

## **ASSESSMENT OF VOCATIONAL MINDSET AND CAREER PLANS OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS OF TAI SOLARIN UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, IJEBU- ODE, NIGERIA**

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### **Abstract**

The study was a survey research designed to obtain data on the vocational mindset and readiness of undergraduate students of the Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijebu-Ode, Nigeria for vocational and entrepreneurship jobs after graduation. A sample of 177 students of form the entire 400 level offering various vocational courses are purposively selected for the study and they responded to a questionnaire that was developed for the study. Data were analysed using frequency distribution and percentages. The findings from the study revealed that entrepreneurial mindset scores of sampled of the undergraduate students followed the pattern of a normal curve with a mean of 24.01 and standard deviation of 7.37. The result of the study also revealed that only 26 (15.3%) of the respondents are interested in self- employment while those intending to be in the private sector were 46 (26.0%) and the remaining 59% would rather want one form of public sector paid appointment or the other. The study recommended that vocational skills and entrepreneurship courses should be embedded with more practice of the skills expected of learners.

**Word Count:** 176

**Key Words:** Vocational Education, Mindset, Career plans, Undergraduate Students

### **Introduction**

Recent development in Nigeria showed that, about 80% of the graduates from Nigerian universities find it difficult to get employment every year Uwaifo (2009).The unemployment problem has therefore injected a negative impact on the Nigeria youths and has made them to be used for different unethical vises like area boys, armed militant, thugs, armed robbery, petty thieves e.t.c. Available information by the National University Commission (NUC 2004) has also reiterates the massive unemployment of Nigerian graduates in the country. This problem is said to be traceable to the curriculum of the higher institutions which lay emphasis on training for white collar jobs and this has eventually creates a miss-match between labour market requirements and lack of essential employable skills by the graduates (Diejomah and Orimolade, 1991; Diabelen, Oni &Adekola, 2000).

Government establishment which used to be the major employer of the university graduates have few vacant positions to accommodate these graduates. The graduates therefore, have to look for non-government jobs in the private sector that are not readily available.This situation pose great challenges to the very existence of individuals in most development countries like Nigeria, thereby calling for the training of educated men and women who can function effectively in the society in which they live.In other to produce graduates that match the economic challenges posed by unemployment, universities have to introduce vocational and entrepreneurship

education so as to prepare the recipients of their training with both competence in their various professions and also provide them the opportunities for self-employment.

Vocational education has been described by different auspices. Anao (2002) states that vocational education is a kind of education that is geared towards the production of the educated men who can effectively work with his head, heart and hands. Olaitan (1998) sees vocational educational as a kind of education or training that equips the learner with saleable or entrepreneurial skills, while Ginzberg (2001) also opines that vocational training is a type of education which has to do with productive work. Assessing the term vocational educational from the view point of these authors, it can be deduced that this type of education equips the beneficiary with saleable, entrepreneurial and vocational skills that would save them all the frustration of searching for non-existing white collar jobs.

The benefits of vocational education are many. Charney and Libecap (2004) reported that vocational education attracts substantial private sector financial contributions, produces self sufficient enterprising individuals, produces successful business and industry leaders, enhances a graduate's ability to create wealth, produces champions of innovation, and leads to greater opportunities with advancing technologies. Obisanya (2010) describes vocational education as an essential ingredient in re-orienting the mindset of Nigerian students towards self employment or job creation. Decening (2008) identifies four minds for vocational future, which are the opportunity recognising mind, the designing mind, the risk managing mind and the resilient mind. The students' mind set could influence the outcome of the vocational education. Watson (2010) views entrepreneurship education to be more than starting a business. He defines entrepreneurship as process through which individuals identify opportunities, allocate resources, and create values. Entrepreneurship education as described by European Union Commission is a process which seeks to provide students with the knowledge, skills and motivation to encourage entrepreneurial success in variety of settings.

Mindset as defined by Etuk (2000) is mentality, habitual or characteristic mental attitude that determines how one will interpret and respond to situations. In the word of Steinhoff (2003), mindset is defined as a set of assumptions, methods or notations held by one or more people which is so established that it creates a powerful incentive within those people or group to continue to adopt or accept prior to behaviours. The challenges of unemployment demand that students have a mindset towards possible opportunities for jobs outside government employment after graduation. Lope PIHI and Sani (2009) in their work, "exploring the vocational mindset of student: Implication for improvement of vocational learning at university", they found students centred learning model known as vocational directed approach as that method, which will enable students to have a positive vocational mindset. There is the possibility that students who are exposed to vocational education might eventually become an entrepreneur.

Oosterbeek, Vanpraag and Ijsselstein (2008) notes that vocational education programme was offered to the students in one location of the school but not to another and found that the programme does not have significant intended effect on students' self assessed vocational skills. However, the effect on the intention to become an entrepreneurship is even significantly negative among the recipients of the programme. Gibb (2002) posits that entrepreneurship education is most effectively placed in the centre that did not have too strong formalized ties with the business schools and that general education his field is left without formalization. He advice that "it is better to have a looser structure in order not to strangle the entrepreneur spirit. When comparing the responses of students from two different nationalities,

Kirby and Ibrahim (2010) found that “ the vocational propensity of the Egyptian students is somewhat higher than that of their counterparts in the United Kingdom, despite the prevailing traditional Knowledge acquisition pedagogy”. When exposed to a more vocational styles of teaching and Learning, the student scores increased by 8% over a twelve week period, suggesting that if a change in vocational educational paradigm could be effected, it should be possible to effect a change in the way students think and behave, thereby helping their vocational culture.

Unemployment, though not new to developing countries, is assuming alarming dimension in recent times. At the basic and secondary levels of education, exposure to vocational subjects is designed to help learners cope with their future employment needs. Universities provide training at the higher level for general and professional employment within society. Worsening situation in the employment market seem to be compelling universities to refocus their curriculum design on the inculcation of job creation rather than job seeking skills in learners. More courses are now been designed to promote vocational skills among university graduates. It is therefore necessary to find out whether university students exposed to these courses have career plans reflecting mastery of acquisition of these skills. The study is therefore designed to find out whether undergraduate students of Tai Solarin University in Ogun state Nigeria have career plans to take up their acquired vocational skills after graduation.

The main objective of this study is the assessment of the effect of vocational courses on career plans of undergraduate students of Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun ,Ogun state. Nigeria. Specifically, the study will attempt to answer the following questions:

- i..What are the personal characteristics of the undergraduate students exposed to vocational skill courses in Tai solarin University of Education?
- ii. What profile of vocational mindset do Tai Solarin University of Education students have?
- iii. Are the undergraduate students ready to take up the acquired vocational skills for entrepreneurial positions after graduation?

### **Establishment of Vocational and Entrepreneurship Centres by Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijebu-Ode. Nigeria**

The federal government feel the need to promote the collaborative efforts of the town and gown in Nigeria. Hence, directed the Nigerian Universities through the National Universities Commission (NUC) to set in motion the setting up of entrepreneurial centre in each university. Also realizing the important role of higher educational system as an instrument for creating wealth, business opportunities, economic development and global market competitiveness, the proprietors of the Tai-Solarin University of Education created a novelty into its educational system by an intelligible integration of vocational and entrepreneurship education into its teacher education to take care of the real, assured or perceived teacher education.

Tai-Solarin University of education was established exclusively to pursue the objectives of teachers, education as contained in the national policy of education. The vision and mission of the centre by the university is that apart from producing highly professional, academically sound, dedicated and disciplined graduate teacher for the various level of education in Nigeria, the university equally intends to make the prospective graduates from the institution to be well grounded and qualify in at least one vocational skill. This is to further equip the graduates to meet the challenges of self-reliance in contemporary Nigeria and the world at large.

The objectives of the centre, through the various courses designed and approved by the National University Commission (NUC) are to:-

- i. Train teacher who are proficient in their respective discipline and also be quality in one vocation that can guarantee self-reliance.
- ii. Equip the students with the needed knowledge and to make them a successful entrepreneur
- iii. Inculcate in the students' knowledge of the modern information communication and technology (ICT) that will enable them to interact with their immediate and distant environment.

The ultimate goal of the centre is that of equipping the graduate for meeting up or coping with the challenges of unemployment or poverty by being self-reliant.

In Tai Solarin University of Education the following vocational skill courses were approved by senate for student in the University. Each student is expected to choose any one of his or her interest. The courses are offered during the first semester of each academic session. Emphasis in the vocational skill courses is on acquisition of practical skills. However, the scientific rudiments and rationale behind the various activities are equally highlighted. Student were expected to be actively in practical works. They will therefore be exposed to project works both in groups and individually. In addition students were expected to be actively involved in the practical activities outside the classroom and at their leisure periods. This, no doubt enhancing their acquisition of the relevant skills. The available vocational courses are:-

1. Fashion Designing and Accessory
2. Catering and confectioneries
3. Textile Design
4. Computer servicing and maintenance
5. Wood work
6. production of fruit juice and non-alcoholic drinks
7. Fish farming
8. Livestock and poultry

Olaitan (1998), in stressing the importance of vocational skill acquisition argues that for the progress of human race, vocational education has been consistent and identifiable element, and that vocational education has been part of the foundation of men's creative and progressive development. When group of youths acquire productive skills through capacity building in vocational training programme they become useful to the society in different ways.

### **Research methodology**

Research method adopted for this study is survey. Courses in vocational skills are offered in all undergraduate students of the University irrespective of their intended course of study. The vocational courses have been structured to cut across all the levels i.e. 100 to 400 level. The population for the study is made up of 400 level students of Tai Solarin University of Education. There are four colleges in the University. A total of 177 students from the four colleges of the university were sampled for this study. A questionnaire was designed to obtain data on the background information, vocational mindset and readiness to use vocational skills from the students. The students were randomly picked from the different departments of the four colleges. The female sample outnumbered the males.

Structured questionnaire was extensively used to gather information for the study. The first part of the questions was to elicit information on the background of the respondents, information on the age, department, the type of vocation, vocational mindset and readiness to use vocational skills from the students. These questions were given adequate face validity by experts in the field of measurement and evaluation in the department of Educational Foundations and Instructional Technology in the College of Applied Education and Vocational Technology of the Tai Solarin University. The students were met during their general courses which usually bring all the students in one college together. The researcher met the students in their different colleges on four different occasions. One day per college. The population of the students was considered to be large and as such may be cumbersome for one person to handle, therefore two other colleagues joined the researcher to interview the students. Simple percentages were used to analyse the respondents' view on the questions raised.

### **Results and discussion**

Data obtained were analysed in response to each of the three research questions stated for the study.

Research Question 1 was on the personal characteristics of the undergraduate students exposed to vocational skills courses in Tai solarin University of Education. The age distribution of the respondents is presented on table 1 below.

**Table 1: age Distribution of Respondents**

Age in years	Frequency	Percentage
Below 20 years	12	6.7
20-24	96	54.3
25-29	45	25.4
30-34	16	9.0
35-39	5	2.8
40 and above	3	1.7
total	177	100.0

As shown on table 1 above, 141 representing (79.75) of the respondents sampled for the study fall within the age range of 20-29 years, while 16 (9%) fall within 30-34 years. Only 12 (6.75) are below 20 years of age while 8(4.5%) are 35 years and above in age.

Table 2: Shows the distribution of respondents across the four colleges in the Tai Solarin University of Education

**Table 2: distribution of Respondents across the colleges**

Colleges	Frequency	Percentage
COSMAS	52	29.4
COSIT	30	16.9
COAEVOT	53	29.9
COHUM	42	23.8
Total	177	100.0

The sampled respondents were purposively selected in the four colleges of the University for the study. College of Applied education and Vocational Technology has the largest size with 53 (29.9%), followed by College of Social Management Studies with 52 (29.4%) and College of

Humanities with 42 (23.8%), while College of Sciences and Information Technology has the lowest number of respondents with 30 (16.9%) respondents.

Table 3 shows the distribution of respondents according to gender

**Table 3: Gender distribution of respondents**

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	76	42.9
Female	101	57.1
Total	177	100.0

The result of the table above shows that majority of the respondents 101 (57.1%) were female while 76 (42.9%) were male.

**Research Question 2**

The second research question was on the profile of vocational mindset of sampled Tai Solarin University of Education students. Frequency distribution of the respondents’ scores on the vocational mindset scale was collected and shown on table 4 below.

**Table 4: Distribution of Respondents’ Vocational Mindset scores**

Scores	Frequency	Percentage
11-15	14	7.8
16-20	39	22.1
21-25	47	26.5
26-30	44	24.9
31-35	20	11.3
36-40	9	5.0
41-45	4	2.3
Total	177	100.0

The scores of sampled Tai Solarin University of Education students followed the pattern of a normal curve with a mean of 24.01 and Standard Deviation of 7.37. It should however be noted that this trend is not expected from students whose mastery of this field could not be taken for granted.

**Research Question 3**

The third research question was on the undergraduate students’ readiness for vocational activities after school. Structure questions was posed to the respondents on the job option they would choose after graduation. The summary of their responses is as presented in table 5 below.

**Table 5: Preferred job Options by Respondents**

Description	Frequency	percentage
Start an enterprise without seeking any paid employment	24	13.6
Combine work with own enterprise	77	43.5
Seek for paid employment until am able to secure one	29	16.4
Leave decision on this to the future	28	15.8
No- response	19	25.9
Total	177	100.0

Table 5 shows that only 24.9 (13.6%) intend to start an enterprise rather than seek for paid employment, while 77 (43.5) intend to combine work with their own enterprise. The remaining

76 (58.1%) would either seek for paid employment or leave the decision as to employment for the future.

The respondents were further asked whether they are ready for vocational and entrepreneurial position after graduation from the university. The sampled respondents (students) described what they want to do after graduation from school in terms of getting employed as summarized in table 6 below.

**Table 6: Respondents' Readiness for Vocational and Entrepreneurial Position**

Description of Respondents' aspirations	Frequency	Percentage
Seek paid employment in the private sector	46	26.0
Seek to be self employed	26	15.3
Seek paid employment in the public sector	46	26.0
Seek paid employment in the non government organization	30	16.9
Work for a socio-philanthropic organization	8	4.5
Not sure of what to do	10	5.6
Total	177	100.0

The summary in table 6 above suggests that only 26 (15.3%) are interested in self employment. The group that could be considered as likely to still depend on vocational skills are those intending to be in the private sector 46 (26.0%) which may be motivated just because of the pay structure. About 59% of the respondents indicated that they would want a public sector paid job. This is still reflect the traditional attitude to employment where the major chunk of graduates hopes to absorbed into government and other public sector jobs.

In consideration of whether these graduates will be ready raise funds to pursue particular vocational goals. Questions were asked on the source from which they would like to obtain funds and their responses are summarized in table 7 below

**Table 7: Respondents' Readiness to source for fund to do Business**

Preferred source of fund by respondents	Frequency	Percentage
Take a loan and be prepared to pay interest on it to start a business	36	20.3
Take an interest free loan to start a business	38	21.5
Use only personal savings to start a business	74	41.8
No interest at all seeking funds for any business	31	16.4
Total	177	100.0

As shown on table 7, as many as 31 (16.4%) show no interest in doing any form of business and would therefore seek no fund. If this is added to the 74 (41.8%) that would do business only with their personal savings and considering that fresh graduates who are job seekers have neither an income nor savings to fall back on, then vocational and entrepreneurship is far- fetched from a majority of the respondents. To also consider that an interest free loan is difficult to come by and as many as 38 (21.5%) would take this option, then there are only 36 (20.3%) that could be seen as being serious with vocational and entrepreneurial thinking. This reinforces the earlier finding on the strength of the vocational mindset of respondents in this study.

### **Recommendations**

Since the majority of the respondents (147) in this study, constituting almost 84% have undergone at least one vocationalcourse, it is shown from the findings that more would still be required in the way of helping undergraduates to cultivate vocational mindset through some of

the courses to which they would be exposed to in the university. It is therefore recommended that those presently offering the courses should promote active involvement of their students in vocational programmes and activities. They should be made to actively plan and execute those enterprises that would attract income to them. Those who are into degree programmes not currently offering courses in vocational and entrepreneurship should be encouraged to introduce students to it because of the current demands in the job market. Also, government should show more practical commitment toward its youths in the implementation of her programmes aimed at poverty reduction and job creation. Adequate resources should be committed towards encouraging vocational skill acquisition along with the various disciplines being offered by the youths in our higher institutions. The school curriculum should be planned and implemented in such a way that the graduating student become job creator.

### **Conclusion**

With the ever-increasing joblessness in Nigeria, the need for capacity building in vocational skill programmes cannot be over-emphasized. Vocational education programmes available in the school curriculum should be given adequate attention by the government and adequately funded by providing the necessary tools and equipment needed. For vocational education programme to give sustainable poverty alleviation and provide self-employment, the youths should be equipped practically during their course of study and assisted financially by government and other agencies. When this is done, perhaps, peace and stability can be guaranteed in this country. When there is peace and stability, development will surface and the international image of the country would be further enhanced.

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