

ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPACT OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION ON SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN BRASS LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF BAYELSA STATE

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ABSTRACT

The study assessed the impact of vocational education on secondary school students in Brass Local Government Area of Bayelsa State. A descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. Three research questions and corresponding null hypotheses were raised to guide the study respectively. The population of the study comprised of all vocational education teachers and students in Brass LGA. A sample of 24 vocational education teachers and 550 students drawn from the population was used for the study. The instrument for data collection was an “Impact of Vocational Education Questionnaire” developed by the researcher and validated by experts in Measurement and Evaluation and Vocational Education. The reliability coefficient was obtained using Cronbach Alpha formula which yielded a value of 0.8. Research Questions were answered using mean and standard deviation while the hypotheses were tested using t-test statistic. The findings revealed that the extent to which vocational education influenced career choice, students’ involvement and the level of unemployment amongst secondary school students in Brass LGA of Bayelsa State was low. Also, it was established that there is no significant difference between the mean responses of teachers and students on the extent to which vocational education influenced career choice, students’ involvement and the level of unemployment amongst secondary school students. It was recommended amongst others that stakeholders should encourage students to develop a positive attitude towards vocational subjects and guidance and counseling sections should come up with activities that will improve students’ awareness and involvement in vocational subjects.

Keywords: Assessment, Impact, Vocational Education, Secondary School Students

INTRODUCTION

Education at all level is a delicate issue, which serves as a way forward to every society-especially in a developing nation like Nigeria. Advanced countries have improved their standard of living by education, which is considered to stimulate economic and technological development; thus, education can be regarded as an investment that yield dividends in terms of overall development of a country (Puyate, 2018). Formal education started in Nigeria during the colonial period. It developed from the early forms of reading, writing, and arithmetic (i.e., the three rs) to a stage where the London General Certificate of Education, Ordinary level syllabus (the so-called O-Level) was used to guide instruction in secondary schools (Charles-Owaba, 2018).

These secondary ‘grammar schools’ were fashioned in such a way that did not accommodate the vocational technical subjects, and as a consequence trade centers and colleges were established. Here, the City and Guild (Intermediate) syllabus was used to guide instruction and

upon completion, successful students were awarded the City and Guild (Intermediate) Certificate of London. The Federal Craft Certificate, or the Ministry of Labor Trade Test Certificate also were awarded to successful candidates. The Federal Craft and Trade Test Programs were put in place by the Federal Government of Nigeria mainly to improve the understanding and competencies of artisans and technicians. In view of the fact that most of our youths pass through the secondary grammar schools (as the trade colleges were fewer in number), following the political independence of Nigeria, there was a realization that the type of education our colonial masters left with us needed a critical re-examination of the worth: of content, objectives, relevance, methods, administration, evaluation, and so forth. According to Ezeobata (2007), this period saw a state of affairs in Nigerian education where every subject had to 'prove its usefulness' to retain a place in the school curriculum. Probably, this was what led the then National Educational Research Council (NERC) to convey an historic curriculum conference at Lagos in 1969, which Okeke (1981, p. 10) has described as "a culmination of people's dissatisfaction with uncertainty of the aims of education." This conference recommended new set of goals and provided directions for major curriculum revision upon which the National Policy on Education of 1977 and the revised policy in 1981 was based.

Against this background of national aspirations, a new educational system commonly referred to as the '6-3-3-4' system of education emerged. Among other innovations, the system provided for pre-vocational and vocational curricular offerings at the junior and senior secondary schools respectively. For the first time in the history of education in Nigeria, vocational and technical education subjects were, as a matter of national policy, to be offered side-by-side, and hopefully, enjoy parity in esteem with the 'more academic' courses hitherto run by the secondary grammar schools under the old colonial-based system of education. To this end, the national curriculum on Agriculture, Introductory Technology, Home Economics, Business Studies (Junior Secondary School Level), Agricultural Science, Clothing and Textile, Home Management, Food and Nutrition, Typewriting & Shorthand, Principles of Accounts, Commerce, Woodwork, Technical Drawing, Basic Electronics, and Auto- Mechanics came into being in Nigerian secondary schools. As one of the innovations that should distinguish the products of the new system from the old, school work was now based on these curricula in both private and public schools from 1982 - driven by the government's directive that post-primary schools should be more comprehensive, which the National Policy on Education had earlier proposed in 1981.

In Nigeria today, the impact of vocational education cannot be over-emphasized. Borishadee (2012) described vocational education as the springboard that is meant to elevate the status of Nigeria in the committee of nations. Jiboku (2015) observed that up till date, Nigeria has been craving for manpower especially in the areas of Engineering, Technical/Vocational education and Technology. The only vehicle for the achievement of the country's goal of technological advancement is vocational education. In the non-formal realm, Jiboku (2015) further stated that vocational education is as old as Nigeria traditional grouping. Skills were acquired through informal and non-formal means. Apprenticeship system was prominent before the advent of Western Education that gave rise to mad rush for white-collar job that was detrimental to the introduction of formal Vocational-Education. However, events soon proved that Vocational Education could not be totally swept under the carpet; hence the establishment of a number of comprehensive schools (assisted and non-assisted), Vocational training centres, Technical Colleges, Colleges of Education (Technical) and Colleges of Technology where the teaching of

Vocational and Technical subjects were predominant up to the level of Technician.

Career choice is a continuous process. Career is a series of job that a person has in a particular area of work, usually involving more responsibilities as time passes (Okonkwo, 2011). According to Alutu (2011), career development and choice should be initiated as early as the nursery school years through the primary, secondary and to the tertiary school level. One's career choice is mostly influenced by parents, friends, relatives, teachers, printed information, etc. It seems making appropriate career choice has become an uphill task among secondary school students in Bayelsa State. Vocational education serves as a pivotal tool in molding, rebuilding and assuaging the risk of making wrong career choice by secondary school students. Career selection is one of many important choices students will make in determining future plans; this decision will impact them throughout their lives. Research shows that secondary school students in Bayelsa State and Nigeria generally are faced with problem of vocational or career choice towards the end of their secondary school education; this is as a result of the poor form of guidance programs being run in secondary schools. Egbo (2017) reported that career choice has always been linked with guidance and counselling. Puyate (2018) have noted that vocational education has a strong correlation with career choice of students especially at the secondary school level. Egbo (2017) averred that a student who enjoys GSM maintenance or fisheries as a vocational subject at the secondary school level may likely want to make it a career after graduation. It is therefore the opinion of this study to stress the extent to which vocational education influences career choice of secondary school students.

Unemployment is among the leading challenges facing the world (Sirghi, 2014). It is a disturbing issue for the world because it influences other problems like poverty, banditry, inequality, and robbery directly or indirectly. Unemployment also affects the migration patterns of the world as people have to leave their territories and move to other territories in search of jobs, which more often than not aggravates the unemployment burden of the receiving countries. Inordinate migration also leads to an increase in the social and environmental pollution as well as pressure on the social amenities of the receiving countries.

According to the Nigerian National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), unemployment is the proportion of the labor force that was looking for jobs but who could not find them at least twenty hours during the time of reference (NBS (2015); (2016)). The unemployment rate is measured as the ratio of unemployed to the labor force. The ratio tends to rise during a recession. The unemployment situation in Nigeria can be discussed in terms of older unemployed and younger unemployed according to Oyebade (2013). While older unemployed are made up of individuals who lost their jobs due to redundancy and bankruptcy, younger unemployed comprises individuals who have never been gainfully employed. The population of Nigeria is youthful with the percentage of the people whose ages fall within the labor force bracket standing at more than 50% of the total population (Awogbenla & Iwuamadi 2010). The youth unemployment figure has been rising year by year in Nigeria with 64 million youth unemployed and 1.6 million youth underemployed in 2017 (Kazeem, 2018). Youth unemployment in Nigeria is attributed to a number of factors among which are: rural-urban drift, rapid population growth, corruption, neglect of agricultural sector, unfavorable government reform, low standard of education, erratic power supply, infrastructural decay, poor management practices, poor system of education, etc. (Uddin and Uddin (2013); Asaju, (2014)).

In order to increase employability amongst youths in Nigeria, the Federal Government via its National Policy on Education (2014) introduced vocational education which is aimed at

imparting the necessary skills to individuals who shall be self-reliant. Despite the formulation of the policy and the consequential introduction of vocational subjects in secondary schools across the nation, reports from scholars (Puyate, 2018 & Ayomike et. al., 2014) and corporate bodies such as National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2015, 2016) revealed that unemployment is still a major problem in our nation. It is worth establishing empirical evidence on the extent to which vocational education helped to reduce unemployment amongst secondary school students.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In spite of the importance of vocational education to the development of both individuals and the society at large, there is no much emphasis placed on the extent to which it has been effectively implemented in Nigeria. The problems associated with students' choice of career, high rate of unemployment and underemployment among school leavers in Nigeria is a serious issue of concern. It is contended that one of the contributing factors of unemployment cum under employment among school leavers in the country could be inadequate or lack of vocational guidance to students while in and out of school (Egbo, 2017). The issue of career choice has been a burden on guidance and counselling only. There is a dearth of empirical research evidence addressing the extent to which vocational education influenced career choice and unemployment among secondary school students in Nigeria. Also, the factors militating against effective implementation as perceived by teachers and students have not been empirically established, hence the problem of this study in question form will be; what is the impact of vocational education on secondary school students in Brass LGA of Bayelsa State?

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The study was aimed at assessing the impact of vocational education on secondary school students in Brass Local Government Area, Bayelsa State. Specifically, the study sought to achieve the following:

1. To determine the extent at which vocational education has been able to impact career choice of secondary school students in Brass Local Government Area, Bayelsa State.
2. To determine the extent of students' involvement in vocational education in Brass Local Government Area, Bayelsa State.
3. To determine the extent to which vocational education can reduce the level of unemployment among senior secondary school students in Brass Local Government Area, Bayelsa State.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. To what extent has vocational education impacted career decision making of secondary school students in Brass Local Government Area, Bayelsa State
2. To what extent are secondary school students involved in vocational education activities in Brass Local Government Area, Bayelsa State?
3. To what extent has vocational education reduced the level of unemployment among senior secondary school graduates in Brass Local Government Area, Bayelsa State?

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

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

1. There is no significance difference between the mean response of teachers and students on the extent to which vocational education influences the career choice of

students in senior secondary school in Brass Local Government Area, Bayelsa State.

2. There is no significance difference between the mean response of teachers and students on the extent to which secondary school students are involved in vocational education activities in Brass Local Government Area, Bayelsa State.
3. There is no significance difference between the mean response of teachers and students on the extent to which vocational education reduces unemployment amongst senior secondary school students in Brass Local Government Area, Bayelsa State.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive survey design. According to Nworgu (2016) a descriptive survey design is a type of research design in which a group of people or items are studied by collecting and analyzing data from only a few people or items considered to be representative of entire group. The use of this research design was considered appropriate because it established the opinions of teachers and students on the impact of vocational education on secondary school students.

The population of the study comprised of all vocational education teachers and students in the ten (10) public secondary schools in Brass Local Government Area, Bayelsa State (Bayelsa State Ministry of Education, 2022). Purposive sampling technique was used to select the only ten (10) secondary schools with senior classes in Brass Local Government Area, Bayelsa State. Also, SS2 class was selected because there was no impending external examination that could distract students from full participation in the study and they have learnt the vocational subjects for some time. All the 550 SS II students and 24 vocational education teachers from the ten schools formed the sample of the study.

The instrument for data collection was an “Impact of Vocational Education Questionnaire (IVEQ)”, developed by the researcher. The instrument was made up of two sections – Section 1 and Section 2. Section 1 contained items bothering on the demographic variables of the respondents while Section 2 contained three sub-sections namely; A, B, C and D. The section of the instrument had 24 items structured on a four-point rating scale of: Very High Extent (VHE), High Extent (HE), Low Extent (LE) and Very Low Extent (VLE) for section A, B and C. These sections elicited information based on the research questions 1, 2, 3 and 4 respectively. The instrument was validated by experts in Measurement and Evaluation and vocational studies. The reliability was ascertained using Cronbach Alpha Formula and a reliability coefficient of 0.80 was obtained which was considered appropriate for the study. The researcher administered the questionnaires to the respondents, after obtaining permission from the principals of the schools. The respondents were informed of the purpose of the research and be assured of the confidentiality of their responses. The researchers retrieved all the distributed copies of the questionnaire from the respondents.

The data was analyzed using mean and standard deviation for research questions, while t-test analysis was used to test the research hypotheses. The decision rule for answering the research questions was obtained by finding the average of the 4-point scale; thus, any item with mean of 2.50 and above will be interpreted as High Extent for research question 1, 2 and 3, and agreed for research question 4; while mean score below will be interpreted as Low Extent/disagreed.

For the hypotheses, the decision rule is that if the calculated t-value is greater than the critical or table value, the null hypothesis would be rejected, otherwise, it would not be rejected.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Research Question 1

To what extent has vocational education been able to impact on career choice of secondary school students?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Responses on Research Question 1

S/ N	ITEMS	STUDENTS N = 150			TEACHERS, N =24			N = 174		
		X ₁	S.D ₁	REMARK	X ₂	S.D ₂	REMARK	X _T	S.D _T	REMARK
1	Vocational education influences the choice of career made by students.	1.26 67	0.462 61	L.E	1.2 500	0.462 65	L.E	1.2 598	0.461 4	*L.E
2	Vocational education decides the outcome of secondary school students	1.29 17	0.474 49	L.E	1.2 619	0.468 76	L.E	1.2 794	0.471 21	L.E
3	Without vocational education students will not be able to take on a career.	1.35 00	0.512 86	L.E	1.3 214	0.469 83	L.E	1.3 382	0.494 61	L.E
4	Vocational education is the lead way to the future of students	1.45 00	0.499 58	L.E	1.4 524	0.524 23	L.E	1.4 510	0.508 60	L.E
5	Through vocational education students can cater for their basic needs.	1.29 17	0.472 13	L.E	1.2 619	0.468 76	L.E	1.2 794	0.471 21	L.E
	GRAND MEAN	1.55 32	0.472 13		1.5 832	0.572 1		1.3 216	0.463 5	

- **LE= Low Extent Source:** Fieldwork (2022)

Results presented in Table 1 above indicated that the extent to which vocational education impacted on career choice of secondary school students in Brass Local Government Area, Bayelsa State was low. The mean of each item was lower than the criterion mean of 2.5 which implies that all respondents (teachers and students) believes that the extent to which vocational education impacted on career choice of students was low.

Research Question 2

To what extent have students been involved in vocational activities?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation on Responses on Research Question 2

		STUDENTS N =150			TEACHERS N =24			N = 174		
S/N	ITEMS	X ₁	S.D ₁	REMARK	X ₂	S.D ₂	REMARK	X _T	S.D _T	REMARK
1	There is high level of involvement of students in vocational activities in senior secondary schools	1.3500	0.5128 6	L.E	1.3 214	0.469 8	L.E	1.3 38 2	0.494 61	L.E
2	There is strong participation of vocational activities among students in the classroom.	1.4500	0.4995 8	L.E	1.4 524	0.524 23	L.E	1.4 51 0	0.508 60	L.E
3	Administrators and Teachers ensure that students are involved in vocational activities	1.2667	0.462 61	L.E	1.2 500	0.462 45	L.E	1.2 59 8	0.461 47	L.E
4	Vocational activities are not included in the school curriculum.	1.2917	0.4744 9	L.E	1.2 619		L.E	1.2 79 4	0.471 21	L.E
	GRAND MEAN	1.3412	0.4813		1.3 213	0.471 2		1.3 32 1	0.467 8	

Source: Fieldwork (2022)

Results presented in Table 2 above indicated that the extent to which secondary school students are involved in vocational education activities in Brass Local Government Area, Bayelsa State was low. The mean of each item was lower than the criterion means of 2.5 which implies that all respondents (teachers and students) believes that the extent to which vocational education influenced career choice of students was low.

Research Question 3

To what extent has vocational education reduced the level of unemployment among senior secondary school graduates in Brass Local Government Area, Bayelsa State?

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation of Responses on Research Question 3

S/ N	ITEMS	STUDENTS N =150			TEACHERS N =24			N = 174		
		X ₁	S.D ₁	REMARK	X ₂	S.D ₂	REMARK	X _T	S.D _T	REMARK
1	Vocational education reduces unemployment among senior secondary school graduates.	1.2667	0.46261	L.E	1.2500	0.46265	L.E	1.2598	0.4614	L.E
2	Vocational education makes students to be self-employed.	1.2917	0.47449	L.E	1.2619	0.46876	L.E	1.2794	0.47121	L.E
3	Vocational education makes senior secondary school graduates to be self-reliant and become independent.	1.3500	0.51286	L.E	1.3214	0.46983	L.E	1.3382	0.49461	L.E
4	Vocational education strengthens entrepreneurship among senior secondary school graduates.	1.4500	0.49958	L.E	1.4524	0.52423	L.E	1.4510	0.50860	L.E
5	Vocational education improves the productivity of senior secondary school graduates.	1.2917	0.47213	L.E	1.2619	0.46876	L.E	1.2794	0.47121	L.E
6	Vocational education generates more income to senior secondary school graduates.	1.3195	0.48111	L.E	1.2619	0.4687	L.E	1.2598	0.46147	L.E
	GRAND MEAN	1.3195	0.48111	L.E	1.2996	0.3979		1.3112	0.4653	

Source: Fieldwork (2022)

Results presented in Table 3 above indicated that the extent to which vocational education reduced the level of unemployment among senior secondary school students in Brass Local Government Area, Bayelsa State was low. The mean of each item was lower than the criterion means of 2.5 which implies that all respondents (teachers and students) believes that the extent to which vocational education reduced the level of unemployment among senior secondary school students was low.

Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant difference between the mean response of teachers and students on the extent to which vocational education influences the career choice of students in senior secondary school in Brass Local Government Area.

Table 4: t-test analysis on hypothesis 1

Category	N	Mean	St.D	df	P	t _{cal}	t _{crit}	Decision
Teachers'	24	1.55	0.47	572	0.05	1.730	1.960	Accept Ho ₁
Students'	550	1.58	0.57					

Source: Fieldwork (2022)

From Table 4 above, the calculated t-value is 1.73 at 572 degree of freedom and 0.05 level of significance. Since the calculated t-value of 1.73 is less than the critical table value of 1.96, the null hypothesis is not rejected. In other words, there is no significant difference between the mean ratings of teachers and students on the extent to which vocational education influences the career choice of students in senior secondary school in Brass Local Government Area.

H₀₂: There is no significance difference between the mean response of teachers and students on the extent to which secondary school students are involved in vocational education activities in Brass Local Government Area

Table 5: t-test analysis on hypothesis 2

Category	N	Mean	St.D	df	P	t _{cal}	t _{crit}	Decision
Teachers'	24	1.32	0.47	572	0.05	1.283	1.960	Accept Ho ₂
Students'	550	1.34	0.48					

Source: Fieldwork (2022)

From Table 5 above, the calculated t-value is 1.283 at 572 degree of freedom and 0.05 level of significance. Since the calculated t-value of 1.283 is less than the critical table value of 1.96, the null hypothesis is not rejected. In other words, there is no significant difference between the mean ratings of teachers and students on the extent to which secondary school students are involved in vocational education activities in Brass Local Government Area.

H₀₃: There is no significance difference between the mean response of teachers and students on the extent to which vocational education reduces unemployment amongst senior secondary school students in Brass Local Government Area.

Table 6: t-test analysis on hypothesis 3

Category	N	Mean	St.D	df	P	t _{cal}	t _{crit}	Decision
Teachers'	24	1.29	0.38	572	0.05	1.660	1.960	Accept Ho ₁
Students'	550	1.32	0.39					

Source: Fieldwork (2022)

From Table 6 above, the calculated t-value is 1.66 at 572 degree of freedom and 0.05 level of significance. Since the calculated t-value of 1.66 is less than the critical table value of 1.96, the null hypothesis is not rejected. In other words, there is no significant difference between the mean ratings of teachers and students on the extent to which vocational education reduces unemployment amongst senior secondary school students in Brass Local Government Area.

Discussion of Findings

The results in research question 1 revealed that the extent to which vocational education influenced career choice of secondary school students in Brass LGA of Bayelsa State was low. Also, the result revealed that there is no significant difference between the mean ratings of

teachers and students on the extent to which secondary school students are involved in vocational education activities in Brass Local Government Area. This finding agrees with that of Egbo (2017) who reported that the extent to which vocational education influenced students' career choice of student was low in Enugu South.

The results in research question 2 revealed that the extent to which secondary school students are involved vocational education activities in Brass LGA of Bayelsa state was low. Also, results in research hypothesis 2 revealed that there is no significant difference between the mean ratings of teachers and students on the extent to which secondary school students are involved in vocational education activities in Brass Local Government Area. The finding is in line with that of Udofia, Ekpo, Nsa and Akpan (2012) who submitted that the vocational activities student engaged in has a strong correlation on skill acquisition.

The results in research question 3 revealed that the extent to which vocational education reduced the level of unemployment among senior secondary school graduates in Brass Local Government Area was low. Also, results in research hypothesis 3 revealed that there is no significant difference between the mean ratings of teachers and students on the extent to which vocational education reduces unemployment amongst senior secondary school students in Brass Local Government Area. This finding is supports Ayoade, Odetunde and Falodun (2020) and Udofia, Ekpo, Nsa and Akpan (2012) who that the introduction of vocational education has not made significant impact in addressing the menace of unemployment in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

The study has established that the extent to which vocational education influenced career choice, students' involvement and the level of unemployment amongst secondary school students in Brass LGA of Bayelsa State was low. Also, it has established that there is no significant difference between the mean responses of teachers and students on the extent to which vocational education influenced career choice, students' involvement and the level of unemployment amongst secondary school students.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are given

- 1) Stakeholders should encourage students to develop a positive attitude towards vocational subjects
- 2) Guidance and counseling sections should brace up their activities that will improve students' awareness and involvement in vocational subjects
- 3) The skills developed in vocational/technical education programs should equipped graduates with skills needed for self-employment that will include the production of goods and services for local and international markets;

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