



INFLUENCE OF VOCATIONAL CONTENTS OF UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION ON SKILLS ACQUISITION OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN FCT, ABUJA, NIGERIA.

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ABSTRACT

The vocational content of the UBE programme is a form of education whose primary aim is to prepare persons for skills acquisition in contributing to societal development. A descriptive survey research design was used. A simple random sampling procedure was adopted. The population of this study is 3,450 consisting of 58 principals and 3,394 teachers from all the senior public secondary in FCT, Abuja. A questionnaire: Influence of Vocational Content of UBE on Skills Acquisition (QIVCUBESA) was used for data collection. Two research questions were answered, and Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Two hypotheses were tested with chi-square at 0.05 level of significance. The findings reveal that teachers who attend workshops use effective instructional materials in skills acquisition and thereby help teachers improve students' entrepreneurial skills. However, several factors can limit the practical application of the vocational content of UBE on skills acquisition, such as poorly trained teachers, poor teacher-student relationships, poor strategies for application of the vocational content of UBE and poor application of the vocational content of UBE and skills acquisition of students. This paper provides recommendations for trained teachers in educational background, the smooth relationship between principals and teachers, including government intervention in ensuring the application of the vocational content of UBE on students' skills acquisition for achieving sustainable development.

Keywords: Skills Acquisition and Sustainable Development, UBE, Vocational Contents, Vocational Contents

INTRODUCTION

Education is an essential key to the development of any society. Education is an instrument a society can use to solve its problems. Nigeria's educational system has witnessed a series of amendments in policies and programmes. Indeed, many of the changes in educational policies of Nigeria are a result of poor planning and implementation, among other things (Chukwu, 2011). The role of education in the transformation and development of a nation cannot be overemphasized. Hence, the required education

at the primary level (basic education) to equip learners with the needed knowledge, attitudes and skills for individual and national development cannot be underestimated. To that end, both Chukwu (2011) and Ugwuoke (2011) supported the fact that unless the citizens of a nation receive at least the required basic education, the dream of achieving precipitous social, political and economic development would become elusive. This reminds us of the significance of the illustrious word-picture painted by the National Policy of Education (2013), which states that education is a tool or an instrument for national development. This implies that education is indeed a requisite for sustainable living.

Basic education is seen as nine years continued education programme. It comprised six years of primary education and three years of junior secondary education. It is the starting point of knowledge acquisition and life-long learning, which potentially equips individuals with the needed skills to cope and survive in the environment (Eddy & Akpan, 2009). According to National Policy on Education (2013), basic education involves Early Child Care Education (ECCE), the primary section and the Basic Junior Secondary Education (BJSS) level. In line with the above statements, Ityav (2014) pointed out that any nation or government that devalues its basic education sector is only affording to risk its future since education at this level is usually viewed as the foundation which must be properly laid.

In implementing the UBE scheme, the role of the primary school headteacher is to ensure that children who are eligible for education are admitted without any form of bias either by tribe or locality. In Junior secondary school, the role of the principal is to ensure that all who pass their common entrance examination and are eligible to be admitted in Junior secondary education are admitted to continue the process of basic education. To this end, the UBE programme in FCT, Abuja, has recorded tremendous progress for over four years in enrollment and projection of students in the UBE scheme. Eligibly qualified students have been enrolled; planning for four years in provisions of plants and facilities has been implemented to a reasonable standard based on what was projected (Ola, 2016).

The declarations at international summits and conferences collectively constitute the trigger factors that prompted the then president, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, to launch the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme at Sokoto on September 30th, 1999 (Ugwuoke, 2011). Thus, the UBE is an educational programme proposed to stamp out illiteracy and reduce poverty by equipping learners with the requisite knowledge, attitudes, and skills to promote individual and national development (Ogbonna, 2005). Hence, Ugwuoke (2011) stressed that introducing the UBE programme was a welcome development to Nigerians, believing that the scheme was the solution to the numerous challenges facing the nation's education sector and to reduce the high level of illiteracy.

In line with the above statement, Anike and Tari (2011) explained that the scheme was proposed to provide the basic framework for equal educational opportunities and access to free compulsory education at the basic level to reduce illiteracy in Nigeria within a possible minimum period purposely. Hence, the specific objectives of the UBE programme, which aims at reducing illiteracy, were listed by the Federal Ministry of Education (FME, 2000) to include:

- i. To develop in the entire citizenry a strong consciousness for education and a strong commitment to its vigorous promotion,
- ii. Provision of free compulsory universal basic education for every Nigerian child of school going age,
- iii. To reduce the incidence or high rate of drop-out from the formal school system (through improved appropriate approaches and efficiency) drastically,
- iv. To ensure the acquisition of appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, manipulative, communicative and life skills, as well as the ethical, moral and civic tenets required for laying a solid foundation for sustainable lifelong learning,
- v. To cater to the learning needs/experiences of young ones and their schooling and other out of school children or youths through appropriate forms of complementary approaches to the provision and advancement of Universal Basic Education.

Assessment of the implementation of the UBE programme is based on how far the above laudable UBE objectives are attainable in Nigeria. However, successful implementation of these UBE programmes based on the established objectives could be possible only if the schools (including public and private primary schools) strictly pursue the highlighted programme objectives by complying with and implementing the prescribed minimum standards for basic education (Ezeugwu, 2008).

Thus, pointing directly at the body responsible for the prescription of the minimum standards, Ityav (2014) holds that Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) is primarily responsible for prescribing the minimum standards for basic education. Further, Ityav advanced that the prescribed minimum standard is a document that contains the country's educational philosophy and is based on the national objectives and the directives of the National Council on Education to ensure effective monitoring and implementation of the minimum standards for basic education throughout the country. However, key areas that are considered crucial in meeting the minimum standard specifications or requirements for achieving the UBE objectives include the implementation of the UBE curriculum, of which the vocational content of the UBE is paramount.

The vocational content of the UBE programme is a form of education whose primary aim is to prepare persons for employment in a recognized occupation, and this encompasses the field of study (agricultural education, fine and applied arts education, business education and vocational trades in soap making, hairdressing, computer training among others). Iheanacho (2016) defined the vocational content of the UBE programme as that aspect of education that deals with business education, farming, bookkeeping, and bricklaying, among others, to acquire vocational skills in these fields. The knowledge received in the vocational aspect of the UBE is to produce individuals who are to be initiators, facilitators, and implementers of technological literacy that would lead to self-reliance and sustainability. The author stresses that vocational education has a direct impact on national welfare. Banjoko, cited in Dokubo (2013), summed it all up, stressing that skill is a major distinguishing aspect of vocational education which makes it outstanding from liberal arts. In summary, vocational and technical education essentially develops in the individual the knowledge, skills, and desirable attitude for legitimate work.

One significant and attractive aspect of the vocational contents of the UBE programme is skills acquisition. Developing a nation's economy is contingent on the quality of skilled human capital in the pool. Vocational and technical education provides students with life skills that make them productive entrepreneurs. It engenders creative and innovative ideas, enlarges the economic pie, and increases personal freedom. The business environment is changing quickly due to the rapid emergence of technology and globalization. This has added to the increase in demand for valuable human skills necessary to respond to such drastic changes for economic progress. As a channel for entrepreneurial skill acquisition, the vocational content of the UBE scheme plays the role of improving the economic situation of Nigeria through the production and distribution of goods in different areas of specialization. This is achievable through the training of the students in different specialized fields. In the long run, this will help the students establish their enterprise, as seen in China, Turkey, India, Japan, among other countries that have succeeded economically through vocational education. This is in line with the views of Lawal (2014), who opined that "for a country to advance socially, economically and technologically, its citizens must be creative and productive with a majority becoming job creators rather than seekers" (P. 54).

The author concluded by emphasizing that optimum attention and recognition is to be given to promoting the vocational content of the UBE scheme in Nigeria if the country wants to attain outstanding achievement in productivity and sustainable economic environment, and natural development. According to Sheieh, Wang and Chon (2009), lifelong vocation education will gradually improve the economic and social development of both the people and the country by making vocational education a channel for exploiting human resources.

However, the greatest weakness in the execution of the vocational content of the UBE scheme is the continuity of the programme from the primary school level to the tertiary school level. There is an urgent need for continuity in any programme or training.

Nigeria is good at formulating very viable policies and goals for the betterment of its citizens. However, to what extent do the planners and implementers ensure that the programme starts from the infancy stage to the fully completed and evaluated stage without creating gaps along the line. Alaku (2009) stated that the major problem lay in the gap between policy planners and implementers. During the 1970s and 1980s, for instance, primary school pupils and secondary school students (post-primary school students) were encouraged through government policy to undertake handcraft and other skill acquisition tasks themselves as part of continuous assessment during a prescribed period. Today, handicrafts, even in most rural areas, are not taken seriously. Most schools now, especially in Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja, seem to accept money in place of crafts. In contrast, some schools seem not to observe the craft periods any longer. This attitude seems to demoralize the students who would have been offered skill courses up to tertiary institutions and even after graduation.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

- i. How do trained teachers in the vocational content of UBE influence skills acquisition of public Junior Secondary Schools students in FCT, Abuja?
- ii. How do principals' administrative competence in vocational content of UBE influences skills acquisition of public Junior Secondary Schools Students in FCT, Abuja?

Statement of Hypotheses

Based on the objectives of the study and the stated research questions, two hypotheses were constructed to help address the research problem:

HO₁: There is no significant influence of trained teachers in vocational content of UBE on skills acquisition of public Junior Secondary Schools Students in FCT, Abuja

HO₂: There is no significant influence of principals' administrative competence in vocational content of UBE on skills acquisition of public Junior Secondary Schools Students in FCT, Abuja

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted descriptive survey research to examine the influence of vocational content of UBE on skills acquisition of Junior Secondary Schools Students in FCT, Abuja. The population of this study consists of all the principals and the teachers in public junior secondary schools in Federal Capital Territory. (Abuja). There are 58 public junior secondary schools in the FCT 3,394 teachers and 58 principals. The total population of the study is, therefore, 3,450. The researcher used a simple Random Sampling procedure of 10% randomization to collect data for the research. The sample size comprised 58 principals and 342 teachers, representing 10% of the total population of 3,450 principals and teachers in the FCT. The 58 schools were spread over the six area councils in FCT.

A 10 – item researcher made questionnaire with a four-point modified Likert rating scale or strongly agreed (SA), Agreed (A) and Strongly Disagree (SD) and Disagree (D) was used to collect data from the respondents. The instrument was validated through Peer review. The reliability coefficient of 0.79 was derived by administering the questionnaire twice at two weeks intervals to ten teachers outside the zone of the study, using a Split Half reliability estimate. The instrument was personally administered to the principals and teachers. Descriptive statistics were used to answer the research questions. Chi-square was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS

The results of the findings are presented in tables 3 and 4.

Table 3: Trained teachers in vocational content of UBE influence skills acquisition of public Junior Secondary Schools students in FCT, Abuja

Item No	Item Description	SA	A	SD	D	\bar{X}	SD	Decision
1.	Teachers who attend seminars organized by professional bodies do proper students evaluation in skills acquisition	223	100	15	88	3.35	0.68	Agree
2.	Teachers who attend workshops organized by professional bodies adopt effective teaching techniques in skills acquisition	238	200	72	57	3.44	0.57	Agree
3.	Teachers who attend conferences organized by professional bodies are better classroom managers in skills acquisition	268	101	35	57	3.37	0.68	Agree
4.	Teachers who attend symposia organized by professional bodies tend to improve students' academic performance in skills acquisition	250	201	42	68	3.33	0.69	Agree
5.	Teachers who attend workshops organized by professional bodies use effective instructional materials in skills acquisition	231	99	31	100	3.23	0.79	Agree
Cluster Mean						3.34		Agree

Source: Field Study 2022

Table 3 shows that items 1-5 had mean scores of 3.35, 3.44, 3.37, 3.33 and 3.23 with corresponding standard deviations of 0.68, 0.57, 0.68, 0.69 and 0.79 respectively. Based on the decision-making criteria, it means that all the items were rated above the cut-off point of 2.50. The cluster mean of 3.34 was also above the cut-off point of 2.50. The standard deviation scores of the respondents are small signifying homogeneity for the items raised. This implies that trained teachers in the vocational content of UBE influence the skills acquisition of public Junior Secondary Schools Students in FCT, Abuja.

Table 4: Principals' administrative competence in vocational content of UBE influences skills acquisition of public junior Secondary Schools Students in FCT, Abuja

Item No	Item Description	SA	A	SD	D	\bar{X}	SD	Decision
6.	Principal's proper checking of teachers' lesson notes will enhance teachers teaching quality in skills acquisition	238	101	141	91	3.55	0.62	Strongly Agree
7.	Principals' proper examination of teachers' lesson plans will enhance teachers' method of teaching in skills acquisition	221	270	41	29	3.40	0.66	Agree
8.	Principals who do not consider classroom equipment will affect students learning in the teaching process in skills acquisition	90	240	61	170	3.37	0.71	Agree
9.	Principals who do not give attention to teachers' welfare will affect teaching quality in skills acquisition	191	160	106	99	3.43	0.64	Agree
Cluster Mean						3.48		Agree

Source: Field Study 2021

Table 4 shows that items 6-9 had mean scores of 3.55, 3.40, 3.37 and 3.43, with corresponding standard deviations of 0.62, 0.66, 0.71 and 0.64, respectively. Based on the decision-making criteria, it means that all the items were rated above the cut-off point of 2.50. The cluster mean of 3.48 was also above the cut-off point of 2.50. The standard deviation scores of the respondents are small signifying homogeneity for the items raised. This implies that principals' administrative competence in the vocational content of UBE influences the skills acquisition of public junior Secondary Schools Students in FCT, Abuja.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1:

There is no significant influence of trained teachers in vocational content of UBE on skills acquisition of public junior Secondary Schools Students in FCT, Abuja

Table 5: Chi-square test for trained teachers in Vocational content of UBE on Skills acquisition.

Opinions	Observed N	Expected N	Residual	Level of Sig.	Df	χ^2 -cal	P-value	Decision
SD	17	226.5	-209.5	0.05	3	728.50	0.00	Sig.
D	31	226.5	-195.5					
A	408	226.5	181.5					
SA	450	226.5	223.5					

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 226.5.

Table 5 revealed that $\chi^2\text{-cal} = 650.26$, at $df = 3$ and $p = 0.00$. Since the $p\text{-value}$ of $0.00 < 0.05$ at 3 degrees of freedom, the null hypothesis states that there is no significant influence of trained teachers in vocational content of UBE in skills acquisition of public Junior Secondary Schools students in FCT, Abuja was, therefore, rejected. This implies a significant influence of trained teachers in the vocational content of UBE in skills acquisition of public Junior Secondary Schools Students in FCT, Abuja.

Hypothesis 2:

There is no significant influence of principals' administrative competence in vocational content of UBE in skills acquisition of public Junior Secondary Schools Students in FCT, Abuja

Table 6: Chi-square test for principals' administrative competence in vocational content of UBE and skills acquisition

Opinions	Observed N	Expected N	Residual	Level of Sig.	Df	$\chi^2\text{-cal}$	P-value	Decision
SD	17	226.5	-209.5	0.05	3	728.50	0.00	Sig.
D	31	226.5	-195.5					
A	408	226.5	181.5					
SA	450	226.5	223.5					

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 226.5.

Table 6 revealed that $\chi^2\text{-cal} = 728.50$, $df = 3$ and $p = 0.00$. Since the $p\text{-value}$ of $0.00 < 0.05$ at 3 degrees of freedom, the null hypothesis states that there is no significant influence of principals' administrative competence in the vocational content of UBE in skills acquisition of public junior secondary school students in FCT Abuja was, therefore, rejected. This means a significant influence of principals' administrative competence in the vocational content of UBE in skills acquisition of public Junior Secondary Schools Students in FCT, Abuja.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study, which sets out to examine the influence of vocational content of UBE on skills acquisition of Junior Secondary Schools Students in FCT, Abuja, revealed that trained teachers in vocational content of UBE influence skills acquisition of public Junior Secondary Schools Students in FCT, Abuja. Thus, school facilities, as put by Ogbonna (2005), are those things that enable a skillful teacher to become so influential in instructional delivery and helps him/her (the teacher) achieve a level of instructional objectives and effectiveness that perhaps would not have been possible if those facilities were in short supply or not available. In a broader sense, Ezeugwu (2008) maintained that such educational facilities (school facilities) include the available infrastructure for teaching-learning activities and instructional materials. It, therefore, implies that the nation's educational goals, including the implementation of vocational content of the UBE programme, can never be achieved if school facilities or equipment are not adequately provided to schools.

The study also found out that principals' administrative competence in vocational content of UBE influences skills acquisition of public Junior Secondary Schools Students in FCT, Abuja. It has been widely believed that the teacher's rewards are in heaven. The teachers are the critical factor in any effort

to boost quality education. It is clear that when they are not adequately motivated, they would become disinterested and dispirited to embark on self-development but would instead engage in other economic ventures, an illegal activity in schools that would yield immediate returns. The success of any good educational policy depends significantly on the efficiency of the supervision machinery.

CONCLUSION

For sustainable development to be achieved, there must be an educational programme whose goals are directed toward the achievement of economic growth of the citizens, skill acquisition and empowerment. The education system in Nigeria, as earlier stated that provides training for skill acquisition, economic development, and emancipation of citizens from poverty is Technical and Vocational Education. From its goals and objectives, the vocational content of the UBE scheme is a veritable tool to achieve sustainable development not only at a national level but globally. This is because the goals of Sustainable Development and of vocational education place emphasis on economic growth and the development of individuals, which will eventually lead to the betterment of humanity in general. Vocational education has been an integral part of national development strategies in many societies because of the impact on human resource development, productivity and economic development. It holds the key to the national development of most nations. Vocational content of the UBE scheme is instrumental in making a remarkable contribution to the economic growth of the Developing Countries by way of suitable manpower production according to the needs of the industry, society and the global world as a whole.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

- a. Government and school managers at the federal level should ensure that trained teachers in the educational background who understand the value of psychomotor and technical development of a child are allowed to manage the public schools' technical aspect of learning, which will significantly aid in developing students' skills acquisition
- b. Principals should ensure a smooth relationship between them and teachers because it will enhance the effectiveness of their supervision to teachers to ensure that students develop the appropriate skills necessary for societal development.

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