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Assessment of Workplace Performance of Graduates of Vocational and Technology Education in Bayelsa State

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ABSTRACT
The study assessed the workplace performance of graduates of Vocational and Technology Education in Bayelsa State. The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. The population of the study was 760 which comprised all the graduates in Vocational and Technology Education in Bayelsa State. Simple random sampling technique was used to sample 262 respondents used for the study. Questionnaire with 12 items was used to collect data. Data collected were analyzed with Arithmetic Mean. The findings revealed that graduates in Vocational and Technology Education performed poorly in their workplace in Bayelsa State. It was recommended among others, that Tertiary Institutions should ensure that practical lessons are both effective and efficient to achieve the desired result of imparting the practical skills necessary for workplace performance.
Keywords: Assessment, workplace, graduates, Vocational and Technology Education.

INTRODUCTION

In line with this period of globalization, higher education has been concerned with the development of person in terms of knowledge, attributes, and skills which any educated person should expect to have by the time of graduation. It further aims to inspire and enable individuals to develop their capabilities to the highest potential levels throughout life so that they grow intellectually, contribute effectively to society, achieve personal fulfillment and are well- equipped for work (Maripaz & Ombra, 2016). This demands that learners be adequately informed, prepared and equipped for the task ahead. In order to meet the manpower needs of the workplace, the graduates have to possess the right attitude and abilities to do the work in line with the demands of the occupation they find themselves. Onah and Okolo (2010), believed that the more informed young people are about the needed work, the more they are able to maintain themselves in an occupation which best meets their individual aptitude and interest.

In Africa in general and Nigeria in particular, governments are making efforts to promote Vocational and Technology Education in higher institutions with the belief that skills acquired through Vocational and Technical Training enhances productivity in work environment. African Union, (2007), also highlighted the current vision of African countries in developing a new strategy to revitalize Vocational and Technology Education that will promote skills acquisition through competency-based training. If this vision should materialize, it will require ability testing for employment in order to promote sustainable livelihoods and responsible citizenship.

Vocational and Technology Education is an educational programme designed to help the learners acquire and develop skills, knowledge and attributes for effective employment or progression in specific occupations. Vocational and Technology Education familiarizes its learners with practical skills related to a specific trade, occupations or Vocation (Kukoyi, 2009). This type of education is given to individuals to enable them develop their creative and manipulative potentials for the benefit of humanity. According to Udo, (2004), Vocational and Technology Education is designed to develop skills, abilities, understanding, attitudes, work habits and appreciation that confers knowledge needed

to enter and make progress in employment on a useful and productive basis. One of the most important features of Vocational and Technology Education, as recognized by African governments, is its orientation towards the world of work with the curriculum emphasizing the performance of Vocational and Technology Trainees in the work environment.

Accordingly, Abas-Mastura, Imam & Osman, (2013), argued that for higher education institutions to respond to the unpredictable labor market and make parallel adjustments, it should demonstrate a greater commitment to develop the generalized expertise that graduates can transfer to whatever working environment they find themselves in after graduation. In other words, they are expected to have developed not only subject specific skills but also employability skills to make them both specialists and generalists. For Shimare and Sallah, (2005), Vocational and Technology Education is a vital instrument for changing and managing the environment recourses for technological, political, social and economic advancement of a nation. Vocational and Technology Education is offered in Technical colleges, Polytechnics, Monotechnics and Universities in Nigeria.

Vocational and Technical Education offers a wide variety of options in administrative, computer, plumbing, hairstyling, technology, printing, agriculture, automobile, craftsmanship, laboratory, home economics, and cosmetic fields. Specifically, these courses include: typewriting, secretarial studies, computer operation, desktop publishing, laboratory technician, mechanic, electrical technician, plumbing, refrigeration and air conditioning, tailoring, beautician, etc (Anusha, 2012). Hence vocational education is any sort of formal training programme that trains students for work in a particular trade. In most cases, training is somewhat short, usually only one to two years. Unlike most college programmes, which focus on providing a broad and varied education. Vocational schools, sometimes also called technical schools, are usually geared towards a specific job.

Vocational and Technology Education courses obtained in the higher institutions in Nigeria are structured in a manner that there is a separation between Vocational and Technology courses and Education courses. These courses are expected to exposed graduates to perform effectively and efficiently in the workplace (Mohammed & Esther, 2020). The students of Vocational and Technology Education programme are expected to choose the option they want to specialize in the course of their four years of study. The students are also mandated to go for industrial training to expose them to real life situations so as to become practically oriented before graduation. Resources are also available for students to practice and acquire skills necessary to their study and work upon graduation. It is believed that when students have completed their four years study in Vocational and Technology Education programme, they will perform efficiently in their workplace upon graduation (Mohammed & Esther, 2020). Furthermore, there are resources that are made available in the learning environment to make Vocational and Technology Education programme effective in preparing students for work. As stated by Lizzio, Wilson & Simons, (2002), the achievement of a students is most associated with a lot of components of their learning environment. These components include; qualified teachers, well equipped classrooms, workshops and laboratories with up to date materials, adequate tools, human and materials resources etc. Fajonyomi, (2007), remarked that the success of any educational enterprise depends largely on the availability of professional teachers. This is possible because the trained teachers have been taught the technical know-how for effective learning to take place in the learners. Similarly, Adeyemi, (2010), found that teachers' experience and educational qualifications were the prime predictors of students' academic achievement.

No learning experience in Vocational and Technology education will be complete without practical lessons. This is affirmed by Burak, (2009), that besides offering knowledge, practical lessons also contribute to improving student skills, including, scientific thinking, observation, creative thinking, interpretation of events, data collection and analysis, and problem solving. Similarly, Okpor and Hassan (2012), opined that if Vocational and Technology Education is to be meaningful and successful in Nigeria, then relationships are needed between public and private sectors to partner effectively with Vocational Technical Education and skill acquisition programmes. Students Industrial Work Experience (SIWES) is a skill development programme designed to prepare students of Nigerian tertiary institutions for transition from the college environment to work, (Akerejola 2008). The programme is meant to give students early experience into the world of work.

In achieving the goals of workplace performance of Vocational and technology graduates, Roeske, (2003) explained, the Nigerian Industrial Skills Development Center was established in 2002. This center, working in close collaboration with the Association of Nigerian Industries and the Nigerian

Employers Association, was tasked to harness the financial and material resources required for achieving and promoting excellence in skills training. A number of other institutions like Integrated Community Center for Employable Skills, the Opportunities Industrialization Center and the Department of Social Welfare's Vocational Centers are parts of government effort to produce skillful Vocational and Technical personnel. Other innovative programmes like the Skills Training and Employment Placement (STEP) and Vocational Skills Project were also kept in place to bring out the talented and skillful Vocational and Technical personnel for the job market (Roeske, 2003). The Nigeria Regional Appropriate Technology Industrial Service and the Intermediate Technology Transfers Units are also providing Vocational and Technology Education graduates with additional and enriched practical skills to enable them set up their own enterprises. However, with the poor performances of graduates of Vocational and Technology Education programmes in the workplace, one can argue that all these interventions have not yielded the expected result.

The success of any school depends on the employability and performance of its graduates in the workplace. Workplace performance of graduates to a large extent determines the functionality and viability of a school programme. Students get a degree with the expectation of getting a job which would give them advancement and earning potential (Kolhede, 1994). On the part of the employers, they expect rigid training in the school that would prepare graduates for the world of work (Hesketh, 2000). Similarly, it is the same desire for any school for that matter. However, the problem of unemployed graduates, due to not possessing the required skills, poses a huge challenge not only to the graduates but also to school authorities.

Furthermore, there is also a concern regarding the readiness and qualification of new graduates to plunge themselves into the real world of work. For example, in a review of several publications from Australia and the United Kingdom, Cumming (2010), concluded that many of the graduates lack appropriate employability skills. Osmani, Weerakkody, Hindi, Al-Esmail, Eldabi, Kapoor, and Irani, (2015), found similar findings in their review of literature related to employability. The reports of lack of adequate practical preparation for those who just got their degree is a growing concern (Andrea, 2018 and Tymon, 2013). These reports included complaints by employers about the lack of basic skills and needed competencies expected particularly in the entry-level position (Andrea, 2018 and Tymon, 2013). In Nigeria, the Nigerian Institute of Personnel Management, NIPM, (cited in Anho, 2011), noted that the quality of graduates from Nigerian Universities is declining rapidly. Anho, (2011), also cited the report of National Employers Consultative Association (NECA, 2011), which decried the quality of Nigerian University graduates who they argue do not meet the demands of industry. In short, the industry expects so much from academia to produce qualified graduates, but the gap remains evident. Hence, the study is aimed at assessing the workplace performance of graduates of Vocational and Technology Education in Bayelsa State.

Statement of the Problem

In spite of several efforts by government through their different policies to make the Nigerian educational system more functional, there are still growing concerns among education stakeholders and industrialists that graduates from educational institutions might lack adequate practical background and relevant job related skills for performance in industries Ideh, (2013), Idris & Rajuddin, (2012). Employers of labour have continued to express their worry over the quality of the current graduate of technical institutions in Nigeria partly due to their lack of relevant job skills for performance in industries Oviawe, Uwameiye & Uddin, (2017). According to Shittu, Yakubu and Wala (2017), this situation calls for the enhancement of vocational and technology skills training programmes that institutions provide across the country.

Institutions lack the tools and equipment necessary for practical training. Ovaiwe and Uwameiye (2010), reported that technical institutions in Nigeria lack the tools and equipment necessary for practical education. The equipment workshops and laboratories are often obsolete, bearing little or no resemblance to the current technologies used by the contemporary age workplace. In most cases, insufficient training resources lead to students overcrowding during classes, with most of them only observing the teacher demonstrate and not having opportunity to get hand on practice. The effect of these problems when not addressed is that the country will in the near future be grappling with an abundance of educated graduates but an unskilled workforce. When put in a question form; why do graduates of Vocational and Technology Education programme perform badly in their various occupations, what is the cause of this underperformance? The problem statement of this study

therefore, is to assess the workplace performance of graduates of Vocational and Technology Education in Bayelsa State.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to assess the workplace performance of graduates of Vocational and Technology Education in Bayelsa State. Specifically, the study sought to determine;

3. the extent to which Student Industrial Work Experience Scheme affect workplace performance of graduates of Vocational and Technology Education in Bayelsa State.
4. the extent to which lecturers' qualifications affect workplace performance of graduates of Vocational and Technology Education in Bayelsa State.
5. the extent to which practical lessons affect workplace performance of graduates of Vocational and Technology Education in Bayelsa State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guide the study;

3. To what extent does Student Industrial Work Experience Scheme affect workplace performance of graduates of Vocational and Technology Education in Bayelsa State?
4. To what extent does lecturers' qualification affect workplace performance of graduates of Vocational and Technology Education in Bayelsa State?
5. To what extent does practical lessons affect workplace performance of graduates of Vocational and Technology Education in Bayelsa State?

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The study was carried out in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. The population of the study was 760, which comprises of all the graduates of Vocational and Technology Education in Bayelsa State. The simple random sampling technique was used to generate a sample size of 262 graduates of Vocational and Technology Education in Bayelsa State which was used for the study.

The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire developed by the researcher in line with the purpose and research questions. The questionnaire comprises of 12 items structured on a four rating scale: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD) respectively. The respondents were required to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with the items represented.

The questionnaire was validated by three lecturers in Measurement and Evaluation Department of Educational Foundation and two lecturers in the Department of Vocational and Technology Education, Niger Delta University, Wilberforce Island, Bayelsa state. The reliability of the instrument was determined using Pearson Product-Moment Correlation co-efficient to measure the internal consistency of the instrument and indicate the degree of consistency. Consequently, the reliability of the instrument was obtained by test-retest method. The instrument was administered to respondents within the study population but outside the study area. After an interval of two weeks, the instrument was re-administered to the same respondents, the two sets of scores were then compared using Pearson correlation co-efficient and the scores obtained was 0.83, making the instrument reliable.

The researcher administered the questionnaire personally to the 262 graduates of the Department Of Vocational and Technology Education in Bayelsa State. 262 copies of the questionnaire was collected after the completion, representing 100% rate of return and were used for the data analysis.

The method of data analysis adopted is the mean (x) statistical tool. Thūs:

Mean $(x)^{-} = \frac{\sum fx}{N}$, Where $\sum$ = Total sum,
F = Frequency of occurrence
X = Nominal values of the rating scale
N = Rating scale № (4)

Nominal value will be assigned to the rating scale as follows:

Strongly Agree (SA) = 4, Agreed (A) = 3, Disagreed (D) = 2, Strongly Disagreed (SD) = 1,

The summation of the rating =4+3+2+1=10

The mean (x) ōf this scope $= \frac{\sum fx}{N} \quad x = \frac{10}{4} = 2.50$

For this study, a mean response greater than or equal to 2.50 is taken as agreed. While any mean rating below 2.50 is taken as disagreed.

RESULTS

Question One: *To what extent does Student Industrial Work Experience Scheme affect workplace performance of graduates of Vocational and Technology Education in Bayelsa State?*

Table 1: Mean scores on the effect of Student Industrial Work Experience Scheme on workplace performance of graduates of Vocational and Technology Education in Bayelsa State.

S/N	Items	N = 262	$\bar{X}$	Remark
1	There is a functional SIWES unit in the University.		2.73	Agree
2	Through the scheme, graduates gained early introduction to real work experience.		2.65	Agree
3	Graduates were thought problem-solving skills to face work challenges through the scheme.		2.22	Disagree
4	Graduates know all the safety requirements in the workplace.		2.15	Disagree
	Grand mean		2.44	Disagree

Table 1 shows that the mean scores of items 1, & 2, are all above 2.50. However items 3 & 4 are below the cut of mean. The table has an grand mean of 2.44 which is below the cut off mean. Hence, it can be stated that, to a low extent, Student Industrial Work Experience Scheme affects graduates of Vocational and Technology Education workplace performance in Bayelsa State.

Question Two: *To what extent does lecturers' qualification affect workplace performance of graduates of Vocational and Technology Education in Bayelsa State?*

Table 2: Mean scores on the effect of lecturers' qualifications on workplace performance of graduates of Vocational and Technology Education in Bayelsa State.

S/N	Items	N = 262	$\underline{X}$	Remark
5	Graduates taught by lecturers with HND qualification performed well in their workplace		1.99	Disagree
6	Graduates taught by lecturers with B.Sc qualification performed well in their workplace		2.33	Disagree
7	Graduates taught by lecturers with M.Sc qualification performed well in their workplace		2.53	Agree
8	Graduates taught by lecturers with Ph.D qualification performed well in their workplace.		2.57	Agree
	Grand mean		2.36	Disagree

Table 2 shows that the mean scores of items 5 & 6 are below 2.50, however, the mean score of items 7 & 8 are above the cut off mean. The grand mean of 2.36 is below 2.50, hence, it can be said that lecturers, qualifications has a low effect on Vocational and Technology Education graduates workplace performance in Bayelsa State.

Question Three: *To what extent does practical lesson affect workplace performance of graduates of Vocational and Technology Education in Bayelsa State?*

Table 3: Mean score on the effect of practical lesson on workplace performance of graduates of Vocational and Technology Education in Bayelsa State.

S/N	Items	N = 262	$\bar{X}$	Remark
9	Graduates are able to finish tasks on time when on the job.		2.57	Agree
10	Graduates are able to adapt to new situations in the workplace.		1.54	Disagree
11	Graduates become self-employed after the programme.		1.66	Disagree
12	Graduates are able to improvise in the workplace.		2.56	Agree
	Grand mean		2.10	Disagree

Table 3 above shows that questionnaire items 9 & 12 had mean scores above 2.50, while items 10 & 11 had their mean scores below the cut off mean. The grand mean of 2.10 is below the cut off mean of 2.50. Therefore, it can be interpreted that practical lesson has a low effect on the workplace performance of graduates of Vocational and Technology Education in Bayelsa State.

DISCUSSION

The result of table 1 shows that to a very low extent, Student Industrial Work Experience Scheme affects graduates of Vocational and Technology Education workplace performance in Bayelsa State. This was revealed by a grand mean of 2.44 which is below the cut off mean of 2.50. The findings are against that of Akerejola, (2008), who stated that Students Industrial Work Experience (SIWES) is a skill development programme designed to prepare students of Nigerian tertiary institutions for transition from the college environment to work and that the programme is meant to give students early experience into the world of work.

The findings of the data analysis of table 2 show that lecturers' qualifications to a low extent, affects Vocational and Technology Education graduates workplace performance in Bayelsa state. This is revealed by the grand mean of 2.36 which is below the cut off mean of 2.50. The findings are against that of Fajonyomi, (2007), in his study, He remarked that the success of any educational enterprise depends largely on the availability of professional teachers. This is possible because the trained teachers have been taught the technical know-how for effective learning to take place in the learners.

Research question 3 sought to know the extent to which practical teaching affect Vocational and Technology Education graduates workplace performance. The result in table 3 has a grand mean of 2.10 which is below the cut off mean of 2.50. This indicates practical lessons have a low effect on graduates' workplace performance in Bayelsa state. This findings are in line with the findings of Ideh, (2013), Idris & Rajuddin, (2012), they stated that graduates from our educational institutions lack adequate practical background and relevant job related skills for performance in industries.

CONCLUSION

On the basis of the findings, this study concludes that Vocational and Technology Education graduates performed poorly in the workplace. This is as a result of some deficiencies in the learning environment of these graduates. The Department of Vocational and Technology Education in the Institutions are lacking in good industrial work experience for students, qualified Lectures, practical work and up-to-date workshops and equipment. The overall effect of this is a stream of unskilled graduates unfit for industrial work in Bayelsa State. In conclusion, Vocational and Technology Education in Bayelsa State is pivot for development. It is a means of providing for the workforce needed in both industries and institutions. It is therefore necessary to improve the programme to generate the needed workforce for the development of the State specifically and the Nation in general.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings,, the following recommendations were made:

1. Federal and state governments should make frantic efforts to provide functional Vocational and Technology workshops in the various Tertiary institutions in Bayelsa state.
2. Governments should release funds for the procurement and distribution of up-to-date instructional materials, equipment and tools for the programme.
3. Lecturers of the programme should be encouraged to proceed on in-service training to update on emergent issues and development in Vocational and Technology courses.
4. Teacher's registration council of Nigeria (TRCN) should ensure that only qualified technical teachers with professional teaching qualifications are employed and allowed to teach in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa state.
5. Tertiary institutions should ensure that practical lessons are both effective and efficient to achieve the desired result of imparting the practical skills necessary for workplace performance.

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