

## **Repackaging Vocational Education towards Academic Ethics and Integrity in Nigeria**

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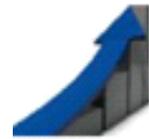
### **Abstract**

*Information age is being experienced by all human activity, its effect is felt either directly or indirectly. The ability of the workforce to cope with this trend helps in achieving the much-desired ethics and integrity in the educational system. Ethics and integrity is seen as the keyword and concept in repackaging vocational education. The much emphasis placed on the acquisition of the necessary knowledge, skill, and attitude needed for effective performance and contribution to the ethical values, academic integrity and honesty in the society has to be upheld. Academic ethics and integrity cuts across both the human and material resources; it embraces among other things-how to organize our teaching and learning package; the level of learning attained and its subsequent impact in the society. The educational planners, implementers and curriculum beneficiaries (learners) are all involved in the pursuit of academic ethics, integrity and honesty. The repackaging activity is very eminent now to help attain this desired quality. This repackaging should also take into consideration the challenges/constraints and the promotion of academic honesty, ethics and integrity in vocational education in addition to the entire variable so mentioned above. Recommendations and suggestions are well articulated in this paper.*

**Keywords:** Vocational Education, Ethics, Integrity and Honesty.

### **Introduction**

The word vocation refers to a strong feeling of suitability for a particular career or occupation. Vocational education aims at development of human abilities in terms of knowledge, skills and understanding so efficiently in carrying on the activities in the vocational pursuits of one's choice. Uko, Ugboaja, Ibe, & Obunadike (2016) added that vocational education is designed to develop skills, abilities, understanding, attitude, work habits and appreciation encompassing knowledge and information needed by workers to enter and make progress in employment on a useful and productive basis. It is an



integral part of the total education programme and contributes towards the development of good citizens by developing their physical, social, civic, cultural, and economic competences. Udofia (2017) described vocational education as that education which has the specific/definite role of preparing and equipping students with skills, that need to create their own employment; the extent of success in the above aim leaves a lot to be desired by the learner.

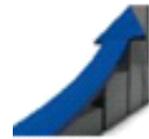
Academic ethics and integrity is an umbrella concept on individual level to maintain a culture of honesty in all aspects of teaching and research. This is not, of course, to say that academics are always quite free in this area. However, Ways Pavela (2009) quoted Mebabes survey of over 4000 students of whom 47 to 60 percent admitted dishonesty. Ways will be pointed out in which to encourage integrity by setting a good example.

Education does not end only with mastery over few languages or subjects. It also means opening the doors of the mind, cleaning the soul and realization of the self. At various levels of Nigerian education system in general and the higher technical education in particular, the ethical considerations have lost its value and place (Pobla, 2011). In real life, the ethics are neither taught through text books nor preached and advocated through any other media of learning and teaching. Hence, it is very difficult to find good people with ethical flavour and very easy to find large number of unethical managers, bureaucrats, educationist, corporate heads, politicians and elected representatives (Pobla, 2011). It is the time for us to identify the causes of the decline in ethics and also identify all those factors and circumstances which are responsible for the same and who all are going to suffer from this deterioration of ethical values.

Academic integrity is the foundation upon which students, departments, staff build their educational and professional careers. Ethical behaviour and independent thought are essential for the highest level of academic achievement (Lauder, 2011). Unfortunately, most recent initiatives to improve learning in Colleges and Universities have largely neglected ethics and academic integrity (Keller, 2011).

The foundation to the academic honesty policy is the school's commitment to the values of ethics, integrity and honesty. Based on the guiding principles and philosophy of vocational education of being self-reliant, one is driven to conduct all our academic affairs with integrity. Accordingly, the school must clearly communicate the institutions expectation regarding academic ethics, integrity and honesty, so the administrators must take academic misconduct very seriously. One goal is to link academic ethics and integrity to personal and professional success in respective area of specialty (McGill & Shelly, 2008).

The intent of the academic ethics and integrity is not merely to be the 'police' of academic violations, but rather to create a culture and climate at the vocational education department that emphasizes, and is more conducive to academic honesty. Yet, when the department and administration are the 'police', they must make sure that academic misconduct is proceeded against pursuant to the honesty code in a fair and consistent manner. As such, the department (Vocational Education) and administration must avoid any enforcements that appear arbitrary, inequitable and unjust. Another



critical point to make is that when the vocational education department does uphold and enforce policy, the department must have the complete and total support of their departmental colleagues, the programme officers, the administrators and particularly the heads of the school or institution.

This paper therefore discusses concept in repackaging vocational education, vocational education goals, major challenges/constraints in academic ethics and integrity in vocational education, promoting academic ethics and integrity in vocational education, conclusion and recommendations.

### **Concept of Repackaging Vocational Education**

Packaging vocational education is an interdisciplinary field integrating science, technology, education and management to project and identify products for distribution, storage, sales and uses. It encompasses the process of evaluation and production of packages. It is a system integral to the value chain that impacts product quality user satisfaction, distribution efficiencies and safety. Packaging vocational and discipline must interact with research and development, manufacturing, graphic design, regulatory, purchasing, planning and so on. The package must sell and project the product, while maintaining an efficient cost effective process cycle Davis, (2008).

Students in packaging program typically begin with generalized science classes before progressing into specific area of specialty as self-life stability. Such areas as electrical trade, electronics trade, building, woodwork mechanical business trade and so on.

### **Goals of Vocational Education**

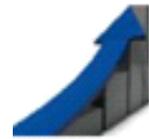
The National Policy on Education (2004) outline the goals of technical and vocational education to include:

1. Provide trained manpower in the applied sciences, technology and business, particularly at craft, advanced craft and technical level;
2. Provide the technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, commercial, and economic development;
3. Give training and impart the necessary skills to individual who shall be self-reliant economically.

In pursuance of the above goals, the policy stipulates that: the curricular activities be structured in foundation and trade module; the curriculum for each component shall consist of general education, theory and related courses, workshop practice, industrial training/production work, small business management and entrepreneurial training.

The above policy emphasized that teacher/student ratio of 1:20 for effective participation in practical work. The policy is also of the opinion that trainees upon completing the program shall:

1. Secure employment with the skills acquire at whatever level;



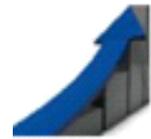
2. Become self-employed, and also be able to employ others by setting up their own businesses;
3. Pursue further education in craft/technical programme.

The goals so discussed shows that vocational education is geared towards the development and survival of both the individual and the general public (society). This acts in line with the function of education which aims at making people understand the worth of their live and live up to ethics and integrity of the society and Nigeria as a whole.

### **Major Challenges in Academic Ethics and Integrity in Vocational Education**

There are many opposing variables towards proper academic ethics and integrity. Although those with vocational capabilities contribute towards solving our problem, there are still some short falls. Bone and Mcnay (2005) portrayed ethics and integrity in education as a multi-dimensional concept, which should embrace all functions and activities; teaching and academic programmes, research, and scholarship, staffing, student, building, facilities, equipment and service to the community. The idea here is a good proof that the ethics and integrity, academic honesty looking for, have not been caught. For this to be attained, our effort and achievement must cut across all the variables enumerated above in a successful way. Anioke (2003) noted that a pass mark has not been given to vocational training because there is need to improve on ethics and integrity of our vocational trained workers. The shortfall ought to be addressed now to help us keep pace with the rest of other countries. The major challenges/constraints are as follows:

1. The failure of leaders who took over from the colonial masters to re-design the educational structures. They only maintain the status quo inherited from the colonial lords and fathers without much change.
2. The examination-oriented system of education we adopt appeared to have failed.
3. The porosity allowed in our curriculum content in terms of content, and other needs.
4. The curriculum is filled with academic exercises that have no bearing with the people's way of life and immediate needs.
5. The expensive nature of our educational practice and moral aspects of education.
6. The complaint about shortage in supply of resources. the complaint posited acts as a major hindrance to ethics and integrity in vocational education. The issue of short supply of human and material resources.
7. The poor image and status attached to vocational education. Most people see it as the education for socially maladjusted and academically incompetent learners. This misconception places vocational education in a downgraded and inferior status.



8. The population explosion syndrome in our classroom and the deteriorating physical facilities is another hindrance.
9. There is the problem of recurrent strike action by almost all sectors at one time or the other. Added to this is the consistent student unrest. All these contribute to the fluctuations in the calendar of event.
10. The rapid technological changes, and increased globalization in the knowledge world and the society all calls for re-visitation and re-examination of our vocational education system.
11. The failure to cope with the nature, needs, competency level and high demand of the society on graduates of vocational education.
12. There is the common problem of unemployment opportunity facing the graduates; the few chances have to be highly competed for.
13. The political set up is another problem. Priority is no longer given to 'equality' when selecting personnel for public offices. This affects our life style in the negative direction.

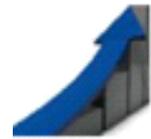
### **Promoting Academic Ethics and Integrity in Vocational Education**

Most serious academics find dishonesty repugnant and integrity essential to academic life. According to Calabrese & Roberts (2004), 'integrity is at the core of all effectively functioning societies and organization', and is particularly critical in academia, a self-governing society where open discussion and democracy should prevail in all aspects of teaching, curriculum, and research (Gerber 2001, quoted in Calabrese and Roberts, 2004). In promoting academic ethics and integrity in vocational education, the following should be noted:

#### **A. Taking Care with Assignment Topics**

Under taking care with assignment topics to promote academic ethics and integrity in vocational education, the below points should be noted

- i. Make sure that they are meaningful, grow out of class work, and that the brief is clear.
- ii. Provide topics that are very specific, perhaps with a particular twist, or an unusual slant.
- iii. Guide students towards topics that interest them.
- iv. Vary assignments from year to year.
- v. Have class discussions about the assignment.
- vi. Include questions which encourage speculation and analysis, and don't just require the repetition of facts (Protor, 2006).



**B Pay Attention to the Process**

The below points should be considered;

- i. Student's life these days is not a leisurely affair – Many students are balancing a lot of commitments, and may be forced into cutting corners with essay writing. Prevent dishonesty by helping students with time management.
- ii. Avoid setting deadlines too close to the end of term, which is stressful time anyway.
- iii. For larger papers, such as research papers, provide interim deadline for particular stages, such as the plan.
- iv. Ask for oral reports and require discussion about the assignment.
- v. Require that students also submit their draft with the final year.

**C Fear of Writing:** This looms large with many students are:

- i. Have class sessions on good writing style, and the different types of writing.
- ii. Set essays in class, for practice.
- iii. If your institution or university has a writing centre, direct students to it.

**D. Demand Correct Citations**

This points should be noted:

- i. Insist that students provide correct, and detailed citations.
- ii. Require that students justify their choice of sources, for example by providing an annotated bibliography.
- iii. Require up-to-date references.

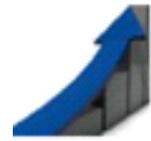
**E. Encourage Meta-learning**

The below points should be considered:

- i. Require that students state what they have learnt from the assignment (Harris, 2004). This is one of the best ways of emphasizing learning as a process in its own right.

**F. Detecting Plagiarism:** Prevention is much better than cure, but detection is the first step in that cure. The list of ways in detecting plagiarism compiled by Harris (2004) are as follows:

- i. The writing style is above that of which the student is capable, or simply differs from the usual one.



- ii. There are linguistic giveaways, use of English spelling when the student is American, or vice versa, or pronouns which do not agree with the writer's gender.
- iii. There are jumps in the structure, with some passages appearing disjointed or not relating to the overall paper.
- iv. Odd layout or formatting, or 'grey' test.
- v. References to additional material that isn't there, for example, charts, graphs e.t.c.
- vi. Mention of dated facts in present tense.
- vii. Citations are absent or the style is inconsistent, or simply lacking.

**G. Cheating:** Pavela (1997) define heating as the use of unauthorized help. Such 'help' may come from students, from illicit prior knowledge of the exam, or from forbidden materials taken into the exam.

**H. Promote an Honesty Attitude:** Honesty is part of promoting the principle of academic integrity. Cheating harms a lot of students. Make it absolutely clear that one require students to submit only their own work, unless it is a group assignment, also should not reuse earlier work without taking permission. Cheating may be difficult to monitor if classes are understaffed. Institutions should support by ensuring adequate staffing, even though this may be in the form of graduate assistants.

**I. Support the Examination Process**

1. Ensure that all students have access to study materials in an easily locatable place, perhaps the library. These materials could include old examination papers, model assignments e.t.c.
2. Demystify the examination process – have more test, calm students' nerves, and try and get them depend on it mentally.

**J. During Examination**

Teachers should endeavor to live up to the below standards:

- a. Make it absolutely clear to students what items are allowed in the exam and what are not.
- b. Try and ensure that the seating arrangement is such that it would be practically impossible for students to copy each other's work.
- c. Invigilate actively – walk up and down the rows, look out for wandering eyes (students may be trying to give signal to one another), and pay attention to the back of the room, where cheats often sit.
- d. Look out for use of unauthorized materials.



- e. Check students' photo ID cards.
- f. Ensure orderly collection of examination papers, either picking them up yourself or ticking them off against the attendance sheet.
- g. Make sure examination papers are kept safe.

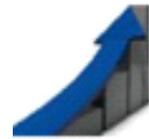
It would be a great mistake to imply that dishonesty is the prerogative of students alone; one can set a good example to students by making own academic integrity, for example, always provide citations when using people's ideas in lecture and handouts. Equally important, however, is to ensure that one provide a positive learning experience for students, with well prepared, relevant and participative classes.

### **Conclusion**

It is observed that there is a strong need of reformation of ethical structure in vocational education, especially in higher level, where it purports to offer new technologists, engineers, managers, academicians, researchers and the makers of society. therefore, repackaging vocational education towards ethics and integrity is an issue that needs to be done with all urgency and commitment. The honesty level is however subjects to the experiences, knowledge, skills and attitudinal traits imbibed on the learner which they will eventually sell out to the general public through the world of work. The desire for value attached to skill cannot be over estimated. All possible approaches, practices and techniques must be applied towards producing good ethical and integrity graduates that will meet the fast global challenges. Our effort to re-orientate the vocational aspect of our general education system must not lose sight of the shift towards the information age. The effect of this age is paramount and has to be accepted, and effort made in keeping pace with its challenges/constraint and demand. Therefore, more concern and effort should be tuned towards implementing for better output to promote academic ethics, integrity and honesty which is mapped out for success. The repackaging activity, cut across the human, material and other ancillaries needed in successful vocational education in Nigeria.

### **Suggestions**

1. Government at all level should mount a serious public enlightenment campaign to educate the general public on the importance of attaining ethics and integrity in vocational fields of study and training. This action will go a long way to wipe away or change misconception, prejudiced and wrong stigma attached to vocational education.
2. Nigeria Labour Congress and other officiates unions should back up the government in establishing functional vocational centres in the local government areas from where the people could go and acquire some job skills. This will reduce the level of crime in the country and also increase the standard of living for the Nigerian people.



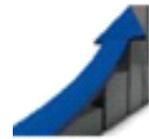
3. Teachers of vocational education should be sponsored for in-service training, workshops or on-the-job training. This will help give current information and equip them to fit into the modern ways of developing the skill and its subsequent ethics and integrity.
4. Vocational institutions should develop good relationships with similar institutes overseas, as this will promote the cross-sharing of ideas and improve technological transfer. By doing this, vocational institutions in Nigeria will have access to up-to-date developments and other numerous benefits.
5. Educational institutions should provide resources needed to teach vocational studies in schools as this will provide students with life skills to become productive entrepreneurs, as it breeds creative and innovative ideas. In the long run, it impacts on the economy and also increases personal freedom.
6. The curriculum of study needs to be revisited and reviewed in line with the current trend and demand of the labour market. This review work covers the workload, the enabling environment and the teacher/student ratio.
7. Discipline must be recalled in the measure commensurate to the offence committed. Students as well as teachers must be checked in their actions which violate the rule of educational practices.
8. Hazard allowance should be considered and paid to teachers and implementers of vocational education. Bonus should also be given to outstanding performance among the students.
9. There is very special and urgent need to establish a functional guidance and counselling unit in our schools. This unit should be vested with authority as regards behavioral patterns and practices.

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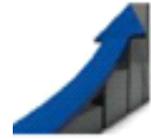
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