

**REFOCUSING MECHANICAL TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION  
PROGRAMMES FOR SUSTAINABLE PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT  
AMONGST YOUTHS IN RIVERS STATE**

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**Abstract**

*This study investigated refocusing mechanical technology education programmes for sustainable peace and development amongst youths in Rivers State, specifically, this study investigated refocussing practical activities in mechanical technology education programmes for sustainable peace and development amongst youths in Rivers State, and refocussing human resource competence in mechanical technology education programmes for sustainable peace development amongst youths in Rivers State. Two research questions and hypotheses were answered and tested at .05 level of significance. A descriptive survey design guided the study. The population of the study comprised 63 mechanical education lecturers and 90 final year students in the three tertiary institutions in Rivers State that offer mechanical technology education, namely. Rivers State University, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, and Federal College of Education (Technical) Omoku in affiliation with University of Nigeria Nsukka. The population was manageable, therefore, no sampling technique was used for the study. Self-made survey questionnaire served as the instrument for the study. The instrument was face validated by two experts. The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient which yielded a coefficient of .74. Mean and Standard Deviation were used to answer the research questions while z-test statistical tool was used*

*to test the hypotheses. The study found among others that practical skills like machine tool maintenance, welding and fabrication, machine tool operations, auto body repair, material selection skills are areas that need refocusing. It was recommended among others that the government and tertiary institutions management through TETFUND should make provision for practical skill training and retraining of all mechanical technology education lecturers for practical skill development to refocusing practical activities of the programme towards skill acquisition of mechanical education students for sustainable peace and development amongst youths in Rivers State*

**Keyword:** Refocussing, Mechanical Technology, Sustainable Peace, &Development, Youths.

## **Introduction**

No state or region of a country seeking economic development which is the good and better life, can afford to neglect the students, graduates and the entire youths, or abandon them to constitute major social problems. This is because the graduates(youths) are the engine of economic growth and industrial development, they provide or serve as the source of the labour force for the production of goods and services. They are also the critical masses of the people whose action and inaction can develop or destroy the fabrics of their country. Ukpong in Ajie, Dokubo and Ibekwe (2019). Youths in the context of the Rivers State connotes not only age but social exclusion deprivation, economic disempowerment and political disenfranchisement. They constitute a segment of the society which traditionally should be seen rather than be heard, but who nevertheless always struggle to be heard.

Olufemi (2020) lamented that more than ten thousand youths graduate from higher institutions yearly in Nigeria which Rivers State is part and parcel of, the population keep soaring yet efforts are not made to keep these graduates engaged for economic development and sustainable peace. Like most concepts in social discourse, there is no universal definition of peace. However, peace has been generally seen as the absence of war, fear, conflict, anxiety, suffering and violence (David in Otiye, 2021).

Several educational programmes have been introduced to provide manpower in different fields, for sustainable peace and community development. One of the programmes that are designed for the achievement of the numerous educational goals is mechanical technology education. This is a branch of technical education that is concerned with the development of competent workers

in terms of acquisition of adequate knowledge and technical skills (Ajie, Ochogba&Bassey, 2023). In other words, mechanical technology education could be described as a programme designed in tertiary institutions to train individuals that will serve as technologists in automobile or metalwork related industries or be able to create employment by means of self-reliance.

Basically, mechanical technology education comprises automobile and metalwork technology education programmes. Automobile technology education is a programme designed for the training of individuals in tertiary institutions who can repair or assemble automobile either as an employer or an employee (Uka&Ochogba, 2019). The aim is to train individuals who can among other things diagnose, handle auto body repairs, auto body spray, auto engine repairs, auto electricity, auto electronics, auto tyre vulcanization, and auto parts merchandise. Onwusa, Nwaosa and Kelubia (2021) pointed that students in automobile technology education are expected to go into successful self-employment upon graduation because they have passed through formal institutions and have acquired better coordinated knowledge and skills needed on the job.

On the other hand, Ugbelu in Ajie, Osoh, and Thomas (2022) described metalwork technology education programmes as an entrepreneurial based skills oriented field of study that is expected to equip learners with sellable skills and make for self-reliance and paid employment. It is a segment of mechanical technology education which focuses on foundry practices, fabrication, welding, forging, machine shop, and equipment mechanic work.etc

Hence, in some tertiary institutions, these programmes are operated independently from each other, whereby automobile is regarded as a course of study while metalwork technology is regarded as another course of a study. On the other hand, some institutions collapse automobile and metalwork technology programmes into mechanical technology education programmes. Mechanical technology education gives adequate training and knowledge to youths and adults and enables them to acquire necessary skills for success in a chosen career which of course lead to sustainable peace and development of a state.

Mechanical technology education as a sub-system of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) programmes designed to equip individuals with mechanical skills. However, this sub-system of education has been regrettably neglected in Rivers State and in Nigeria at large. The consequences of which have been high rate of unemployment and joblessness culminating into restiveness among youths in the state and in the country, Adebisi, Akinsooto and Akpomuje (2014) observed that the level of

unemployment in the country has direct negative effects on the level of crimes and insecurity in such a country. Uwa, Chuke, and Elton (2016) argued that unemployment in Nigeria has led to an increase in militancy, kidnap for ransom, violent crimes, youth restiveness, and socially delinquent behaviours, among others. About 60 % of the Nigerian youths and graduate population is without jobs or underemployed, a situation that poses a threat to human security, especially in terms of crimes and other vices. The present generation of youths and graduates are confronted with a dual dilemma, such as unemployment and insecurity. The unemployment is worrisome on the premise that it has contributed criminality and terrorism in Nigeria, thereby having adverse effects on sustainable peace, economic growth and development. According to Van der Veen and Simone, (2020) unemployed youths are frequently perceived as a high risk for the stability of a country. It therefore means that creation of jobs and employment opportunities are viable ways of maintaining peace, law and order in any societies. As mechanical technology has emerged as a promising sector with the potential to creating employment opportunities and foster economic growth, the field encompasses various industries, including manufacturing automotive, aerospace, and renewable energy, among others. The neglect of mechanical technology education programmes in Nigerian has led to the production of graduates who find it puzzling to be self-reliant or fit into mechanical industries without undergoing serious retraining which as well send a signal calling for refocusing of the programme in all higher institution across the country.

Refocussing according to Okwelle, Tombari, and Ojotule (2021) 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 adequate attention to mechanical technology education programmes with the view to improving the capacities of her students or youth for sustainable development, empowerment, and peace in the state. Refocusing implies that the attention of this government would be directed to refocussing the human resource competence and improving the practical activities of the programme, where mechanical technology education products will be useful and meaningful to the society, government and industries. Bearing in mind that the root cause of unemployment in Rivers state among others include skill mismatch, lack of relevant skills, lack of qualified and trained manpower, with high level of competencies

Competencies are the knowledge, skills, abilities, and behaviors that contribute to individual and organizational performances. Competent human resources increase the chances of producing ready to work graduates in mechanical technology education, therefore, the teacher as a resource personnel used for implementing mechanical technology education goals through effective teaching and learning process need to be a master in the use of hand tools, operation of machine tools, supervision of students practical activities, maintenance and repair of equipment. It is expected that teachers in these mechanical technology have these requirement to ensure sound output and well blended individuals that will produce knowledge, and skill required for sustainable national development (Onah, 2019). Momoh in Onah (2019) stressed that the need for training and retraining in TVET has been recognized worldwide as a means of developing resources, for better consumption, efficiency, and increase productivity. Through training and retraining, resource personnel in mechanical technology education could be assisted to be current, and competent on development in their areas of profession with a view to enhancing their performance on the job towards the production of ready-to-work graduates. Aworanti (2013) asserted that training and retraining of teachers make them inculcate in the learners dignity of labour, respect, ethical value, self-reliance, quality job delivery, technical skills, and industrial harmony for the attainment of sustainable national development

Furthermore, refocusing mechanical technology education programmes will address and improve practical activities of the resource persons (lecturers) and students in the areas such as milling machine operation, drilling operations, lathe operations, machine tool repair and maintenance, fabrication, gas acetylene welding, arc welding, forging and foundry, automobile body repair and spray, automobile air conditioning repair, automobile wheel balancing, automobile engine repairs, machine parts productions, all anomalies that seem to ridicule graduates of these programmes, correct negative perceptions as quacks and incapacitated who cannot function effectively in the industries or technological institutions (Okwelle *et al*, 2021). Refocusing mechanical technology education programmes will attract management and government intervention fund to purchase relevant facilities and capable manpower to drive the process of delivery instructions to her students.

Sustainable development is about the development of individuals and that of the economy. Mechanical technology education empowerment improves a nation's economy, provides job opportunities, reduces crime rates and encourage creativity and competitiveness in nation building. Mechanical technology

education and sustainable development are inevitably connected, its process, has an essential role to play in providing skills and values considered necessary to put sustainable peace and development into practice

Work is key to sustainable livelihood just as peace is central to socio-economic development and general human well-being. There cannot be meaningful sustainable peace and all kind of development if there is no sustainable livelihood as well as peaceful living and co-existence. Adebisi (2013) noted that sustainable development goes hand-in-hand with sustainable livelihood.

Achieving sustainable peace and development includes not just protecting people but also empowering people to fend for themselves. So, jobs creation is an antidote to insecurity, peace building and developmental strategy. It is on this note that this study investigated refocussing mechanical technology education programmes for sustenance of peace and development amongst youths in Rivers State

### **Statement of the Problem**

Nigerian tertiary institutions keep producing graduates that are theoretically excellent but practically unfit, whom after graduation find it a puzzle to fit into the industries or be self-reliant. Nnodim and Johnwest cited in Nnodim and Ochogba (2018) opined that skilled job opportunities in industries are not filled because technical education graduates are not technically competent enough to take up the available skilled jobs, by implication, mechanical technology education graduates are not technically competent enough to take up the available skilled jobs. Okonjo-Iwuala (2013) opine that it has been well documented that Nigerian higher institutions lack the tools to give students the skills employer needs and as a result the issue of youth unemployment appears to be shooting up the sky because most of the graduates lack employability skills that are often required from technical and vocational schools. This lack of competence prevent most of these youths from securing or creating jobs immediately after graduation making them to be frustrated which as well lead some of them as youths that need to survive in the society to indulging in social vices, as Eneh in Ogele (2020) observed that In Port Harcourt City, violent crimes have continued unabated. He submitted that “lack of employment makes crime a more attractive option for some Nigerian university graduates. This is because in Nigeria it is common to find some graduates still roaming the streets, five years after graduation in search of jobs that are not there, thereby lending force to crimes such as robbery, pipeline vandalization, oil bunkering, yahoo/yahoo plus, and prostitution among

the youths.”National Bureau of Statistic (NBS) (2019) stated that in 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of 2018 Rivers State was the second highest rated unemployed state in Nigeria with (46.7 %), the statistic cited above was expressed in terms of the labour force searching and ready to work but could not get a job. The statistic have shown why there is increase in violence and crime amongst youths which has become a threat to human security in the state.It is against this backdrop that the research is aimed on refocussing mechanical technology education programmes for sustainable peace and development amongst youths in Rivers State.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The study is aimed at refocussing mechanical technology education for sustainable peace and development amongst youths in Rivers State. Specifically, the study investigated:

1. Refocussing practical activities in mechanical technology education programmes for sustainable peace and development amongst youths in Rivers State.
2. Refocussing human resource competence in mechanical technology education programmes for sustainable peace and development amongst youths in Rivers State

### **Research Questions**

1. What are the practical skill areas in mechanical technology education that need refocussing for sustainable peace and development amongst youths in Rivers State?
2. What are the human resource areas that need refocussing for sustainable peace and development amongst youths in Rivers State?

### **Hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses were tested at .05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant difference between the mean response of mechanical education technology lecturers and final year students on the practical skill areas in mechanical technology education that need refocussing for sustainable peace and development amongst youths in Rivers State
2. There is no significant difference between the mean response of mechanical education technology lecturers and final year students on the human resource areas that need refocussing for sustainable peace and development amongst youths in Rivers State.

### **Methodology**

The study was carried out in Rivers State. The study adopted descriptive survey design. The population of the study comprised all technical education lecturers and final year technical education students in the three higher institutions in

Rivers State that offer mechanical technology education programmes. They are, Rivers State University, Port Harcourt (18 lecturers, 27 final year Students); Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt (19 lecturers, 25 final year students) and Federal College of Education (Technical), Omoku, Rivers State in affiliation with University of Nigeria Nsukka, (26 lecturers and 38 final year students). Final year students were selected because they have spent more time in the programme than other set of students. As at the time of this study, there was a population of 63 and 90 technical education lecturers and final year students respectively. The population was manageable; therefore, the entire population was used for the study. Self-made survey questionnaire titled, “Refocussing mechanical technology education programmes for sustainable peace and development amongst youths in Rivers State (RMTEPSPDRS)” served as the instrument for data collection. The instrument was partitioned into two sections that were structured in four point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA-4), Agree (A-3), Disagree (D-2) and Strongly Disagree (SD-1). The instrument was face validated by two experts in the Department of Technical Education in Ignatius Ajuru University of Education Port Harcourt. Also, the instrument was tested to ascertain its reliability using Cronbach Alpha Reliability Coefficient tool. This was achieved through purposive sampling of 7 mechanical technology education lecturers in Niger Delta University, Bayelsa. The reliability coefficient achieved was .74 which confirmed the reliability of the instrument. Copies of the instruments were administered and retrieved by the researcher on the spot of administration. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions and to ascertain the homogeneity of responses. Also, z-test statistical tool was used to test the hypotheses. Mean score less than 2.50 were rejected while Mean scores equal or greater than 2.50 were accepted. Also, z-calculated values less than z-critical values were accepted while z-calculated values greater than z-critical values were rejected which shows that there was a significant difference between the mean responses of the groups.

## **Results**

**Research Question 1.** What are the practical skill areas in mechanical technology education that need refocussing for sustainable peace and development amongst youths in Rivers State?

**Table 1. Mean Response on the Practical skill areas in mechanical technology education that need Refocusing**



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S/N	Items	Lecturers (n=63)	final year Students (n=90)
X <sub>1</sub>	SD <sub>1</sub>	Decision	X <sub>2</sub> SD <sub>2</sub> Decision
1	Machine tool operation Skill area	3.44 .50	Agree 3.26 .55
2	Oxy-acetylene welding skill area	3.50 .50	Agree 3.26 .76
3	Automobile air conditional repair skill	3.46 .50	Agree 3.42 .56
4	Automobile body repair skill area	3.61 .58	Agree 3.48 .67
5	Machine parts production skill area	3.44 .53	Agree 3.23 .65
6	Arc welding skill area	3.53 .50	Agree 3.33 .69
7	Fabrication skill	3.65 .48	Agree 3.06 .78
8	Automobile electrical skill	3.42 .71	Agree 2.92 1.08
9	Material/equipment inventory taking skill	3.53 .66	Agree 2.97 .73
10	Argon welding skill	3.28 .74	Agree 3.18 .51
11	Blacksmithing skill	3.33 .76	Agree 3.67 .72
12	Pipe fitting skill	3.26 .86	Agree 3.11 .31
13	Automobile engine serving skill	3.45 .61	Agree 3.24 .34
<b>Total</b>		<b>3.45 .57</b>	<b>3.24 .58</b>

Source; Field Survey 2024

Result in Table 1, shows that both lecturers and mechanical technology education final year students agree that all the items highlighted are practical skill areas in mechanical technology education that need refocussing for sustainable peace and development amongst youths in Rivers State. This is evident in the Grand Mean scores 3.45 for lecturers and 3.24 for final year mechanical technology education students, which are both greater than 2.50 which is the acceptable mean value. Also, the closeness in the standard Deviation for both groups which is .57 and .58 shows homogeneity in the responses of both groups.

**Research Question 2.** What are the human resource skill areas that need refocussing for sustainable peace and development amongst youths in Rivers State?

**Table 2. Mean responses on human resource skill areas that need refocusing**

		Lecturers (n=63)			Final year Students (n=90)		
S/N	Items	X <sub>1</sub>	SD <sub>1</sub>	Decision	X <sub>2</sub>	SD <sub>2</sub>	Decision
1	Instructional Planning skill	3.39	.63	Agree	3.72	.51	Agree
2	Workshop management skill	3.42	.77	Agree	3.23	.71	Agree
3	Facilities and Equipment Management skill	3.36	.74	Agree	3.04	.56	Agree
4	Effective students management skill	3.09	.94	Agree	3.74	.77	Agree
5	Critical thinking skill	3.38	.60	Agree	3.34	.57	Agree
6	Problem solving skill	3.26	.57	Agree	3.32	.58	Agree
7	Ability to generate alternative solution in every study situations	3.23	.73	Agree	3.10	.67	Agree
8	Ability to participate in society on behalf of peace and skill development	3.38	.60	Agree	3.50	.67	Agree
9	Bias awareness skill	3.25	.78	Agree	3.20	.54	Agree
10	Quality inspection skill	3.42	.77	Agree	3.25	.48	Agree
11	Quality assurance analysis skill	3.23	.79	Agree	3.16	.43	Agree
<b>Total</b>		<b>3.31</b>	<b>.58</b>		<b>3.33</b>	<b>.59</b>	

Source; Field Survey 2024

Results in Table 2, shows that both lecturers and mechanical technology education final year students agree that the variables highlighted are the human resource skill areas that need refocussing for sustainable peace and development amongst youths in Rivers State. This is evident in the Grand Mean scores 3.31 for lecturers and 3.33 for final year mechanical technology education students, which are both greater than 2.50 which is the acceptable mean value. Also, the closeness in the standard Deviation for both groups which is .58 and .59 shows homogeneity in the responses of both groups.

**Hypothesis 1.**

There is no significant difference between the mean response of mechanical education technology lecturers and mechanical technology education final year

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students on the practical skill areas in mechanical technology education that need refocussing for sustainable peace and development amongst youths in Rivers State.

**Table 3: z-Test Analysis on the practical skill areas that need refocusing in mechanical technology education**

Category	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	DF	z-cal	z-crit	Remark
Lecturers	63	3.45.57		151	2.22	1.96	Significant
FinalYearStudents	90	3.24.58					

Source: *Researchers' fieldsurvey, 2024*

Data in Table 3 above reveal that z-calculated (4.07) is greater than z-critical (1.96) at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected, hence there is a great significant difference between the mean responses of technical education lecturers and final year students on the causes of youth migration to overseas in River State.

**Hypothesis 2.**

There is no significant difference between the mean response of mechanical education technology lecturers and final year students on the human resource areas that need refocussing for sustainable peace and development amongst youths in Rivers State.

**Table 4: z-Test Analysis on the human resource skill areas that need refocusing in mechanical technology education**

Category	n	$\bar{X}$	SD	DF	z-cal	z-crit	Remark
Lecturers	63	3.31.58		151	.21	1.96	Not Significant
FinalYearStudents	90	3.33.59					

Source: *Researchers' fieldsurvey, 2024*

Data in Table 4 above reveal that z-calculated (.21) is greater than z-critical (1.96) at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted, hence there is no significant difference between the mean response of mechanical education technology lecturers and final year students on the human resource

areas that need refocussing for sustainable peace and development amongst youths in Rivers State.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The result in table 1, is in conformity with the view of Okwelle *et al*(2021), that refocusing mechanical technology education programmes will address and improve practical activities of the resource persons (lecturers) and students in the areas such as milling machine operation, drilling operations, lathe operation, machine tool repair and maintenance, fabrication, gas acetylene welding, arc welding, forging and foundry, automobile body repair and spray, automobile air conditional repair, automobile wheel balancing, automobile engine repairs, machine parts productions, all anomalies that seem to ridiculed graduates of these programmes. Refocusing mechanical technology education programmes will attract management and government intervention fund to purchase relevant facilities and capable manpower to drive the process of delivery instructions to her students

The result in table 2, shows homogeneity in the responses of both groups. This is in conformity with the view of Momoh in Onah (2019) which stress that the need for training and retraining in technical and vocational education and training which mechanical technology education is part and parcel of, has been recognized worldwide as a means of developing resources, for better consumption, efficiency, and increase productivity. Through training and retraining, resource personnel in mechanical technology education could be assisted to be current, and competent on development in their areas of profession with a view to enhancing their performance on the job towards the production of ready-to-work graduates.

### **Conclusion**

The study deduced that there is need to refocus mechanical technology education as to get the best out of the noble programmes, as the study found among others that practical skills like machine tool maintenance, welding and fabrication, machine tool operational, auto body repair, material selection skills, critical thinking, instructional planning, workshop management, equipment management skill, problem solving skill, bias awareness skill, etc are areas that need refocusing so as to make mechanical technology programme a viable one in Rivers State

### **Recommendation**

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made.

1. The government and tertiary institutions management through TETFUND should make provision for practical skill training and retraining of all mechanical technology education lecturers for practical skill development to refocusing practical activities of the programmes towards skill acquisition of mechanical education students for sustainable peace and development amongst youths in Rivers State
2. The curriculum of mechanical technology education should be designed such that more attention and time should be allotted for practical training than theoretical

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