

## YOUTH INTEREST IN BUSINESS AND TECHNICAL SKILL ACQUISITION: ITS IMPLICATION FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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### *Abstract*

*The purpose of this study was to examine youths' interest in business and technical skill acquisition and its implications for national development. A survey research design was adopted for this study. Two research questions and one null hypothesis were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance to guide the study. The sample for the study consisted of 480 respondents. The instrument used for data collection is a structural questionnaire and interviews validated by the three senior lecturers from the department of V.T.E university of Nigeria, Nsukka. The data collected were analysed using percentages and chi-square. The findings revealed that males had negative interest in skills acquisition in business and technical education than female students. Also, the findings showed that male and female students differ significantly in their interest in skills acquisition in business and technical education. The findings possess worthwhile implications for redirecting and strengthening youth interest in skill acquisition in business and technical education in Nigeria. The study recommends that others the youths should be encouraged to acquire skill in business and technical education.*

### Introduction

Education is seen as the reconstruction of events, which involve the lives of individuals so that new happenings and new events become more purposeful and more meaningful. For this reason, the society places maximum premium on education.

The national policy on education (2004) places great emphasis on the acquisition of practical and applied skills, as equipment of individual to be self-reliant and contribute to the development of the society. Business and technical education on its part if well planned, adequately provided for and implemented can contribute in transforming Nigeria through her citizenry into a self-reliant nation. (Njoku 2008).

The poor state of youth development in Nigeria has remained a source of worry to government and many concerned citizens at both national and community levels, the scarcity of skilled youths and unemployment are areas of greatest concern to the common man. Unemployment which occurs mostly among youths and school leavers has remained a major problem in both urban and rural environments. There is every indication that the youths, if properly mobilized and trained, could pave way to sustainable youth employment and industrial development.

The recent developments in Nigeria whereby a substantial section of the labour force is being retrenched seem to heighten the need for more emphasis on skill acquisition. The bulk of this labour force comes from the civil service, the manufacturing, business and other sectors. Equally affected in this jobless pool are many petty traders who depend on imported materials for their businesses. Consequently, many of these jobless individuals are forced to return to their villages while a negligible few who are able to fall back on their little savings still linger around the towns.

A notable characteristic of this group of people is that most of them are unable to perform any skilled work of a diversified nature in the towns and villages where they reside. Ironically, these people have not been trained in rudiments of a trade. On the other hand, there are others in the towns and cities who have no defined mode of living. This group of people constitute, at the moment, a threat to the society. Apparently, the nation seems to be indifferent about their plight. This indifference, although unsubstantiated with data, is causing a lot of havoc to the society in terms of human lives. Many have died out of frustration as a result of lack of means of maintaining their family while some able bodied men have turned to armed robbery which seems to be causing uncertainty in the way and manner people live. One is forced to be in a state of apprehension always while relaxing in one's home or travelling along the road. This type of development does not augur well for a healthy society. Hence, there is an urgent need for re-alignment of the present situation towards improvement of education for productive work. The nature of our depressed economy and limited job opportunities call for dedication and self employment.

#### Statement of Problem

Reports (Digbori-Besmart, 2004; Uwameiye, 2005) indicated that youth interests in skill acquisition in business and technical education has not been favourable. These reports revealed that the youths dislike business and technical education because it attracts low income generally and poor social recognition.

Although efforts were made in some parts of the country and at various periods to encourage pupils and students and their parents to show interest in vocational and technical subjects, greater number of the students and their parents preferred literary to business and technical education (Taiwo, 1981, Fafunwa, 1991). More worrisome is the dividing enrolment in business and technical education in our tertiary institutions. Low career stability has been reported among university graduates of business and technical education (Toby, 2000). There is therefore an urgent need for a re-evaluation of the policies and programmes for business and technical education, youth employment and industrial development.

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to:

1. Ascertain the overall expressed youths interests in skills acquisition in business and technical education.
2. Compare the perception of males and females interest in skills acquisition in business and technical education.

#### Research Questions

The study sought answers to the following research questions:

1. What was the overall expressed youths interest in skill acquisition in business and technical education?
2. What was the perception of males and females interest in skill acquisition in business and technical education?

#### Hypothesis

The following hypothesis were formulated to guide this research study and were tested at 0.05 level of significant.

1. Male and female students do not differ significantly in their interest in skill acquisition in business and technical education

### Methodology

Descriptive survey design was employed in this study. A descriptive design seeks to document and describe what exist or the present status of existence or absence of what is being investigated (Njoku 2008). All the secondary schools in the three education zones in Niger State numbering 141 (as at 2010) constituted the population for the study. In each of the three education zones, four secondary schools were randomly sampled by balloting with replacement giving a total of 12 secondary schools were involved in the study. 20 male and female students were randomly selected from each school, the sample size of 480 students appeared adequate for the study provided the sample is not below 30 (Okafor 2002). The sample size of 480 students appeared very adequate for the study provided the sample is not below 30 (Roscoe, 1976).

A structured questionnaire and interview schedules were used to obtain data for the study. The questionnaire was subject to the criticism of the professional colleagues for validation; after minor modifications, the questionnaire was tried out on a sample of 20 students not included in the sample, a reliability estimate from the trial test yielded reliability co-efficient of 76.8, a figure which was considered high enough for the purpose of this study. This suggested that the items were unambiguous and clearly understood.

Data were collected through the students that were randomly selected from the senior classes of the schools mentioned above. The questionnaires were administered to the students by the investigator and 384 were duly returned out of 480, representing 84% and were found usable for the study.

The questionnaire requested the students to tick ( $\sqrt{\quad}$ ) the response that best reflected their rating scale, strongly agree (1), agree (2), disagree (3), strongly disagree (4). The responses of strongly agree and agree on negative questions were reversed before scoring. The total frequencies reflecting either positive or negative items were used for testing the hypothesis formulated to guide the investigation. Simple percentages and the chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) were used to analyse the data. The statistical inference was drawn at 0.05 level of significance. The questionnaire was structured and interview schedules were also used to obtain data for the study.

### Results

Table 1: Students Variables and Responses Showing Interest in Skill Acquisition in Business and Technical Education

Students	N	Total	Frequency and % positive interest	Frequency and % negative interest
Male	209	3,135	1,087 (34.68)	2,048 (65.38)
Female	175	2635	1341 (51.47)	1,294 (48.68)

The results presented in Table 1 were used for analysis of data related to the hypothesis formulated to guide the study.

### Hypothesis

Male and female students do not differ significantly in their interest in skill acquisition in business and technical education.

Table 2: X<sup>2</sup> Analysis of the Interests of Male and Female Students in Skill Acquisition in Business and Technical Education

Student variable	Positive interest		Negative interest		Total	t-cal	c.v. 0.05
Males	O 1087	E (1326.9)	O 2048	E (1808.9)	3136		
Females	1351	(11111.0)	1274	(1513)	2625	2625	165.03
Total	2438	(24.38)	3322	(3322)	5760		

Key:

(tv) Table Value

(cv) Calculated value

(O) Positive interest

(E) Negative interest.

The table value (tv) of 3.842 is greater than the calculated value (cv) of 165.03 required for significance at 0.05 level. The hypothesis of no significant difference in interests between the two groups was therefore rejected. It was concluded that males (with 65.38% negative interest) showed a more significantly negative interest in skill acquisition in business and technical education than the females (with 48.68% negative interest).

### Discussion

The findings related to the first research question showed that males, with a frequency of 2048 (65.38%) had negative interest in skill acquisition in business and technical education. This may be because vocational and technical schools do not prepare students for the kinds of noble or white collar professions, which they would choose for their living. The responses made by the males showed that they still believe that business and technical education should be for those of relatively low intellectual ability in class, and for children of poorer parents. The findings also confirm their belief that those who take to vocational trade have low esteem in society, are hardly rich, and have little prospects for career or professional advancement.

The negative interest demonstrated by the above responses tends to defeat the purpose and philosophy of business and technical education as spelt out in the National Policy on Education (FRN 2004). If most students continue to show negative interest in business and technical education, there will be no solution to problems of unemployment, retrenchment, youth restiveness, and other vices.

The findings related to the single hypothesis and the second research question revealed that the males showed negative interest in skill acquisition than the females. This is to be expected because of the social stigma cast on business and technical education. Students would want to be associated with jobs such as medicine, pharmacy, engineering, among others.

### Implication for National Development

The findings of the study have implications on youths, teachers, parents, society and the government of Niger State. The study has provided information on the acquisition of skills in

Business and Technical Education. It is therefore imperative that Business and Technical Education for the purpose of developing a good society among other benefits.

### Conclusion

The essential products of teaching and learning in any field involves acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes. Due to the growing concern to reduce high rate of underdevelopment experienced in third world countries, government have become engaged in reforming the educational system to meet up with the challenge. This therefore, places a lot of emphasis on the skills product of education for it is a highly skilled manpower, which is capable of sustaining progress and of course improving an economy of a country.

### Recommendations

Children should be encouraged to acquire skill in business and technical education. Parents would be doing the society a lot of injustice if they fail to encourage their children to acquire skills in business and technical education. In these days of acute unemployment and retrenchment of workers in the public and private sectors, children should be encouraged to take to business and technical education with emphasis on skill acquisition to be either self-employed or employer of labour.

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