Research Article

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Vocational Development Initiatives for Youth Empowerment: Case of the Nigeria Secondary Schools' Curriculum

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Abstract

The study was carried out to evaluate the Vocational Development initiatives of the Nigerian secondary education curricula introduced by the National Education Research and Development Council (NERDC). Five research questions were formulated to guide the study. Descriptive survey design was adopted. The study was carried out in Kogi State. Sample for the study was 220 respondents made up of 102 male and 118 female senior secondary school students offering trade subjects. A structured questionnaire titled Vocational Development Initiatives for Youth Empowerment (VDIYE) questionnaire was developed for data collection. The questionnaire was face and content validated by three vocational education experts. The reliability of the questionnaire was determined using the test re-test reliability method which yielded a co-efficient of 0.72. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Based on the data collected and analyzed, it was observed that majority of respondents view trade subjects as desirable and that it prepares them adequately for future vocational career choice among other findings. Recommendations were thereafter made on ways to improve on trade subjects. This is in order to achieve the desired objectives of making secondary school graduates to be job creators and also reduce unemployment.

Keywords: *Vocational Development initiatives, Trades subjects, secondary schools, curriculum, Youth Empowerment*

1. Introduction

Youths are young, dynamic, energetic and proactive. They are important actors in redefining and restructuring existing model of kinship and moral patterns of reciprocity and solidarity in the society; hence they are usually referred to as the leaders of tomorrow. Youths are viewed simultaneously as creative and destructive forces (African Sustainability Centre, 2014). They are germane to the development of any nation. Despite the importance of youths to national development, they are faced with several challenges. Among which includes inadequate skills, training and unemployment.

Although, unemployment is a global menace, it is prevalent mostly in developing countries. International Labor Organization (ILO), described unemployed as numbers of economically active population, who are without work but available for and seeking work including people who have lost their jobs and those who have voluntarily left work. Accordingly, Bureau of Statistics (2019) revealed

that Youth unemployment and underemployment rate in Nigeria currently stood at 55.4%. While corroborating this statistics figure, Ngige (2019) decried the alarming rate of unemployment in Nigeria, which he predicted will reach an all high figure of 33.5% in year 2020.

The unemployment figure is further expected to rise due to the fact that the Universities and other tertiary institutions in Nigeria produce an average of 120,000 graduates and 500,000 secondary school leavers every year to the labour market where there is no job (ILO, 2009; Akinyemi et al., 2012). Umana (2019) identified causes of unemployment in Nigeria to include corruption, rural urban migration, poor quality control in the educational system, poor infrastructure and poor quality education. A major cause of youth related unemployment in Nigeria is deficient school curricula. Severally, the curricula of Nigeria schools, most especially secondary schools have been producing job seekers rather than fostering self-employment.

Secondary education is the second or intermediate level education in Nigeria. It preceded the first six years in primary school (primary education). This type of Education which is sub-divided into Junior and senior schools runs for a total of six years, i.e three years for junior secondary school (JSS) and three years for Senior Secondary School (SSS). The objective of senior secondary type of education among others includes the provision of trained manpower in the applied sciences, technology and commercial at sub-professional level and the provision of entrepreneurial, technical and vocational job specific skills for self-reliance, and for agriculture, industrial, commercial and economic development (FRN, 2013). Unfortunately, the students have being completing their secondary education with no appreciable skill capable of making them to achieve the stated above objectives. This is so as the curricula were not tailored towards self-sufficiency in any vocation or trade. Neither was it tailored to awaken the entrepreneurship development in the students. While entrepreneurship is the capability to discover, create opportunities and use same to the benefit of the society, and in turn brings richness to the pacesetter and his business. Entrepreneurship is a dynamic process of creating incremental wealth. Sharma (2019) described entrepreneurship development as the process of enhancing the capacity to develop, manage and organize a business venture while keeping in mind the risks associated with it. Entrepreneurship development is therefore helping an entrepreneurs develop skills through training and application of that training. It instils in them the quality of making better decisions in the day to day business activities.

To this therefore, in order achieve the objective of making SSS graduates to be wealth creator, a review of the secondary curriculum was carried out by injecting thirty-six trade/entrepreneurship (T/E) subjects into the curriculum (table 1). According to Orji (2013) the rationale for the T/E subjects includes making secondary school education functional to the extent that school graduates have vocational, technical and entrepreneurial skills and competences necessary to generate jobs and create wealth, and in the process eradicate poverty. Secondly, to address the dearth of technical skills and a growing demand for services of the skills in Nigeria

The apparent death of traditional vocational education and the need to make secondary school education functional to the extent that school graduates have vocational, technical and entrepreneurial skills and competences necessary to generate jobs and create wealth, and in the process eradicate poverty (Orji, 2013), necessitated the need for the introduction the trade/ entrepreneurship subjects. These trade subjects are expected to stir some level of excitement among stakeholders, given their relevance and capacity to bridge the widening unemployment gap and contribute to national development. Other advantages of the trade subjects includes the acquisition of functional organization skills, possession of problem-solving and decision-making abilities Occupational aspirations and job readiness, Hand-on & work-based experiences. The success of the implementation of the subjects hinges on several factors. Some of which are: Availability of qualified teaching staff, school infrastructures, community interest and support, availability of local resources, social-cultural inclinations, and student attributes in terms of ability, career interest, age, peers and family influences

Laudable as the T/E curriculum is, many youths in kogi state still engage in unskilled and menial activities for survival such as commercial motor cycling (okada), touting, prostitution, peasant farming etc. even after their secondary education.

2. Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to analyse the impact of the secondary school curriculum on vocational development of students in kogi state. Specifically, the study sought to (1) identify trade subjects offered in secondary schools (2) determine factors influencing choice of trade subjects by secondary school students (3) determine the availability of infrastructural facilities for the teaching of trade subjects in secondary schools (iv) identify teaching technique and strategies used for impacting trade subjects on students (v) determine the impact of trade subjects on students' vocational skill development

3. Research Questions

1. What are the vocational trades offered in secondary schools in kogi state?
2. What are the factors influencing choice of trade subjects by secondary school students in kogi state?
3. Are there availability of infrastructural facilities for the teaching of trade subjects in secondary schools in Kogi State?
4. What are the teaching technique and strategies used for impacting trade subjects on students in kogi state?
5. What are the effects of trade subjects on students' vocational skill development?

4. Methodology

The study was carried out in Kogi state, Nigeria. The simple random sampling technique was adopted in selecting Kogi central senatorial district out of the three senatorial districts in Kogi State for the study. Kogi central senatorial district is made up of five Local Government Areas (LGA). These are Okehi, Adavi, Okene, Ogori-Magongo and Ajaokuta. Three of the five LGAs were randomly chosen. These are Okehi, Adavi and Okene LGAs. There are a total of 2800 senior secondary school students in 21 public secondary schools in the district. (Kogi state ministry of education). A total of 220 students were randomly selected and utilized as sample from six secondary schools in the three LGAs for the study. A structured questionnaire titled Vocational Development Initiatives for Youth Empowerment (VDIYE) questionnaire was used for data collection. On-site assessment of the infrastructures available for the implementation of trade subject was carried out. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, percentages and inferential statistics.

5. Results and Discussion

Personal characteristics of the respondents

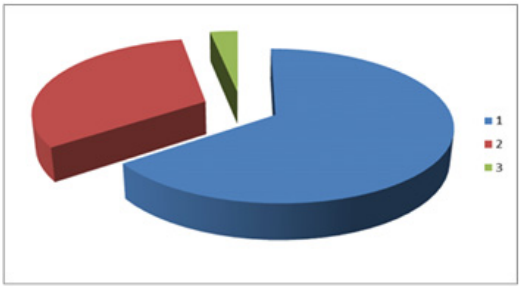

Figure 1: Age of the respondents. >20=3%, 17-20=32% and 13-16=65%

Data in figure 1 shows that the age of the respondents ranges from 13-22 years, with a mean age of 16.5 years. The mean age shows that all the respondents are still within the youthful age. Young age is synonymous to risk taken and innovativeness, hence, the students are expected to be willing to develop special interest in one trade/vocational subjects and take up such subjects as intent vocations. About 52% of the respondents were female while 48% were male.

5.1 Research Question 1: What are the vocational trades offered in secondary schools in kogi state?

Table 1: Distribution of trade and vocational subjects offered by students at the senior secondary school certificate in Kogi State

S/N	Trade/ Entrepreneurship Subjects in Nigeria Secondary Schools (NERDC, 2014)	Common SSS Trade Subjects in Kogi State	Enrolement of Students in SSCE Trade Subjects in Kogi	Percentage (%) Enrolement of Students in SSCE Trade Subjects in Kogi
I	Auto Body Repair and Spray Painting	NILL	-----	-----
Ii	Auto Electrical Work	NILL	-----	-----
Iii	Auto Mechanical Work	√	371	1.22
Iv	Auto Parts Merchandising	NILL	-----	-----
V	Air Conditioning and Refrigeration		-----	-----
Vi	Welding and Fabrication Engineering Craft Practice	√	480	1.58
Vii	Electrical Installation and Maintenance Work	√	289	0.95
Viii	Radio, TV and Electronic Servicing	√	98	0.32
Ix	Block Laying, Brick Laying and Concrete Work	√	91	0.30
X	Painting and Decorating	√	302	1.00
Xi	Plumbing and Pipefitting	NILL	-----	-----
Xii	Machine Woodwork	√	251	0.83
Xiii	Carpentry and Joinery	√	127	0.42
Xiv	Upholstery	√	223	0.74
Xv	Furniture Making	√	200	0.66
Xvi	Catering Craft Practice	√	732	2.42
Xvii	Garment Making	√	809	2.67
Xviii	Clothing and Textile	√	874	2.88
Xix	Dyeing and bleaching	√	3068	10.12
Xx	Printing Craft Practice	NILL	-----	-----
Xxi	Cosmetology	√	29	0.096
Xxii	Photography	NILL	-----	-----
Xxiii	Mining	NILL	-----	-----
Xxiv	Tourism	√	1371	4.52
Xxv	Leather Goods Manufacturing and Repair	NILL		-----
Xxvi	Stenography	NILL	-----	-----
Xxvii	Data Processing	√	7014	23.15
Xxviii	Store Keeping	NILL	-----	-----
Xxix	Book Keeping	√	4432	14.63
Xxx	GSM Maintenance	NILL	-----	-----
Xxxi	Animal Husbandry	√	856	2.82
Xxxii	Fishery	√	621	2.07
Xxxiii	Marketing	√	8205	27.08
Xxxiv	Salesmanship	NILL	-----	-----

Data in table 1, shows that, out of the 36 trade and vocational subjects introduced into the secondary school curriculum (NERDC, 2014) 22 of the subjects which represent (61.11%) were offered in Kogi State. Also out of the 22 trade and vocational subjects, marketing has the highest patronage of 27.08% followed by Data processing with 23.15% enrollment. Cosmetology has the least enrollment of 0.096%. Most of the industrial education related trades such as auto mechanical work, Electrical Installation and Maintenance Work, Radio, TV and Electronic Servicing, Machine Woodwork, Welding and Fabrication Engineering Craft Practice, Furniture Making etc. all recorded very low enrollment.

5.2 Research Question 2: What are the factors influencing choice of trade subjects by secondary school students in kogi state?

Table 3: Chi square result on analysis of factors influencing the choice of trade/vocational subjects offered by students

S/N	Factors	Chi-square value	Df	Assumption Sig.(2 sided)	Remarks
1	Genuine interest in the trade subjects	74.986	48	0.560	Sig
2	Ability to learn trade subjects and excel in it. (Self-efficacy)	31.789	48	0.681	Not sig
3	Intends to pursue vocation after my Education. (Vocational intention)	45.877	48	0.361	Not sig
4	Availability of infrastructure in the community	45.432	48	0.579	Not sig
5	Availability of infrastructure in the schools	39.442	48	0.806	Not sig
6	Possibility of being self employed by the trade	69.233	48	0.024	Sig
7	Lucrative of the trade subjects	73.772	48	0.010	Sig
8	Trade subject can fetch me daily income after schooling	64.477	48	0.00	Sig
9	I have role model in the vocation	70.583	48	0.019	Sig
10	Availability of advancement opportunity in the trade subjects	73.564	48	0.010	Sig
11	Passion for learning trade subjects	42.903	48	0.681	Not sig
12	Trade subject gave me opportunity to acquire skills ability	80.870	48	0.056	Sig
13	Peer group/Friends motivate me offer same trade subject	48.411	48	0.456	Not sig
14	The trade subject is chosen by my parents	79.138	48	0.050	Sig
15	The trade subject was chosen by my school	41.654	48	0.729	Not sig
16	I choose the trade subject due to my Guardian's advice	56.255	48	0.193	Not sig
17	The school counselor advised me to choose the trade subject	63.067	48	0.071	Sig
18	Not interested in any trade subject	53.373	48	0.275	Not sig
19	My interested trade choice is not offered in our school	72.149	48	0.014	Sig
20	Trade subject teachers were interactive and practical oriented	63.772	48	0.063	sig

While investigating the factors influencing the choice of trade and vocational subjects, the Chi square analysis in Table 3 reveal that 11 out of the 20 variables subjected to Chi square analysis were found to significantly influence the choice of trade and vocational subjects offered by the students. These are vocational intention (x=0.560), possibly of being self-employed (x=0.024), trade and vocational subject being lucrative (x=0.010), ability of trade and vocational subjects to fetch money for survival during and after schooling (x=0.00), having a role model in a vocation (x=0.019), availability of advancement opportunities in trade and vocational subjects (x=0.010), because the trade and vocational subjects were chosen by some parents (x=0.050), students were advised by school counselor (x=0.071), because the trade and vocational subjects of interest was not offered in one's school (x=0.014).

The positive significance of vocational intention to the choice of trade and vocational subjects is expected. This is because one of the major reasons for introducing trade and vocational subjects, according to Orji (2013), is to stimulate vocational intention in the students. This is expected to propel the students to commence work on the trade and vocational subjects after schooling rather than waiting for a white collar job. Vocational intention is expected to reduce youth unemployment in Nigeria. Also the positive significance of the possibility of being self-employed by the trade is also expected to negate the unemployment problem in Nigeria.

5.3 Research Question 3: Are there availability of infrastructural facilities for the teaching of trade subjects in secondary schools in Kogi State?

Table 4: Frequency Table for Availability of infrastructural facilities in Senior Secondary Schools in Kogi Central District

Infrastructure	Frequency/ Percentage (%) (Yes)	Frequency/ Percentage (%) (No)
Are their availability of appropriate equipment for the teaching of trade subjects in your school?	102 (46.41)	118 (53.59)
Are consumables and materials provided for your use during trade subjects' practical classes by the school authority?	41 (18.66)	179 (81.34)
Does your teacher use the available equipment and materials properly for the teaching of trade subjects in your school?	185 (84.18)	35 (15.82)
Are specialist trade subject teachers employed or transferred to your school in recent times for the teaching of trade subjects only?	49 (22.27)	171(77.73)
Do trade subject teachers teach other subjects in your school?	168 (76.36)	52 (23.64)
Are there available textbooks for the teaching of trade subjects at your disposal?	145 (65.37)	75 (34.13)
Are there availability of relevant trade subjects' textbooks in your school library?	89 (40.50)	131 (59.50)
Do your school have adequate teachers to teach your chosen trade subjects and those of others?	94 (42.77)	126 (57.23)
During exams, are you always compel to provide practical materials for your own use?	198 (90.09)	22 (9.91)
Are vocational practitioners engaged in the teaching of trade subjects in your school?	51 (23.21)	169 (76.79)
Does your school have workshops/ laboratory for the trade subjects?	160 (72.8)	60 (27.20)
In your opinion, are there adequate funding to execute the proper teaching of trade subjects in your school?	80 (36.4)	140 (63.60)

Data in Table 4 shows that the usage of available equipment and materials was highly rated by the respondents (84.18%) while the availability of workshop and laboratory for the teaching of trade subjects was rated second highest of 72.8%. At the same time the provision of consumable for practical use received the least positive yes response of 18.66%. Furthermore, from the table, it could be affirmed that there were averagely adequate equipment for the teaching of vocational subjects in schools in Kogi Central Senatorial District, however, in the opinion of the respondents, government did not provide adequate funding to purchase tools required for effective teaching of the trade subjects. It can also be deduced from their response that that the trade subjects lack qualified teachers. The findings of the study corroborated the opinion of Bienose (2019) who identified one major shortcoming of the curriculum to include non-availability of qualified teachers for the new trade subjects. This was indeed a challenge to teaching the subjects in schools across the nation. He stressed further that non-provision of training and low motivation of teachers could also hamper their effectiveness in teaching trade subjects. The findings of the result is also in line with the study of Ali and Lukeman (2015) who observed that inadequate material and equipment is hampering effective implementation of the trade subjects curriculum.

5.4 Research Question4: What are the teaching technique and strategies used for impacting trade subjects on students in kogi state?

Table 5: Assessment of teachers teaching trade subjects

Teaching of trade subjects	S A	A	U	D	S D	Total	Mean
The teaching is interactive	150	180	330	50	10	720	3.27
The method of teaching is interesting	176	312	0	110	52	650	2.96
There are more practical work done than class work	280	300	150	78	0	808	3.67
Students are made to work in groups in trade subjects	124	60	106	200	50	540	2.45
Teachers use modern methods and technique in the teaching of trade subjects	55	80	22	150	200	507	2.21
Students are given project work to embark upon in trade subjects	250	300	90	140	0	780	3.55

Teaching of trade subjects	S A	A	U	D	S D	Total	Mean
We visit company/workshops of successful vocational practitioners in my trade subjects	0	40	0	380	20	440	2.00
Teachers in the trade subjects interact and share ideas	50	144	120	200	34	548	2.49
Students are rewarded for good performance in practical works in trade subjects	300	352	60	100	0	812	3.69
Best teachers are rewarded for the good performance of their students in trade subjects	50	144	120	168	50	532	2.42

Data in Table 5 shows the assessment of the teaching of trade and vocational subjects. This was subjected to a five points Likert-type scale of strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree and strongly disagree. Based on the mean of data in Table 5, it was revealed that the following variables were significant: the teaching of the trade and vocational subjects was interactive (x=3.27), there were more practical works done in vocational subjects than other subjects (x=3.67), others include, students were given project to embark upon in vocational subjects than other subjects (x=3.55), and that students were rewarded for good performance in practical works in vocational subjects (x=3.69). The significance of teaching vocational subjects as being interactive is expected due to the nature of some of the subjects and the necessity to interact while teaching in order to assimilate and able to carry out some specific assignment on their own. Although, there were teachers in schools to teach the subjects, response of students indicated that the teachers were not given any special and adequate training on the use of modern technique of teaching trade subjects

5.5 *Research Question 5: What are the effects of trade subjects on students' vocational skill development?*

Table 6: Practical effects of the trade subjects on student's vocational development

Practical effects of the trade subjects on students vocational development	S A	A	U	D	S D	Total	Mean
The trade subject stimulate my thinking faculty creatively	250	304	90	60	34	738	3.35
The trade subject i offered has stimulated my mindset on vocational education	150	180	90	200	16	636	2.89
The trade provides specific business knowledge of how to start a company and run it successfully	76	140	144	244	0	604	2.74
The trade subject provide me skills on how to start a workshop in trade subject successfully	150	100	136	120	60	566	2.57
The trade subject provide me skills on how I can solve problems relating to my vocation	300	264	136	98	0	798	3.62
I can analyze a business idea relating to my trade subject	76	72	300	174	0	622	2.82
The trade subject has developed my ability to evaluate, communicate and network my profession	76	60	180	240	0	556	2.52
The trade subject has given me innovative ideas on to source my daily income	250	220	120	150	0	740	3.36
The trade subject has raised my awareness about self-employment	326	200	120	130	0	776	3.52
The trade subject has enabled me to see vocational education as possible career option	300	200	120	80	40	740	3.36

The practical effects of vocational subjects on students vocational development was revealed in Table 6. Based on the mean of three variables found to be significant are as follows: the teaching of vocational subjects stimulated the thinking faculty of the students (x=3.35); it developed the ability of the students to solve problems related to the vocational subjects offered (x=3.62); and it provided innovative ideas on how to source for daily income (3.36). Others include raising the awareness of students on self-employment (x=3.52) and enabled the students to see vocation practitioners as possible career options (x=3.36).

To a certain extent, it could be said that the introduction of vocational subjects have been able to create vocational awareness on self-employment in the youths but have not been able to stimulate the vocational ideas and mindset as well as build their personal confidence and resilience of youths in vocational subjects.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

The introduction of trade subjects has been able to create vocational awareness on self-employment in the youths but have not been able to stimulate the vocational ideas and mindset as well as build personal confidence and resilience of youths in vocational education. Based on the findings, the study

recommends the following:

The government should encourage the youths and let them be aware of trade/vocational subjects available in the secondary schools to meet the student's choice and enhance the achievement of developing a true vocational spirit among the youths.

There is need to provide adequate infrastructures and funds to schools for effective teaching of all the trade/vocational subjects. In-service training programmes in terms of theory and of innovative instruction should be organized for teachers at the beginning of each term or session where necessary, new professional teachers should be recruited to handle some of the novel trade subjects.

New teaching tools/methods tailored to the specific field of study should be developed. Student centered teaching methodology should be employed; more of self-learning and discovery should be encouraged. The teaching should balance theoretical and practical aspects, making use of inter-active and pragmatic methods; active self-learning; action oriented pedagogies; group work; learning through projects; learning by direct experience; methods for self-development .workshops and laboratories should be equipped for effective teaching of trade and vocational subjects. Students should be exposed to role models in their vocational subjects. Examples of successful vocation practitioners in various trades should be cited where necessary to boost students' interest.

Excursion and visit to companies could be arranged and executed to also boost the student's interest. The government at all levels should support programmes for training trade teachers within Nigerian vocational environmental dimension. Exchange programmes for trade teachers could be organized for cross fertilization of ideas. This can be achieved through workshops, seminars and conferences attendance. Teachers whose students perform excellently well in trade subjects should be given public recognition and reward through promotion or financial incentives. If all the above suggestions are adhered to, it would stimulate the vocational mindsets as well as build the personal confidence and resilience of youths in trade subjects.

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