagura and Reece, 1989).

Vocational education is designed to ensure that appropriate skills and attitudes are imparted to the pupils who will be taught to appreciate the role of productive work and eventually undertake it (Williams, 1977; Kings, 1991; Mandebvu, 1996). Hollinsheads (1990:28) contends that: “Co-operation between education and industrial enterprises increases the relevance of vocational education to industry and provide a good opportunity to meet required industrial standards at training stage”.

In a study on “Relevance of School Education to Employment Expectations of employers in Harare”, conducted by Mandebvu (1996), he recommended that business-school partnership need to be created. This partnership could be in the form of career guidance, holiday job opportunities, attachments of teachers and pupils to industry and business (school on the shop floor), the financing of problem solving competitions by the business world and joint curriculum development. This provides teachers with an opportunity to up-date the curriculum so that it is relevant to the needs of industry. Teachers need to be seconded to companies and that will be necessary to update them on what is happening in industry. In addition to this, the teachers need exposure to the informal sector for the purpose of developing relevant programmes for this sector to assist school graduates on completion of their school work. Thus, the pupils using the skills and knowledge gained can be occupied gainfully in the world of work. In an attempt to provide an adequate answer on the effectiveness of vocational education in Zimbabwean rural secondary schools this study will provide answers to the following research questions:

a) What is the nature of vocational education available for rural Zimbabwean secondary students?

b) What is the level of vocational education teacher preparation in Zimbabwean rural secondary schools?

c) To what extent does full implementation of vocational education in rural Zimbabwean secondary schools being affected by resource availability?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study made extensive use of the case study research method. This method was most appropriate in this research in that it enabled the researchers to collect original data from the sample. Case studies are useful when the study’s main concern is to understand what is happening in a specific context (Robson, 1993). This research attempted to get tangible evidence on factors affecting implementation of vocational education in rural communities of Rushinga district. The strengths of the case study in this research are manifold. It provided opportunities for in-depth analysis of factors affecting the implementation of vocational education in rural communities of Rushinga district. This was done by studying the case intensively. The researcher was in a position to understand different cases in detail thus, ensuring high internal validity. Furthermore, the use of case study in this study was an excellent device for initial exploratory research and for evaluating real-life problems relating to implementation of vocational education in rural communities of Rushinga district. More so, it was a flexible method in that it made use of interviews, observations, questionnaires retaining high research reliability.

Population

The target population for this study was made up of 10 secondary school heads and 60 vocational education teachers.

Sample

This study made use of 10 secondary school heads and 60 vocational education teachers in Rushinga District who also happened to be all people involve in vocational education in the district.

Sampling techniques

This study was targeting at vocational education teachers by virtue of their subject orientation and school heads by virtue of their managerial positions as well as policy-makers at school level. Purposive sampling technique was used. This approach was appropriate in that the respondents were able to address the specific needs of the research statement, that is, factors influencing the implementation of vocational education in rural secondary schools of Rushinga District communities. Thus, the people who are actively involved constitute purposive sample. Gall, Borg and Gall (1996) view purposeful sampling as a technique of wisely choosing subjects of the study, who are likely to be “information-rich” with respect to the purpose of the study. Mertens (2005: 324) concurs with the above when he says, “The sample is selected to serve a different purpose, hence the term ‘purposive sampling’ is used to describe the process”.
Instruments

The study made use of questionnaires, interview guides and documentation analysis. School heads and vocational subject teachers were treated as a homogeneous group and were given the questionnaires to complete and interviewed using one interview schedule. Again, documents such as the school master timetable, mission statements and termly school reports on curriculum implementation were analysed. This was done to cross-check on the extent to which schools had implemented vocational education and to assess how they valued vocational education.

Data collection procedure

Appointments were made with the school heads and vocational subjects teachers at least two weeks before visiting through correspondence. The researcher then visited the subjects and administered the interviews in person over a period of five days.

Validity and Reliability

Instruments used in this study were tested for validity and reliability. They were also tested for internal reliability. This is very crucial especially when a study is integrating a perception related phenomenon. A reliability of 0.80 made the instrument reliable (Petersen and Maree, 2010).

Pilot Study

This study made use of pilot study to obtain validity and reliability of research instruments. The pilot study was done with 10% of replica respondents from a distance district of Makonde in Zimbabwe. The use of a distance province in the form of Mashonaland West was done to avoid sharing of information among would be respondents. The pilot study was also done to amend any logistical or procedural difficulties regarding to the study.

Ethical Considerations

This study was guided by principles that provide a generalised framework of how the research must be conducted. The study emphasised rules that are rational, objective, universal and impartial. It addressed the following ethical considerations.

Informed consent and voluntary participation

Respondents who were school heads and vocational education teachers were given all relevant information about the risks or harm that could arise if they participate in the research. They then chose to participate or not to participate in the study. They were also allowed to pull out of the research at any point should they wish to without any penalties.

Protection from harm

The research thrived to ensure that respondents were not being exposed to any undue physical harm or psychological harm. Harm can be embarrassment, anger imitation, physical and emotional stress, low self esteem, exacerbation of stress, delay of treatment, sleep deprivation, loss of respect from others, negative labelling, invasion of privacy, damage of personal dignity, loss of employment and civil or criminal liability (Happner, 1992). The researcher tried as much as possible to be honest, respectful and sympathetic towards all participants and if by any chance participants required debriefing after an interview the researcher provided this and made referral whenever possible.

Confidentiality and privacy

The research tried as much as possible to protect anonymity of the research participants and the confidentiality of their disclosures by consent to the release of personal information. Respondents’ information and responses shared during the study was kept private to protect identities of participants. All research transcripts: audio or written were destroyed at the completion of the research.
RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Nature of Vocational Education available for Zimbabwe schools

It emerged from responses given that the subjects that were on offer for vocational education in Zimbabwe schools were: Agriculture, Principle of Accounts, Building Studies, Woodwork, Technical Graphics, Fashion and Fabrics, Food and Nutrition and Metalwork. These were some of the subjects recommended by the Nziramasanga Commission of Inquiry into the Education of Zimbabwe of 1998. The vocational subjects were mainly offered with the idea of marrying theory and practice. Thus, the hands-on-approach was adopted so as to equip the graduates with survival skills. The respondents were also in agreement that the pragmatic approach offered by vocational education made the learners to be self-reliant and become employers of themselves and other people. Hence, the entrepreneurial skills and empowerment were emphasised.

Teacher preparation in Vocational Education

Table 1: Distribution of respondents by highest teaching qualifications (N=70)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Untrained</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificate/Diploma in Education</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor of Education</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Certificate in education</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 presents data on the respondents’ highest teaching qualifications. The findings in Table 1 indicate that most (47%) of the respondents teaching vocational education had a Certificate or Diploma in Education with specialization in a particular practical subject, 4(6%) had a Bachelor’s degree in Education specializing in educational Administration and only 1(1%) had a Graduate Certificate in Education with special emphasis on another area not related to vocational subjects. From the table, it is evident that 38(54%) of the respondents had a vocational subject component with theory of education. These were better qualified to teach vocational subjects in schools of rural communities of Rushinga District.

Table 2: Distribution of respondents by academic qualification (N=70)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘O’ Level</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘A’ Level</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Those who had attained ‘O’ Level as their highest academic qualification were 42 (60%) and those with an ‘A’ Level certificate as their highest academic qualification comprised of 28(40%) respondents. The information above could not adequately establish the possession of a vocational subject by the respondents.

Table 3: Highest Vocational Education Qualification (N=70)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-vocational (PVC)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Foundation Certificate (NFC)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Certificate (NC)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Diploma (ND)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher National Diploma (HND)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No qualification in vocational education</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From table 3 it is evident that the majority of respondents 43 (62%) had no vocational education qualification. This state of affair clearly shows that vocational subjects are not being taken seriously.
Table 4: Distribution of respondents’ views on the adequacy of resources to support vocational education (N=70)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource</th>
<th>Not Adequate</th>
<th>Not sure</th>
<th>Adequate</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Syllabus</td>
<td>77% (54)</td>
<td>3% (2)</td>
<td>20% (14)</td>
<td>100%  (70)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textbooks and teaching aids</td>
<td>96% (67)</td>
<td>1% (1)</td>
<td>3% (2)</td>
<td>100%  (70)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshops/workrooms</td>
<td>96% (67)</td>
<td>1% (1)</td>
<td>3% (2)</td>
<td>100%  (70)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tools</td>
<td>91% (64)</td>
<td>3% (2)</td>
<td>6% (4)</td>
<td>100%  (70)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>80% (56)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>20% (14)</td>
<td>100%  (70)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumables</td>
<td>89% (62)</td>
<td>3% (2)</td>
<td>8% (6)</td>
<td>100%  (70)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The study sought to establish the respondents’ views on the adequacy of teaching and learning resources in the schools to teach vocational education. Data in Table 4 shows respondents’ views on the adequacy of teaching and learning resources. The findings indicate that most of the respondents viewed material resources such as textbooks and teaching aids (96%), workshops/workrooms (96%), tools (91%) and consumables (89%) as inadequate. Very few respondents indicated that syllabuses (20%) and staff (20%) were adequate. These results suggest that the material resources for the teaching and learning of vocational subjects were not enough.

Table 5: Views of respondents on the usefulness of workshops and seminars on vocational education attended

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aims of workshops and seminars</th>
<th>Never useful</th>
<th>Somewhat useful</th>
<th>Useful</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Syllabus interpretation</td>
<td>65% (45)</td>
<td>15% (11)</td>
<td>20% (14)</td>
<td>100%  (70)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching methods</td>
<td>63% (44)</td>
<td>17% (12)</td>
<td>20% (14)</td>
<td>100%  (70)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvisation of teaching aids</td>
<td>60% (42)</td>
<td>14% (10)</td>
<td>26% (18)</td>
<td>100%  (70)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guiding pupils in vocational subject choices</td>
<td>51% (36)</td>
<td>21% (15)</td>
<td>28% (19)</td>
<td>100% (70)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective use of textbooks</td>
<td>50% (35)</td>
<td>19% (13)</td>
<td>31% (22)</td>
<td>100%  (70)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective teaching in workshops or workrooms</td>
<td>65% (45)</td>
<td>11% (8)</td>
<td>24% (17)</td>
<td>100% (70)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 shows data on the usefulness of seminars and workshops held at school, cluster, district or provincial levels with respect to syllabus interpretation, teaching methods, improvisation of teaching aids, guiding pupils in vocational subject choices, effective use of textbooks and effective teaching in workshops/workrooms. The majority of respondents indicated that seminars held were not useful in syllabus interpretation (65% of respondents) and effective teaching in workrooms (65% of respondents). Very few respondents stated that seminars were useful in effective use of textbooks (31% of respondents) and guiding pupils in vocational subject choices (28% of respondents). The data in Table 5 suggests that workshops or seminars did not achieve most of the aims for which they were organised.

Comparison of the vocational subjects respondents specialised in at college and those they were teaching

Respondents were asked to comment on the vocational subjects they specialised in at college and those that they were actually teaching. From these results, there was a low correlation (r=+0.35) between the vocational subjects respondents specialised in at college and those that they were teaching.
This implies that most of the respondents in this study were teaching vocational subjects they did not specialise in at college. Such a situation highly compromises the quality of teaching of vocational subjects.

**Major Constraints Affecting Implementation of Vocational Education Policy in Schools as Perceived by Respondents**

Respondents were asked in an open-ended question to mention the major constraints that were affecting the implementation of vocational education policy. The constraints are summarised below. Respondents revealed that there was:

- Lack of co-ordination from HEXCO and Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture with schools;
- Lack of resources (personnel, tools, machinery, syllabuses);
- Negative attitude portrayed by some school heads that are too academic;
- Limited funding for attachment of pupils and teachers to local industries;
- High teacher turnover especially those with vocational education qualification due to poor remuneration in comparison with the industrial sector and lack of job security;
- Disorganisation at HEXCO for failing to communicate with all schools by sending circulars and examination calendars to keep these schools well informed like what ZIMSEC is doing;
- Lack of workshops and seminars from HEXCO on their expectations in vocational subjects being offered by schools and
- Non-involvement of vocational subject teachers in designing syllabuses and marking of HEXCO examinations so that they are kept informed of the expectations of this examining board.

**DISCUSSION**

The findings have revealed that the major subjects on offer for vocational education in Zimbabwe schools of rural communities of Rushinga were Agriculture, Principle of Accounts, Building Studies, Woodwork, Technical Graphics, Fashion and Fabrics, Food and Nutrition and Metalwork. Such subjects were chosen because they have been seen to offer pupils with survival skills which they can use after completing school.

The findings have also shown that most of the respondents were untrained, had no vocational education qualification and were in most cases teaching subjects for which they did not train. This has a bearing on the quality of vocational skills to be imparted to the learners and consequently the ability of the learners to be self-reliant and become independent problem solvers because of lack of relevant guidance. The fact that there was a mismatch between subjects that the respondents trained to teach and those they were actually teaching clearly shows negative effects on curriculum implementation. Thus, the teachers lacked subject mastery and could not impart appropriate skills to the learners.

Although respondents had knowledge of practical subjects they did at ‘O’ Level, this was not sufficient enough to adequately enable the teachers to teach vocational subjects. This is because the teachers especially those untrained have no appropriate teaching methods to assist pupils in their learning. These findings have an implication on educational administrators at district or provincial level in that if teachers are recruited on the basis of practical subjects done at ‘O’ Level alone, then implementation of vocational education is heading for disaster. Considerations have to be made to recruit teachers who have done vocational subjects at university or college.

The findings in this study have also shown that teaching resources were inadequate. These resources include syllabuses, textbooks, teaching aids, workrooms, tools, consumables among others. Considering that most of the teachers were not qualified, implementation of a new vocational education curriculum was impossible. The inadequacy of resources could possibly explain why very few schools have been approved as centres for NFC examinations by HEXCO.

From the findings, teachers lacked guidance by way of staff development and in-service training courses. In view of the fact that most respondents were untrained and inexperienced, lack of guidance was a serious barrier to curriculum implementation for implementers lacked direction. Thus, the respondents were not properly directed in interpreting the new vocational education curriculum for quality output, in terms of skilled vocational education pupils. Curriculum planners need to devise methods of ensuring that vocational education teachers are properly staff developed and in-serviced before and after curriculum implementation.

Again, the findings have shown that most respondents were not supervised by Education Officers who in most cases were subject specialists. The teachers lacked direction and essential feedback from experts for them to correct weaknesses and improve on their strengths. Hence, this is an indication that constant supervision of curriculum implementers was necessary to bring about quality learning of vocational skills. It is also imperative that after supervision, the supervisors can establish training needs for the teachers. Thus, these planned seminars would improve the teacher’s performance and the pupils’ learning. Consequently, the national goal of creating an independent and self-reliant citizen can be realised.
Additionally, findings in the study revealed that there was no communication between HEXCO and secondary schools. ZIMSEC, unlike HEXCO, constantly send circulars and examination calendars to keep schools well informed on the new developments. This disorganisation has made the school administrators and teachers of vocational subjects to lose sight on how to go about the vocational education business. In an interview with respondents, it was revealed that most of them did not know the procedures to be followed when a school wants to be an examination centre for NFC examinations with HEXCO.

Another factor that the respondents believed to have a bearing on the implementation of vocational education curriculum was their non-involvement in syllabus design and marking of HEXCO examinations. When involved in the designing of syllabuses, the teachers can be made to feel that they are part and parcel of the decision-making process. Involvement of teachers in decision-making is central for effective implementation of the curriculum for they tend to effect the syllabuses with much confidence. Also, as teachers are involved in marking final NFC examinations, they can learn new techniques of the examinations and the discussions held when moderating examination papers can act as an effective staff development measure for staff growth.

CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions that can be drawn from this study are that:

1. Very little seems to be taking place in secondary schools with regards the implementation of vocational education programme.
2. Vocational education continues to be taught by under qualified and inexperienced teachers. As a result of this the teaching that is going on is not effective and pupils at the end benefit very little or nothing at all.
3. The Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture and Ministry of Higher and Tertiary education seem not to be co-ordinating efforts with regards provision of expert knowledge through conduction of staff development workshops and seminars to the practicing teachers. Such efforts would go a long way in promoting effective teaching of vocational subjects. Hence, Ndawi (2002:297) observes that “Teachers in the field might need to be in-serviced to enable them to specialise in specific subject clusters”.
4. School administrators, who have an academic bias, need to be in-serviced so that they can in turn develop a very positive attitude towards vocational subjects. This done, the school heads can be innovative in making available the essential resources for effective teaching of vocational subjects.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the findings of this research, the following recommendations are made:

i) More experienced vocational education teachers should be deployed to the rural communities of Rushinga District;
ii) The untrained teachers who are holders of a National Certificate (NC) should be awarded salaries equivalent to senior teachers in the non-graduate grade so that they are motivated to teach vocational subjects in schools;
iii) More teachers in the technical subjects should be trained in educational practice and these should do a National Certificate or National Diploma course at college in the vocational subjects they are to teach.
iv) The newly trained vocational subject teachers with NC or ND should be given a salary award slightly above that of non-graduate teachers who are academically-trained. The positive discrimination would enable the vocational education teachers to stay in the teaching field;
v) Before new educational policies are implemented at a large scale, thorough staff-development and re-orientation sessions should be held so that the existing teachers can implement these policies from a position of knowledge. Thus, HEXCO, through its Curriculum, Research and Development Unit (CRADU) should guide curriculum implementers by mounting workshops and seminars on their findings in vocational/technical education;
vi) A scholarship fund be set up with funds obtained from commerce and industry to sponsor pupils who excel in vocational subjects at Zimbabwe Junior Certificate (Z.J.C.) so that they can proceed to NFC (‘O’ Level) with these vocational subjects;
vii) Back-up support from Educational Services Centre in the Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture (formerly known as Curriculum Development Unit) in the form of initial kits, modules and syllabuses will go a long way in assisting teachers to implement vocational education policy;
viii) HEXCO should set up offices at provincial level (decentralise power) instead of the current state where it is centrally situated (Head Office). Such a move will ensure smooth flow of information from head office (HEXCO) to schools;
ix) Further research needs to be carried out on:
a) The extent to which NFC graduates are pursuing careers related to the courses they did at 'O' level.
b) The informal sector in Zimbabwe to look backwards and see the role of education and training on these workers.
c) The topic can be treated with a larger population using other research designs.

REFERENCES


