

Original Research Article

Refocusing Vocational and Technology Education Programmes and Facilities in Universities for Sustainable Youth Empowerment in Rivers State

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Abstract

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The study aimed to investigate refocusing vocational and technology education Programmes and Facilities in universities for sustainable empowerment in Rivers State. The study was conducted in Rivers State. Two research questions and two hypotheses was formulated to guide the study. The population of the study was 34. There was no sampling. A self-structured instrument titled " Refocusing Vocational and Technology Education Programmes and Facilities for Sustainable Development (RVTEPFSE) was validated by three experts. Findings revealed that proficiency in calculation, communication, human relation, capacity in operating modern machines, computer systems, ability to teach, plan are skills expected of VTE graduates in refocusing VTE programmes. Finding further revealed that e-classrooms, e-libraries, e-workshops, computers, modern mechatronic equipment, interactive board are modern facilities expected to be used in refocusing VTE programmes and facilities in universities. Recommendations were made Government should employ good number of profession to VTE programmes for effective instructional delivery, provide e-classrooms, e-libraries and e-workshops and other ICT facilities to VTE programmes to boost students performance.

Keywords: Empowerment, Refocusing, Sustainable Development, University Education, Vocational and Technology Education, Youth

INTRODUCTION

The growth and development of any nation solely depends on the massive and efficient involvement of her local skilled technical manpower available for boosting the quality of life of her citizenry. This situation can be achieved by upgrading facilities in institution of learning and technological institutions with the aim to expose students with requisite skills and knowledge that will enable them to engage and tackle the needs of the industries. The students are given the practical skills in the university programme of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET).

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is a learning process that gear towards inculcating essential technical skills and basic scientific knowledge into the students of technology institutions.

Musa, Muhammad and Musa (2019) stated that TVET is concerned with the acquisition of knowledge and skills for the world of work. Nwanneke and Iwuanyawu (2019) described TVET as a tool required in equipping the learner with attitude, knowledge and skill thereby producing technical competent, vocationally oriented and skilful workforce. TVET was introduced in Nigeria universities with the aim of providing manpower in technical craft and advanced craft needed in agriculture, industry, commerce and economic development of the nation. But, the focus was diversified and facilities required to be used to train the youths was not provided and upgraded. Thereby, making students and graduates of vocational and technology education programme not valuable, less resourceful and a job seekers who cannot

be self-employed or engaged in the production and maintenance processes of the industry. Hence, it required the authorities of the university, government to refocus on the vocational and technology education facilities with the sole aim to be used in training the students for sustainable empowerment. Kama in Okwelle, Beako and Ojotule (2019) declared that youths acquired skills in TVET courses such as Electrical technology building technology and mechanical technology in the universities.

Vocational and technology education is a course studied in the Faculty of Education in universities in Rivers State. Its course content focuses on mechanical technology (engine operation, engine components, mechanical equipment, machine parts and machine, mode of operations, materials and types of metal used in producing its component part), Electrical technology (Electrical equipment, tools, electronic devices, installation and maintenance works) and building technology (Building materials, equipment, instrument, quality of materials and building designs and construction) among others. Students of this department were expected to major in a particular option, and will have in-depth knowledge and skills to repair and maintain mechanical and electrical machines, engines and used the right equipment to repair when developed faults and ability to design, construct building and roads and other related works. Graduates of this department were equally expected to be employed in civil engineering companies, electrical companies and other multinational oil industries or be self-employed by establishing private mechanical and electrical enterprises at any available location in the state. But, since 1999 when Nigeria returned to democracy, focus of successive government were not directed to vocational and technology education programmes and facilities for empowerment towards improvement of skilled workforce. The old and obsolete training machine parts, equipment brought since the colonial era is still available and used as instructional materials in the vocational and technology education workshops in most Nigeria universities. In order to achieve relevant skills, knowledge, attitude and entrepreneurship in technology education, new technologies have to be introduced into the mechanical technology, electrical technology and building technology curriculum which are all options in vocational and technology education in university.

University education is an apex educational level in Nigeria. Okoro (2016) stated that university education is the educational level that follows the completion of a secondary education. It is usually referred to as the third level education and it include teaching, research, exacting applied work such as in the medical schools, and social services activities of universities (Ibezim, 2013). Though, university education officially divided into two broad groups via undergraduate and post-graduate students. Vocational and technology education courses

are studied at both undergraduate level and undergraduate level. These descriptions of university education suggest that it has a wide range of student to attend to and thus requires suitable modern technologies that would satisfy the needs of these various classes of students for sustainable youth empowerment.

Empowerment is the process of obtaining basic opportunities for marginalized individual either by the marginalized or the non-marginalized (Ene, 2014). Ezeani (2016) declared that empowerment deals with equipping an individual with reputable confidence to develop his own capacity having the will mind to make decision, accept responsibilities, make choice, access to productive resources, increase one's self-positive image, ability to be competent, and overcoming of stigma of any time in the society. Therefore, refocusing on mechanical technology, electrical technology and building technology as a medium to empower youths in the 21st century, graduates will be expected to different levels of skills thus; basic skill (proficiency in reading, writing, simple calculations, communication and human relation) technical skills (capacity in operating modern, machines, engines, computer, construction, maintaining and repair mechatronic systems, robots and used mechatronic equipment and other modern electronic and mechanical gadgets), professional skills (such as in marketing, accounting, teaching, law, mining, surveying and architecture) and management/leadership skills (such as goal setting; planning, motivation, decision-making, delegation, supervision aid ethical judgement) (Eze, 2012). Empowerment can be defined as a multi-dimensional social process gear towards acquiring skill suitable to gain employment or be self-reliant that helps people gain control over their own lives (Beako, 2016).

The objectives of empowerment as support activities aimed at improving employment opportunities for trained graduates, equip target group with marketable skills and put in place mechanism that will improve future sustainability of vocational and technical centres (Akpan, 2014). Given these knowledge and skills to repairs and maintain engine components (engine operation, engine components, mechanical equipment, machine parts and machine, mode of operations, materials and types of metals used in material productions and component parts), Electrical technology(Electrical equipment, tools, electronic devices, installation and maintenance works) and building technology (Building materials, equipment, instrument, quality of materials and building designs and construction) among others. Vocational and technology education lecturers would impart knowledge into the student with the view to gain employment opportunities in industries for self-reliant. The VTE programmes stands the chance to guide their students to have in-depth knowledge and skills to repair and maintain mechanical and electrical machines, engines, building materials and instrument, used the right equipment to repair them when developed faults and ability to design, construction of

building, roads and other related works. These aims and objectives of VTE programmes will be achieved when government, university authorities, captains of industries and stakeholders in educational sector sincerely refocusing vocational and technology education facilities.

Facilities are all the instructional facilities like workshops, laboratories, studios, equipment, machines, tools, consumable materials while are used in teaching and learning of vocational technology training. Bwala (2012) Facilities are any material thing or services that facilitate teaching and learning in universities. Bwala further opined that training facilities for technology education programmes encompasses the basic hand tools, equipment and structural facilities which include e-classrooms, e-laboratories, e-workshops and e-libraries. Focusing on these facilities may guaranteed well-equipped e-workshops, internet facilities, computer accessories and other smart devices in a bid to achieve success.

Focusing refers to the ability of someone, organizations, institutions or groups of person(s) give all attention to a particular programmes, facilities, things or projects. The focus of these groups can be diverted or lost to other matters considered resourceful and relevant to the contemporary society. But when the results is not fruitful and able to ameliorate the pride of the people or society, it therefore become necessary to refocusing with the view to achieve positive result. VTE programmes is expected to improve manpower development and encourage youth empowerment when VTE programmes and facilities failed to achieve desire expectations, it is duty bound to refocusing VTE programmes and facilities to address lapse in youth empowerment.

Refocusing simply mean to bring back all attention to a particular thing or project. Most time, the attention of the people, organizations, institutions or government has been diverted to other projects or programmes in the state. In this study, refocusing refers to the ability of the authorities of the university, government and multinational oil industries to give all attention to vocational and technology education (VTE) programmes and facilities with the view to improve the capacities of youth empowerment in the state. Refocusing will implies that the attention of this government would be directed to restructuring and redesigning VTE programmes, where VTE products will be useful and meaningful to the society, government and industries. Refocusing further mean that lecturers of VTE will be Information and Communication Technology (ITC) literate and can interact effectively with students on zoom cloud and other possible social platforms. Refocusing also implies that a professional regulatory body must be established with the view to monitor and supervise the conduct of VTE graduates and lecturers to maintain integrity, discipline and professionalism in the field. The VTE professional regulatory body will be saddled with the responsibility to conduct professional examinations aimed to induct

graduates into the fold as members of the organisation. Just as in the case of engineers and lawyers where one year compulsory law school is established for graduates of law while graduates of engineering are subjected to a compulsory examinations and screening by it professional body via Council of Registered Engineers of Nigeria (COREN) to ascertain professionalism. This organisation will encourage professionalism in VTE field of study, create employment opportunities to members and equally accord respect to its teeming members in the society and at workplaces

Furthermore, refocusing VTE programmes will address all abnormalities that seem to ridiculed graduates of VTE, correct negative perceptions as quacks and incapacitated who cannot function effectively in the industries or technological institutions. Refocusing VTE programmes and facilities will attract government intervention fund to purchase relevant facilities and capable manpower to drive the process of delivery instructions to VTE students. Hence, induction of members will add colour to the profession and alert members of the public of responsibilities of VTE programmes and products, including its primary duties that enables VTE inducted members to exhibit professional responsibilities.

Professional responsibilities are those ethics that guide a train VTE lecturers on what is expected of him/her in the profession. These responsibilities of VTE professional are such that train graduates should be imbibed, via dedicated to their profession, keep the institution law, be tidy (both in person and work), be versatile and proficient in their field and act as a role model to learners. Others responsibilities of train VTE graduates include be punctual to both school and classes, be firm in decision taking, be helpful to both colleagues and students when needs arise, have the interest of the learners and the job, be sincere, industrious and have initiatives, impart knowledge to learners among others.

It is crystal clear that the attention of successive government has been focused mainly on road constructions and other infrastructural developments and less attention on investing in vocational and technology education programmes, facilities and other related programmes that gear towards improving graduate and youth potentials.

Youth is the time of life between childhood and adulthood. Unesco (2013) stated that youth mean every person between the ages of 15 and 35 years. Unesco further described youth as best understood as a period of transition from the dependence of childhood to adulthood's independence. Ejeka, Nwokoji and Onyechinyere (2016) defined youth as the time of life when one is young especially the period between childhood and maturity of the early period of existence, growth or development. Jega (2012) described youth as a special group of people with strong stamina and

passion for realizing certain set goals and objectives. For the purpose of execution of Nigeria's national youth development policy, the youth comprises all young persons of age 18 - 35 who are citizens of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. These definitions confirmed that undergraduates and graduates of VTE falls within this age bracket. These graduates and undergraduates will be empowered through skills and knowledge acquired from VTE lecturers in the university. Nwalado and Oru (2016) stated that vocational education is expected to provide youth knowledge, skills and training that satisfy the human resource demand of a nation. This skills and knowledge will enable them to be empowered and employed in government parastatals, multinational oil industries or self-employed. Consequently upon this background, refocusing vocational and technology education programmes and facilities in universities for sustainable youth empowerment in Rivers State was carried out.

Statement of the Problem

Graduates of vocational and technology education are expected to be employed industries with the task to operate, maintain and repair machines, operate, maintain and repair machines, engines and engine components in their mechanical workshops, electrical technology students are to perform duties in electrical equipment, tools, electronic devices, installation and maintenance works and building technology students are required to be familiar with building materials, equipment, instrument, quality of materials and building designs and construction considered the option. However, consider the technological revolutions, multinational oil industries has reviewed and adopted modern machine, engines, technical equipment strange to obsolete machines, engines and engine components available in the vocational and technology education workshops of universities. This situation has created a vacuum where graduates of vocational and technology education are not be able to identify, be familiar and utilize modern mechanical, electrical and building facilities for production and maintenance purposes of multinational oil industries. This has diverted the focus of multinational oil industries from given employment opportunities to graduates of vocational and technology education, since they are no longer relevant in the production process and maintenance processes of the industries. It is on this premise, the study aimed to refocusing on vocational and technology education facilities in universities for sustainable youth empowerment in Rivers State.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to examine the focus

of the mechanical technology facilities in universities for sustainable youth employment in Rivers State. Specifically, the study sought to:

(1) identify qualities expected of vocational and technology education programmes to attract the attention of the multinational oil industries to provide employment opportunities to its graduates in Rivers State.

(2) ascertain modern facilities expected to be used to train vocational and technology education students to attract employment opportunities in multinational oil industries in Rivers State.

Research Questions

The following research questions were posed guide the study

(1). What are the qualities expected of vocational and technology education programmes to attract the attention of the multinational oil industries to provide employment opportunities to its graduates in Rivers State.

(2) What are the modern facilities expected to be used to train vocational and technology education students to attract employment opportunities in multinational oil industries in Rivers State.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance.

(1). There is no significance different in the mean response between VTE lecturers of the Department of Vocational and Technology Education, Rivers State University, and VTE lecturers of Faculty of Vocational and Technology Education, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rumueluimini, Port Harcourt, Nigeria on qualities expected of vocational and technology education programmes to attract the attention of the multinational oil industries to provide employment opportunities to its graduates in Rivers State.

(2) There is no significance different in the mean response between VTE lecturers of the Department of Vocational and Technology Education, Rivers State University, and VTE lecturers of Faculty of Vocational and Technology Education, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rumueluimini, Port-harcourt, Nigeria on modern facilities expected to be used to train vocational and technology education students to attract employment opportunities in multinational oil industries in Rivers State.

METHODS

The design used for the study was descriptive survey. The study was carried out in two universities, owned by the Rivers State Government. These two Universities

Table 1. Mean and Standard Deviation on Qualities Required of Vocational Technical Education (VTE) Students in Refocusing Vocational Technical Education VTE Programmes

S/N	Qualities Required in refocusing Vocational Technical Education Programmes	\bar{X}	SD RSU Lecturers	Remark	\bar{X}	SD IAUOE Lecturers	Remark
1	Proficiency in calculation	3.98	1.03	Required	4.01	0.89	Required
2	Proficiency in communication	4.09	0.84	Required	3.82	1.03	Required
3	Proficiency in human relation	3.86	1.09	Required	3.79	1.14	Required
4	Proficiency in reaching and writing	3.65	1.19	Required	3.69	1.16	Required
5	Capacity in operating modern machines	3.92	0.93	Required	3.71	1.28	Required
6	Capacity in operating modern engines	3.98	0.82	Required	3.62	1.20	Required
7.	Capacity in operating modern computer operation	4.12	0.89	Required	3.90	0.92	Required
8.	Capacity in operating maintaining mechatronic systems and robots.	4.14	0.81	Required	3.94	0.94	Required
9	Acquire skill is teaching	3.86	1.08	Required	3.56	1.20	Required
10	Acquire skill in teaching surveying	3.92	1.01	Required	3.60	1.16	Required
11	Acquire skill in mining	2.56	1.00	Required	2.65	1.03	Required
12	Ability to set goal	2.58	1.35	Required	2.87	0.98	Required
13	Ability to plan	2.97	0.90	Required	2.91	0.90	Required
14	Ability to plan motivate	2.68	1.02	Required	2.72	1.04	Required
15.	Ability to take decision	3.00	0.97	Required	2.58	1.23	Required
16.	Ability to supervise	2.85	0.99	Required	2.67	0.67	Required
17	Ability to in ethical judgement	2.67	1.02	Required	2.64	1.05	Required
Total Mean/Standard Deviation		2.95	0.97		2.76	1.09	

Ajuru University of Education, Rumuolumini, Port Harcourt and Rivers State University, Port Harcourt, Nigeria. The population of the study consist of 30 respondents, comprises 16 lecturers drawn from the Department of Vocational and Technology Education, Rivers state University, Port Harcourt and 16 lecturers in the Faculty of Vocational and Technology Education, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rumuolumini, Port Harcourt.

A self-designed instrument tagged "Refocusing Vocational and Technology Education Programmes (RVTEP) was used to elicit information from respondents. The instrument was validated by three experts from the Department of Vocational and Technology Education, Rivers State University, Port Harcourt and one expert from the Department of Industrial Technology Education, Michael Okpala University of Agriculture. Umunike, Nigeria. The questionnaire consists of two parts: A and B. Part A dealt with personal data of respondents, Part B is sub-divided into two sections: 1 and 2, section 1 dealt with information on qualities required of VTE students in refocusing vocational and technology education's programmes for sustainable development while section 2 focused on modern facilities expected to be used to deliver instructions in a bid to refocusing vocational and technology education programmes in universities for sustainable development in Rivers State.

The questionnaire items are based on four point likert scale response of Strongly Required (SR), Required (R),

Not Required (NR) and Strongly Not Required (SNR) with corresponding values of 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively. To determine the reliability coefficient of the instrument, a pilot test was conducted on six lecturers from the Department of industrial Technology Education, Michael Okpala University of Agriculture, Umunike, and was carried out using pilot test method. The reliability coefficient was determined using Crobach Alpha Coefficient which yielded 0.90 which implies that the instrument was very reliable and used for the study. Mean and standard was used to answer the research questions, while Z-test statistical tools was used to test the hypotheses. The decision rule for the research questions was any item with mean value equal to or less than 2.50 were rejected while mean value equal to or greater 2.50 were accepted. The hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance with t-test statistical tool. For the null hypotheses, if the value of the Z-calculated is less than the value of Z-critical, the hypothesis was accepted, while if the value of the Z-calculated is greater than or equal to the value of the Z-critical, the hypothesis was rejected.

RESULTS

Table 1 shows the mean values ranges from 2.95 to 2.76, which are all greater than the criterion mean of 2.50. This implies that all the items listed above are qualities

required in refocusing the vocational and technology education programmes in universities in Rivers State. **124 Merit Res. J. Edu. Rev.**

Table 2. Mean and Standard Deviation of Respondents on Modern Facilities Required to be used to Refocusing Vocational Technical Education (VTE) Programmes in Universities

S/N	Modern Facilities Expected to be Used to Refocusing VTE Programmes	\bar{X}	SD RSU Lecturers	Remark	\bar{X}	SD IAUOE lecturers	Remark
1	E-classrooms	3.99	0.92	Required	4.10	0.89	Required
2	E-Libraries	3.87	1.10	Required	4.16	1.02	Required
3	E-workshops	3.85	1.13	Required	3.85	1.14	Required
4	Mechatronic components	4.13	0.90	Required	3.95	1.12	Required
5	Mechatronic equipment	4.25	0.81	Required	4.16	0.86	Required
6	Smart devices	3.98	1.02	Required	3.83	1.14	Required
7.	Computers	3.96	1.02	Required	3.82	1.17	Required
8.	Laptops	3.99	0.02	Required	3.80	1.15	Required
9.	Brandnew engines	4.21	0.83	Required	3.86	1.07	Required
10	Digital versatile disk players	4.28	0.81	Required	4.20	0.86	Required
	Total mean/standard deviation	3.05	0.86		2.97	1.04	

Table 3. Z-test Analysis of Response on the Prospects of Integrating Robotics Technology into Curriculum of Metal Work Technology Students

Respondents	\bar{X}	SD	N	df	α	z-cal	z-cri	Remark
RSU Lecturers	2.95	0.97	18	32	0.05	0.5902	± 1.96	Accepted
IAUOE Lecturers	2.76	1.09	16					

Table 4. Z-test Analysis Response on the Modern Facilities Expected to be Used in Refocusing Vocational and Technology Education Programmes

Respondents	\bar{X}	SD	N	df	α	z-cal	z-cri	Remark
RSU Lecturers	3.05	0.86	18	32	0.05	0.2661	± 1.96	Accepted
IAUOE Lecturers	2.97	1.04	16					

Table 2 displays the mean values ranging from 3.05 to 2.97, which are greater than the criterion mean of 2.50. This indicates that VTE lecturers in two universities in Rivers State agreed with all the items as being the modern facilities expected to be used in delivery instructions in a bid to refocusing vocational and technology education in universities in Rivers State.

Information on Table 3 indicates that Z-calculated is 0.5902 while Z-critical is ± 1.96 . This implies that the value of Z-calculated is less than the value of Z-critical. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted, as such, the researcher concluded that there is no significant difference in the mean response of Lecturers of Department of Vocational and Technology Education of Rivers State University and Lecturers of Vocational and Technology Education of Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rumuolumini, Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

Data on Table 4 shows that Z-calculated is 0.2661 while Z – critical is ± 1.96 . This implies that the value of Z-calculated is less than the value of Z-critical. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted, indicating that there is no significant difference in the mean response of lecturers of department of vocational and technology education of Rivers State University and Lectures of vocational and technology education of Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rumuolumini on modern facilities expected to be used in refocusing of vocational and technology programmes in universities in Rivers State.

DISCUSSION

The finding of the study revealed 10-items as qualities required of vocational and technology education students in refocusing vocational and technology education

programmes and facilities in universities in Rivers State. The items include proficiency in calculation, proficiency in communication, human relation, reading and writing,

vocational and technology education lecturers of Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rumuolumini, Port Harcourt on modern facilities expected to be used in

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capacity to operate modern machines, engines and other related devices are qualities required of vocational and technology education students in refocusing vocational and technology education programmes in universities for sustainable development in Rivers State. The finding consented to the opinion of National Policy of Education (NPE) in Miller, Nwaekete and Akiti (2016) who stated that the acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competencies both natural and physical, as equipment for the development of a society. The finding also agreed with Eze (2012) who stated that a medium to empower youths in the 21st century, graduates will be expected to different levels of skills thus: basic skills (proficiency in reading, writing, simple calculation), technical skills (capacity in operating modern machines, engines) and professional skills (marketing, accounting, teaching, law), leadership skills (goal setting, planning, motivation). The finding further revealed that there is no significant difference in the mean response of vocational and technology education lecturers of Rivers State University, Port Harcourt and vocational and technology education lecturers of Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rumuolumini, Port Harcourt on the qualities required of vocational and technology education students in refocusing vocational and technology education programmes and facilities in universities for sustainable development in Rivers State.

The finding also revealed 10-items as modern facilities expected to be used in refocusing vocational and technology education programmes and facilities in universities for sustainable development in Rivers State. The finding include: e-classrooms, e-libraries, e-workshops, computers, laptop, smart devices, mechatronic components, digital versatile disk players, interactive board and brand-new engines among others. The finding is in line with Umah and Nwokike (2016) who stated that modern facilities as new teaching aids used to impact knowledge, skills and attitudes on technical education students to enable them develop values, manipulative skills needed for educational achievements and technological transformation. The finding also agreed with Chidobi (2015) who stated that communication technologies are equipment that enables information to be transferred from the source to the users which try to overcome natural barriers to information transfer like speed and distance. The finding further agreed with Nwokike (2015) modern facilities involves all the sophisticated machines and equipment invented in 21st century for easy gathering, processing and transmission of information across the globe and for easy communication between people. The finding also revealed that there is no significant difference in the mean response of vocational and technology education lecturers of Rivers State University, Port Harcourt and

refocusing vocational and technology education programmes and facilities in universities for sustainable development in Rivers State.

CONCLUSION

It is crystal clear that the intention of successive government was diverted to other sectors of the economy including construction of roads, building of flyovers among others. This diversion had given lapses to the educational programmes where many programmes were not credited due to poor infrastructures and under staff. This ugly situation has crippled skills acquisition and development in vocational and technology education programme which ordinarily supposed to produce competent skills graduates expected to be employed in the multinational oil industries and foreign companies. Refocus on the facilities of vocational and technology education programmes would enables students to attain certain technical qualities expected to suit into production and maintenance processes of multinational oil industries for given employment opportunities to vocational and technology education students.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, researchers made the following recommendations:

- (1) The department of Vocational and Technology Education to establish monetary and supervisory unit to monitor students compliance to basic qualities expected of students to be useful in the world of work.
- (2) The Government should provide basic modern facilities to the department of vocational and technology education to enable students learn effectively in the 21st century

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