

Vocational Education as a Strategy for the Sustenance of Socio-Economic Empowerment of Nigerians

Utibe, U. J.

*CUDIMAC/Department of Science Education
University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Enugu State, Nigeria
E-mail: uduak.utibe@unn.edu.ng*

Udongwo, G. E.

*Department of Home Economics
School of Vocational Technical Education
Akwa Ibom State College of Education, Afaha Nsit, Nigeria
E-mail: graffiong@gmail.com*

ABSTRACT

The socio-economic status of Nigerians could be enhanced through the empowerment using vocational education, whose activities spread across all fields of study and sectors of the economy. This survey therefore examines vocational education as a strategy for the sustenance of socio-economic empowerment of Nigerians. The basic aims are to know when vocational education should be introduced, challenges facing vocational education and types of vocational education that should be introduced to students so as to provide a scientific stand point on the subject matter. The study is conducted in the south-south and south-east geopolitical zones of Nigeria. Teachers and other education stakeholders totaling 1850 were used for the study. Three research questions were raised and answered. Two sets of questionnaire were used for data collection. The instruments were validated by two vocational Educators and one measurement and evaluation lecturer. The reliability of the instruments was determined using Pearson Product Moment Coefficient statistics as 0.84, 0.79 and 0.88. Data was analysed using frequency and percentage. The findings reveal among others that vocational education should be introduced at the primary level. It is recommended that the federal government should setup machinery to introduced vocational education with a special curriculum in the primary schools.

Keywords: *Vocational Education, primary school, curriculum, challenges, empowerment*

INTRODUCTION

Vocational education activities in Nigeria are governed by the policies in the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004) guide lines. Any matter concerning vocational education in Nigeria that does not reflect the philosophy and goals of vocational education in Nigeria is not authentic. FRN (2004) states that the Nigeria's philosophy of vocational education is based on the provision of equal access to educational opportunities for all citizens of the country at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels both inside and outside the formal school system. It also emphasized the acquisition of appropriate skills and the development of mental, physical and social abilities and competencies as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute meaningfully to the development of the society. However, the big question bothers on the practicability of this policy in Nigeria's education system which

this work addresses. Anyakoha (2008) states that present day Nigerian economy is tending towards a technological economy with almost everything depending on technology. The gadgets in the home such as fans, cookers, washing machines, dryers, televisions and communication equipment among others needs the knowledge of technology for their operations to be effective. In agriculture, whatever modifications are to be made on the crops are carried out when the crops are young. It is only the young plant that can be transplanted, boarded, grafted and modified. The scripture on the other hand supported that the best time to train the child is when the child is young so that when the child is old the child cannot depart from the training (Anyakoha and Igboeli, 1998).

The FRN (2004) in the National Policy on Education lay very little or no emphasis on vocational education. The only vocational attention is sandwich in Cultural and Creative Arts. In the secondary school (junior and senior) levels, the subjects are presented in groups with group B dedicated for vocational subjects in each case. The vocational subjects include agricultural sciences, applied electricity, auto-mechanics, book-keeping and accounting, building construction, electronics, home management, technical drawings and fine arts. The post secondary or university education does not have much emphasis on vocational education except for the newly introduced entrepreneurial education and the technical and vocational education technology (T-VET) in some universities (International Federation for Home Economics, 2008 and 2012). The development of technology and vocational education is basically new to Nigerian post secondary education which has very little or no qualified teachers to teach this vocational/entrepreneurial education (McGregor, 2009). It is on this development that this study is hinged to investigate the right time and the vocational education courses that should be introduced into the Nigerian education system. This study stems from the fact that the administrators of education in Nigeria are battling with unemployment, skill acquisition and job creation without a single solution. While most people argue that vocational education should be introduced in primary school, others argue in support of secondary and yet others argue in support of university or even during the national youth service corps (FMWASD, 1995; Williams, 2002; National Planning Commission, 2004; Nwaogwugwu, and Agumagu, 2007). The main reason for this study is to provide a scientific stand on the above matter. The general purpose of this study was the analysis of vocational skills acquisitions as strategies in managing challenges in a changing world. Specifically this study sought to:

1. Determine the appropriate educational level to introduce vocational education into the Nigerian education system.
2. Determine the vocational challenges facing the Nigerian education system (economy).
3. Determine the appropriate vocational skills that should be introduced into the Nigerian education system.

Consequently, the following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the appropriate educational level to introduce vocational education into the Nigerian education system?
2. What are the challenges facing vocational education in Nigerian?

3. What are the appropriate vocational skills that should be introduced into the Nigerian education system?

METHOD

This study adopts the survey research design. This design is appropriate because the researchers are only interested in the level of introduction, challenges and types of vocational education. The study was conducted for education system at all levels and education stakeholders in the south-south and south-east Nigeria. The population covers all the teachers in all levels of education and other education stakeholders in the south-south and south-east part of Nigeria. The sample for this study was 1850 teachers and other education stakeholders. This is made up of 500 primary school teachers, 500 secondary school teachers, 500 university lecturers and 350 education stakeholders. Simple random sampling technique was used to draw the teachers and other education stakeholders in the zones. Three researchers made instruments were used for data collection. The instruments were validated by two vocational Educators and one measurement and evaluation lecturer. Test-retest method was used to determine the reliability of the instruments. The reliability coefficients were found to be 0.84, 0.79 and 0.88 using Pearson Product Moment Correlation method. The researchers along with trained research assistants personally administered the instruments to the respondents. All the completed instruments were retrieved at the spot and there was 100% return rate. The data collected were analyzed using frequency and percentages.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows that the study groups supported the introduction of vocational education in the primary school with members of the other education stakeholders (parents, ministries of education staff in States and Federal levels, authors and book publishers) having 93% as the highest and members of the university community have 77% as the least. Table 2 shows that of the eight items identified in the study, items 1 and 2 are not seen as challenges facing the Nigerian vocational education system. They rather see items 3 – 8 as major challenges facing the Nigerian education system. The highest of these challenges being the poor societal attitude towards vocational education. They see vocational education as the reserved educational opportunity of the poor. Table 3 reveals that the vocational skills outlined in the National Policy on Education (2004) should be introduced to the pupils in the primary school via a specialized curriculum. In their support they strongly supported item 14 (woodwork) bearing in mind that wood is indigenous to the Nigerian environment and mostly used materials. As the data on table 1 provide that all the study groups supported the early introduction of vocational education into the primary school system. This position negates the position of the FRN (2004) which advocates the study of cultural and creative arts. The researchers in their opinion feel that the earlier the vocational education is introduced to the students/pupils the better they are catch young and positive interest developed in them towards vocational studies. It can be seen that there exists an array of challenges facing vocational education in Nigeria but the good news is that there also exist qualified teachers, teaching and learning facilities which the education system can

harness to improve vocational education in Nigeria. Finally table 3 reveals that specialized curriculum to cover all the identified vocational areas in the FRN (2004) National Policy on Education should be introduced in the primary schools. The school system should aim at catching the pupils' young and inculcating the interest in vocational studies into them so that they would grow and live with it all their lives. There are changes in the world today which makes the present world more challenging when compared to the world before now. Such changes include among others the level of unemployment, standard of living, the facilities of life and the need for people to be more self-employed rather than look forward to the government to provide employment to all. The situation of the country in this regard is not only pathetic but a blatant proof of economic suicide. Nigeria in particular has traded vocational education for crude oil. Since crude oil was discovered in Nigeria, the leadership of the country has through their actions killed the spirit of vocational education in nearly every person. When vocational education is introduced in the primary school, the children would learn trades which would form an integral part of their growth and development, on maturity they would use this and create work for themselves, reduce unemployment and become self-employed.

However, before today, pupils in the elementary schools used to engage in hand work. This was when they will produce baskets, crater, pot molded with clay and mud etc. Today, money is charged in place of hand work. How good and economic rewarding would it have been to Nigeria if the previous trends were encouraged and allowed to be positively influenced by modern advancements today Nigeria would have been the true China of Africa than the unrealistic African giant she claims. Solving the challenges facing vocational education in Nigeria would raise the confidence of Nigerian students as they would grow with these trades, see it as an integral part of their developmental processes and not a means of survival of the poor. In this regards both the poor and the rich would be naturally self-employed and unemployment would be drastically reduced. Provision of specialized vocational education curriculum in the primary school would cover and solve local problems and promote self-employment and wealth creation as the pupils would master these trades and make their money earlier enough in live.

Table 1: Summary of teachers and educational stakeholders on the appropriate educational level to introduce vocational education into the Nigerian education system.

S/No	Details	Decision		
		Support	Against	
1	Primary level	Primary Sch. Teachers	400 (80)	100 (20)
		Secondary Sch. Teachers	425 (85)	75 (15)
		University Lecturers	385 (77)	115 (23)
		Other Education Stakeholders	325 (93)	25 (07)
2	Secondary level	Primary Sch. Teachers	120 (24)	380 (76)
		Secondary Sch. Teachers	150 (30)	350 (70)
		University Lecturers	100 (20)	400 (80)
		Other Education Stakeholders	50 (14)	300 (86)
3	University level	Primary Sch. Teachers	80 (16)	420 (84)
		Secondary Sch. Teachers	110 (22)	390 (78)
		University Lecturers	155 (31)	345 (69)
		Other Education Stakeholders	30 (9)	320 (91)

Note: Values in bracket represent percentage. *Source:* Survey, 2013

Table 2: Summary of teachers and other educational stakeholders on the vocational education challenges facing the Nigerian education system (economy)

S/No	Details	Decision	
1	Availability of qualified teachers	250 (14)	1600 (86)
2	Availability of teaching and learning equipment	325 (18)	1525 (82)
3	Poor students attitude towards vocational education	1450 (78)	400 (22)
4	Poor parental interest towards vocational education	1345 (73)	505 (27)
5	Poor societal attitude towards vocational education	1565 (85)	285 (15)
6	Government lips services towards vocational education	1338 (72)	512 (28)
7	The poor teaching and learning of vocational education in Nigerian schools	1423 (77)	427 (23)
8	The vocational education curriculum used in Nigerian school system	1525 (82)	325 (18)

Note: Values in bracket represent percentage.

Source: Survey, 2013

Table 3: Summary of teachers and other educational stakeholders on the types of vocational that should be introduced into the Nigerian education system

S/No	Details	Decision	
		Support	Against
1	Agricultural science	1653 (89)	197 (11)
2	Applied electricity	1239 (67)	611 (33)
3	Auto-mechanics	1625 (88)	225 (12)
4	Book-keeping and accounting	1398 (76)	452 (24)
5	Building construction	1721 (93)	129 (07)
6	Commerce	1433 (77)	417 (23)
7	Computer education	1662 (90)	188 (10)
8	Electronics	1590 (86)	260 (14)
9	Clothing and textiles	1259 (68)	591 (32)
10	Food and nutrition	1611 (87)	239 (13)
11	Home management	1710 (92)	140 (08)
12	Metal work	1168 (63)	682 (37)
13	Technical drawing	1532 (83)	318 (17)
14	Woodwork	1810 (98)	40 (02)
15	Shorthand	1095 (59)	755 (41)
16	Typewriting	1522 (82)	328 (18)
17	Fine art	1421 (77)	429 (23)
18	Music	970 (52)	880 (48)

Note: Values in bracket represent percentage.

Source: Survey, 2013; *National Policy on Education, 2004.*

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study assesses vocational education as a strategy for the sustenance of the socio-economic empowerment of Nigerians. The findings reveal that there are challenges facing vocational education in Nigeria. Hence, it is recommended that government at all levels should introduce vocational education in primary schools, give a holistic solution to the challenges facing vocational education and set up specials curriculum for vocational education in Nigeria. The contents of the special vocational education curriculum should be able to solve Nigerian problems.

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