

Influential Factors Affecting the Attitude of Students Towards Vocational/Technical Subjects in Secondary Schools in Southeastern Nigeria

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Abstract This paper was to determine the influential factors that affects the attitude of the students towards the study of vocational/Technical subjects (Home economics) in secondary schools. This was initiated as a result of the students apathy to the study of vocational subjects (Home economics) in secondary schools. In carrying out the research, the focus was to identify the variables or interest, gender, socio-economic status of the parents as it influences the students choice of the study of vocational/Technical subjects (Home economics) were raised to guide the researcher designing the instrument to be used for the study. Structured questionnaires was used for the data collection. A sample of hundred respondents offering vocational/Technical subjects (Home economics) in senior secondary schools were used. The mean frequency distribution and grand mean were used in analyzing the data collected. Major findings were made on the factors that influence the students attitude such as interest, gender, and socio-economic status, the qualification of teachers and instructors and guidance counsellors motivated influence. Based on these findings, recommendations for its improvement was proffered.

Introduction

Vocational/ technical education are among the vital tools an individual can use to be developed. It is a training for useful employment in trade, industries, agriculture, business and home making etc. the emphasis on vocation. technical; education is to prepare one for self reliance.

American vocational association (1971) sees vocational subjects as those designed to develop skills, abilities, understanding, attitude, work habit and appreciation encompassing knowledge and information needed any workers to enter and make progress in employment on a useful and productive basis. It contributes to the production of good citizens by developing their physical, social, civic, cultural and economic competencies.

The advent of formal education in Nigeria neglect vocational and technical education entirely. Despite all efforts made to recognize it, yet little or no attention was given to it. No meaningful development was made in the area of vocational education until 1981, when the National policy on Education was published. Due to total neglect, vocational education suffered a major decline in quality, number, policy and directive in Nigeria due to the total neglect. It was after the oil boom era 1970s that it dawned on the nation that there was acute scarcity of skilled manpower.

Osuala (1999) emphasized that the term either technical or vocational education has no single universally accepted definition but what is common is the various definitions is its goals and objectives that remain the same. Technical education has been defined as that phase of education which seeks to help the people, students and the populace acquire specific mechanical or manipulative skills required in industrial arts or applied science.

The aims of vocational and technical education

The national policy on education (2004), stated the goals and objectives of vocational and technical education as follows:

- (1) to provide trained manpower in applied science, technology and commerce particular at sub-professional grades.
- (2) to provide technical knowledge and vocational skill necessary for agriculture, industries, commercial and economic development.
- (3) to give training and impart the necessary skills leading to the production for craft-man, technicians and

other skilled personnel who will be enterprising and self-reliant.

(4) enable our young men and women to have intelligent understanding of the increasing complexity of technology.

(5) to give an introduction to professional studies in engineering and other technologies.

Yole (1986) reported that occupational areas within which vocational and technical educational education subjects fall largely into are: Agriculture, Home economics, Business and mechanics, capacity, countering, Arts etc. However, Agriculture and carpentry remain improper choices because they do not attract much interest amongst the students.

Anyakoha (2000) emphasized that Home economics is a unique and dynamic field of study. Its central theme is the improvement of lives of individuals, field of study¹ that draws knowledge from many disciplines including science and humanities in order to fulfill its objectives. Being a vocational subject that focuses on the welfare of individuals, families and societies, Home economics contributes meaningfully to the solutions of the problems of the society such as unemployment, poverty, malnutrition (Olcitan 2000).

Osuala (1992) also stressed that Home economics as a vocational subject is required to equip the learner with the knowledge of skill and attitude necessary for thorough effective management of the home, it requires skills, wisdom, dedication, care, intelligence, unusual patience and very strong power of observation and imagination. Therefore, a student that has these qualities should study vocational/ technical subjects especially Home economics rather the reverse is the case.

Federal Government wants vocational/technical education to occupy a prominent position in our secondary schools, Nigerian schools pay little or no attention to vocational/technical subjects. Teachers and students seem not to understand what it is all about and consequently, develop some contempt and aversion for the subjects. As such of vocational/technical subjects remain unhealthy. Many of the occupations and trades are regarded as ignoble and unbecoming. An average Nigerian parents does not want his son to earn a living as a full time farmer, a watch-repairer, a plumber, a house painter, for many Nigerians, these jobs are for the poor and underprivileged. Padunny (1994) stressed that typically the higher the occupational status of the students parents, the positive their attitude towards science. This is to say that higher occupational parents would want their child to be doctors, engineering etc. without considering if the child would actually read science subject to achieve that. The influence of parents in the development of students interest in vocational/technical subjects cannot be over emphasized this is because parent seem to have much influence on children's choice of educational career. The socio-economic status of parent of a child determines the type of career one choose to do, some parents have biased and rigid thoughts regarding the occupational choices of a child/children. Parents forgot that every type of work, once it is beneficial to the individual and society, is worthy and noble. (Nwankwo 1996).

The result of this is a quasi calculated attempt to frustrate the good intention of the federal and state government about vocation/technical education. The quality sign of potential success in students vocational pursuits require the identification of the students interest, aptitudes, abilities, values and judgments, if these will be discovered, it requires a guidance counselor who will give the appropriate occupational information to the student with proper exposition to various opportunities available in the world of work.

It is not surprising that students are not interested in vocational/technical subjects. Osuala (1992) opined that, at the heart of our society and economic problem is a national attitude that implies that vocational/technical subjects are designed for somebody else's children and is meant primarily for the children of the poor. This same attitude is shared by students. Thus, it makes the students lack interest in the study of vocational subjects particularly Home economics.

The skill that teachers exhibit in teaching influences the student enrolment in vocational/technical subjects. Onwuka, (1981) postulated that the method of approach is very vital in any teaching/learning situation. The way the teacher presents the subject matter to the learner may make a student like or dislike a subject. Nwogwugwu (1989) pointed out the need for blending theoretical and practical work in teaching of subjects as to stimulate students interest more especially on vocation technical subjects . the greatest single

factor in teaching learning is the teacher. No technique, no method, no device, no gadget can guarantee success, but only an effective qualified teacher can adequately execute these. (Okafor, 1987). Thus the greatest motivating device yet discovered is the highly motivated teacher of students are to be involved actively in teaching and learning process in a way of projects, field trips, directed field activities etc, note learning and subject centered orientation should be changed to a more practical and child centered out-look. The increase in qualities and quantities of outputs should be primarily due to improvement in the quality of the teacher. It is therefore the trust of this study to explore the influential factors that affects the students on the study of vocational subjects in Nigerian secondary schools.

Problem Statement

Vocational/Technical education subjects ought to attract many students because of its laudable importance but reverse has been the case. the reasons for this probably is due to people's perception that it does not require specialized kind of training. The students have the feeling that even if one is at home at the requisite skills needs to learn have to cook, farm, etc can be acquired without formal training.

People are ignorant of the importance of the vocational subjects which could help males and female students receive formation and be able to work solution to problems. Also, it enables the students to acquire skills, abilities essential for independent life met up with personal and family needs more especially in this economic difficulties.

Purpose of the Study

The study was meant to investigate the influential factors that affects the attitude of the students towards the study of vocational subjects in secondary schools. Specially to:

- (1) determine the influence of student's interest towards the study of vocational/technical subjects.
- (2) Determine the influence quality of the vocational/technical teachers and instruction.
- (3) Determine the influence parental and socio-economic status influence on students choice of vocational/technical subjects.
- (4) Determine the influence of gender in the students choice and enrolment in vocational/technical education.
- (5) Determine if the students are effectively counseled on the choice of vocational subjects.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study

- (1) what are the level of students interest in the study of vocational/technical education/subjects.
- (2) What are the influence of teacher qualification on the attitude of vocational/technical subjects.
- (3) What are parents socio-economic status influence on the attitude of students on the study of vocational/technical education/subjects.
- (4) What are the influence of gender/sex on the students choice of vocational/technical education/subjects.
- (5) What are the influence of guidance counselor on the students attitude towards the study of vocational/technical education/subjects.

Methodology

Research Designing

The study made use of descriptive survey research design. The design was suitable for the study since the data were collected through questionnaire from students SSII and SSIII students for their attitude towards the study of vocational/technical education/subjects in secondary schools.

Areas of the study:

The study was carried out in Abia state of Nigeria, comprising five (5) educational zones. The zones are Umuahia, Ohafia, Ugwunabo, Aba south and Aba north. Abia state has schools that study Vocational/Technical education/subjects.

Population of the Study

The population for this study comprised of all the SSIII students in all the Government owned senior secondary schools in Abia State that are offering vocational/technical education subjects.

Sampling and Sampling Techniques of the Study

The sampling technique adopted in this study was the simple random sampling. This was achieved through the application of the table of random numbers.

A sample of five (5) secondary schools were randomly chosen from the educational zones. The level of students chosen were SSIII students. This was because it was perceived that the students have been more exposed to the study of some of the vocational/technical subjects. Thus, a total of 100 students were chosen as the sample size.

Instrument for Data Collection

The instrument used was a structured questionnaire used to collect data for the study. The items were generated based on the information gathered from the purpose of the study. The instrument used a four-point likert-type scale for rating the response options strongly Agreed (SA) Agree(A), Strong Disagree (SD) and Disagree (D) as well as numerical values of 4,3,2 and 1 respectively. For decisions to be made the mean of the scaling point was computed as

$$\frac{4+3+2+1}{4} = 2.5$$

Therefore, response with means 2.5 and above was regarded as agree while mean less than 2.5 would be disagree.

Validation and Reliability of Instrument

The instrument was subjected to face validation by three experts from department of Home economics, federal college of education Umunze. The reliability of the instrument was established using Pearson's' product-moment correlation coefficient formular to find out the internal consistency of the validated instruments.

Data Collection

The instrument was administered to the respondents by the researcher and five research assistance that were employed by the researcher, one from each of the educational zones of Abia state. One hundred copies of the questionnaire were administered and returned.

Data Analysis

The data collected for the study were analyzed using mean and Grand mean to answer the questions.

Results

Table 1: mean ratings of the response of the students level of interest in the study of vocational/technical subjects.

S/N	Items	SA	A	SD	D	EFX	F	X	EX	Remark
(1)	Vocational/ technical subjects	172	105	30	7	3.14	100	3.14	2.85	Agreed
(2)	students interest are sustained thought the lesson period.	136	117	28	13	2.94	294	100	2.94	Agreed
(3)	The number of students that study vocational subjects are very few.	136	102	28	13	2.79	279	100	2.79	Agreed
(4)	Practical in vocational subjects area quite interesting and fascinating.	140	70	24	20	2.54	254	100	2.54	Agreed
Grand mean = Ex = 2.85.										

Table 1 above shows that all the items that could make students develop interest in the study of vocational/technical subjects recorded will above the acceptable level of 2.5. this indicates that almost all the items are high level of interest.

Table 11 means rating of the response of students on Vocational/Technical subject teachers and instructions.

Items	SA	A	SD	D	EFX	F	X	EX	Remark
(1) there are adequate trained vocational subject teacher & instructor.	40	87	86	31	244	100	2.44	2.44	disagree
(2) vocational subject teachers are not committed teachers	72	54	58	31	215	100	2.15		disagree
(3) the teachers teach well with the right method of teaching.	44	30	106	26	206	100	2.6		disagreed
(4) the teacher carryout the practical of vocational/technical subject with much interest and mastery.	92	54	64	24	232	100	2.32		disagreed

From table 2 above, it was shown that all the items contained mean response below the acceptable level of 2.5. which indicates that all the items are factors study of vocational/technical subjects.

Table 111. the mean rating of the response on parental socio-economic status influence on students choice of vocational/technical subjects.

S/W items	SA	A	SD	D	EFX	F	X	EX	Remark	
(1) my parents are educated	212	60	36	9	317	100	3.17		agreed	
(2) your parents would want you to take up any of the vocational/technical subjects as a career	80	93	40	25	238	100	2.38	2.81	disagreed	
(3) My parents react negatively to my study of vocational/technical subjects	108	114	38	14	274	100	2.74		agreed	
(4) parents see vocational/technical subjects as the subjects for children from poor parents.	140	123	26	9	298	100	2.98		Agreed	
							$\bar{E} X = 2.81$.			

Table IV- means rating of the response on the role of gender in enrolment in the study of vocational/technical subjects

S/N items	SA	A	SD	D	EFX	F	X	EX	Remark	
(1) the number of boys that enroll in the study of vocational /technical subjects are greater than girls.	212	60	39	9	317	100	2.73		Agreed	
(2) Vocational subject like Home economics are for girls alone	108	108	42	15	273	100	2.73		Agreed	
(3) Boys want to study core sciences than vocational subjects	76	42	76	27	221	100	2.21		Disagreed	
(4) Boys and girls that study vocational subjects are equal.	36	39	82	35	192	100	1.92		
							EX= 2.50			

The above table indicates that gender one of the factors that influences the study of vocational subjects this was because the items in the table recorded an equal Agreed and disagreed as a factor of influence.

Table V- mean rating of the response on the extent the students were counseled to the study of vocational/technical subjects.

S/N items	SA	A	SD	D	EFX	F	X	EX	Remark
(1) There is a guidance counsellor in the school.	104	54	70	21	49	100	2.49	2.49	disagreed
(2) students are counseled on the study of vocational/technical									

subjects and others.	60	63	72	26	221	100	2.21	.. "
(3) counsellors have counseled students to study vocational/technical education because they are skillful.							9.1	
(4) students were counseled negatively on the choice of vocational subjects because of their lack of interest.	80	60	66	27	233	10	2.33	.. "
	52	54	66	35	207	100	2.07	.. "
							EX = 9.1	

The result of the items in the above table showed that guidance counselors were shorting in most of the schools and this influences the attitude of the students towards the study of vocational subjects.

Discussion

The findings of the study revealed that factors of the items presented for analysis where proved to be factors that could influence the attitude of students towards the study of vocational/technical subjects. The level of the interest of the students in the study of vocational/technical subjects are high because the students interest were aroused through the practical/workshops that were being carried out in the class/laboratory. But despite the fact the level of interest of the students are high, still the number of students that study vocational/technical subjects were still very few. This was as a result of other factors treated below.

The study also agreed that parent socio-economic status could make student develop a negative attitude towards the study of vocational/technical subjects. It was observed that those children the parents are educated would not want to study vocational/technical subjects.

Mkpa (1986) opined that the family into which a child is born exerts a profound influence on the child's career, because his occupational life is conditioned by the child education which depends to a considerable extents on the family. Also the position of the parent in one society sometime influence students interest in the study of vocational/technical subjects. Whereas some illiterate parents do not consider any subject/course were important then the other and the student from such parents could not be influenced to choose any particular course of study.

The findings also indicates that gender was one of the factors that influence the study of vocational/technical subjects. Even when a boy would want to study vocational subjects like agriculture, Arts etc. he would still not want to study Home economics.

The finding of the study also revealed that another factor that influence the study of vocational subject in secondary schools was shortage or absence of guidance counselors in one schools. This was because most schools do not have guidance and counselors as a result most of the students that are skillful and have the abilities for the vocational/Technical subjects were not counseled to study subjects that they would do better in. if study of vocational/Technical subjects, there would be a change in the students attitude towards that.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, it was observed that the factors that influence the attitude of subjects towards the study of vocational subjects are interest, shortage of teachers and instructions, parental socio-economic status, gender and shortage of guidance and counselors in secondary schools. Since vocational/Technical education is the development of skills, knowledge, abilities and behaviour necessary for entry into or advancement in a specific occupation, students should be properly integrated into it to enable the students acquire the basic knowledge of vocational/Technical subjects. The issue now is in the direction of self

reliance and national development which, incidentally are twins in womb of vocational/technical education, we will only mature the mother as to receive the babies.

Recommendation

It is recommended that, teachers, students, parents, school administrators and indeed the entire public should have of attitude in favour of vocational/Technical education. It is not for the poor or down trodden, it is for people whose talent and abilities are in the area of manipulative skills leading to technology transformation of Nigerian society.

Parents and relatives should stop discouraging students work towards vocational/Technical education as a careers. Consequently, there should be provision of more funds required for the procurement and installation of machines, and equipment, supply of furniture and fittings, construction of workshop and laboratories and provision of special incentives for vocational teachers in our secondary schools.

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