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LINKAGES WITH INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE: A PANACEA FOR PRACTICAL SKILLS ACQUISITION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study looked at connections to business and industry as a magic bullet for acquiring practical skills in Nigeria. To help the researcher with the study, three research questions were developed. A descriptive research survey design was used in the study. A questionnaire with a four-point Likert rating scale was employed. A stratified random sampling technique was used to randomly select 30 students from the department of vocational and technology education at Niger Delta University Wilberforce Island, 10 lecturers from the department of vocational education, 10 lecturers from the department of technology education, 25 registered craftsmen, and 25 small-scale business owners, which accounted for 30 percent of the study's total population of 300. A questionnaire that was submitted to face and content validity by measurement and evaluation specialists from Niger Delta University served as the data collection tool. Data was analyzed using the arithmetic mean with a 2.50 cutoff threshold. Links between TVET institutions and industry should be very high, and there is an urgent need to promote skills training from technical colleges to polytechnics and universities. The study's findings also show that links with industry and commerce are a remedy or panacea for the acquisition of practical skills. Finally, it reveals the readiness of undergraduates to acquire practical skills through links with industry and commerce.

Keywords: Linkages, industry, commerce, Panacea, practical; skills acquisition.

Introduction

In the medieval era, practical skills acquisition and development have been man's means of transforming materials and products since the beginning of time, but for development to occur, it takes trained hands and minds to apply the knowledge, techniques, and acquired skills very effectively (NWOKOLO 2017). By definition, a skill is the ability to do something well, usually gained through training or experience. On the other hand, skills acquisition involves the practice or a way of doing things, usually gained through practical training or experience. The industrial revolution brought with it the manufacturing system, which involves factories and industries with far-reaching historical effects and increasing application of science and technology to goods manufacturing and services with more emphasis on industrial skills. Prior to the industrial revolution, apprenticeship was a common way to gain practical skills or join a craft guild. A broad range of technical and professional workers, including engineers, technicians, craftsmen, and technology, were required for these changes (Megrath 2022).

Abhuere (2020) asserts that the significance of acquiring practical skills cannot be overstated due to its multifaceted function in Nigerian national development, which includes the following in particular creation of jobs eradication of poverty and hunger, as well as a decrease in crime and insecurity by effectively involving young people. Akerele (2017) defines technical vocational education (TVE) as the part of education that exposes the student or trainee to the development of observable abilities that

could be converted into financial gains and a sustainable way of life. TVE has been given priority by the Federal Republic of Nigeria in the National Policy on Education (NPE 2004) because this is pertinent to Nigeria's industrial and technical growth.

It is regarded as the area of training that focuses on developing applied and practical abilities. According to Oni (2017), the biggest issue facing Technical Vocational Education (TVE) in Nigeria at the moment is the absence of connections with business and industry. TVE institutions particularly polytechnics and colleges of technology that need to cooperate and form partnerships with manufacturers and industries are always at odds with one another. He said that instead of accepting and accommodating undergraduates to acquire practical skills in the job, manufacturers and industries are fabricating attachment records for internships and industrial training. Mohammed (2022) asserts that tertiary institution graduates of technical vocational education (TVE) are unable to demonstrate the work capabilities necessary in an industrial workplace.

He said it is disheartening and scary how many factories and industries have reported that recent school graduates are unable to perform the tasks for which they are employed. According to Atsumbe (2021), this is because these graduates were not effectively connected to the essential industries during their training period to gain the fundamental practical skills needed for their positions. According to Bugaje (2021), a shortage of skills is common in Nigeria these days, resulting in a large number of underemployed and unemployed graduates living on the streets and a large number of skill gaps in the construction, oil and gas, rail, and other industries. According to him, the rapidly growing construction sector lacks the necessary skills, particularly in trades like tiling and P.O.P. production. The craftspeople are from nations that speak French. Nigeria currently lacks a great deal of expertise in high pressure welding and fitting for the oil and gas sector. Furthermore, he said that the majority of train track technicians at the time were Chinese, and that the railway improvement throughout Nigeria was another major undertaking. This cannot be sustained but according to Bugaje (2021), most Nigerian parents still oppose their kids attending polytechnics or monotechnics, let alone vocational or skills training. Nowadays, most parents would rather want their children have degrees than talents. The reason is the long-standing separation of technical vocational education and training (TVET) institutions from industry. He continued by saying that bridging the gap between industry and (TVET) institutions requires the appropriate cooperation and synergy. Linking trainees to commerce disciplines like purchasing, printing, insurance, marketing, entrepreneurship, accounting, and enterprise activities, among others, is highly relevant, according to Onyene et al. (2017). This exposes them to an environment where their interests and context should be creators and employers of labor. They added that because our technical vocational education and training (TVET) institutions are not connected to industry commerce, manufacturers, and microfinance development organizations, Nigeria is currently viewed as a country that produces ninety-nine consumers and only one producer. Our institutions should flourish in order to empower people and provide access to resources, organizations, and agencies that will be able to produce well-bred business owners who will create jobs. Olusegun (2021) noted that the industrial training fund's (ITF) goal is to guarantee that industry and manufacturers train undergraduates, but regrettably, the institutions are no longer benefiting from the necessary collaboration. He continued by saying that the majority of factories are unwilling to hire students for SIWES or IT since the Industrial Training Fund (ITF) does not offer the incentives that are anticipated. Additionally, he remembered an instance in which the Federal Polytechnic Ilaro had to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with industry in order to provide training to its personnel and students during extended vacations. After visiting a number of firms, the institution discovered that the factories were insufficient and that the only ones that were available

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were not yet ready; only Dangote showed any interest. He pointed out that this was the gap between the (TVET) institutes and industry and commerce.

Rotimi (2021). suggested that in order for students and graduates to successfully acquire skills in preparation for gainful employment in any workplace, educational institutions should take the initiative to establish connections with the business community and industry. He went on to say that cooperation and link-up synergy with (TVET) institutions have to be strengthened.

Statement of the problem

Currently practical skills acquisition through the industry and commercial enterprises is a major challenge. Rotimi, (2021) asserted that industry linkage with TVET Institutions that should be partnering are in perpetual divorce. It is already noted in the paper that lack of practical skills from industries, factories and commercial enterprises has caused the unemployment of young graduates roaming the streets. Manufacturers and factories are not ready to accommodate students for skills exposure. Most times they are not also accepted for industrial attachment or SIWES, causing graduates not to be able to perform their tasks when employed in a public and private sector. The question is how can linkages with industry and commerce provide remedy to practical skills acquisition in Nigeria. This paper addresses the above questions.

Purpose of the Study

The study investigated linkages with industry and commerce: a panacea for practical skills acquisition in Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to.

1. Assess the effect of linkages with industry and commerce for practical skills acquisition.
2. Identify government responsibility to link industry and commerce for practical skills acquisition.
3. Determine the level of readiness of undergraduates in Technical vocational education (TVE) for practical skills acquisition through linkages with industry and commerce.

Research Questions

The following research questions guides the study

1. What is the effect of linkages with industry and commerce towards practical skills acquisition?
2. What techniques has the government employed towards linkages with industry and commerce for practical skills acquisition?
3. What is the level of readiness of undergraduates in technical vocational Education (TVE) towards practical skills acquisition through linkages with industry and commerce?

Methodology

Research Design

A descriptive research survey design was used in the study.

Population of the study

There were 300 responders in the study's population.

Sample and sampling technique

A stratified random sampling technique was used and a sample of 100 respondents 25 of whom were registered craft men was chosen. 30 students from the vocational and technology education departments at Niger Delta University Wilberforce Island, 10 lecturers in the vocational education department, 10 lecturers in the technology education department, and 25 small business owners all in Bayelsa state.

Instrument for data collection

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The data was gathered via a questionnaire. The research questions were analyzed using the arithmetic mean which consists of 12 items divided into four divisions. A four-point Likert rating scale with the options SA, A, D, and SD (strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree) is the tool that was devised. Three specialists in the fields of business and technology education at Niger Delta University Wilberforce Island, Bayelsa State, were awarded the instrument for content and face validity. The reliability was tested using Cronbach alpha, and a coefficient of 0.82 was found.

Analysis of Data

The research questions were addressed using the arithmetic mean. Any item above the 2.50 cutoff points was accepted for consideration, while any item below the 2.50 cutoff points was rejected.

Results

Research Question 1

What is the effect of linkages with industry and commerce towards practical skills acquisition?

Table 1: Mean score rating on the effect of linkages with industry and commerce towards practical skills acquisition.

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	T	X	Decision
1.	Linkages with industry and commerce encourages practical skills acquisition	50	30	15	5	100	3.25	Accepted
2.	Creates jobs and reduce graduates unemployment	60	20	10	10	100	3.20	Accepted
3.	Prepares students for gainful employment in any work place.	70	20	5	5	100	3.35	Accepted
	Grand mean						3.20	Accepted

Source: Field survey 2024

Table 1 above indicates the mean score responses of the respondents. It reveals that the entire items from (1-3) on the table have mean scores above the cut-off point of 2.50. The result shows that linkages with industry and commerce is actually geared towards practical skills acquisition. With a grand mean of 3.26 which indicates accepted.

Research Question 2

What techniques has the government employed towards linkages with industry and commerce for practical skills acquisition?

Table 2: mean score rating and techniques employed by the government towards linkages with industry and commerce for practical skills acquisition.

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	T	X	Decision
1.	Linkages with industry and commerce is a priority to the government	20	10	10	60	100	1.90	Rejected
2.	Management of institutions mismanage fund appropriated for	60	30	5	5	100	3.45	Accepted

	technical and vocational education.							
3.	Government encourages undergraduates to practice acquiring practical skill through linkages with industry and commerce.	50	20	15	5	100	3.05	Accepted
	Grand mean.						2.80	Accepted

Source: Field survey 2024

The result presented in table 2 above indicates the mean responses of the respondents. Items 5 and 6 on the table have mean scores above the cutoff point of 2.50, except item 4 with a mean of 1.90 which is below the cutoff point. This shows that the government is actually employing techniques towards linkages with industry and commerce for practical skills acquisition with a grand mean of 2.80 which indicates accepted.

Research Question 3:

What is the level of readiness of undergraduates in technical vocational education (TVE) towards practical skills acquisition through linkages with industry and commerce?

Table 3: Mean score rating on the level of readiness of undergraduates in technical vocational education (TVE) towards practical skills acquisition through linkages with industry and commerce.

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	T	X	Decision
1.	Technology students participate in practical skills acquisition and commerce related courses	60	30	5	5	100	3.45	Accepted
2.	Technology students have interest in practical skills acquisition and business courses	70	20	5	5	100	3.35	Accepted
3.	Technology students ignore practical skills acquisitions and commerce	30	10	10	50	100	2.20	Accepted
4.	Technology students encourages one another to embibe the spirit of practical skill acquisition	50	30	15	5	100	3.25	Accepted
	Grand mean						3.06	Accepted

Field survey 2024

The result presented above is in support of the readiness of undergraduates in (TVE) towards practical skills acquisition through links with industry and commerce, items 7, 8, and 10 were accepted while item 9 was rejected. The results are displayed in table 3 above, which displays the mean responses of

the respondents on the level of readiness on the part of the respondents with a grand mean of 3.06, which indicates acceptance; Table 3 similarly demonstrates that undergraduates are prepared for courses pertaining to commerce and the acquisition of practical skills.

Discussion

The findings from the investigation supported the general respondents views that linkages with industry and commerce will contribute greatly to practical skills acquisition in Nigeria, this is in line with Rotimi (2021), who suggested that institutions must be proactive in having a link with the industry and commercial enterprises for students and graduates to be successful in acquiring skills in preparation for gainful employment in any work place.

Research question 1 sought to find out the effects of linkages with industry and commerce towards practical skills acquisition. From table 1. Above the responses of respondents shows positive effects with a grand mean of 3.26 which is greater than the cutoff point of 2.50 signifying Accepted. This is in line with Oyene etal (2017) who observed that linkage of the trainees to commerce discipline such as, (purchasing, printing, insurance, marketing entrepreneurship and enterprise activities) is very relevant, exposing them to an atmosphere where their interest and context should be creators and employers of labour.

Research question 2. Sought to find out techniques government has employed towards linkages with industry and commerce for practical skills acquisition. From table 2 above the responses of respondents with a grand mean of 2.80 is greater than the cut point of 2.50 which indicates Accepted, shows that government is putting efforts towards practical skills acquisition through linkages with industry and commerce. This is in line with (N P E2004) which asserted that, the Federal Republic of Nigeria in the National Policy on Education placed a premium on T V E in view of its relevant in technological and industrial development of Nigeria. Which is seen as that aspect of training which is geared towards the acquisition of practical and applied skills. Research question 3. Sought to find out the level of readiness of undergraduates in Technical vocational Education (T V E) towards practical skills acquisition through linkages with industry and commerce. From table 3 above the responses of respondents with a grand mean of 3.06 which is above the cutoff point of 2.50 which signifies great extent of the readiness of undergraduates to acquire practical skills through linkages with industry and commerce Olusegun (2021) Who observed that, the purpose of industrial training Fund (I T F) is to ensure the training of undergraduates by industry and manufacturers for successful practical skills acquisition.

Conclusion

The paper has revealed that linkages with industry and commerce is a remedy for practical skills acquisition. It is very obvious that from the findings if the government and the various (T V E T) institutions in Nigeria Synergizes and collaborates with the industries, Factories and commercial enterprises in order for their trainees to acquire practical skills. The skies will not only be the limit for Nigeria in regards to technological and industrial advancement, but earns global confidence.

Recommendations.

The following recommendations were drawn from the findings of the study.

1. There is urgent need to promote skills training right from Technical colleges to polytechnics and universities.
2. Skills Training Centres/ Institutes and (TVET) institutions should have Memorandum of understanding s (MOUs) with industries, Factories and commercial enterprises for Industrial Training (I T) to meet our local employers capacity.

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3. Government should blow up support employment and accessibility to resources and commercial agencies that will be functional to breed well brought up entrepreneurs to train individuals in specific skills job creations.
4. Linkages between TVET institutions and industry should be very high.

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