PERCEPTION OF TECHNICAL COLLEGE STUDENTS ON WOODWORK TECHNOLOGY FOR SELF-EMPOWERMENT IN NIGER STATE NIGERIA

BY

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ABSTRACT

Nigeria is fast becoming a predominantly youthful society with high rate of unemployment. There is the need for appropriate training and practical skills in Vocational and Technical Education (VTE) to tackle the unemployment which has reached alarming proportion. A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. A structured questionnaire was used to gather data from the population of 102 respondents offering woodwork technology in the college. Mean and Standard Deviation were used to answer the research questions. Kuder Richardson (K-R 21) Formula was used to determine the reliability of instrument. The reliability coefficient of instrument was found to be 0.87. The objective of the study was to assess the level of performance of practical skills acquired by technical students for self-empowerment, students' opinions towards woodwork technology for self-empowerment after the programme, and extent to which study have acquired the skills. Three research questions were postulated to guide the study. The major findings of the study were: practical skills acquired during the course of training is adequate for students to be self employed after schooling; and student perceived that woodwork technology would make them to be self empowered after the training. Recommendations were based on the findings of study which include: Federal Government of Nigeria and all stakeholders should pay attention to woodwork technology in particular and VTE in general as a means of overcoming unemployment problems among the youth in Nigeria. Modern tools, equipment and adequate infrastructural facilities should be provided for woodwork practical training.

INTRODUCTION

Unemployment occurs when people are without jobs and they have actively sought for job within the past four week (ILO 2007). Emeh (2012) refered to unemployment as a situation where people who are willing and capable of working are unable to find suitable employment. Oviawe (2010) defined unemployment as a situation in which people who are willing to work at the prevailing wage rate are unable to find jobs.

A high level of unemployment and underemployment is one of the critical socio economic problems facing Nigeria (Salami, 2011). Nigeria is an important case study of the youth unemployment. The country has had a pervasive unemployment for over a decade though, Nigeria is the most populated black nation in Africa and 8th in the world with a population of over 160 million people. According to Awogbenle and Iwuamadi (2010), the statistics from the Manpower Board the Federal Bureau of Statistics, Nigeria has a youth population of 80 million, representing 50% of the total population of the country. 64 million of them unemployed, while 1.6 million are under-employed.

The cause of youth unemployment is as a result of public negative attitude towards Technical and Vocational Education (TVE) as education for the low status (Nwokomah, 2005). This stems from the low

image of 'blue collar' jobs which TVE offers, before and after independence, Nigeria education system prepared students for basic 'white collar' jobs. Over time, the paucity of jobs led to high unemployment rate and also a high level of poverty in the society (Moja, 2000; Ebong & Leigha, 2006). The Nigeria society wrongly believes that those who are not academically inclined study TVE subjects. It is because of this reason that most parents are not willing to encourage their wards to study TVE subjects. The fact remains that most parents are apt to want an academic education for their children, whether or not graduates increasingly finds it difficult jobs or not. They do not want their children to go to schools for the purpose of becoming Bricklayers, carpenters, mechanic (Nwokomah, 2005). The urge for certificate and degree in preference to technical vocational skills stems from the fact that when it comes to political appointments, leadership positions and decision making, graduate with degrees certificates in other fields are favored most than their counterparts with technical vocational skills.

The Nigeria Educational Research and Development Council (FGN, 2004) stated that vocational education is that form of education which is obtainable at the technical colleges. This is equivalent to senior secondary education but designed to prepare individual to acquire skills, basic and scientific knowledge and attitude required as craftsmen and technicians and sub-professional level. According to Akaninwor (2005), vocational education could be regarded as that aspect of education which provided the recipients with the basic knowledge and practical skills needed for entry into the world of work as employees or as self-employed. For Akerele (2007), vocational education is an aspect of education that exposes the learner to the acquisition of demonstrable skills building and skill identity, which ultimately becomes a means of livelihood.

Technical Education According to National Policy on Education (2013) referred to that aspect of educational process involving, in addition to general education, the study related sciences and the acquisition of practical skills attitude, understanding and knowledge relating to occupation in various sectors of economic and social life. Woodwork technology is a study given to students in Technical Colleges to promote a deliberate sustainable development and poverty reduction becomes and intervention plans to bring about learning which could make the students to be more productive in areas of economic sector, occupational and specific work (Okwori, 2012).

The only way to empower the youth is to provide them with adequate and qualitative education in order to make them job creators and eradicate poverty (Sekenu, 2004). Many countries of the world including Nigeria have considered Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) as relevant in equipping young people with technical skills that would enable them engage in productive livelihoods. However the United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2005) section for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) observed that TVET programs have not led to increased employment, despite the obvious need for technical and vocational services. This might be due to dearth of wage employment opportunities for technically trained manpower. The new world economy requires innovation, training, reinventing in vocational education and training that will significantly favor the youth. Adequate practical skills could help the youth acquire the mind set and know-how to make self-empowerment or viable career option (Maigida, 2013).

In Nigeria today, the goal of making students of technical colleges to be productive and self reliance has not been fully achieved (Oni, 2007, Usor & Essien, 2012). Osenim and Nwoji (2010) noted that technical institution have been turning out graduate at all levels of education,

whereas at graduation most of them lack employability skills, work place skills and job generation competencies. Despite the facts that the world has gone globalization, technical education in Nigeria does not increase productivity but rather is plague with inadequate of schools industry link, new skills, standard delivery strategies.

From the foregoing, it is well recognized that vocational and technical education remains the key to achieving economic empowerment and national development. The researcher is in agreement with the various opinions expressed on the potential of vocational and technical education in equipping the learners with practical skills necessary for self-empowerment. However, the extent to which this has been achieved is not yet addressed. Therefore, this study investigates students' perception towards woodwork technology for self empowerment.

Majority of Nigerian youth are idle and some are involved in various social vices due to lack of employment. Statistics revealed that 64 million Nigerian youth are unemployed (Awogbenle and Iwuanmadi 2010). Consequently they cannot raise their socio-economic standard and therefore cannot contribute to nation building. Youth unemployment is a menace and constitutes danger and a threat to Nigeria's socio-economic growth. As often said "an idle mind is the devil's workshop" the joblessness of the Nigerian youth today stems from their non-acquisition of technical/practical skills. This is further aggravated the youth negative behavior in the society as most antisocial acts including thuggery, arm robbery, militancy, Boko-Haramist, restiveness, ethnic-political clashes and social vices in Nigeria could be traced to the high rate of unemployment (Okafor, 2011). Unfortunately, most research studies on youth unemployment have not been delved into vocational technical education program as an alternative to unemployment of Nigeria youth. This study was designed to investigate students' perception towards the woodwork technology skills for self-empowerment.

Purpose of the Study

The study assessed the perception of Niger state technical college students' on woodwork technology for self-empowerment. Specifically, it examined:

I. Whether woodwork practical skills acquired by technical college students are adequate for effective performance towards self-empowerment;
II. Students' opinion towards woodwork technology for self-empowerment.
III. The extent to which student have acquired woodwork skills for self-empowerment

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study

I. To what extent does woodwork practical skills acquired by technical college students adequate for self-empowerment?
II. What are the students' opinions toward woodwork technology for self-empowerment?
III. What are strategies employed in teaching that lead to student self-empowerment?

METHODOLOGY

Survey research design was adopted for the study. According to Nwargu (2006) survey design is the study of a group of people, collecting and analyzing data from a few people considered to be representatives of the entire group. The design was therefore appropriate for the study since it was to solicit information from woodwork technology students through the use of questionnaires on woodwork technology for youth self-empowerment.

The study was conducted at Government Technical College New-Bussa, Pandongari and Minna Niger State, Nigeria. The choice was informed by the fact that these institutions trained students on various fields in woodwork Technology, with a large population of students and resource materials needed to carry out the research study. The population of the study was all woodwork technology students obtained from Government Technical College New-Bussa, Pandongari and Minna Niger state comprising of one hundred and two students. The sample was made of all 102 woodwork technology students in the woodwork Department of Government technical colleges, New Bussa, Pandongari and Minna, Niger State. Since the sample size was small the entire population was used.

30-items structured questionnaire developed from the literature reviewed was used for the data collection. Section A had 10 items on the student performance in practical skills acquired in woodwork technology. Section B contained 10 items information on students' opinion towards woodwork technology for self-empowerment. While section C also contain 10 items information on strategies employed by the instructor in his teaching. The questionnaire was designed five point response scales of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (U), Disagreed (D) and Strongly Disagreed (SD). The instrument was face validated by 4 experts from the department of Industrial and Technology Education, Federal University of Technology, Minna, Nigeria, to structure and arrange the items. A corrected version reflecting the experts' advice was used to draft the final copy of the questionnaire. A pilot testing of the questionnaire was carried out with fifty respondents (woodwork students) of Government Technical College Bida, Niger State, Nigeria. Cronbach Alpha Formula was used to determine reliability coefficient of the instrument. A reliability coefficient of 0.87 was obtained. The majority of individuals correctly reported Cronbach's alpha as the measure of internal consistency with efficient reliability (Gliem & Gliem, 2003). The data collected for this study is from a self-administered structured questionnaire conducted by the researcher during the lecture classes of woodwork at Government Technical College, New Bussa, Pandongari and Minna, Niger State. One hundred and two (102) copies of the questionnaire were administered on the respondents and retrieved with 100% return rate.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data collected was analyzed using mean and standard deviation. The mean value at 2.50 and above is regarded as agree while mean below 2.50 is regarded as disagree. The Data was computed using statistical package for social sciences (SPSS version 22.0).

Research Question one: what extent does woodwork practical skills acquired by technical school students adequate for self-empowerment?

Table 1: Means and standard deviation of the respondent on practical skills acquired by woodwork students

S/No	Items	Mean ($\bar{X}$)	Standard deviation	decision
1	Practical skills acquired by woodwork students during the course of training enable them to produce some household furniture	3.31	0.48	Agree
2	Practical skills acquired by woodwork students during the course of training enable them to repair some spoilt furniture	3.69	0.48	Agree
3	Practical skills acquired by woodwork students during the course of training enable them to understand and interpret the aspects of woodwork in building plans	3.46	0.52	Agree
4	Practical skills acquired by woodwork students during the course of training enable woodwork students to understand and follow safety precautions guiding the profession	3.23	0.44	Agree
5	Practical skills acquired by woodwork students during the course of training enable them to work and share ideas with other colleagues in the profession	3.62	0.51	Agree
6	Practical skills acquired by woodwork students during the course of training enable them to make use of modern machines	3.54	0.52	Agree
7	Practical skills acquired by woodwork students during the course of training enable them to handle sophisticated equipment during practical work	2.77	0.83	Agree
8	Practical skills acquired by woodwork students during the course of training enable them to dismantle and assemble some components of furniture work.	3.62	0.51	Agree
9	Practical skills acquired by woodwork students broaden their knowledge and understanding in handling practical issues	3.77	0.44	Agree
10	Practical skills acquired by woodwork students during the course of training enable improve the general performance in woodwork technology profession.	3.85	0.38	Agree

The results from table 1 shows that all the items had mean value greater than 2.5 cut-off point. The result disclosed that respondents agree with item 1-10. This implies that students in technical college agreed that practical skills acquired during the course of training will enable them to perform better in profession in future.

Research Question two: What are the students' opinions toward woodwork technology for enhancing self-empowerment?

Table 2: Means and standard deviation of the responses on students' opinions towards woodwork technology for self-empowerment.

S/No	Items	Mean (X)	Standard Deviation	Decision
11	Students undergoing woodwork technology training will have more job opportunities and better payment.	3.49	0.71	Agree
12	Based on practical skills acquired during the course of training, I preferred to engage in woodwork technology for self-empowerment.	3.41	0.79	Agree
13	Woodwork technology has a brighter future for self-empowerment of Nigerian youths	3.36	0.78	Agree
14	Woodwork technology prepares me for job after school	3.32	0.92	Agree
15	Woodwork technology provided adequate skills for self-empowerment.	3.38	0.78	Agree
16	Woodwork technology courses teaches me skills needed by wood workers in world of work	3.45	0.71	Agree
17	The woodwork technology prepares to have my shops, tools and equipment for self employment after school.	3.44	0.62	Agree
18	The projects and assignments during the course of study prepared me for future challenges	3.44	0.71	Agree
19	My interest in woodwork technology has increased since I have been in the course	3.48	0.62	Agree
20	Many Nigerians have made a lot of fortunes from woodwork technology profession.	3.38	0.70	Agree

Table 2 shows that all the items had mean value greater than 3.0 cut-off point. The result disclosed that respondent agreed with items 10-20. This implies that students of technical college perceived that woodwork technology will enable them to be self-empowered after schooling.

Research Question three: To what extent do students acquire skills for self-empowerment through woodwork?

Table 2: Means and standard deviation of the responses on students' acquisition of skills for self-empowerment through woodwork

S/No	Items	Mean (X)	Standard Deviation	Decision
21	There was adequate provision of time for practicals in the workshop	3.25	0.62	Agree
22	A qualified laboratory technologist handles the teaching of practicals.	3.11	0.57	Agree
23	The interest and commitment of our instructor in teaching greatly enhanced our understanding of the subject.	3.26	0.61	Agree
24	I acquired enough practical knowledge through the qualify instructor handling the teaching of woodwork	3.12	0.58	Agree
25	Our school central workshop was well equipped to enhance the practical's acquisition	3.17	0.61	Agree
26	I have personal interest in woodwork trade	3.01	0.52	Agree
27	My school made adequate provision of materials for practical.	3.02	0.54	Agree
28	Students are exposed to new tools and equipment in woodwork	3.20	0.63	Agree
29	Students are exposed to different types of modern woodwork materials and their characteristics	3.21	0.67	Agree
30	Students embark on industrial trainings and workshop during the holidays	3.16	0.59	Agree

Table 3 shows that all the items had mean value greater than 3.0 cut-off point. The result showed that respondent agreed with items 20-30. This is an indication that students of technical college are exposed to adequate practical work that could enable them to be self-empowered.

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The result obtained from table I revealed that all items except number 7 are the factors that determines the extent to which woodwork practical skills acquired by technical school students are adequate for self-empowerment which is in line with Bello, M. I. Danjuma, I. M. & Adamu A. Y. (2007) who observed that vocational and technical education training such as furniture crafts, upholstery and ornamental designing are necessary trade required for youth self-empowerment. In another development, further study by Ofoha (2011), showed that, generally Nigerian technical students have learnt significant self-employable skills in Vocational Technical Education. This implies that acquisition of skills are major requirements in all facet of national economy, therefore, the need to engage technical college students in a befitting practical skills that will enable them to be job creator rather than job seekers (Galadima, 2003).

Research question 2 has to do with the opinions of students toward woodwork technology for self-empowerment. The result obtained from table 2 revealed that all items that all items confirmed student opinion that woodwork technology enhances self-employment which is in line with the view of Maigida, Saba & Namkere (2013) who observed that adequate practical skills could help students acquire the mindset and know how to make self-empowerment or viable career options. In view of these, it is obvious that vocation and technical education remain a key to achieving student self-empowerment for national development. The researcher is in support of the various opinion express by student as regard acquisition of skills in woodwork technology for self-empowerment.

The findings from table 3 shows that all items are factors influenced students of technical college exposure to adequate practical work that could enable them to be self-empowered which is in line with Adekoya (1999) who claimed that for the Nigerian youth to be empowered economically they should be given the necessary skill acquisition and for this to be done the curriculum should be effectively implemented. Oli (2000) believed that to ensure a positive future for Nigeria, the youth who are believed to be the future leaders of the country ought to be well equipped with basic skills to drive the economy. Omotosho, Idowu, Esere and Arewah [2009] citing Ipaye [1988] posited that one of the developmental tasks of the youth is to be self-empowered, which invariably arises from the youth becoming gainfully employed.

CONCLUSION

The study established that practical skill acquired by students in technical colleges is adequate for self-empowerment as it enable them to produce some household furnitures, understand and interprets the aspect of woodwork in building plans and also enables them to handle sophisticated equipment during practical works among others. This implies that in order to encourage youth self-empowerment in Nigeria, greater emphasis must be placed on teaching students of technical colleges enough practical skills especially in woodwork technology. It was also established in the study that technical colleges students have positive opinion as regard the acquisition of skills in woodwork technology for self-empowerment based on the fact that students undergoing woodwork technology training in technical colleges will have more job opportunities and better payment. As established in the research result, students in technical colleges believed that woodwork technology has a brighter future for self-empowerment. The study also shows that the level of practical skill acquired by students of technical colleges is adequate for self-empowerment in Niger State of Nigeria.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The woodwork technology curriculum and practical training should be improved upon in order to motivate the students in studying woodwork trade, and encourage unemployed youths to study the trade for self-empowerment. Also, Special financial support (soft loan) should be given to woodwork technology students after completion of their program to enable them to establish on their own.

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