

Impediments To The Acquisition Of Practical Skills For Proficiency Among Technical College Students In Delta State, Nigeria.

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Abstract

This study investigated the impediments to the acquisition of practical skills for proficiency among technical college students in Delta State. Four research questions were raised to guide the study. A descriptive survey design was used for the study. The population of this study consists of all the students and teachers in the six technical colleges in Delta State. A sample size of 180 respondents which comprise twenty five (25) students and five (5) teachers from each of the six technical colleges in Delta State. A 19 – item structured questionnaire was used for data collection and the data was analysed using sample percentage. The findings of the study revealed that inadequate provision of training materials, tools, equipment, instructional material, nature of industrial attachment, inadequate training given to teachers among others are impediments to the acquisition of practical skills by students in technical colleges in Delta State. Based on these findings, the following recommendations were made; that all stakeholders should contribute adequately in providing training materials, tools and equipment for the acquisition of

practical skills, industrial attachment should be given priority attention, quality of teaching in practical skill classes should be monitored closely and practical skill classes should be effective and efficient.

Introduction

Technical colleges in Nigeria have been training students with requisite skills to become technically inclined individuals that can fit into the world of work. These skills qualify and fortify them for jobs in both government and private sectors. Both sectors, according to Ndomi (2008), require well-trained and competent technicians who can operate and maintain the available technical equipment. Therefore, it is necessary that the government should provide well-equipped technical colleges for education and practical training to produce graduates that will be both educationally and technically equipped with practical skills that will enable them stand out in the world of work without the need for pre-employment training. The major goal of vocational institutions is to prepare students for successful employment in the labor market (Finch & Crunkilton, 2009). This situation can be achieved

by establishing a curriculum that is practically oriented with necessary workshop and training equipment.

Technical Colleges' workshops give room for practical training and skills acquisition of students in technical courses for future development in important sectors in order to attain the basic needs of electricity, construction, production, maintenance and manufacturing among others. Students' practical projects are an important part of the curriculum in technical colleges, but a supportive school environment is a fundamental requirement for the successful implementation of curriculum (Bybee & Loucks-Horsely, 2006; Penney & Fox, 2007). This curriculum can only be implemented when facilities in the workshops are made available and sufficient. Available and adequate equipment enhances student's learning which enables them to be involved in demonstrations, and practical training which will continue to enhance and build their skills.

In recent time, most Technical Colleges in Nigeria have actually recorded low performance due to inadequate and poor maintenance of the required facilities in the workshops for effective training which has affected the acquisition of practical skills for proficiency by students of Technical Colleges in

Delta State. It has been shown that Technical College graduates have 2-tier advantages: they can become theoretically skilled as well as being practically skilled (Miller, 2011). According to Oke (2005), practical skill is the ability to do something expertly well, especially as a result of long practical experience. This entails technical processes that bring about the attainment of ultimate and required goals. Every individual is called to this challenge to be creative; therefore technical education enables one to use their talents, practical skills and abilities to explore various careers and opportunities using available local resources irrespective of social, economic, political and religious status.

However, the acquisition of practical skills for proficiency by students in Technical Colleges is still faced with many problems which Miller (2011), highlighted as; inadequate supply of technical workshops, inadequate supply of instructional material, lack of adequate motivation, poor professional personnel and public image. For effective implementation of technical education and for students to acquire practical skills for proficiency, technical colleges will need extra resources and supports. At a time of economic recession such as

that which presently exists in Nigeria, the shortage of financial and human resources creates more difficulty in reducing the problems facing technical education in technical colleges. Gidado (2010), stated that policy objectives are not being met because of the quality and quantity of teachers and instructors available in the technical colleges, and the teachers produced over the years have fallen short of national expectations and needs of the society. He further stated that inadequate number of qualified teachers and poorly trained teachers is another impediment to the acquisition of practical skills.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the various interventions to ensure that students of technical colleges are well equipped with the requisite practical skills for the labour market and the awareness campaign about the benefits of technical and vocational education, it has not attracted youths in the region to move into technical and vocational training at all because most of the technical college graduates have not been able to gain employment in their respective fields of training. The reason is that most of these technical college students do not possess the

employable skills needed by the labour market.

Furthermore, there are still various problems facing the acquisition of practical skills in technical colleges in Delta State. All these have in no small measures impeded the acquisition of practical skills for proficiency in Technical Colleges (Amoer, 2009). It is against this backdrop that the researcher undertook this study to ascertain why the technical college students do not possess the needed employable skills for proficiency in the world of work.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to identify the impediment to the acquisition of practical skills for proficiency by technical college students in Delta State. Specifically, the study sought to find out:

- i. the impediments facing technical college students' practical skill acquisition for proficiency.
- ii. the level at which teachers' qualifications and quality of teaching affect the acquisition of practical skills.
- iii. the effect of these impediments on the acquisition of practical skills for proficiency.

- iv. the relevance of the practical skills acquired by technical college students to the world of work.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide this study:

- i. What are the impediments facing technical college students in practical skill acquisition for proficiency?
- ii. To what extent do teachers' qualifications and quality of teaching affect the acquisition of practical skills?
- iii. What is the effect of these impediments on the acquisition of practical skills for proficiency?
- iv. What is the relevance of the practical skills acquired by technical college students to the world of work?

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study would be of great benefit to technical educators in imparting students with relevant practical skills for proficiency and also ensure that all impediments to the acquisition of practical skills by technical college students are reduced.

The findings of this study would also be of immense benefit to students of technical colleges as they would see the need to acquire the

requisite practical skills for proficiency needed in the world of work.

It is expected that the findings of this study would be beneficial to educational planners and schools administrators as it would enable them to put in place, facilities that would enhance acquisition of practical skills for proficiency by technical college students.

Scope of the Study

The study covered the six technical colleges in Delta State which include:

- Government Technical College, Sapele
- Government Technical College, Agbor
- Government Technical College, Utagbe-Ogbe
- Government Technical College, Isele-uku
- Government Technical College, Ofagbe
- Government Technical College, Ogor

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey design in carrying out the investigation because the study sought information from the sample that was drawn from the population.

Population of the Study

The population of the study consisted of all the students and teachers in the six technical colleges in Delta State

Sample and Sampling Technique

A random sampling was used to select one hundred and eighty (180) respondents made up of twenty five (25) students and five (5) teachers from each of the six technical colleges in Delta State.

Instrument

A 4-point scale of 19-item questionnaire that covered the four research questions was used for the data collection.

Validity of the Instrument

The instrument was subjected to both face and content validity by three experts in vocational/technical education. The final outcome of the questionnaire was based on the experts' comments and suggestions.

Reliability of the Instrument

The reliability of the instrument was established using test-retest method. The Pearson's product

moment correlation was employed to calculate the correlation coefficient (r) which was 0.91. which showed that the instrument was reliable.

Method of Data Collection

The instrument was administered to the respondents by the researcher and two guided research assistants. One hundred and eighty copies of questionnaires were distributed to the respondents and One hundred and sixty five were returned which represents 91.67%.

Method of Data Analysis

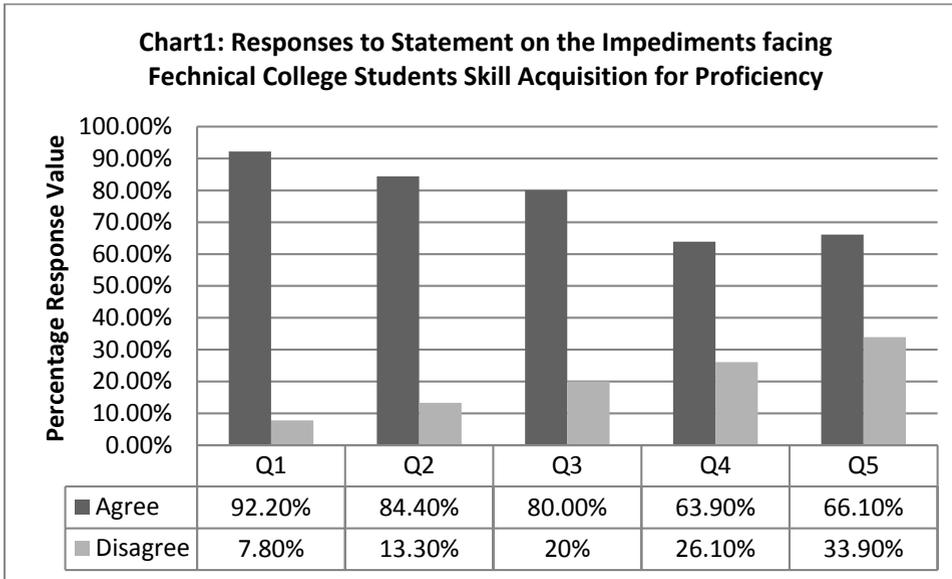
The data collected were analysed using sample percentage. The researcher considered it necessary to treat "strongly Agreed" and Agreed simply as "Agreed" while strongly Disagree and Disagreed simply as "Disagreed". The formula for percentage is:

$$\frac{\text{Total number of respondents}}{\text{Total number of questionnaires}} \times \frac{100}{1}$$

Results

The results of the study are presented as follows:

Research Question 1: What are the impediments facing technical college students in practical skill acquisition for proficiency?



In chart1, item 1 above shows that 166 respondents representing 92.2% of the respondents were of the opinion that inadequate provision of training materials is an impediment to technical college students' skill acquisition for proficiency. This indicates an agreement with the question item 1 while 14 respondents representing 7.8% disagreed. Similarly, item 2 shows that 152 respondents representing 84.4% were of the opinion that class size has a negative effect on effective practical teaching which is an impediment to technical college students' skill

acquisition for proficiency. This indicates an agreement with item 2 while 28 respondents representing 13.3% disagreed. Also item 3 above shows that 144 respondents representing 80.0% were of the opinion that there is inadequate provision of basic workshop tools and equipment. This indicates an agreement with item 3 while 36 respondents representing 20.0% disagreed. Moreover, item 4 above, indicated that 115 respondents representing 63.9% agreed that little attention is given to industrial attachment while 65 respondents

representing 26.1% disagreed. Furthermore item 5 above indicated that 119 respondents representing 66.1% agreed that poor/insufficient instructional material in technical colleges is an impediment to technical college students' skill acquisition for

proficiency while 61 respondents representing 33.9% disagreed.

Research Question 2: To what extent do teachers' qualifications and quality of teaching affect the acquisition of practical skills?

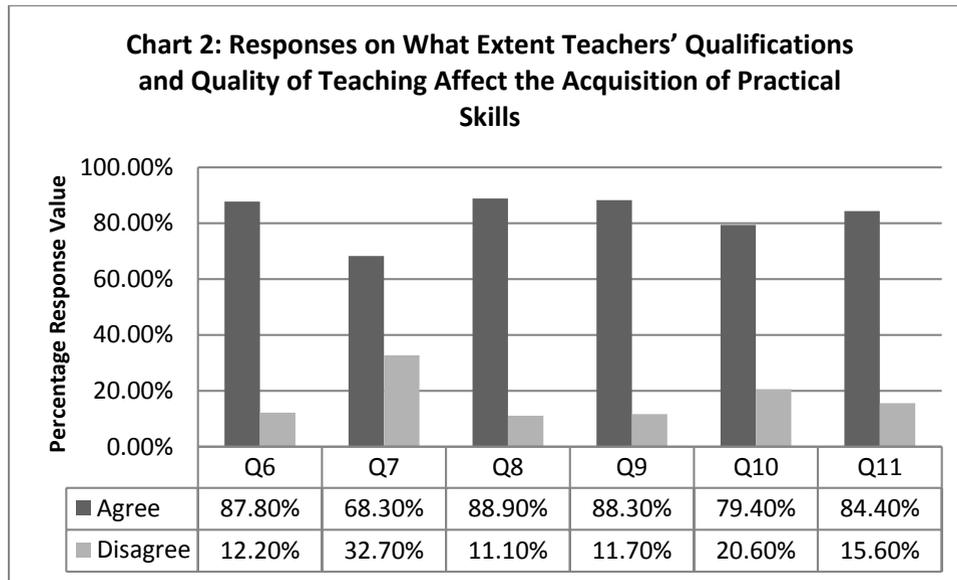


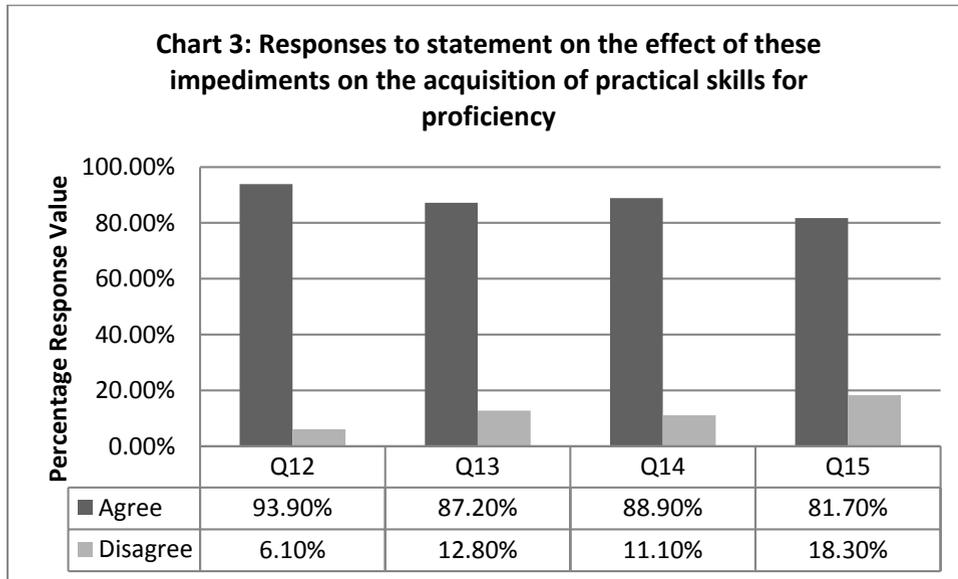
Chart 2, revealed that item 6 above indicated that 158 respondents representing 87.8% agreed that inadequate practical training given to teachers affect the practical training of students while 22 respondents representing 12.2% disagreed. Also item 7 above indicated that 123 respondents representing 68.3% agreed that lack of industrial attachment for teachers affect practical skills training while 57 respondents representing 32.7%

disagreed. From item 8 above, it indicated that teachers develop apathy to workshop practice due to lack of motivation while 20 respondents representing 11.1% disagreed. Similarly, item 9 above indicated that 159 respondents representing 88.3% agreed that inappropriate teaching methods also affect practical skill training while 21 respondents representing 11.7% disagreed. In the same vein, item 10 above indicated that 143 respondents representing

79.4% agreed that inability to control large class size during practical skills training affect practical skills training while 37 respondents representing 20.6% disagreed. Moreover, item 11 above indicated that 152 respondents representing 84.4% agreed that teachers with poor qualifications lack

better teaching skills and abilities while 28 respondents representing 15.6% disagreed.

Research Question 3: What is the effect of these impediments on the acquisition of practical skills for proficiency?



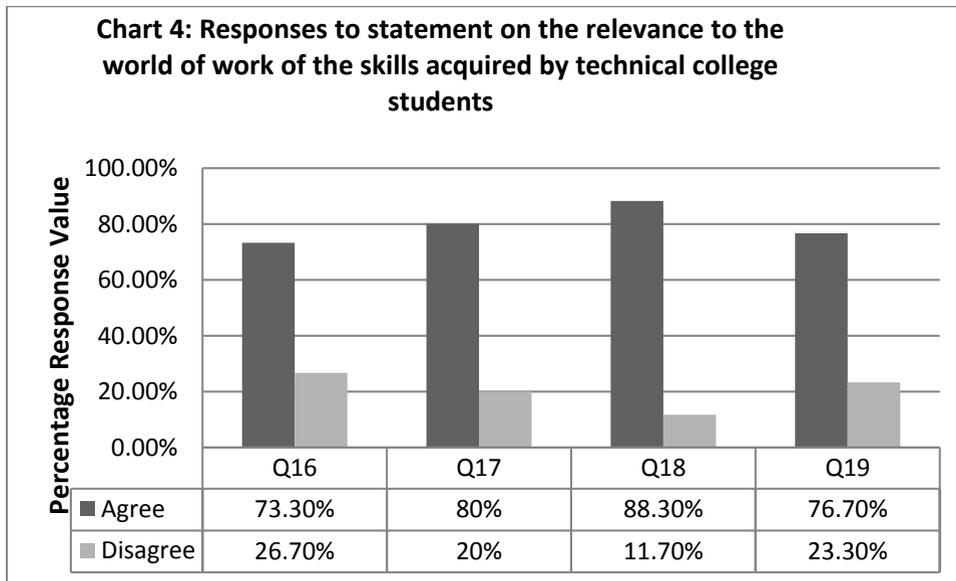
In Chart 3, item 12 indicated that 169 respondents representing 93.9% agreed that poor academic performance is one of the effects of the impediments on the acquisition of practical skills for proficiency while 11 respondents representing 6.1% disagreed. Similarly, item 13 above indicated that 157 respondents representing 87.2% agreed that low

practical skills by technical students is an effect of the impediments on the acquisition of practical skills for proficiency while 23 respondents representing 12.8% disagreed. Furthermore, item 14 above indicated that 160 respondents representing 88.9% agreed that the inability of technical students to fit into the world of work is another effect of the

impediments on the acquisition of practical skills for proficiency while 20 respondents representing 11.1% disagreed. Also item 15 above indicated that 147 respondents representing 81.7% agreed that poor attitude to learning of practical skills related courses is also an effect of the impediments on the acquisition of

practical skills for proficiency while 33 respondents representing 18.3% disagreed.

Research Question 4: What is the relevance to the world of work to the skills acquired by technical college students?



From chart 4, item 16 above indicated that 132 respondents representing 73.3% indicated that the skills acquired by technical college students will increase the rate of self-employed and self-empowered individuals in the society while 48 respondents representing 26.7% disagreed. From item 17 above, it indicated that 144 respondents

representing 80.0% agreed that skills acquired by technical college students will increase the level of practically oriented graduates in the labour market while 36 respondents representing 20.0% disagreed. From item 18 above, it indicated that 159 students presenting 88.3% agreed that the skills acquired by technical college students will reduce the over

dependency on government jobs by students after school while 21 respondents representing 11.7% disagreed. Finally, from item 19 above it indicated that 138 respondents representing 76.7% agreed that the skills acquired by technical college students will enhance productivity and manufacturing in the industries while 42 respondents representing 22.3% disagreed.

Discussion of Findings

Chart 1 revealed that a large percentage of the respondents agreed that all the items are impediments to the acquisition of practical skills for proficiency among technical college students. These include, inadequate provision of training materials, tools, equipment, instructional materials, class size and the nature of industrial attachment. This finding is in agreement with Opeoluwa (2007), who stated that only 40% of technical colleges in Nigeria have the educational resources needed for the impartation of skills; resulting in the production of low quality technical graduates. On the question of class size, Dasmani (2011), maintained that large class size do not match with the supply and provision of training resources, and that this does not allow the instructor to attract and retain the attention of all the students during practical classes. Also on the issue of

the little attention given to technical colleges students' industrial attachment, Palmer (2005), asserted that technical colleges have not been able to access opportunities for industrial attachment and as a result there is little or no link between the practical skills training in the school and the world of work. This situation has left many technical college students unemployed on graduation.

Furthermore, in chart 2 above, the respondents agreed that teachers' qualification and quality of teaching are impediments to the acquisition of practical skills for proficiency. This finding is in line with Akamobi (2005), who observed that teachers' qualification and quality of teaching are very important to the acquisition of practical skills in vocational and technical education and that the absence of any of these two essential ingredients will lead to the production of half baked technical college graduates with little or no employable skills.

In addition, chart 3 showed that all the respondents agreed with all the items as the effects of the impediments on the acquisition of practical skills for proficiency. This finding is in agreement with Okorie (2011), who stated that the effect of these impediments on the acquisition of practical skills has resulted in the drastic decrease of practical

knowledge and performance of students, high rate of unemployment, increase in the rate of societal ills and decrease in the economic development of the country.

Chart 4 revealed that the respondents agreed that acquisition of practical skills by technical college students has relevance to the world of work as it will reduce unemployment, increase the level of practical oriented graduates in the labour market, reduce dependency on government jobs and enhance productivity. This finding is in line with Onifade (2005), who observed that acquisition of requisite skills is a means of increasing the production power of a nation, hence Nigeria as a nation should recognize the fact that every citizen should be equipped with skills that will enable him/her to be self reliant as this will also promote the well being of the country.

Conclusion

The acquisition of practical skills for proficiency by technical college students leads to the production of craftsmen and technicians that are needed in the world of work. However, the result of the study showed that there are a lot of impediments to the acquisition of practical skills for proficiency among technical college students. Amidst the hue and cry for technological development in the country, there is

the need to ensure that nothing hinders practical skills acquisition in technical colleges. Therefore, all stakeholders must put in place all the necessary machinery that will ensure that technical college students acquire the practical skills needed for the world of work.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

- All stakeholders should contribute adequately in providing training materials, tools, equipment and other infrastructural facilities for the acquisition of practical skills in technical colleges.
- Industrial attachment should be given priority attention by vigorously promoting it for both staff and students.
- Teachers qualification and quality of teaching in practical skill classes should be given close monitoring.
- Practical skill classes should be effective and efficient in order to achieve the desired result of imparting practical skills needed for the world of work.

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