

# ATTITUDE OF STUDENTS AND TEACHERS TOWARDS VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN OTA, OGUN STATE, NIGERIA

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## Abstract

Vocational education is a vital tool for economic development. The Federal Government, in 2011, launched the Senior Secondary Education Curriculum (SSEC) which requires that all senior secondary school students be trained in one vocational subject. This study examines the attitudes of students and teachers towards vocational education in secondary schools in Ado-Odo Local Government, Ogun State, Nigeria. It aims to highlight the factors that affect and influence the attitudes of students and teachers towards vocational training as well as identify ways through which these attitudes can be improved. The study employs the use of questionnaires distributed to 200 students and 60 teachers in four secondary schools in Adodo-Ota LGA. The results show that students and teachers recognize the importance of vocational education. The study recommends that students be provided with modern day equipment to encourage students' engagement in vocational subjects. The curriculum for the teaching of vocational subjects should be comprehensive, standardized and enforced in all secondary schools to ensure that students acquire all the skills they need to practice the vocation(s). These will improve vocational education and the attainment of its goals in secondary schools.

Keywords: Vocational Education, Attitude, Ogun, Nigeria.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The National Policy on Education in Nigeria [1] states that the goals of education are building; a united, strong and self-reliant nation, a great and dynamic economy, a just and egalitarian society, a land full of bright and full opportunities for all citizens and a free and democratic society [1]. At least three of these goals may not be achievable without a solid and sustainable vocational education training system.

[2] defines vocational learning as education, training and/or learning intended to equip persons for a specific vocation in industry, commerce, IT and/or that which specifically seeks to develop knowledge and skills in learners to operate successfully in the world of work. [3] states that the acquisition of the appropriate practical skills that vocational education offers is a means by which the productive power of a nation can be increased, which will result in economic growth of the nation. UNESCO-UNEVOC explains that the development of practical skills results in the acquiring of socially and economically rewarding jobs and can help the development of small scale businesses, allow the return of displaced workers as well as aid the easy transition from school to the world of work for school leavers, dropouts and graduates. It further states that the development of job-related competencies and skills among the poor, youth and the vulnerable is vital to reducing poverty. [3], reiterates this by stating that the empowerment of youths with these appropriate practical skills is essential to curb the increasing rate of social vices and ills and the negative repercussions of joblessness.

There is an increasing awareness of the importance of the acquisition of vocational skills in personal and national development. Although vocational education has been incorporated into the secondary school curriculum of Nigeria, successful implementation is essential for the achievement of the aims and goals of vocational education as well reap the benefits in personal and national growth and development. The attitudes of the students and teachers towards vocational educational is a vital factor in the successful implementation and attainment of the goals and objectives.

This study is therefore aims to identify the factors that influence the attitudes of students and teachers of vocational education as well as identify and recommend ways through which these attitudes can be improved. The results will therefore aid Vocational Education Training policy makers, curriculum developers and trainers in recognizing the factors that affect the attitudes of students as well as ways in which vocational training can be improved in order to achieve the goals and objectives desired.

## 1.1 Literature Review

Vocational education has been defined, by the National Policy on Education, as an all-encompassing term which refers to “those aspects of the education process that involve, in addition to general education, the study of technologies and related sciences and the acquisition of practical skills, attitude, understanding and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of the economic and social life” [4] [5]. Vocational education provides theory and practical skills needed in the present day technological society for paid and unpaid unemployment in the society [6].

[4] posits that vocational and technical education is education that which:

- 1 Is necessary for effective employment.
- 2 Is based on a solid foundation of general education.
- 3 Gets people into jobs requiring specialized training
- 4 Develops occupational competence and teaches skills that enable an individual earn a living and finally;
- 5 Makes an individual contribute maximally to national development.

### 1.1.1 Goals/Objectives of Vocational and Technical Education in Nigeria

The goals of Vocational and Technical Education as established in the National Policy on Education (NPE) [4] [5] [6] are:

- 1 To provide trained manpower in the applied sciences, technology and business particularly at craft, advanced craft and technical levels.
- 2 Provide the technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, commercial and economic development.
- 3 Give training and impart necessary skills to individuals who shall be self-reliant economically.

However, there are certain problems that could affect the achievement of these goals. [6] states that the achievement of these goals depends on the quality of vocational programmes. [4] identified the problems preventing the effective actualization of objectives of vocational education in Nigeria; The first problem identified is ‘strong bias towards vocational subjects’ i.e. the attitudes of students and teachers, which as earlier stated, is an important factor that influences the success of vocational educational and training programmes.

### 1.1.2 Attitude

Attitude, as defined by [7] is the accumulation of information about an object, person, situation or experience which forms an individual’s opinion about or predisposition towards that thing. [8] defines attitude as an evaluative judgement, either favourable or unfavourable, that an individual possesses and directs towards some attitude object, which may be abstract or concrete.

[9] defines attitudes as how one thinks and feels about an act towards objectives and ideas. It also defines attitude as positive or negative feelings that an individual has about objects, persons or concepts. [9] posits that positive or favourable attitude towards vocational education positively impacts on the learning and performance of students of vocational education. This is due to the fact that individuals are typically biased towards those attitude objects which they evaluate positively and against those evaluated negatively.

[10] identified the negative attitude of many Nigerians towards vocational training as a major obstacle to the successful implementation of vocational training policies and curriculum. [11] also identified poor public impression and apathy to vocational education as a challenge facing vocational education in achieving sustainable development in Nigeria.

### 1.1.3 Factors that influence attitudes of students and teachers

There are numerous factors that influence attitude. [12] identified eight factors: maturation, physical factors, home influences, social environment, government, media, the teachers and the curriculum. These factors greatly influence whether students have positive or negative attitude towards vocational education and training.

[13] in a study of SSIII students in all publicly owned senior secondary schools in Abia state, Nigeria, observed that factors such as interest, shortage of teachers and instructors, socio-economic status, gender and shortage of guidance counsellors influence the attitude of students towards vocational education.

[9] states that the availability of learning resources supports skills acquisition, these resources include textbooks and in the case of practical vocational training, modern equipment which enables hands-on training of the students. [9] states that the lack and inadequacy of instructional materials hampers the effectiveness of non-formal training. The provision of equipment for practice of the vocational skills being taught is therefore very essential as it enhances the teaching of the skills by the trainers as well as the learners' acquisition.

[9] also posits that professional training is essential for teachers' efficiency. The absence of it will negatively affect his ability to effectively communicate the principles and concept of the subject to the students. It is therefore apparent that proper training is essential for vocational teachers to ensure that lesson concepts are properly communicated to the students.

Parents have a major influence on the subsequent behaviour and choices of their children [7]. Parents' involvement in the learning process provides an enabling environment which develops students' intellectual abilities. [9] asserts that parental encouragement helps a student's performance as it enables the development of positive attitudes towards education as well as their perception of education, as an enabling home environment encourages the development of positive attitudes in students towards education and this is evident as the students have better academic performance, reduced dropout rates, improved students' self-esteem and their involvement in school activities.

#### *1.1.4 Development of the Nigerian Education Curriculum, The Senior Secondary Education Curriculum*

The need for the educational system to be relevant to societal aspirations always influences curriculum change or innovations [10]. Nigeria launched the present education curriculum in 2011 as a re-aligned curriculum designed to meet the target of the reforms in the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategies (NEEDS) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) [14]. These targets are; value-orientation, poverty eradication, job creation, wealth generation and the empowerment of people through education [14].

The new Senior Secondary Education Curriculum (SSEC), which builds on the Basic Education Curriculum (BEC), aims at preparing every student for higher education, equipping them with functional trade/entrepreneurship skills and strengthening their ethical, moral and civic values [1]. 34 Trade and Entrepreneurial subjects were designed to be incorporated into the restructured formal education curriculum in order to enable skill development [3] [1] [14] [5]. These subjects are:

- 4 Auto body repairs and spray painting
- 5 Auto Electrical work
- 6 Auto Mechanical works
- 7 Auto parts merchandising
- 8 Air-conditioning Refrigerator
- 9 Welding and Fabrication, engineering craft practice
- 10 Electrical Installation and Maintenance work
- 11 Radio, TV and Electrical work
- 12 Block laying, Bricklaying and Concrete work.
- 13 Painting and decorating
- 14 Plumbing and Pipe Fitting
- 15 Machine woodworking
- 16 Carpentry and Joinery
- 17 Furniture Making
- 18 Upholstery
- 19 Catering craft practice

- 20 Garment Making
- 21 Textile Trade
- 22 Dyeing and Bleaching
- 23 Printing Craft Practice
- 24 Cosmetology
- 25 Leather Goods Manufacturing and Repair
- 26 Keyboarding
- 27 Data Processing
- 28 Store Keeping
- 29 Book Keeping
- 30 GSM Maintenance
- 31 Photography
- 32 Tourism
- 33 Mining
- 34 Animal Husbandry
- 35 Fisheries
- 36 Marketing
- 37 Salesmanship

Students are required to offer and register one trade/entrepreneurial subject in which they will be assessed in a public examination (NECO or WAEC) [1]. Schools are required to select vocational subjects based on the following considerations:

- Type of school
- Vision of the school
- Teaching staff
- School infrastructures
- Community interest and support
- Availability of local resources
- Socio-cultural inclination among others [1].

Previous studies [15] [16] support the vocalisation of the senior secondary education curriculum. [15] posited that education can only become the foundation stone of a sustainable society if it succeeds in imparting necessary life skills, as vocalisation ensures that participants are equipped with skills, knowledge and aptitudes that enable them engage in productive work, adapt to rapidly changing labour markets and economies, and contribute in their respective societies as responsible citizens. [16] also stated that the introduction of vocational subjects into the curriculum was necessitated due to the fact that formal education did not meet the needs of a vastly increased youth population who require manual and technical skills for gainful employment. However [16] noted that vocalisation alone was not sufficient without proper and successful implementation of technical and vocational programmes in schools. Implementation is also not possible without a proper understanding of the attitudes of students and teachers towards vocational education.

## **2 METHODOLOGY**

The study was carried out in four secondary schools in Adodo-Ota local government area of Ogun state, Nigeria. Data was collected through the use of questionnaires and analysed using statistical analytical tools due to the quantitative nature of the data.

A total of 260 questionnaires (200 questionnaires for students, 60 for teachers) were distributed although only 181 students and 43 teachers responded.

The students were selected randomly from the senior secondary classes, as the SSEC makes vocational subjects mandatory for only senior secondary school students. The four secondary schools were selected using the purposive random selection method.

### 3 RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The study set out to assess the attitudes of teachers and students towards vocational subjects and the factors affecting these attitudes. Table 1 below shows the distribution of teachers by gender, Table 2 shows the number of teachers in the sample who do/do not teach vocational subjects and Table 3 shows the qualifications of teachers in the sample.

*Table 1. Distribution of teachers by gender (N = 41).*

Gender	Number of Teachers	Percentage
Male	16	37.2
Female	27	62.8
Total	43	100

*Table 2. Do you teach vocational subjects?*

	Number of Teachers	Percentage
Yes	14	32.6
No	29	67.4
Total	43	100

*Table 3. Qualification of teachers.*

Qualification	Number of Teachers	Percentage
NCE	1	2.3
University Degree	38	88.4
PGDE	4	9.3
Total	43	100

The results show that none of the teachers have a vocational certificate, although all of the vocational teachers have at least 4 years of experience, this could negatively impact the ability of the vocational teachers to effectively communicate and train the students.

#### 3.1 Attitudes and Perceptions of Teachers towards Vocational Subjects

42.1% of teachers agree that the curriculum is not comprehensive, 23.7% are uncertain and only 34.2% disagree with this statement. It is therefore apparent that the curriculum needs to be better developed in order to meet the standards necessary for proper training of students.

27.8% teachers state that students do not have access to modern equipment, while 51.2% state that they do. Access to modern equipment and instructional materials is a major factor that affects the attitude of students as reviewed literature shows. 10% of teachers reported that students do not learn enough skills from the vocational subjects while 80% reported that the students learn enough skills.

All teachers agree that vocational subject learning can help in the economic development of both the individual and the country and students can continue a career in vocational skill learning. However, 3.9% disagree that all students should offer vocational subjects and 32.6% agree that vocational subjects should be offered by those who wish to offer them. 21.4% also state that the school management does not encourage vocational subjects learning.

However, 42.9% report that students do not show interest in vocational subjects although 48.8% of teachers agree that students perform better at vocational subjects than other subjects. 41.9% of teachers however report that vocational subjects take more time than other subjects.

It is however evident from the results that teachers recognize the importance of vocational training for secondary school leavers as well as its benefits to national and personal development.

The distribution of students by gender is shown in Table 4 while the distribution of students according to number of years that have offered vocational subjects is shown in Table 5.

**Table 4.** *Distribution of students by gender (N = 181).*

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Number of Students</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Male	72	39.8
Female	109	60.2
Total	181	100

**Table 5.** *How long have you been offering vocational subjects in school?*

<b>Duration</b>	<b>Number of students</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Less than a year	18	9.9
1 year	7	3.9
1 – 2 years	43	23.8
More than 2 years	113	62.4
Total	181	100

Table 6 shows the distribution of students according to the length of time it took to master a skill or craft. Most of the students reported needing three classes or less to effectively master a skill.

**Table 6.** *How long did it take you to effectively master a skill a craft/skill in your vocational class.*

	<b>Number of students</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Not so long	82	45.3
1 class	10	5.5
1 – 3 classes	70	38.7
More than 3 classes	19	10.5
Total	181	100

### **3.2 Attitudes of students towards Vocational Education**

The students show a positive attitude towards vocational subjects. 87.8% reported that they enjoyed vocational skill-learning and 81.1% agreed that the tasks given were easy. 89. % also reported that had self-confidence in carrying out the vocational skill learning tasks. However, 52.8% reported that vocational subjects were difficult for them to understand, only 9.9% reported that they hated vocational subjects.

85.9% of students reported being able to successfully recreate at least 1 of the vocational training skills/crafts they were taught in the vocational classes. Although 9.4% reported that they did not intend to continue making crafts after secondary school, 14.4% reported that they would continue making crafts before their university degree, another 14.4% during their university degree, 22.1% after their university degree and 38.7% reported that they would continue practicing crafts learned forever. This shows a general willingness to practice and use the skills learned in vocational training.

Results show that students understand the importance of vocational training as 94.4% agreed that these skills are useful in life while 75.7% reported that they can continue a career in vocational skill learning. 90.1% of students reported a desire to improve their performance in vocational subjects.

### 3.3 Factors affecting attitude of students towards Vocational Education

Although trade subjects are compulsory for all students surveyed in this study, motivation (as shown in Table 7), most likely in the choice of the vocational subject to study, was found to be a factor that influenced the attitude of students.

*Table 7. Who motivated you to take vocational subjects.*

	Number of Students	Percentage
A friend	6	3.3
A teacher	78	43.1
A relative	5	2.8
Someone/Something I watched	16	8.8
Nobody	76	42.0
Total	181	100

As shown, 43.1% of the respondents reported being motivated by their teachers. More students who were motivated by teachers reported that it was easier to approach their instructors whenever they had challenges.

## 4 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results show that students and teachers recognize the importance of vocational education, understand its benefits, and have generally positive attitudes towards vocational subjects. Based on the findings, the motivation and involvement of staff in the vocational training of students positively impacts on the attitude of students towards vocational subjects. It can be deduced that it also increased the likelihood of students to participate in these classes and therefore learn more as active participation is important in practical classes, which vocational subjects usually consist of.

The results show that the school management did not seem to encourage vocational education and this may influence funding and provision of instructional materials and equipment for vocation subjects. It was also discovered that teachers did not have any added vocational training qualification and this may influence the quality of the training that the students receive and this may affect the students' attitude.

There is also a need for improvement in the curriculum to ensure that it is comprehensive and to increase the likelihood of students continuing the practice of the skills/crafts long after leaving secondary school. It is also recommended that the government should ensure that adequate instructional materials, modern equipment and well-trained teachers are present in a school before approval is given for vocational training in any trade in the school.

The benefits that Nigeria could gain as a result of the successful acquisition of skills, the end result of vocalisation of secondary education, are numerous [3]. It is therefore essential that stakeholders in vocational education should seek to improve public opinion through education and career guidance programs. This must focus on improving public impression of vocational education.

Schools and educators should seek partnerships with community centres, associations and NGOs with vocational training initiatives as well as private companies and industries in order to gain access to a richer source of resource materials and practical training, as well as funding, and so ensure that students gain the necessary skills needed for personal and national development.

### 4.1 Recommendations for Future Research

Future research should examine the ways in which parents and other family members influence the students' choices and how these are related to gender and cultural background.

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