

Implementation of Skills-Based Vocational Education Programmes for Youths Empowerment and Community Development in Ogun State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Due to some institutional, structural, personnel, and environmental variables of performance limitations, the expectations of vocational education programmes seem to have been compromised. This paper therefore presents an investigation on the implementation of vocational education programmes for community empowerment in Ogun State, Nigeria. Descriptive survey research was adopted for the study. From a total population of 384,740 technical education students, a sample of 380 students and 60 instructors were selected using a random sampling technique. A 5-point Likert structured questionnaire titled: "Vocational Education and Community Empowerment Scale (VECES)", $r=0.86$ was used for data collection. Mean and standard deviation scores were used to answer the research questions, while a t-test was used to test the hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance. Results showed that inadequate training facilities and an acute shortage of qualified instructors challenged vocational education programmes for community empowerment. Respondents did not significantly differ in their opinions on the contents, challenges and strategies to enhance the effective implementation of vocational education programmes. It was concluded that youths in the communities were yet to be empowered because of the performance limitations associated with implementing vocational education programmes as expected in the state's policy document. Based on these findings, it was recommended among others that government and private sectors should provide qualified instructors, equipment and facilities in technical and vocational institutions for the acquisition of skills.

Keywords: Vocational Education, Youths Empowerment, Community Development, Youths Performance Limitations

1. Introduction

No nation can improve technologically, industrially and economically without developing a strong partner initiative in wealth creation, poverty reduction and employment generation with the required skills. Vocational Education with its relevant practical training components is widely recognised as the key to any nation becoming technologically pertinent and internationally competitive. Gambo, Shafri, and Yusuf (2022) asserted that the neglect in strategic implementation of vocational education programmes is robbing the nation of graduates' contributions to the economy. Every society needs competent auto-mechanics and truck drivers, carpenters, plumbers, electricians, electronics and computers, databases, web and network technicians, bookkeepers, clerks, medical technicians, and nursing assistants in its informal sector to function appropriately.

The empowerment of youths is to capacitate them with adequate, appropriate and qualitative skilled-based education to make them job creators and eradicate poverty (Okwelle & Wordu, 2016). Many countries, including Nigeria, have considered vocational education as relevant in empowering young persons with technical skills that would enable them to engage in productive and sustainable livelihoods.

Adeoti (2024) opined that in many other societies, graduates of vocational or technical education are highly skilled entrepreneurs, but much is still being desired in Nigeria. Unfortunately, those who influence education policy in the state appear to make graduates of vocational education less skilled compared to university graduates. This perception reflects the employers' preference for regular University graduates and the salary disparity between technical and university graduates,

respectively. Hence the neglect of the vocational education sector may have contributed among other factors to the high unemployment and rising poverty level in Nigerian communities.

It has been well documented that Nigeria's higher institutions lack the requisite tools to give students the skills employers need, and this situation seems to apply to graduates in all disciplines. Chang, Sjoberg, Turumen, and Rambaree (2022) emphasised that the development of a vocational scheme would give new graduates some work skills and experience. Thus, higher education including vocational that encompasses economic, educational, and social objectives, is expected to be skill-driven in knowledge. Nevertheless, UNESCO (2023) established that there seems to be growing interest in youth empowerment and perhaps this informs an investigation into the implementation of vocational education programmes and community development. Because of this, this study sought to examine the implementation of skills-based vocational education programmes for youth empowerment and community development in Ogun state, Nigeria.

Adeoti (2024) asserted that vocational education is an essential component of strategies to reduce and prevent poverty. Many children drop out of school because they do not see the relevance of education to their lives. To influence the decisions of at-risk children and their parents, education should have a tangible end, particularly in terms of improving future employment prospects. In such circumstances and where youths are concerned, the focus should be on the transition from school to work, either through vocational education or skills training programmes. The skills transmitted through such programmes should prepare young people for gainful employment. These skills can be taught through the formal education system. For example, in vocational education institutions, through non-formal education programmes, or private businesses and apprenticeships. In vocational training, work safety codes must be taught and practised and well monitored by organizations or communities.

Vocational education involves entrepreneurship, which is the capacity and attitude of a person to undertake a venture, with a risk or failure. It demands the individual be prepared to assume a reasonable degree of risk and be a good leader in addition to being highly innovative. Since entrepreneurship involves leadership, leadership abilities determine a person's or organisation's effectiveness, entrepreneurship could become a major avenue to accelerate economic growth and create job opportunities, many youths aspire to become successful entrepreneurs, but their ability to make use of their skills remain constrained if they are not empowered.

Through a well-functional vocational education, youth can be empowered. Hence, poverty alleviation should be given utmost priority by the government, keeping in mind the future consequences and tasks ahead for sustainable development. The prospect and success of TVET would depend on the continuation and expansion of the existing training programmes, and strengthening the existing cooperation both national and international, as well as by starting non-formal training programmes for the unemployed youth and the community at large as part of government poverty alleviation efforts toward sustained welfare of the youth and development. Against this backdrop, this study examined the implementation of skills-based vocational education programmes for youths' empowerment and community development in Ogun state, Nigeria.

The main challenge is that Nigerian youths face myriads of challenges, which impede their empowerment and community development. Many youths who dropped out of secondary school lack the basic vocational skills to compete in a knowledge-based economy. Many youths face high unemployment, joblessness and difficulties getting a firm foothold in the labour market. Graduates who are bereft of the needed vocational skills or competencies that would enable them to function in today's world of work are prone to exploitation and under-employment. The underlying factor may be that vocational education programmes are poorly implemented and have not leveraged significantly on youth empowerment. Issues of implementation are paramount for improved socio-economic activities in the nation. Students should be exposed to a variety of skills. They

should also be better acquainted with foreseeable challenges and how best to handle them when such come. Moreover, the issue of quality must be emphasized in the process of implementation to ensure effectiveness. Hence, this study examined the implementation of skills-based vocational education programmes for youths' empowerment and community development in Ogun state, Nigeria.

The following questions were raised in the study:

1. What are the skills-based vocational education programmes required to enhance youth empowerment and community development in Ogun State?
2. What are the challenges associated with the implementation of vocational education programmes for youth empowerment and community development?
3. How can quality implementation of vocational educational programmes improve youth empowerment and community development?

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

HO1: There is no significant difference between the opinions of technical education instructors and students on challenges associated with the implementation of vocational educational programmes for youth empowerment and community development in Ogun state.

HO2: There is no significant difference between the opinions of technical education instructors and students on ways to improve the implementation of vocational educational programmes for youth empowerment and community development in Ogun state.

2. Literature Review

By way of concept, a vocation can also refer to those work activities in which one is specially gifted. People generally are committed to their vocations, find them intrinsically rewarding and perform them with great autonomy and feelings of satisfaction, importance, and relevance. The number of unemployed graduates in Nigeria suggests that most of them do not possess relevant, saleable, employable or even entrepreneurial skills needed in society (Adeoti, 2024). This partly explains why the nation has remained economically dependent to date. This is because most nations who are economic giants today, started by equipping their citizens with the right type of education - education that will enable them to use both their heads and hands. The kind of education that equips its recipients with such abilities to think is generally described to work as vocational education (NOUN, 2020).

Vocational Education aims to equip individuals to use their heads and hands to survive in a world that is essentially work-oriented. This is education designed to prepare individuals or skilled personnel for one or a group of occupations, trades or jobs. In Nigeria, vocational education is usually offered in senior secondary schools or technical colleges and includes general education, practical skills and recounted theories required by the chosen occupation. Hence, this can be defined as the process of acquiring knowledge, skills, aptitudes, and attitudes necessary for effective living (Ayeni & Olowe, 2015).

The Nigerian dream of building a truly egalitarian society can only be achieved through the effective use of Technical and Vocational Education. It offers life-long education to all types of learners and enables them to realize and develop their self-potentials maximally. Even special and adult education relies heavily on Vocational Education. The five main national objectives of Nigeria, which it expects to achieve through the instrument of education, are the building of:

- I. a free and democratic society;
- II. a just and egalitarian society;
- III. a united, strong and self-reliant nation;
- IV. a great and dynamic economy; and
- V. a land of bright and full opportunities for all citizens (FGN, 2014).

The philosophy of Technical and Vocational Education is basically to enhance human dignity and enthrone work and labour by making individuals acquire and/or develop enough saleable and employable skills, competencies, attitudes as well as knowledge to enable them to gain and maintain basic employment or self-reliance for a comfortable living (NOUN, 2020). Moreover, the philosophical concepts of Vocational Education include:

- a. Vocational Education (or programmes) should be developmental and not terminal. It should provide maximum options for learners to advance or branch out into gainful employment.
- b. Vocational Education is needed to make liberal or general education concrete and understandable while general education should point out the vocational implication of all educational experiences.
- c. There is a need for pre-vocational orientation of pupils in the world of work.
- d. Developing attitudes, basic educative skills and habits appropriate for work is imperative just like training in skill competence.
- e. Vocational Education should satisfy the demands of the technology-oriented society and the needs of man for liberalising experience in his educational growth and similar undertakings.

According to Seyi (2014), before the introduction of formal, western education in Nigeria, at about 1892, different ethnic groups were already "training" young men and women in various occupations, trades as well as the production of different materials and services such as brewing, building, carving, spinning, fishing, hair-dressing, pottery, mining, herbalism, agriculture, gold-smithing, iron-smithing, etc. This was done at family and sometimes community levels. Appropriate character training and disposition were also taught. This was the era of traditional vocational education. During this era, people generally engaged in vocations such as various types of farming (poultry, snail, livestock, etc), fishing, hunting, carving, carpentry, sculpturing, painting, building, decoration, catering, boat-making, mat-making, dyeing, hair plaiting, barbing, traditional medicine, trading, etc.

Ruth and Deitmer (2020) remarked that when formal education began in Nigeria in 1842 with the primary aim of evangelizing the natives through the instrument of literary education, this type of education was less expensive and less demanding in terms of human and material resources though less relevant to the needs of people. They considered literary education as an essential element in the spread of Christianity. NOUN (2020) asserted that this was a kind of dislocation to the already thriving traditional vocational education in Africa. This is because going to school then did not seem to specifically emphasize the various skills in agriculture, hunting, trading, weaving, etc. Rather students merely acquired reading and writing skills. Our former British colonialists equally came with a system of education that did not meet the needs of the colonized people of Africa. Meanwhile, from 1900, various colonial government departments and private firms were operating in-house/on-the-job vocational training programmes for their workers or prospective workers. Participants were sponsored by the employers or admitted to be employed on successful completion of the training).

Okonkwo, Chidi, Nwokike and Nwafor (2021) remarked that by October 1960, when Nigeria gained independence, it was obvious that the so-called education we inherited from the British government was not adequate to the societal and economic needs of Nigeria. It was clear that the old inherited British literary curriculum would not meet the educational and economic challenges of the emerging Nigerian nation. Consequently, vocational education began to receive much-needed attention in the proposed national curriculum through the 1969 National Curriculum Conference. It is pertinent to point out that in the 1960s, vocational education was primarily in the hands of voluntary and private individuals and agencies.

Ruth and Deitmer (2020) explained that by the 1970s, the government's participation in the establishment of vocational-technical institutions was on the increase. To date, efforts are still being made (though more in principle than in practice) to give vocational education its pride of place in the country's educational system. Most of these efforts do not meet with full implementation, funding and adequate monitoring. Others appear to be sabotaged and crippled so that they hardly achieve the purpose(s) for which they were initiated. However, there is a ray of hope for vocational education as a result of its functionality and relevance to any nation Otitoju, Folorunso, Erinfolami, and Odewusi (2023) posited that the various stakeholders in education (the graduates, parents, the society, and the various establishments, and the nation) are generally disillusioned and dissatisfied with the returns they receive from education. It appears education has failed to deliver its "promises" to the nation. In the streets of Nigeria, it is easy to find many certificated but unskilled and consequently unemployable graduates. It is important to mention here that aspects of vocational education should be part of basic primary, junior secondary and senior secondary school education. At the post-secondary level, institutions that offer technical and vocational education include tertiary technical institutions such as science and technical colleges, polytechnics, mono-technics, colleges of education (technical) and universities. It is also important to note that vocational education should be part of the ongoing mass literacy campaigns, adult education, non-formal education as well as special education for the physically challenged e.g. the blind, deaf, and dumb. This is to ensure that such programmes are relevant and meaningful to the individuals (recipients) and to society generally (NOUN, 2020).

3. Methodology

Descriptive survey research was adopted for the study. The population for this study is the male and female students and instructors in all Technical Colleges in Ogun state. From the population of technical education students, a simple random sampling technique was used to select a sample of 380 students and 60 instructors from the population. The main instrument for data collection was a 5-point Likert structured questionnaire titled: Vocational Education and Community Empowerment Scale (VECES). The instrument was validated with a reliability co-efficiency index of $r = 0.86$. Mean and standard deviation scores were used to answer the research questions, while a t-test was used to test the hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance.

3.1. Results and Analysis

RQ1: What are the skills-based vocational education programmes required to enhance youth empowerment and economic development in Ogun State?

Table 1. Mean and standard deviation scores on Vocational skills-based programmes for youth empowerment

	VEP Skills	SD	Ranking	Decision
1.	Welding and Fabrication skills	0.39	1 st	Strongly agree
2.	Electrical Installation	0.40	2 nd	Strongly agree
3.	Piping and Fitting	0.42	3 rd	Strongly agree
4.	Metal Work	0.49	4 th	Strongly agree
5.	Computer Software Design	0.50	5 th	Strongly agree
6.	Photography	0.57	6 th	Agree
7.	Auto Servicing	0.59	7 th	Agree
8.	Carpentry skills	0.40	8 th	Agree
9.	Bricklaying and Meson	0.45	9 th	Agree
10.	Food and Catering Services	0.48	10 th	Agree
11.	Soap Making	0.59	11 th	Agree
12.	Barbing/Hair Dressing	0.48	12 th	Agree
13.	Laundry and Dry Cleaning Services	0.51	13 th	Agree
14.	Fashion Designing	0.49	14 th	Agree
15.	GSM or Phone Repairs	0.50	15 th	Agree
16.	Snail Production	0.58	16 th	Agree
17.	Truck Driving	0.50	17 th	Agree
18.	Radio and Television Services	0.53	18 th	Agree
19.	Painting	0.47	19 th	Agree
20.	Art work	0.52	20 th	Agree
21.	Tie and Dye Making	0.51	21 st	Agree
22.	Hair styling and Cosmetology	0.55	22 nd	Agree
23.	Veterinary technology	0.53	23 rd	Agree
24.	Hair Making	0.49	24 th	Undecided
25.	Watch Repair	0.43	25 th	Disagree
26.	Tinkering	0.40	26 th	Disagree

The data in Table 1 shows the respondents' opinions on the available vocational educational skills. In the ranked order, the respondents strongly agreed with items 1- 5, they agreed with items 6 – 24, while they disagreed with items 25 and 26. This indicates that items 1-13 were considered highly needed while items 14 -23 are moderately needed by youths for empowerment, while items 24-26 are less needed. The standard deviation (SD) scores of the items ranged from 0.39 to 0.59 indicating alignment in the opinions of both respondents.

RQ2: What are the challenges associated with the implementation of vocational education programmes for youth empowerment and community development?

Table 2. Mean and standard deviation scores on the challenges associated with the implementation of vocational education programmes for youth empowerment

Challenges	Students		Educators		Decision
	X	SD ₁	X ₂	SD ₂	Decision
27. Inadequate curriculum	4.20	0.80	4.35	0.81	Agree
28. Inadequate training facilities and equipment	4.32	0.85	4.26	0.82	Agree
29. Shortage of vocational education instructors	4.45	0.81	4.12	0.82	Agree
30. Poor funding of vocational education programmes	4.78	0.90	4.56	0.88	Strongly agree
31. Poor programmes implementation	3.86	0.77	3.71	0.79	Agree
32. Lack of public interest to enroll in vocational educational skills programmes	4.40	0.78	4.23	0.72	Agree
33. Low orientation about vocational educational programmes	3.96	0.91	3.68	0.89	Agree
34. Negative perception of the public about skills acquisition	3.63	0.81	3.89	0.78	Agree
35. Poor remuneration of vocational education instructors	4.32	0.72	3.98	0.69	Agree
36. Inadequate infrastructure support base	3.78	0.74	3.57	0.71	Agree
37. Absence of supervision and monitoring of inputs and processing outcomes	3.84	0.71	4.07	0.78	Agree
38. Nature of skill available	2.66	0.93	2.98	0.91	Undecided
Grand Mean/ SD	3.71	0.81	3.65	0.80	Agree

Table 2 shows that respondents strongly agreed on item 4 and agreed on items 1, 2, 3, 5-11. They however were undecided on item 12. A grand mean of 3.71 and 3.65 for students and vocational educators respectively, indicate that the respondents agree that there are challenges associated with the implementation of vocational education skill programmes for youth empowerment in Ogun state. The standard deviation (SD) of the items ranged from 0.71 to 0.93, suggesting that the respondents were almost consistent in their responses.

RQ3: How can quality implementation of vocational educational programmes improve youth empowerment and community development?

Table 3. Mean and standard deviation scores on how to enhance implementation of vocational education programmes for youth empowerment

VEP Enhancement Strategies	Students		Instructors		Decision
	X ₁	SD ₁	X ₂	SD ₂	Decision
39. Greater enrolment of the youths into vocational education	4.48	1.06	4.43	1.02	Agree
40. Technical teachers should be highly remunerated	4.68	1.09	4.57	1.09	Strongly agreed
41. Adequate recruitment of vocational teachers	4.03	0.94	4.35	1.02	Agree
42. Regular and adequate training facilities	4.68	0.93	4.74	0.94	Strongly agreed

43. Appropriate budgeting and funding	4.82	0.98	4.65	0.96	Strongly agreed
44. Vocational programmes should be relevant to skill needed	3.35	1.01	3.04	1.03	Strongly agreed
45. Vocational education programmes should attain global standard	4.05	0.90	4.31	1.08	Agree
46. There should be adequate awareness of vocational educational programmes	4.62	0.94	4.53	0.98	Strongly agreed
Grand Mean/ SD	4.32	0.98	4.34	0.02	Agree

The data in Table 3 represents that the respondents strongly agreed with items 2,4,5 and 8; they agreed with items 1, 3 and 7, while they were undecided on item 6. The grand means of 4.32 and 4.34 for students and vocational educators respectively, indicate that the respondents preferred positive solutions that will improve vocational educational programmes for youth empowerment in Ogun state. The standard deviation (SD) of items in Table 3 ranged from 0.90 to 1.09, implying that the respondents were very close in their opinions.

3.2. Hypotheses

Table 4. T-test analysis on differences between opinions of vocational education instructors and students on the challenges associated with the implementation of vocational educational programme

Group	N	X	SD	df	t _{cal}	t _{tab}	Remark
Instructors	60	3.65	0.80				
Students	300	3.71	0.81	358	-0.55	1.960	Accepted

Table 4 shows that at 358 degrees of freedom, the calculated t-value of -0.55 is lower than the critical t-value of 1.960, indicating that there is no significant difference between the opinions of the technical educators and those of the technical education students on the challenges confronting the implementation of vocational educational programmes for youth empowerment in Ogun state. The first null hypothesis therefore was not rejected but accepted.

Table 5. T-test analysis on differences between opinions of vocational education instructors and students on the ways of improving vocational educational programme implementation for youth empowerment

Group	N	X	SD	df	t _{cal}	t _{tab}	Remark
Instructors	60	4.34	1.02				
Students	300	4.32	0.98	358	-0.95	1.960	Accepted

The data in Table 5 shows that the t-calculated of 0.95 is less than the t-critical of 1.960 at 358 degrees of freedom. This implies that there is no significant difference between the opinions of the technical educators and those of the technical education students on ways of improving vocational educational programmes implementation for youth empowerment in Ogun state. Therefore, the second null hypothesis was not rejected but accepted.

3.3. Discussion

The finding of the study in Table 1 revealed that youths could be trained in various skill areas, which if effectively utilised will help to reduce unemployment and enhance their empowerment and develop their communities. These findings were corroborated by Akinde and Vitung (2020) and Okonkwo, Chidi, Nwokike and Nwafor (2021) that vocational education can

contribute immensely to the empowerment of youths and, reduction of extreme poverty and hunger. The result also agrees with the findings of Peter (2014) which emphasised that skills acquired by youth through vocational education would aid job creation, youth empowerment and poverty alleviation, which in turn can solve various social problems.

The result in Table 2 revealed that challenges were hindering the implementation of vocational education programmes for the empowerment of youths and community development. These findings are consistent with the observation of Omeje, Mba, and Ugwu (2020) that despite the intentions of successive Nigerian governments, vocational education programmes are still fraught with problems of many variants. Specifically, the challenges posed by poor funding agrees with the observations of Ayeni and Olowe (2015), that sufficient funds has not been channelled to vocational technical education which is a major problem plaguing the system. Also, the poor funding status of vocational education as reported in this study is in line with the findings of Omeje, Mba and Ugwu (2020) who reported that sufficient funds for vocational education in the country are not provided either by the government or the private sector. Analysis of item 3 in Table 2 pinpoints that the acute shortage of vocational education professional teachers hinders the practice of vocational education in the Ogun State area.

Otitoju, Folorunso, Erinfolami and Odewusi (2023) noted the challenge of the lack of teachers and further buttressed that the nature of vocational subjects is such that those teachers who teach them should have to undergo rigorous training to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge to impart to the learner and not just the theoretical aspects of the discipline alone. The result further reveals that a lack of public interest in vocational education skills hampers its implementation. This claim was supported by the findings of Akinyetun, Alausa, Odeyemi and Ahoton (2020) that most parents do not encourage or guide the youths to take a course in vocational disciplines because the society does not place any sufficient value or dignity on the programme. Furthermore, the findings unveil that implementing vocational education programmes depends also on adequate training facilities. The result is consistent with the view of Emeasoba (2018) that vocational programmes in Nigeria has been bedevilled by an inadequate supply of facilities and equipment necessary for acquiring skills and competencies for self-employment.

From the result in Table 3, it is the opinion of the respondents that if some proactive measures are taken, vocational education implementation could yield the expected results by driving youth empowerment. Nworgu (2006) asserted that for vocational education to take its rightful place in Nigeria, there should be a concerted effort towards equipping all vocational education institutions, ensuring that vocational education teacher preparatory programmes are supported as well as a change of attitude towards vocational education by all stakeholders.

Tables 4 and 5 which showed the result of the test of hypotheses to determine if there are divergent opinions between the two categories of respondents indicated that both the students and vocational educators of vocational education are on the same page concerning the challenges and solutions to vocational education implementation as a vital tool to curbing youth unemployment in the Ogun State. This implies that these major stakeholders in vocational education are fully aware of the potential of vocational education in national development if properly implemented.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

From the findings, it could be deduced that vocational education is a vital tool through which any nation can experience growth and development. Empowering youths through vocational education goes a long way in reducing unemployment and other social vices that are prevalent among youths in Ogun State, Nigeria. This is essential because occupational skill acquisition is widely recognized as a sure way to overcome the problem of unemployment. Hence, vocational education occupies an important aspect and position in the sustainable development of any region and nation like Ogun State and Nigeria.

Based on the foregoing, the study recommended that there should be a massive recruitment of viable and adequate vocational education instructors with innovations to enhance technical instructional delivery. The government should organise regular seminars and workshops to keep vocational education teachers updated on the current developments in the field of vocational education. Vocational education instructors should be well-remunerated and motivated. Furthermore, there should be an effective public awareness campaign to sensitise the people on the benefits of vocational education in terms of employment. Both government and private sectors should collaborate to provide training facilities in technical vocational institutions/centres for the acquisition of skills in vocational education.

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