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Factors Affecting Students' Low-Enrolment in Vocational Technical Education Post-Graduate Programmes in Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examined factors affecting students' low-enrolment into post-graduate programmes in Vocational and Technology Departments in Tertiary Institutions in Bayelsa and Rivers States. Two research questions and one null hypothesis were used. The researchers used simple descriptive survey research design. The population was one hundred and forty-nine (149). The whole 149 was used as the sample because it was manageable. The instrument used for the study was questionnaire developed by the researchers titled: Factors Affecting Students' Low-Enrolment in Post-Graduate Programmes in VTE Departments in Bayelsa and Rivers States Tertiary Institutions. The instrument was validated by two experts in the Measurement and Evaluation Unit of Educational Foundations Department and One from Vocational and Technology Education Department, all of Faculty of Education, Niger Delta University, Wilberforce Island, Bayelsa State. The reliability was calculated to be 0.87 using Cronbach Alpha. The Z-test for the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. The study revealed that finance is a major factor affecting students' low-enrolment of more Vocational Technical education student that do not have low prospect as well as job opportunities not limited to teaching areas. It was therefore recommended, that the State Governments where tertiary institutions are established should create a financial scheme to subsidize tuition fees as well as research grants for post-graduate students to ease the students' financial burden.

Keywords: Factors affecting; Post-graduate; Students' low-enrolment; Technical education; Tertiary institutions; Vocational education.

1. Introduction

Vocational technical education in post-graduate programmes involves the recipients to get an in-depth knowledge of the discipline in order to monitor undergraduate students and conduct researches with regard to the programme.

Furthermore, the post-graduate programmes in vocational technical education are offered in tertiary institutions such as the Universities and research related institutions. In addition, students admitted in Vocational technical Education (VTE) at the post-graduate level are expected to obtain a minimum of second class lower division in the area of specialization and show evidence that they can carry out research at the post-graduate level.

Enrolment refers to act of enrolling in an institution or a course. It also refers to the act of signing up for an institution and/or specific course(s) at that particular institution. The enrolment process also involves preset criteria or condition or standards which the candidate must satisfy to be considered for admission. The enrolment process is completed after a student is granted admission to a particular institution. Students can then select courses to take through their school's online student information service.

Vocational and Technical Education focuses on providing practical skills and knowledge to prepare individuals for specific careers or trades. It emphasizes hand-on training and real-world application, equipping students with necessary expertise to excel in their chosen field. Post-graduate programmes, on the other hand, offer advanced education and specialization beyond the undergraduate level. These programmes allow individuals to deepen their knowledge, gain expertise in specific area, and enhance their career prospects. Both vocational and technical and post-graduate programmes play crucial roles in meeting the diverse needs of a workforce and fostering professional growth. This process typically involves evaluating applicants based on their academic achievements, personal qualities and other relevant factors. Enrolment decisions are made by a committee or individuals responsible for the reviewing applications and determining which candidates are best suited for the institution or programmes.

Vocational technical education is a multi-facet, multi-disciplinary and pragmatic discipline geared towards equipping individuals with necessary skills that enhance their relevance and participation in the world of work (Okoye, 2013). Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013) also asserted that vocational and technical education is an aspect of the educational process involving, in addition to general education, the study of technologies and relevant skills and understanding the knowledge needed in occupations in various sectors of the people economic and social life. International Labour Organisation (2010) defined vocational education as activities which essentially aim at providing the skills, knowledge and attitude required for employment in a particular occupation or a function in any field of economy activity including agriculture, industry, commerce, hotel, catering, tourist industries and private services.

Wapmuk (2011), on the other hand, envisioned vocational education as a programme that skillfully prepares people for effective performance of practical task. Daso (2012), regarded vocational education as a programme of study designed to enable the learner to be theoretically and practically based for the acquisition of necessary skills, abilities, knowledge, values, understanding and attitudes through a formal educational system. For the purposes of this work, the researcher adopted this as the operational definition: vocational technical education is that area of education that provides skills to learners to be employed or become self-employed.

Technology education is a special grade of vocational education, which can be distinguished from other vocational education programmes because it places more emphasis on mathematics and the basic sciences in the training programme in order to bridge the gap between the professional engineer and the craftsman. Uwaifo (2009), posited that technical education is the training of technically-oriented personnel who are to be initiators, facilitators and implementers of technological literacy that would lead to self-reliance and sustainability.

According to Akalugo (2011), development of any society depends in the quality of its work force and it is the fundamental drive in any developing economy. Example of such workforce includes highly skilled professionals like bricklayers, carpenters, painters and auto mechanics. Others are laboratory and pharmacy technicians, electric/electronic technicians, and skilled vocational nurses to mention but a few (Okoye, 2013). Contributing also to the workforce issue Osuala (2004) reported that the following programmes of VTE are available: Aeronautical Technology, Architectural Technology, Mechanical Technology, Fire and Safety Technology, Chemical Technology, Industrial Technology, etc.

A perusal of some brochures from Nigeria tertiary institutions showed that most of the aforementioned courses are not available. This might be partly due to lack of qualified manpower to teach such courses as reaffirmed by Okwelle and Nworgu (2007). Studies conducted by Isyaku (2003) Aina (2006) and Harbert (2006) opined that majority of the qualified personnel prefer to work in industries with better pay and opportunities. Corroborating, Yakubu (2006) noted that low enrolment in vocational teacher training programme was due to poor image attached to technically-oriented personnel in the society. Furthermore, finance may also be a factor, as Subethra (2015) stated that a lot of students at the post-graduate level are confronted with financial challenges in embarking on technical education programme.

This study will consider finance and societal values as factors affecting low enrolment in Vocational technical Education post-graduate programmes. Finance is a factor that affects low enrolment in most post-graduate programmes in Vocational Technical Education. Aniah and Mohammed (2012) reported that the provision of Technical and Vocational education and Training in the educational programmes in Nigerian institutions is expensive from post-primary, undergraduate and post-graduate education. This requires a student to be financially capable to sponsor him/herself in Vocational Technical Education especially at post-graduate level.

Also, societal value as it affects low enrolment in post-graduate programmes in Vocational and technical education. Vocational Technical Education and Training had been perceived to be a blue collar job mainly due to the practical nature of the course. For many parents and students still perceive programmes in VTE as a second class education mostly in developing nations like Nigeria (Aniah and Mohammed, 2012). While according to Billet (2000), TVET has suffered from low social value in the society mainly due to public perception.

From the foregoing, the literature has revealed that finance and societal values affected low enrolment in vocational technical Education post-graduate programmes in tertiary institutions. This necessitated the study on the factors affecting low enrolment in Vocational Technical Education post-graduate programmes in tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

2. Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to examine factors affecting students' low enrolment in vocational technical education post-graduate programmes in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa and Rivers States in Nigeria. The specific objectives of this study is to:

1. determine the extent to which finance can affect students’ low enrolment into postgraduate programmes in vocational technical education in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa and Rivers States tertiary institutions.
2. determine the extent to which societal values affect students’ low enrolment into postgraduate programmes in vocational technical education in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa and Rivers States tertiary institutions.

2.1. Research Questions

1. To what extent does finance affect students’ low enrolment into postgraduate programmes in vocational technical education in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa and Rivers States tertiary institutions?
2. To what extent do societal values affect students’ low enrolment into postgraduate programmes in vocational technical education in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa and Rivers States tertiary institutions?

2.2. Hypothesis

Ho₁: There is no significant difference on how finance affects students’ low enrolment in post-graduate programmes in vocational technical education in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa and Rivers States.

Ho₂: There is no significant difference on how societal values affect students’ low enrolment in post-graduate programmes in vocational technical education in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa and Rivers States.

3. Methodology

The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The population was 149 which comprise of 25 from Niger Delta University, Bayelsa State and 124 from Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port-Harcourt, Rivers State. The whole population of 149 was also used as the sample because it was manageable. The instrument used was titled: Factors Affecting Students’ Low Enrolment in Vocational Technical Education Post-Graduate Programmes Questionnaire (FASLEVTEPGPQ. The instrument was divided into two sections. Each of them was used to elicit responses on the research questions raised in the study. The instrument was subjected to face validation by two experts in Measurement and Evaluation Unit of Educational Foundations Department and one expert from Vocational and Technology Education Department, all of the Faculty of Education, Niger Delta University, Wilberforce Island, Bayelsa State. A pilot study was also carried out. The instrument was administered to post-graduate students in Vocational and Technology Education from Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State. The questionnaire was retrieved and the scores obtained from the two administrations were analyzed using Cronbach Alpha Reliability coefficient. A reliability coefficient value of 0.87 was obtained. Then the researchers administered the questionnaire to post-graduate students in vocational and technology education in Bayelsa and Rivers States tertiary institutions. After the data was retrieved, it was analyzed using Z-test for the hypothesis and the mean and standard deviation to address the research questions. The mean value scores exceeding 2.50 were accepted while those below were rejected. Also, reject null hypothesis if calculated Z-value exceed tabulated Z-value or accept. The hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance.

4. Data Analysis

4.1. Research Question 1

To what extent does finance affect students’ low enrolment into postgraduate programmes in vocational technical education in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa and Rivers States tertiary institutions?

Table-1. Financial effect on Students’ Enrolment in Post-Graduate Programmes in Rivers and Bayelsa State Tertiary Institutions

S/N	Items	Niger Delta University			Ignatius Ajuru University		
		Mean	SD	Decision	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Financial post-graduate programme in vocational technical education is expensive	3.25	0.62	Agree	3.24	0.62	Agree
2	Financing post-graduate project in vocational technical education can be frustrating	3.40	0.82	Agree	3.33	0.78	Agree
3	Financing post-graduate programme can lead to poor enrolment of students	3.28	0.68	Agree	3.27	0.68	Agree
4	Lack of finance can delay completion of post-graduate programme in vocational technical education	3.28	0.77	Agree	3.12	0.56	Agree
5	Financing post-graduate programme in vocational technical education may lead to withdrawal of students	3.48	0.77	Agree	3.44	0.80	Agree
	Grand Mean and Standard Deviation	3.34	0.73	Agree	3.28	0.69	Agree
	Within Score 2.50						

N For Niger Delta University 25						
N for Ignatius Ajuru University 124						

The result in Table 1, research question 1 revealed that all question items 1-5 were above the mean response score. The criterion response score of 2.50 for Niger Delta University. Also, the response results of Ignatius Ajuru University also indicated that the mean response scores were also above the criterion response score of 2.50. In addition, the grand mean response score of 3.34 and 3.28 for Niger Delta University and Ignatius Ajuru University were above the criterion response score of 2.50. This means that finance is a factor affecting low students enrolment in post-graduate TVET programmes in tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

4.2. Research Question 2

To what extent do societal values affect students' low enrolment into postgraduate programmes in vocational technical education in tertiary institutions in Bayelsa and Rivers States tertiary institutions?

Table-2. Societal value effect on Students' Enrolment in Post-Graduate Programmes in Rivers and Bayelsa State Tertiary Institutions

S/N	Items	Niger Delta University			Ignatius Ajuru University		
		Mean	SD	Decision	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Technical teachers have low prospect in labour market	3.37	0.74	Agree	3.38	0.74	Agree
2	Lecturer in technical education have low standard of living	3.47	0.84	Agree	3.43	0.83	Agree
3	Technological teachers to not earn well in labour market	3.55	0.89	Agree	3.52	0.88	Agree
4	Job opportunities in technical education are limited to classroom teaching only	3.67	0.92	Agree	3.63	0.91	Agree
5	I would love to secure a job as a technical education instructor.	3.54	0.83	Agree	3.56	0.84	Agree
	Grand Mean and Standard Deviation	3.52	0.84	Agree	3.50	0.84	Agree
	Within Score 2.50 N For Niger Delta University 25 N for Ignatius Ajuru University 124						

The result in Table 2 revealed that all question items 1-5 were above the mean response score. The criteria response score of 2.50 for Niger Delta University, Wilberforce Island, Bayelsa State. Also, the mean response score result of Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt, Rivers State were above the criteria score of 2.50. In addition, the grand mean response of 3.52 and 3.50 for Niger Delta University, Bayelsa State and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rivers State respectively-were above the criteria response scores of 2.50. This means that finance was a factor affecting low students' enrolment in VTE post-graduate programmes in tertiary institutions. Additionally, the mean standard deviation ranging from 0.82 as well as the grand mean was low and clustered together making the instrument to be homogenous.

4.3. Hypothesis

There is no significant difference on how finance affects students' enrolment in post-graduate programme in Rivers and Bayelsa States tertiary institutions and how student value vocational technical training program in labour market.

Table-3. Z-test Analysis of Financial Effects of Student's Enrolment in Post-Graduate Programme in Rivers and Bayelsa State Tertiary Institutions and how Students Value Vocational Technical Training Program in Labour Market

Items	Mean	Standard Deviation	N	df	Z-cal	Z-tab	Decision
Financial effects of PG students enrolment in TVET	3.44	0.73	149	296	10.10	1.960	Rejected
Student value on TVET Program in labour market	2.55	0.79	149				

The data obtained from the null hypothesis showed that z-calculated value of 10.10 was higher than Z-critical value of 1.960 at 0.05 level of significance with 149 degree of freedom. This resulted to the rejection of the null hypothesis based on the decision rule. Therefore, it would be stated that there is significant difference on how finance affects students' enrolment in post-graduate programme in Rivers and Bayelsa States tertiary institutions and how students value vocational technical training programme in labour market.

5. Discussion of Findings

Result obtained from research question 1 showed that finance is a major factor influencing the enrolment of students in vocational technical education programme. This is in agreement with the findings of Pauline and Bernadette (2014) that inadequate finance can limit students from furthering their education. The authors further affirmed that students in higher education programme, may drop out due to financial constraints. Data obtained from research question 2 revealed that vocational technical education teachers do not have low prospect, jobs are not limited to classroom only and they earn better. Osuala (2004), listed other opportunities in vocational technical education that is suitable for training and industrial activities. In addition, it was observed that vocational technical education lecturers are leaving below standard as compared to their job input. This may affect the level of manpower development in the field. (Okwelle and Nworgu, 2007) identified seven forms of wastages in technical and vocational education to include; low enrolment rate of entrants, repetition of class; drop outs, under-utilization of human learning and non- employment of school leavers. Result obtained from hypothesis showed that there is significant difference on how finance affects students' enrolment in post-graduate programmes in Bayelsa and Rivers States tertiary institutions and how society values affect vocational technical training programmes in Bayelsa and Rivers tertiary institutions in Nigeria. This implies that irrespective of financial constraints faced by post-graduate students, it may not affect their perception on how they value vocational technical education programmes. employment of school leavers. Result obtained from hypothesis showed that there is significant difference on how finance affects students' enrolment in post-graduate programmes in Bayelsa and Rivers States tertiary institutions and how society values affect vocational technical training programmes in Bayelsa and Rivers tertiary institutions in Nigeria. This implies that irrespective of financial constraints faced by post-graduate students, it may not affect their perception on how they value vocational technical education programmes.

5. Conclusion

From the findings of this study, it was revealed that finance affected low enrolment of students in post-graduate programmes in Vocational and Technical Education Departments in Tertiary institutions.

In addition, societal values also affected low enrolment because society perceived Vocational technical Education as a programme for less intelligent people, never-do wells, not suitable for white collar jobs.

From the foregoing, it can be concluded that finance and societal values affected students' enrolment into Vocational and Technical Education programmes in post-graduate levels in tertiary institution.

Recommendations

From the research findings, it was recommended that:

1. States and federal Governments should institute a comprehensive fiscal initiative aimed at providing subsidies for tuition and research grants within the realm of post-graduate education, specifically targeting students' enrolment in vocational technical education programmes.
2. States and Federal Governments should mount enlightenment campaign that will disabuse the minds of the populace that VTE is not a second class course or graduates from VTE are also capable of securing white collar jobs like any other programme. Also, to inform the public of the prospects and job opportunities that are abound in VTE.
3. States and Federal Governments should increase budgetary allocation to VTE under Education. With provision of bursary to VTE students.
4. Federal Government should enact a law requesting oil companies and other multinational companies to contribute 1-2 percent of their budget to VTE.

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