Improving the quality of Technology and Vocational Education (TVE) Work and Study Degree Programme (WASP) in Ebonyi State University for Graduate Employment and National Security

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Abstract: *National peace and security is a function of overall satisfaction of the citizenry of any nation in an ideal situation. The satisfaction could be in the form of job-satisfaction, political stability, economic and social stability or any combination of the above indicators and more. This paper studied the challenges facing the Work and Study degree programme of the Technology and Vocational Education Department of Ebonyi State University (EBSU) Abakaliki, with a view to enhancing or improving it for graduate employment and national security. Survey design was used in the study. Two research questions that guided the study were administered on a sample of forty (40) respondents and analyzed with frequency count and percentages. From the analysis, six findings emerged, notable among which was the fact that the award of the WASP Degree Certificate gives job satisfaction to the recipient. Based on the finding of the study, some recommendations were made to enhance the WASP programme in Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki. These include; government and management of the programme should ensure adequate funding of the programme by any means, staff should also endeavour to update their competency through retraining, it is necessary that a monitoring or supervisory committee be established to discourage several malpractices and corrupt practices. Where all these are not attainable, the programme could be scrapped.*
Keywords: *Work and Study Programme (WASP), Graduate employment, National security, Social stability, Job satisfaction, Political stability.*

I. Introduction

At the Academic **B**oard meeting of Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki held on 6th day of April, 2000, the pioneer Dean of Faculty of Education, Prof. L. O. Ocho presented a proposal for the establishment of a continuing education programme in Ebonyi State University Senate in its meeting, and subsequently, culminated to the establishment of the household name in continuing education tagged Work and Study Programme (WASP). The Work and Study Programme is an opportunity for talented, intelligent and qualified working adults in various life endeavours, to acquire University education without having to give up their jobs as civil servants, self employed individuals in businesses, employees of companies and corporations. It is one way in which Ebonyi State University can make its services and benefits available to as many people as possible, and in this way advance the literacy campaign of Ebonyi Government. The programme believes that with better education, efficiency, effectiveness and high productivity will be attained in the work places.

The WASP is designed as a weekend programme. It is expected that those who are admitted and registered into the programme are mature and committed enough to work and study on their own. The minimum academic entry qualification is five credits including Mathematics and English Language in O-level examinations. The quality and quantity of WASP Education is designed to be equal to the regular programme. WASP students take the same degree examination with the regular students. The WASP students are taught by the same lecturers that teach the regular students. Though, sometimes some regular programme lecturers don't teach in the Work and Study Programmes, which results to contracting some part time lecturers to assist in teaching the programme. Also classes or lectures for WASP students start at 12pm and end at 6pm on Fridays and 8am to 6pm on Saturdays. A semester in the WASP programme consists of not less than 22 weeks (WASP Handbook, 2011).

1.1. Programme Objectives
According to WASP Handbook (2011), the programme is designed to achieve the following objectives:
1. To make University Education available to as many qualified individuals as possible.
2. To improve the effectiveness and efficiency of civil and public servants, self employed businessmen and women in order to improve the productivity of workers in the state and the country at large.
3. To increase the awareness and interest of people in their environment and thereby, increasing their sensitivity to the possibilities of life.

4. To improve people's attitude to work and get them to accept the principle of service to humanity as a worthy cause.
5. To examine the use of resources, people and materials available in the University community for the benefit of the wider community.
6. As a campaign against illiteracy to ward off timidity and ignorance in the society.
7. To create self-reliance principle in the minds of people of the society.

In the Technology and Vocational Education WASP Degree programme of the Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki (EESU), the curriculum was designed to provide participants with intellectual and professional competency required for either self employment, paid employment, further studies or a combination of any of the above. This is in line with the objectives of technology and vocational education as stated by the Federal Government of Nigeria (2004) in the National Policy on Education. The programme was aimed at training or retraining teachers working in the primary and secondary schools across the country and other interested candidates especially those that are desirous of acquiring occupational based knowledge and skills that will enable to be self-employed.

Technology and Vocational Education according to Ogunyemi, (2012) holds the key to poverty alleviation as it is the only type of education that addresses the occupational needs of the recipients. Recognizing that this type of education forms the base for technological development of any country, Nigeria stands on the brink of becoming technologically irrelevant in the economic order unless urgent steps are taken to avert it

The TVE WASP programme of Ebonyi State University is streamed into four units of Metalwork/Automobile technology, Building/Woodwork technology, Electrical/Electronics technology and Agricultural Education. The programme was designed to last for five (5) academic years (i.e. ten semesters) for those that has O-level qualification and four academic years for those that has the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE), National Diploma (ND) and the Higher National Diploma (HND).

Several challenges have been militating against the quality of this programme, which is preventing the programme from achieving its laudable objectives. Such problems as: inadequacy of staff, low enrolments, lack of facilities, poor funding and poor coordination among others have continued to affect the quality of TVE EBSU WASP programme (Okeke, 2013).

One major problem that always challenges Technology and Vocational Education in Nigeria is the problem of teaching staff. It is a known fact that the extent of pursuit of excellence in any institution of higher learning depends to a large extent on the caliber and quality of its staff (Asaya, 2012). In the WASP Technology and Vocational Education programme of EESU, there is real shortage of staff, resulting in the engagement of part-time staff. The problem of lack of facilities and the decay of the existing ones pervades Nigeria Educational Institutions including EBSU. Obanya (2012) discovered that there was inadequate classroom space, desks and seats (i.e. facilities) in teaching and learning of similar programme in University of Ibadan. Here in EBSU there is no functional laboratory or workshop designated for the programme, to inculcate skills on the students' technical and vocational teachers that will teach the younger generation on graduation. The workshop facilities that are available for the use of the regular degree programmes are not usually open during the weekends for use by the WASP students; hence the WASP programme is a weekend programme.

Yet another problem was the quality of the students admitted into the programme. Dwindling enrolment over the years has made it possible for low quality students to be admitted into the programme. But poor quality students according to Obanya and Ezewu (2013), no matter how good the teachers may be, are not likely to benefit maximally from the training programme in any field of learning. This is applicable to TVE WASP programme. Nwachukwu (2012) said that for any success of any academic programme, the students admitted for the programme must be qualified for the programme they are being admitted to study.

According to Adeyinka, (2011) the lack of adequate planning on the part of the organizers and inadequate facilities render part time training programmes ineffective. This often results in the graduates being half-baked and unable to face the challenges of effective teaching and learning. Lassa (2012) observed that the types and duration of the courses offered in part time programmes are rather short. This results in the tendency to rush through the scheme of work always, so as to cover the course contents. More so, as the same staff are responsible for teaching other programmes such as the regular programme, Pre-Degree programme and other numerous responsibilities that run concurrently with the WASP programme, little attention was therefore left for the WASP student.

Apart from the identified challenges above, Yalokwu (2008) further identified these problems in addition:
a. Poor coordination of programme.
b. Inadequate boarding facilities.
c. Unsuitable library and Textual materials.
d. Highly commercialized programme.

e. Substandard classroom facilities.
f. Communication gap between students and University Authorities.
g. Lack of Teaching and learning Aids.
h. Over crowded or disorganized time-table.

In his own reaction, Tseja (2009) remarked that the type of courses offered and the intention of the organizers is another problem to be considered. WASP programme courses are organized to deepen trainee knowledge and competence and hence must be academic and practical in nature to achieve the objectives for establishing the programme. This will no doubt guarantee job satisfaction as mastery of a skill guarantees satisfaction is executing it.

1.2. Statement of the Problem
Work and Study Programmes are generally designed to help (especially teachers of primary and secondary schools) to advance their professional competency and raise their status. Depending on the course involved, it is more or less an in service-training programme necessary to train the teacher in essential professional and academic skills. This calls for adequate number of qualified personnel, adequate planning and management, adequate funding and a good number of eligible, dedicated students among other things. The TVE WASP programme has fallen short in some of these areas namely, dearth of students, poor funding, lack of facilities, such as classrooms, workshops, accommodation, overcrowded time table etc. Could it be that the programme was not well planned or that the programme was not being well implemented? Nigeria currently is passing through serious security challenges. Part of the reasons for this security threat is hinged on massive unemployment of the youths (Odeta, 2013). Consequently, these youths are recruited by the dreaded Boko-Haram terrorist group to carry out terrorist activities, thereby endangering national security.

1.3. Significance of the Study
If the WASP programme is well planned and implemented, the beneficiaries would gain more knowledge and skill: that would make them more professionally qualified and competent. This could earn them promotion in their job due to the professional advancement made through completing the programme, this guarantees greater job satisfaction and security. On the other hand, those that are not gainfully employed already could become self-employed, only when they have acquired sufficient knowledge and skills that will enable enter and succeed in the world of work. When one is satisfied and occupied with his job, he will have less time for complaint or get involved in any kind crime. These knowledge and skills when inculcated on the pupils and students, would, no doubt bring more productive and enlightened Nigeria society. This paper wishes to contribute to the building of this type of productive society through the investigation of the challenges militating against the quality of the technology and vocational education WASP programme in EBSU State University, Abakaliki.

To the participants in the programme, this study will be a good guide to enable them prepares for the challenges ahead in the programme and furthermore, to the authorities at EBSU, the result of this study would be a pointer to the inherent problems in the WASP programme. Such a vital knowledge can inform decision making by way of reviewing the programme in the light of the prevailing challenges with a view to either tackling the challenges to improve the programme or better scrapping the programme.

1.4. Purpose of the Study
The main purpose of this study was to identify some of the challenges against a good quality Technology and Vocational Education WASP Programme in Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki with a view to enhancing job and national security through the programme. The major challenges were the inadequacy of:
i. Personnel
ii. Facilities
iii. Funding etc

1.5. Research Questions
The following questions were raised to guide the study:
1. What are the problems militating, against the quality of the B.Sc. (Ed) WASP programme of Technology and Vocational Education in EBSU, Abakaliki?
2. In what ways could the identified problems be resolved?

II.   Method

The descriptive survey design was used in this study. Olaitan, Ali, Eyo and Sowande (2010) remarked that survey research is the plan structure and strategy that the investigator adopts in order to obtain data from the

respondents using questionnaires. This study was carried out at the Ishieke campus of Ebonyi State University, where the faculty of Education is located. The population of the study was all the WASP students of the Technical and Vocational Education Department. From the data collected from the WASP coordinator in the department revealed that there are a total of 115 WASP students in all the five levels of the programme.

However, 40 WASP students were simple randomly selected for the study. In addition to the personal interview conducted with three academic staff of the department, an instrument of fifteen (15) items was administered to the sample of the study. The questionnaire, which had two sections, contained ten items on section A and five items on section B. While the section A sought data on the problems or challenges, section B elicited responses on the possible solutions. The simple percentage and frequency counts were used for analysis of data generated to answer the research questions raised.

III. Results

The results of the study were arranged in tables according to the research questions that guided the study.

Research Question 1: What are the problems militating against the B.Sc. (Ed) WASP Degree programme of Technology and Vocational Education in Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki?

Table 1: The percentage and frequency count of the respondents on the problems militating against sandwich B.Sc. (Ed) technology education programme in EBSU.

S/N	Items	Reponses			
		Yes		No	
		%	F	%	F
1.	In your own opinion; do you think that this programme is well planed?	42.5	17	57.5	23
2.	Is the programme supervised?	10	04	90	36
3.	Are the teaching facilities adequate?	25	10	75	30
4.	Do you use workshop/laboratory when necessary?	12.5	05	87.5	35
5.	If you are awarded this degree, would you be satisfied with your job?	72.5	29	27.5	11
6.	Would you be able to impart the knowledge and skills acquired from this programme to your pupils/students in idea environment	55	22	45	18
7.	Can you say there is good enrolment into the course?	22.5	09	77.5	31
8.	Is there a library for use?	12.5	05	87.5	35
9.	Do you use ICT in the programme?	37.5	15	62.5	25
10.	Are the staff sufficient?	25	10	75	30

On Table 1: f = frequency count,
% = percentage response,
Any percentage above 50% is the accepted response.

Research Question 2: In what ways could the identified problems be resolved?

Table 2: The percentage and frequency count of the respondents on ways to resolve the identified problems .

S/N	Items	Reponses			
		Yes		No	
		%	F	%	F
1.	Increase funding of programme.	82.5	33	17.5	07
2.	Increase staff strength.	62.5	25	37.5	15
3.	Increase and improve facility.	72.5	29	27.5	11
4.	Change the timing (i.e. duration).	50	20	50	20
5.	Closer staff/student relationship.	70	28	30	12

On Table 2: f = frequency count,
% = percentage response,

Any percentage above 50% is the accepted response.

IV. Discussion

The major findings of the study emerged from the high percentage responses of 75% and above, to the items that surveyed or studied these indicators. The major findings of the study included:
1. TVE WASP programme is not well planned.
2. TVE WASP programme is not supervised.
3. There is acute shortage of facilities such as lecture rooms, laboratories, computers and accommodation etc.
4. There is no functional workshop.
5. Enrolment into the programme sessionally was low.

6. There was no effective library
7. That despite the inherent problems in the programme, candidates derive job satisfaction from the acquisition of the certificate.

In Nigeria, part time programme has been one of the fundamental ways of training manpower mainly teachers of primary, secondary and other similar schools. This is for greater proficiency and competence in their jobs and higher status in the profession. The above would in turn guarantee job satisfaction, job security and finally national security. As a manpower developing programme, there is the need for efficient training of the entrants into part time programme. This effective training requires competent personnel, effective facility, good management and funding among other things.

However, from the data on table 1 above it, was observed that challenges such as inadequate funding, inadequate facility, poor planning and supervision, inadequate staff and students etc have combined to affect the quality of the programme. These challenges were decried by several scholars including Adeyinka (2011), Tseja (2009) and Obanya and Ezewu (2013) who among numerous other researchers highlighted most of the problems itemized in table 1 above.

Notwithstanding, all the above constraints, in table 1 items 5 & 6 showed that the graduates of the programme derive more job satisfaction when they acquire the degree certificate. This implies that they would be better integrated into their duty as there is more job security. Yalokwu (2008) observed that there is a positive relationship between acquiring the certificate and job satisfaction. This same positive relationship has been established to exist between job satisfaction and national security.

From the responses in table 2, the 50-50 rating of the duration for the programme reveals that there is no definite decision made on whether it should be changed or not. However, other responses showed that the respondents admitted that the quality of the programme could be improved through increased finding, increased staff strength, increased and improved facilities and closer students/staff relationships among other things.

Furthermore, from the oral interview, held with some selected staff of the programme, it is obvious that the programme needs urgent attention to save it from collapse. This attention could be in form of: increased finding of the programme, in addition of more qualified staff, enhancing and procuring suitable facilities, prompt payment of the teaching honorarium, use of computers, forging closer relationship between staff and students and closer supervision of the programme implementation.

V.   Conclusion
A study of the challenges against the B.Sc. (Ed) WASP programme of the Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki revealed some inherent problems that affect the quality of the programme. Some of these problems include: inadequacy of funds, personnel and facilities among others. The effects of these problems are adverse on the quality of the programme. These problems notwithstanding, the degree certificate offers job satisfaction to the recipient, once awarded.

VI.   Recommendations
In order to achieve the educational and academic objectives for which the WASP programme was established and increase its academic and practical value, it is recommended that due consideration be given to:
1. **Funding:** Some respondents were of the opinion that adequate funding could help mitigate the other problems. They argued that if the fees paid in the programme could not sustain it, government and management of the programme should ensure adequate funding of the programme by any means. Where this is not attainable, the programme could be scrapped.
2. **Facility:** A situation whereby the department borrows facility to run the WASP programme is not good enough. From the interview it was obvious that this programme needs facility. It was also discovered that facility was always borrowed during accreditation to keep programmes afloat in the department. These borrowed facilities and other requisite ones should be acquired and maintained in the department.
3. **Staff:** shortage of manpower should be tackled by recruitment of qualified staff. The available staff should also endeavour to update their competency through retraining.
4. **Communication:** There is the need for greater interaction and communication between staff and students, devoid of any form of attachments or preconditions.
5. **Supervision:** It is necessary that a monitoring or supervisory committee be established to discourage several malpractices and corrupt practices.

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