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FACILITIES UTILIZATION AND EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS ACQUISITION AMONG UNDERGRADUATES OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The study examined facility utilization and employability skills acquisition among undergraduates of Vocational Education in Cross River State, Nigeria. To achieve the objectives of the study, two null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. Relevant literature were reviewed on the study. 1,541 year four Vocational Education students from four tertiary institutions in Cross River State constituted the population of the study, from which a sample of 400 respondents were drawn using stratified, proportionate and accidental sampling techniques. The study adopted survey design. Questionnaire research instrument titled "Facility Utilization and Students' Employability Skill Acquisition Questionnaire (FUSESAQ)" was used for data collection. The instrument was face and content validated by three experts and a reliability estimate of 0.88, 0.79 and 0.87 were established using Cronbach Alpha reliability method. The data generated from fieldwork were statistically analyzed using simple linear regression technique. All hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that utilization of infrastructural and instructional facilities have significant joint influence on students' employability skill acquisition in Vocational Education. Based on these findings, it was recommended amongst others that Vocational Education curriculum developers should increase the time allocated to practical activities to ensure effective utilization of the available infrastructural facilities so as to improve employability skill development among students.

Keywords: Facilities utilization, Employability skills, Undergraduates, Vocational Education, Cross River State, Nigeria

Introduction

In line with other countries of the world, Nigeria has accepted the postulation that general skill acquisition is one of the instruments for economic empowerment and development. This is so in view of the fact that a nation's economic development largely depends on her ratio of independent and/or productive citizens to dependent and/or non-productive citizens. Essentially, as the employment rate increases, the economic development rate increases, and the citizens' standard of living together with the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) increases and vice versa. Conversely, a rise in unemployment rate has the potentials of causing serious threat to the existing prevailing peace and stability in a country. Globally, unemployment has significant adverse effect which includes poverty, homelessness, hopelessness, family stress and other social evils such as crime, violence, break up of families, alcoholism and prostitution (Eita & Ashipala, 2010).

Also, Alamana in O'Nwachukwu (2016) opined that unemployment is potentially dangerous as it sends disturbing signal to all segments of the society. The scholar added that at present, Nigeria's unemployment rate has reached 33% with thousands of university graduates having nothing substantial to do to make ends meet. Edet and Atah (2019) on their part articulated that the acute shortage of jobs all over the world with its attendant consequential negative impact places consuming responsibilities on the training institutions and their trainers to lay bare the truth to students that unemployment is present in the society, and that the easy way out is to be armed with job creation mentality right from school.

The development of information and communication technology has shifted the types and nature of available jobs, and brings about changes in the world economy. This changes requires people to adapt quickly to the nascent needs to fit into the world of work. Thus, government of many nations have striven to educate and train their human capitals to address these challenges, (Dania, Bakar & Mohammed, 2014). It is believed that acquisition of relevant skills by youths will increase their chances of being employed as employers expect job seekers to possess some vital physical and intellectual skills which will enable them become efficient and effective on their jobs when they are employed. Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) state that the aim of education should be that of transforming the youths into highly skilled and competent citizens capable of competing globally. It thus, sees Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) which Vocational Education is part and parcel of as one of the agents of this transformation through the development of appropriate knowledge, skills and competencies in the learners.

Vocational Education is a programme of study that teaches her learners necessary skills, knowledge, attitude and competencies needed for employment, advancement on a job and self-reliance. One of the major challenges facing vocational education graduates is the poor employability skill acquisition, and this has left many of these graduates unemployed. Those who are seen as employed are found to be underemployed and paid pittance (Edet, 2020). These graduates barren of employability skills are unable to retain jobs when employed, and are unable to perform effectively and efficiently on the job. Ideally, these graduates are supposed to be productive and contributors to the economic development of the nation, but they tend to be unproductive and incapable of being dependent upon, thereby reducing the level of economic development of the nation, while increasing the unemployment and poverty index.

Employability skills are the basic skills required by job seekers to fit into the labour market in order to gain employment and advance on the job. These skills are needed to equip an employee to carry out his or her duties effectively and efficiently. These skills can be regarded as career foundation blocks which include interpersonal skills, communication skills, problem solving skills, customer relation skills, office practice skills, competency skills. According to Saunders and Zuzel (2010) employers expect students to have well developed employability skills set, so that they can make an immediate contribution in the workplace when recruited. They went further to classify these employability skills into three main categories namely personal qualities, core skills and subject knowledge.

Broadly put, employability skills can be grouped into four major groups namely workplace management skills, employee personal skills, technical skills and interpersonal skills. Unfortunately, most graduates of Vocational Education in Nigeria lack these basic skills for employment. Skill acquisition is essential to any nation that needs to grow and develop as it enhances job opportunities, self-employment, and job creation, reduction in crime and poverty rates as well as increase in the nation's standard of living through increase in economic activities

Such skills also include technical skills viz; production skills, processing skills, accounting skills, managerial skills, marketing skills, office skills, computer skills, technical skills, human relation skills, leadership skills, decision making skill, problem solving skill, critical thinking skill innovative skill and ICT skills. Ramlee in Audu, Kamin and Saud (2013) reported that some graduates of Technical Vocational Education (TVE) usually gain mastery of technical skills but employers normally feel dissatisfied of such employees who possess only technical skills. Globally, poor employability skills acquisition has been a major challenge facing the employment sector.

Many researchers have tried to investigate what could be the cause of these poor employability skills acquisition among graduates. For instance, Munishi (2016) attributed this poor employability skills acquisition to ineffective curriculum, incompetent lecturers, and emphasis on general knowledge rather than skill acquisition, lack of teaching and learning resources, lack of career guidance at higher training levels as well as inadequate industrial attachment for the trainees. Dania, Bakar and Mohamed (2014) opined that factors influencing the acquisition of employability skills among students are self-concept, participation in career development activities and industrial training. Edet, and Udida (2019) attributes it to the present of slags in the curriculum content. Howbeit, it is believed that federal and state government have taken step in addressing other aspects that could bring about the acquisition of employability skills among students such as; the provision of instructional materials and employment of lecturers.. Yet, the problem of poor employability skill acquisition still persists.

Consequently, many researchers have presumed that the poor employability skills acquisition among undergraduates of vocational and technical education could be caused by poor facility utilization for teaching and learning. Infrastructural and instructional facilities utilization may go a long way in trimming the widening gap in employability skills acquisition of vocational and technical education graduates.

Uchendu (2015) carried out a research on assessing University students' skills acquisition for employability in Cross River State. Two hypotheses were formulated to give direction to the investigation. Survey research design was adopted for the study. The sample was 300 students drawn from a population of 2,998 final year students from the two universities using stratified random sampling technique. Data was collected using researcher's constructed instrument titled "University Students' Skill Acquisition for Employability Questionnaire (USSAEQ)". Population t-test and independent t-test statistical techniques were used in analyzing the data. Results obtained showed that the level of university students' acquisition of employability skills is

significantly low. Also, students from conventional universities did not differ significantly from those in specialized university in their acquisition of employability skills. It was, thus, concluded that university students' employability skill acquisition is significantly low.

In another study conducted by Omar, Bakar and Rashid (2012) on employability skill acquisition among Malaysian Community college students. The objective of this study was to assess the acquisition of employability skills among Malaysian community college students. The sample size was 325 students selected randomly. Employability skills were measured using an instrument developed by the Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS). The overall mean on employability skills among community college students was 3.63 (S.D. = 0.47). Thus, the employability skills of community college students was considered to be moderately high. Of all measures of employability skills, students scored the highest on personal qualities (Mean= 3.86, S.D. = 0.59). The lowest score was identified in the area of resource skills (M =3.52: S.D. = 0.55). Three aspects of employability measures were above the mean: basic skills (M = 3.66, S. D. = 0.59), interpersonal skills (M = 3.72, SD. = 0.71) and personal qualities (M = 3.86, SD. = 0.59). The three aspects of employability that were below the mean were thinking skills (M= 3.61, SD. = 0.62), resource skills (M = 3.52, SD. = 0.55) and informational skills (M = 3.55, SD. = 0.59). The study tested whether employability skills among students differed as a function of gender and work experience. The result of an independent t-test showed that there was no significant difference in employability skills by gender or work experience.

With regards to infrastructural facility utilization, Egunjobi (2014) investigated infrastructural facilities and the practice of Vocational Business Education in Nigeria. Survey design was adopted for the study. The sampling technique used for the study was simple random technique. The sample used consisted of fifty (50) lecturers in the school of Vocational and Technical Education. Thirty (30) lecturers in the department of Business Education were selected while five lecturers each from four other departments were randomly selected to make up the fifty (50) respondents sampled for the study. Data was analyzed using simple percentages. Findings revealed that across all the departments, there were insufficient facilities for teaching and learning. Yet, the few available ones were obsolete. Also, many of the lecturers were not ICT compliant as such, unable to satisfactorily manipulate the equipment.

Sabitu (2016) investigated school plant utilization and entrepreneurial skill acquisition among secondary school students in Akoko Zonal Education Area of Ondo State, Nigeria. Five hypotheses were formulated to guide the study and eight secondary schools were selected using simple random sampling technique. Two sets of instruments were designed and use in collecting data, which were; questionnaire on school plant utilization and questionnaire on students' entrepreneurial skill acquisition. Data collected were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) and multiple regressions, and all hypotheses were tested at a significant level of 0.05. The study revealed that there is a low but positive relationship between school plant utilization and entrepreneurial skill acquisition among secondary school

students. It also revealed that utilization of basic amenities, school site, school plant, library, laboratory and utilization of classroom have no joint influence on entrepreneurial skill acquisition among the students. However, each of the variables made significant contributions to the prediction of entrepreneurial skills acquisition. The utilization of library facilities had the highest predictor (60%), while the least was utilization of basic amenities (18%).

Munishi (2016) conducted a research on factors contributing to lack of employability skills acquisition among Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) graduates in Tanzania. The paper utilized Historical Dialectical Materialism approach, which suggested looking into the past and present in order to properly understand why contemporary technical education graduates lack employable skills and how to fix the problem. Drawing on secondary data and an in-depth interviews with key stakeholders, findings showed that lack of competencies on the job among graduates fundamentally emanates from poor training at primary and secondary levels resulting from incompetent teachers and inadequate facilities. The problem was further fuelled by ineffective curriculum, incompetent lecturers, less emphasis on general knowledge and skills as well as lack of career guidance at higher training levels.

Udofia, Ekpo, Nsa and Akpan (2012) investigated the availability and utilization of instructional facilities and students skill acquisition and found out that the availability of technical equipment, tools, machines and other technical facilities as well as effective utilization of these facilities in teaching and training of students equip them with employability skills. Their findings of the study showed that there were relationships between the teacher quality, teaching methods, workshop equipment, instructional materials and the employability skills acquired by students.

In cognizance of instructional facility utilization for employability skills. Nsa, Ikot and Udo (2013) investigated instructional materials utilization using (charts and picture) and students performance in practical agriculture in Ikot Abasi Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The sample consisted of two hundred students of Junior High School. Questionnaire was used to collect data from students and analysis was done using t-test and Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA). Findings revealed a significant difference between the performance of students taught with instructional charts and those taught without. Results also showed a significant difference between students taught with instructional pictures and those without instructional pictures among others. Walter (2004) observed that the use of instructional charts reduce verbalism and improve the students' reading skills and enhance creativity. Their presentation stimulates learning and improves retention of what is learned. This may consequently improve academic performance of the learners.

Stressing the importance of teaching facilities, Chike in Balogun (2003), posited that teaching facilities help to stimulate interest and ensure mobility and continuity in the teaching and learning process. He added that whenever these facilities and/or equipment are utilized, they generate greater students' interest in the learning system and also enhances retention of ideas. Stressing the importance of instructional television, Ekanem (2007) noted that electronic instructional television stimulate the

learner's perception as they can hear and see at the same time. The author further stated that this can facilitate the acquisition of cognitive skills in the learners.

In addition, Anindo, Mugambi and Matula (2016) investigated influence of training equipment and acquisition of employable skills by trainees in public technical and vocational education and training institutions in Nairobi County, Kenya. Three objectives guided the study. The study adopted descriptive survey design targeting three TVET institutions in Nairobi County. The research instruments were questionnaires' for tutors and students and an interview guide for principals. Data was analyzed using both descriptive and quantitative statistics. Data was presented in frequency tables and percentages. The key study findings were that there was inadequate provision of training equipment, institutions lacked modern equipment to match those used by the industries, workshops were not well equipped, it was also established that relevance of training equipment influences acquisition of employable skills, for instruction, tutors mainly used lecture, demonstration, work-based learning and discussion teaching methods due to large classes and inadequate training equipment. The study concluded that availability of training equipment had a major influence on acquisition of employable skills by students.

Purpose of the study

The main purpose of this study was to ascertain the influence of facilities utilization on employability skills acquisition among undergraduates of Vocational Education in Cross River State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study was designed to:

1. Determine the influence of infrastructural facilities utilization on employability skills acquisition among undergraduates of Vocational Education
2. Ascertain the influence of instructional facilities utilization on employability skills acquisition among undergraduates of Vocational Education

Research questions

The following questions were answered while addressing the purpose of this study:

(1) How does infrastructural facilities utilization influence employability skill acquisition among Vocational Education undergraduates?

(2) How does instructional facilities utilization influence employability skill acquisition among Vocational Education undergraduates?

Research hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested in this study:

(1) Infrastructural facilities utilization has no significant influence on employability skill acquisition among Vocational Education undergraduates

(2) There is no significant influence of instructional facilities utilization on employability skill acquisition among Vocational Education undergraduates

Research Method

The study adopts a survey research design. 1, 541 year four vocational education students in public tertiary institutions in Cross River State, Nigeria were the population. 400 year four vocational education students were selected to

participate in the study using stratified proportionate and accidental sampling techniques. A researcher-made questionnaire was the main instrument for data collection. The instrument had response options of Very Highly Utilized (VHU), Highly Utilized (HU), Fairly Utilized (FU), and Rarely Utilized (RU) for infrastructural and instructional facility utilization while that of employability skills acquisition had response options of Very High (VH), High (H), Low (L), and Very Low (VL) respectively. The questionnaire was validated by two (2) Business Educators and one (1) expert in measurement and evaluation. The reliability of the instrument was determined by conducting a pilot test on twenty (20) year four vocational education students in the University of Uyo, Akwa Ibom State. The data collected were subjected to Cronbach Alpha reliability method and it yielded a reliability estimates of .88 and .79 for the independent variables and .87 for the dependent variable which was considered high enough for the instrument's stability in generating data for the main study. The researcher visited the institutions involved to obtain permission and consent from the heads of selected institutions and departments who were willing to take part in the study. The instrument was administered by the researcher to all the identified respondents and all were retrieved successfully at the end of the exercise. Data collected were analyzed using simple linear regression statistical tool.

Table 1. Distribution of the study

S/No	Institutions	Population of Vocational Education undergraduates	Sample of Vocational Education undergraduates (26%)
1	University of Calabar, Calabar	264	69
2	Cross River University of Technology, Calabar	508	132
3	College of Education, Akamkpa	410	107
4	College of Education, Obudu	359	92
	TOTAL	1, 541	400

Source: Heads of Department in the tertiary institutions under study

Presentation Results

Hypothesis one:

Infrastructural facilities utilization has no significant influence on employability skill acquisition among Business Education undergraduates.

The independent variable is infrastructural facilities utilization while the dependent variable is employability skill acquisition. Both the independent and the dependent variables were measured continuously. The independent variable was used to envisage the dependent variable. However, simple linear regression was used as statistical tool to determine the level of variation in the dependent variable as explained by the independent variable. The result is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Simple Linear Regression analysis of the influence of infrastructural facilities utilization on employability skill acquisition

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.884[a]	.870	.866	0.150

Source of variation	SS	Df	MS	F-ratio	p-level
Regression	220.58	2	110.290	24.43*	.035[b]
Residual	1791.96	397	4.514		
Total	2012.54	399			

*p<.05; df 2, 397; critical F = 3.02

The correlation coefficient R is estimated at 0.884 which showed a strong positive correlation between infrastructural facilities utilization and employability skills acquisition among Vocational Education undergraduates. The coefficient of determination (R^2) is 87% which showed that 87% of the employability skills acquired were explained by infrastructural facility utilization while unexplained variation is 13%. The test proved to be significant or valid since the p value (0.035) associated with the computed F-ratio of 24.43 was less than 0.05 level of significance at 2 and 397 degrees of freedom. With these results, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implied that infrastructural facilities utilization significantly influenced the employability skill acquisition of Vocational Education undergraduates.

Hypothesis two

There is no significant influence of instructional facilities utilization on employability skill acquisition among Vocational Education undergraduates.

The independent variable is instructional facilities utilization while the dependent variable is employability skill acquisition. Simple linear regression was the statistical tool used to establish the level of variation in the dependent variable as explained by the independent variable. The result is presented in Table 3

Table 3.Simple Linear Regression analysis of the influence of instructional facilities utilization on employability skill acquisition

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.803[a]	.791	.790	0.175

Source of variation	SS	df	MS	F-ratio	p-level
Regression	231.14	2	115.570	25.34*	.022[b]
Residual	1810.25	397	4.560		
Total	2041.39	399			

*p<.05; df 2, 397; critical F = 3.02

The correlation coefficient R was estimated at 0.803 which showed a strong positive correlation between instructional facilities utilization and employability skills acquisition among Business Education undergraduates. The coefficient of determination (R^2) was 79% which shows that 79% of the employability skills acquired were explained by instructional facility utilization while unexplained variation is 21%. The test proved to be significant or valid since the p value (0.022) associated with the computed F-ratio of 25.34 was less than 0.05 level of significance at 2 and 397 degrees of freedom. With these results, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implied that instructional facilities utilization significantly influenced the employability skill acquisition of Vocational Education undergraduates.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study were discussed under the following sub-headings:

Utilization of infrastructural facilities and students' employability skill acquisition.

The finding of this aspect of the study revealed that infrastructural facilities utilization significantly influenced employability skill acquisition among Vocational Education undergraduates.Institutions that utilize infrastructural facilities adequately enhance the students' chances of acquiring employability skills than institutions that fail to utilize infrastructural facilities.This finding support Sabitu (2016) whose findings revealed that no good teaching and learning can take place in the absence of good buildings which provide shelter for both students and staff. Students who utilize good buildings acquire myriad of employability skills than their counterparts in other institutions without good buildings. The finding is also in line with Udofia, Ekpo, Nsa and Akpan (2012) who opined that imparting of skills to learners requires well equipped workshop and its utilization.

In line with the finding, Egunjobi (2014) investigated Infrastructural Facilities

and the Practice of Vocational Business Education in Nigeria and revealed that, across the department there are not enough facilities; and where available, they are obsolete and many of the lecturers are not ICT compliant. Thus, unable to fully handle the equipment. Similarly, Munishi (2016) conducted a research on factors contributing to lack of employability skills among technical and Vocational Education (TVET) graduates in Tanzania and identified ineffective curriculum, incompetent lecturers, less emphasis on general knowledge and skills as well as lack of career guidance at higher training levels as major contributors.

Utilization of instructional facilities and students' employability skill acquisition

The finding in this regard revealed that there is significant influence of instructional facilities utilization on employability skill acquisition among Vocational Education undergraduates**.** This result is in consonance with the findings of Nsa, Ikot and Udo (2013), Walter (2004) and Balogun (2003) whose findings revealed a significant relationship between utilization of instructional facilities and students' academic performance. The finding of this study is also in support of Ekanem (2007) who noted that electronic instructional television stimulates the learner's perception as they can hear and see at the same time thereby facilitating the acquisition of cognitive skills in the learners.

In addition, Anindo, Mugambi and Matula (2016) investigated influence of training equipment and acquisition of employable skills by trainees in public technical and vocational education and training institutions in Nairobi County, Kenya. The results of their research is in consonance with the finding of this study. They found that there was inadequate provision of training equipment, institutions lacked modern equipment to match those used by the industries, workshops were not well equipped, it was also established that relevance of training equipment influences acquisition of employable skills, for instruction tutors mainly used lecture, demonstration, work-based learning and discussion teaching methods due to large classes and inadequate training equipment. They recommended that broken down equipment including the obsolete ones should be repaired and/or replaced to promote effective skill acquisition and training in all the colleges. Special orientation on the operation and maintenance of the procured workshop facilities should be organized as at when due to update the instructors and workshop technicians about proper handling of the facilities.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn; Students who utilize infrastructural facilities effectively in the study of Vocational Education have high chances of acquiring employability skills. High utilization of instructional facilities promote students' employability skill acquisition in Vocational Education. In summary, proper and effective utilization of infrastructural facilities and instructional facilities significantly influences employability skills acquisition among Vocational Education undergraduates.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study and the conclusion drawn, the following recommendations were made:

(1) Institutions should erect state-of-the-art buildings and furnish same with

sufficient chairs that can accommodate students in order to create a conducive environment for teaching and learning for effective employability skills acquisition.

(2) Vocational Education curriculum developers should increase the time allocated to practical activities to ensure effective utilization of available instructional facilities to improve employability skill development among students.

(3) Non-governmental organization, philanthropies and Alumni should assist government and institutions in the adequate provision and distribution of both instructional and infrastructural facilities to ensure their effective and regular utilization for teaching and learning of Vocational Education courses such that acquisition of employa skills will be enhanced.

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