
Students Perception of Parental Influence on Their Choice of Vocational Education in Benue State

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Abstract

This study was carried out to investigate students' perception of parental influence on their choice of Vocational Education in Benue State. The study was guided by three research questions. Survey design was used for the study. The population for the study was 660 senior secondary school students. A sample of 330 students was randomly selected from all the eight technical collages in the state with hat-and-draw sampling technique. The instrument used for data collection was Focused Group Discussion (FGD). The finding revealed that there is no significant difference in the perception of parental influence among student of urban and rural technical schools. It was also disagreed that adequate support was not given to students of technical collages and that some of them depend on menial jobs to cater for themselves.

Education is essential to the achievement of personal goals and individual aspirations and it is a precious asset of fundamental importance to the society. It lays a vital role in the technological advancement of any nation. This is why Nigeria redesigned the curricula of the nation to reflect the full range of human difference, interest, abilities, talents, and needs (FRN, 2004).

The advent of vocational/technical subjects as core courses in the Nigeria curriculum was the brainchild of the 1969 curriculum conference by the Nigeria Educational Research Development Council (NERDC) for the curriculum reform. The colonial education legacy, which was grossly inadequate to meet the social, cultural

and economic needs of Nigerians. One of the major purposes of vocational education is to prepare the young learners for immediate employment on leaving school.

To Alaezi (1990), the schools with vocational education orientation are not only designed to prepare pupils for particular trades and occupations but also provide them with a kind of practical education which enables them to enter a particular industry. Thus, among other subjects, the curriculum, of these schools are structured to include such vocational subjects as wood work, metal work, mechanics, electronics, local craft, home economics and business studies. It is as a result of the above problem that this paper attempted an investigation into students' perception of parental influence on their choice of vocational education.

Purpose of the Study

The major purpose of this study is to determine students' perception of parental influence on their choice of vocational education. Specifically, the study sought to achieve the following objectives;

- i. To investigate students' perception of parental influence on their choice of vocational/technical education.
- ii. To determine the level of support students reading vocational/technical subjects receive from their parents.
- iii. To investigate other preferred career choice vocational/technical education student would have if not influenced by parents.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study.

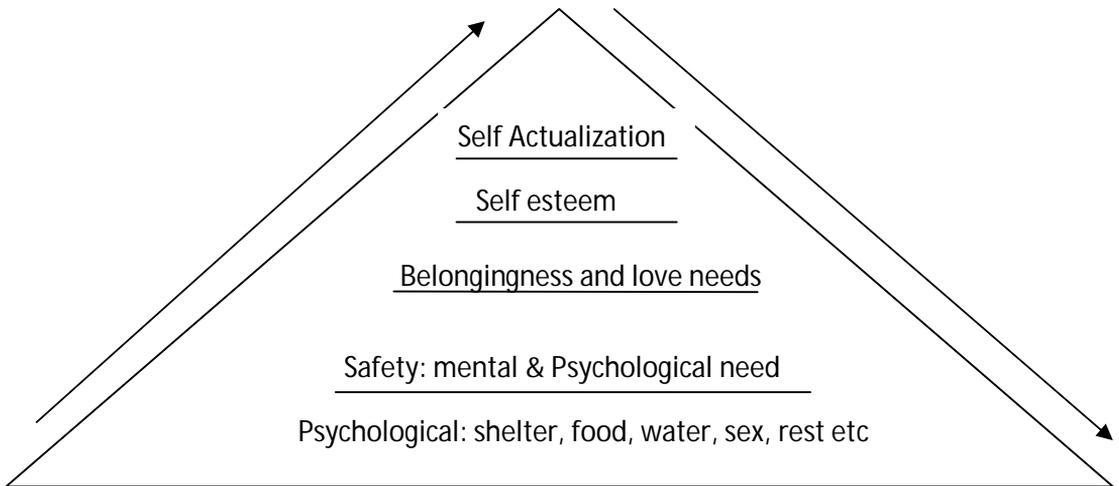
1. To what extent do urban students perceptions of parental influence on their choice of vocational/technical education differ from those of their rural counterpart in respect of same issue?
2. What is the perception level of parental support for their children's choice of vocational/ technical subjects in urban schools as compared to the support they exhibit for rural schools?
3. To what extent do the perceived alternative career choices of student from urban technical schools differ from those of their counterparts from rural technical schools?

Theoretical/Conceptual Carifications

The theory of motivation by Abraham Maslow of 1954 was adopted for this study. Abraham Maslow's theory of Hierarchy of needs said that human needs are many and varied. At any point in time, an individual has many competing needs seeking his attention. Those competing needs can be ordered in a hierarchy from the

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most energetic to the least energetic at any given instant. Maslow arranged human needs from the most primary needs to the higher order motives as follows:



Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1954)

Self: Actualization Needs

These needs involve the development of an individual’s potential to do what he is capable of doing. It includes motives for competence, proficiency, achievement, exploration, and self determination. These elements persist for a life time. Factors like good health, good communication, positive human relationships, self acceptance and understanding, positive self – acceptance and understanding that provides for individual differences and self actualization. Activities such as games, drama, music, debates on social problems and scientific investigations should be encouraged in schools to enable students showcase their competence in such areas (Ngwoke, 1995).

Self Esteem Needs

Self-esteem is concerned with the individuals worth, his self-respect and self – concept. A learner who has a positive self-concept sets attainable and realistic goals. Such student is more likely to succeed in the future than the one who has a negative self-concept. It is therefore an important factor for academic achievement in school.

Every student is competent in one thing or the other. The teacher should identify the strength and weakness of every learner and encourage student to develop favorable self image rather than making abusive remarks on students and their families that will make them develop a negative self-concept (Thornburg, 1995; Wilson & Corpus, 2005).

Belongingness and Love Needs

These include affection, feeling for group affiliation and identification. The classroom is a social environment and no student should be made a stranger in the class. They should be actively and equally engaged in activities like clubs and inter – house competition to enhance the development of group affiliation among students.

Safety Needs

Safety needs include needs for stability, security and orderliness. The learning environment that involves excessive manual labour, bullying or corporal punishment of student and threat from authority makes learners feel unsafe in the school compound which affect them psychologically. The teacher should therefore minimize the manner he exercises authority on the learner in order to prevent the actualization of growth needs of student in the classroom (Lasha way Bokina, 2000)

Nwachukwu (2007) only orchestrated what this theory is all about. To him motivation is an energizing force that induces or compels and maintains behavior. Motivation is an internal psychological process whose presence or absence is inferred from observed performance. According to Nwachukwu, motivated behavior has three characteristics.

1. It is sustained, when it is maintained for long time until satisfied.
2. It is goal-directed when it seeks to achieve an objective.
3. It results from a felt need which is an urge directed towards a need.

The process of motivation therefore starts with a perceived need, after which tension is created resulting to motivating behaviors. It is this motivating behaviors that lead to the realization of the need which is goal oriented behavior.

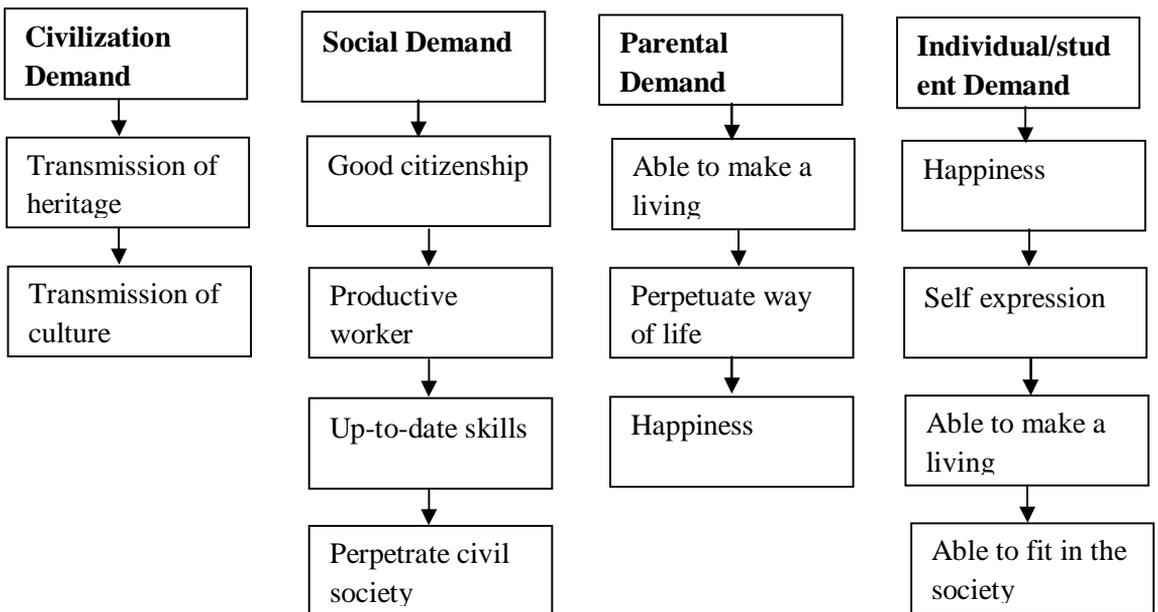
This is why students' perception of their parental influence of their choice of vocational/technical education is based on motivation theory. We react to things the way we perceive them. If we perceive the need which would be reduced by a particular event or object, we are motivated to work towards that event. For instance, when children who are talented and interested in vocational/technical education discover their parental low interest in the subject, it creates aggression, withdrawal, displacement, repression and even apathy. That is when the target criterion we want to achieve does not ring bell as to how it can help us in life; we may not be motivated towards achieving this criterion variable.

To Elazar (2004) individual free choice is basic to pluralistic democratic societies. He opined that the choice of subjects basically has been in the hands of parents who presumably guide the education of their children or alternatively in the hands of the state which has committed itself to impacting a certain kind of education

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on the children of its citizen and resident. According to Elazer (2004) in the United States and other Western democracies, education was initially a responsibility shared by parents and communities. In recent years the western world has shown an increasing desire to restore the possibilities of choice in education by offering its citizens a variety of educational options, and allowing the students the opportunity to choose from among them. This tendency is strengthened by paralleled moves towards decentralization and localism, which acknowledge that local residents are aware of their own needs and requirements in educational matters.

It is in the light of similar ideas of the United States and Western world that Nigeria after series of curriculum conferences changed its policy on education to reflect the societal needs of the people thereby introducing vocational/technical education to cater for unemployment problem. According to Elazar, (2004) the treatment of the issue of choice in education is not an easy one because, every educational system must respond to four sets of demands whose importance is given different weight by different segments of the body polity. These four sets of demands projected by Elazar (2004) are civilization, social, parental and individual demands. Elazar captures further attributes of the various demands in the table on the next page:



Sources: Elazar’s sets of Educational Demand. (2004)

In discussing the various demands Elizar posited that the first task of educational system is to transmit the heritage of the civilization it serves because cultural transmission is believed to be the treasures of heritage. The social dimension of education on the other hand has to do with perpetuation of civil society, which involves education for good citizenship, education to develop productive workers for the society for the up-to-date skills and education for social control. Elazar believes very strongly that parents want the educational system to teach their children to be able to make a living, help them perpetuate their way of life and at least in some vague way their pursuit of happiness.

The individual students dimension however emphasizes that education should help to seek happiness in schools and offer assistance to students in the pursuit of happiness beyond their formal education. The students also seek self expression, and individual goals, which are widely acceptable by the society and education for adjustment or the ability to fit in.

There should therefore be increase in range of learning options to allow students more choices of schools and subjects according to their abilities, interest and talents. The rigid division between the arts and science streams should be removed and equal emphasis placed on the acquisition of knowledge, skills and positive values. However, every educational system must respond in some measures to all the four demands as indicated in the table. The ordering and the emphasis will however be different from polity to polity.

Methodology

The research design used for this study was descriptive survey. It used the total population of 660 students all from SSII in eight technical collages. A sampling technique of hat and draw method was used and a sample of 330 students were randomly selected from all the vocational/technical schools. The students were further divided into fifteen groups for Focused Group Discussion (FGD) with each group having twenty two students. Proximity of the institutions to one another was used as a key factor in constituting the FGD groups. The instrument used for data collection was the Focused Group Discussion (FGD). The data for the study were collected through the qualitative survey method using the tools of FGD.

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Data Presentation and Analysis of Findings

Tables showing preferences of parents' choice of academic programmes.

Table I: Shows Students' Opinion Regarding Technical/Vocational and Non Technical/Vocational Education Programmes

Do Parents Prefer Non-Technical/Vocational Education Programme to Technical/Vocational Education Programmes?

FGD	NO	Yes	No	Undecided	Percentage
Urban	22	17	3	2	88%
Rural	22	15	4	3	79%
Total		32	7	5	

Table I reveals that parents prefer non technical/vocational education in both urban and rural areas, to Technical/Vocational education.

Table 2: Shows Students' Opinion Regarding the Influence of Available Jobs on Their Parents Preference of Academic Programmes

Does the Nature of Jobs Available for Graduants of Non Technical/Vocational Education Students Influence Parent's Preference?

FGD	NO	Yes	No	Undecided	Percentage
Urban (22)		18	4	1	92%
Rural (22)		16	4	2	83%
Total		34	7	3	

Table two reveals that the nature of jobs available to graduants of non technical/vocational schools influences parents' preference of non Technical/vocational schools to technical/vocational schools, among rural and urban parents. This might not be unconnected with the fact that white collar jobs which are more available to graduants of non Technical/Vocational graduants are much more preferable and fashionable among the Nigerian populace. This invariably explains why students of Technical/Vocational schools enjoy less patronage and support from parents.

Table 3: Shows the Influence of the General Employability and Occupation Specific Skills Provided By Technical/Vocational Programmes to Students of Urban and Rural Schools

Does the General Employability and Occupation Specific Nature of Technical/Vocational School Programmes Influence Students Preference of Technical/Vocational Schools?

FGD	NO	Yes	No	Undecided	Percentage
Urban (22)		20	2	-	92%
Rural (22)		15	5	2	83%
	Total	35	7	2	

Table 3 reveals that majority of the students want the Technical/Vocational education because of sustainable jobs; a job that will bring in enough earning to take care of their daily needs unlike the white collar jobs that are difficult to come by.

Major findings from the FGD conducted include:

- a. There is no difference in the perception of parental influence among students of technical schools in urban and rural areas.
- b. Students in both urban and rural technical schools have common history and culture.
- c. Students of both urban and rural technical schools exist under the same socio-cultural conditions and major social actions in the polity affect them in same manner.
- d. Though perception differs a little bit, students of both urban and rural vocational schools agree that safety needs and desired capacity for self actualization are major factors that influence their parents' perceptions.

Discussion of Findings

The results of the findings show that there is no difference in the perception of parental influence among students of technical schools in both urban and rural areas. This may not be unconnected with the fact that both students of urban and rural technical schools have common history culminating into common problems and aspirations which are generic in nature. Their needs and wishes are therefore almost similar and this possibly accounts for the similarity in their view on perception of external influence on choice of vocational/technical subjects. It was gathered that parents preferred non-technical programmes which would lead their children to white collar jobs in offices, rather than a technical/craft oriented jobs in workshops. Participations in FGD, groups stated that many parents refused to assist their children who had preferences for vocational studies. The students agreed that while they appreciated their parents' desire to study courses that would lead to office jobs, they

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were equally aware of the fact that white collar jobs could no longer go round everybody with requisite qualifications. According to the students, they wanted to study a programme that would give them sustainable jobs; a job that would bring in enough earnings to take care of their daily needs and those of their families.

Urban and rural vocational students who participated in FGD had similar understanding of where they were coming from, where they were, and where they were going. They explained that while it was quite easy to get a choice job with any certificate one had some twenty years back, it was no longer possible to get even the lowest rated job, particularly in public sector. Their visions were that a strong background in vocational programmes would not only bring about jobs but the creation of employment opportunities for those with viable vocational skills. They believed their success would bring about a change in perception of their parents towards vocational programmes.

Other reasons for the similarity of view between students of rural and urban vocational schools were the fact that the same curriculum is used in both schools. Their abilities to become aware of their environment and creativity carve a living from it becomes a common goal particularly that both exist under the same socio-cultural conditions, this agrees with Oledede's [1984] view that individuals learn to know their world through their sense organs, but what they perceive also depends on what they bring forth from their past experiences and what their present needs and wishes are.

The survey submits that vocational education is a competency-based applied learning that contributes the academic knowledge, higher order reasoning and problem-solving skills, work attitude, general employability skills and occupation -specific skills of an individual which should be encouraged rather than being perceived as a worthless programme.

Suggestions/Way Forward

Scholarships or start-off grants should be given to the graduates at the end of their courses to set up their own businesses.

Awareness drive targeting parents and guardians is advocated for here. Such an exercise could expose the parents to the advantages technical programmes have over other programmes particularly in the area of self employment and self actualization.

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