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EDITORIAL DESK

The Centre for General Nigerian Studies has continued to be a frontier for knowledge dissemination through her series of publications, among other activities being performed by the directorate.

This volume 5 journal of Contemporary Issues in Nigerian Economy of March 2025 housed a total of 18 well researched articles from scholars across the geographical boundaries of the Africa sub region. The team of experienced editors subjected the articles to peer review, and their plagiarism checks have satisfied the guild of editors.

The journal is recommended to researchers, scholars, lecturers, and students to read, and the planners can leverage on recommendations as panacea to the doldrums confronting the socio-economic and educational spheres of the Sub Sahara Africa nations

I wish all the contributors and readers Barka Eid Fitri and Easter in advance

Prof. M.O.B Mohammed FNAEAP

Lead Editor

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INCLUSIVE VOCATIONAL EDUCATION THROUGH THE CURRICULUM IN PUBLIC JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL A PATHWAY TO ERADICATE CORRUPTION FROM THE GRASSROOTS

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Abstract

Inculcating vocational education into the curriculum of public junior secondary schools offers a pragmatic pathway to addressing corruption from the grassroot level. This approach focuses on equipping students with practical skills, ethical values, and a sense of responsibility, fostering self-reliance and integrity. Vocational education emphasised hands-on training in various trades and professions, reducing dependence on white-collar jobs and mitigating the desperation that often lead to corrupt practices. This paper explored the integration of vocational education as a strategic framework for empowering young learners with employable skills, ethical grounding, and economic opportunities. By fostering transparency and accountability in the curriculum, students developed a strong moral compass, ensuring that values like honesty, diligence, and responsibility became integral to their worldview. Moreover, the financial independence gained through skill acquisition minimizes the allure of corrupt practices, as individuals have legitimate avenues for income generation. The study highlighted successful case studies of vocational programmes in public education systems worldwide, offering actionable insights for policymakers. It advocated for partnerships between public institutions, private organizations, and non-governmental bodies to create sustainable and scalable vocational training models. It was therefore recommended among others that government should increase funding and investment through strengthening of industry-education partnerships for the purpose of transforming education into a tool for empowerment and value inculcation, vocational training in junior secondary schools emerged as a powerful instrument to eradicate corruption and foster a culture of integrity from the grassroots upward.

Keywords: Vocational education, Corruption eradication, Grassroots development, Public junior secondary schools, Ethical values.

Introduction

Corruption is a pervasive challenge that undermines socio-economic development, trust in institutions, and the overall well-being of societies. Efforts to eradicate corruption often focus on enforcement measures and policy reforms, yet these strategies alone have proven insufficient in

addressing the issue at its roots (Mbato, & Eguzozie 2024; World Bank, 2020; Okoye & Arimonu 2016). A more sustainable solution lies in fostering a culture of integrity and accountability from an early age, starting at the grassroot level. Education, particularly at the foundational stages of public junior secondary schools, serves as a critical avenue for instilling ethical values and practical skills that can deter corrupt practices (Mbato & Eguzozie 2024).

Vocational education, with its focus on hands-on training and employability, offers a transformative approach to this challenge. Vocational training not only promotes self-reliance but also reduces the economic pressures that often drive individuals toward corrupt activities by equipping students with industry-relevant skills and a strong ethical framework (Idris & Mbudai, 2017). Furthermore, integrating vocational education into the curriculum can address the unemployment and underemployment crises that frequently contribute to systemic corruption.

According to Okoye and Arimonu (2016), corruption remains a significant obstacle to development and governance worldwide, with its roots often embedded in societal structures, economic inequality, and limited access to opportunities. Developing countries, in particular, face the dual challenges of high unemployment rates and systemic corruption, which often perpetuate a cycle of poverty and distrust in public institutions (Mbato & Eguzozie 2024; Idris & Mbudai, 2017). Despite various anti-corruption campaigns and enforcement mechanisms, efforts to combat corruption have achieved limited success, primarily because they do not address the underlying socio-economic factors that breed corrupt behavior.

Education is widely regarded as a fundamental tool for social transformation. In this context, vocational education has emerged as a promising avenue for empowering individuals with practical skills and fostering economic self-reliance (Adekunle, 2024; Anukaenyi, & Ozomadu, 2019). Unlike traditional academic pathways, vocational education focuses on equipping students with marketable skills, enhancing their employability and reducing reliance on precarious or unethical means of income generation. Public junior secondary schools, which cater to a significant portion of the youth population, provide an ideal platform for integrating vocational education as part of the formal curriculum.

Inculcating vocational education in public junior secondary schools according to Mbato and Eguzozie (2024) has the potential to address corruption from the grassroots by addressing the root causes of economic vulnerability and ethical erosion. Vocational education serves as a long-term strategy for building a corruption-free society by providing young learners with the tools to succeed in the workforce and embedding values of integrity and accountability in their training. This study is grounded in the belief that equipping individuals with skills and ethical awareness during their formative years will not only enhance their economic prospects but also foster a culture of honesty and responsibility that can permeate all levels of society.

Statement of the Problem

In Lagos State, the pervasive experiences of youth unemployment and corruption continue to be enduring issues in threatening sustainable development, economic stability, and social cohesion. Despite a number of reform attempts, the formal educational system has been considerably cut off from the functional needs of the labour market and the moral expectations of civic life. Therefore, huge numbers of graduating youths from public junior secondary schools are neither equipped with the abilities to be employable nor comprehensively anchored in moral principles and

therefore are readily susceptible to socio-economic disenfranchisement and unhealthy influences. This gap is particularly relevant in an environment where economic independence is necessary to halt reliance on illegal sources of livelihood, and where values-based learning is fundamental in instilling a culture of openness, responsibility, and national progress. This lack of a well-formulated and morally grounded vocational education curriculum at the junior secondary school level is one reason why there is more and more a lack of both moral and economic preparedness among the students. Even as vocational education has emerged as a feasible path towards youth employability and social responsibility, its institutionalization in public junior secondary school curricula in Lagos State remains feeble, haphazard, and inadequately supervised. More importantly, all vocational programs in existence never even try to address the twin mandate of skill training and moral education under an integrated and sequential methodology. Therefore, this study sets out to investigate the extent to which the injection of vocational education in public junior secondary schools can be a purposive and sustainable methodology towards arresting corruption and economic self-sufficiency among young people in Lagos State. The problem lies in the under-exploitation of vocational education as an instrument for reforming youth unemployment and moral rot simultaneously, hence necessitating empirical investigation into its prospects of yielding systemic change in education policy and practice. To this end, this paper intends to answer the following research questions;

- i. To what extent does vocational education promote self-reliance and reduce economic vulnerabilities among students in public junior secondary schools?
- ii. How does the integration of ethical values and integrity into vocational training influence students' attitudes toward corruption?
- iii. In what ways can vocational education provide sustainable alternatives for employment and income generation among youths?
- iv. How effective is vocational education in addressing the root causes of corruption at the grassroots level in Lagos State?
- v. What recommendations can be proposed for policymakers, educators, and stakeholders to effectively integrate vocational education into the curricula of public junior secondary schools?
- vi. What case studies or best practices from other regions or countries demonstrate the success of vocational education in reducing corruption, and how can they inform local implementation?

Literature Review

The literature on vocational education and its potential impact on socio-economic development and corruption reduction is expansive, highlighting various theoretical and practical insights. This section reviews key themes relevant to the integration of vocational education in public junior secondary schools as a pathway to eradicating corruption at the grassroots level.

Vocational Education and Economic Empowerment

Numerous studies emphasize the role of vocational education in enhancing employability and economic independence. According to Alla-Mensah (2021), vocational training equips individuals with practical skills that align with labor market demands, reducing unemployment rates and economic insecurity. Vocational education addresses one of the root causes of corruption by providing students with tangible career opportunities, thereby reducing financial desperation. Furthermore, Okoye and Arimonu (2016) argue that integrating vocational training in junior

secondary school curricula can promote entrepreneurship, enabling young people to create their own income streams and reduce reliance on corrupt systems.

Ethics and Values in Vocational Training

The integration of ethical education within vocational programs has been identified as a critical component of building a corruption-free society. Studies, such as those by McClelland (2017), suggest that embedding moral education alongside skill acquisition fosters a culture of integrity and accountability among students. Ethical training instills values of honesty, responsibility, and social justice, ensuring that graduates of vocational programs not only possess technical expertise but also a strong moral compass.

Corruption at the Grassroots Level

Research on grassroots corruption indicates that it often stems from systemic issues such as poverty, lack of education, and limited access to opportunities. Grimshaw (2020) highlights the importance of grassroots initiatives that empower individuals with skills and knowledge to resist and counter corrupt practices. Vocational education, by addressing economic and ethical deficiencies, offers a long-term solution to these challenges.

Vocational Education in Public Junior Secondary schools

Public junior secondary schools serve as accessible platforms for large-scale education, particularly in developing regions. According to Adeyemi and Uko-Aviomoh (2004), these institutions are ideal for implementing vocational programmes due to their ability to reach diverse student populations. Integrating vocational education in these settings not only enhances students' career prospects but also aligns educational outcomes with societal needs, such as reducing corruption and fostering sustainable development.

Case Studies of Vocational Education and Corruption Reduction

Empirical evidence supports the efficacy of vocational education in mitigating corruption. For instance, a study by Ndegwa (2019) in Kenya demonstrated that students who underwent vocational training were less likely to engage in corrupt practices compared to their counterparts in traditional academic programmes. Similarly, Germany's dual system of vocational training, which combines classroom instruction with on-the-job experience, has been praised for its success in producing a skilled and ethically grounded workforce (Solga, 2014).

Challenges and Opportunities

Despite its potential, integrating vocational education into public junior secondary schools is not without challenges. These include limited funding, lack of qualified instructors, and societal perceptions that undervalue vocational training. However, partnerships with industries, government agencies, and non-governmental organizations present opportunities for overcoming these barriers and scaling vocational programs effectively. The reviewed literature underscores the transformative potential of vocational education in addressing unemployment and reducing corruption (Kovalchuk et al., 2022). By combining skill acquisition with ethical training, public junior secondary schools can become catalysts for socio-economic change, fostering a culture of accountability and integrity from the grassroots level. This study builds on these insights to propose actionable strategies for integrating vocational education into the public junior secondary school curriculum.

1. Curriculum Framework

The curriculum for vocational education in public junior secondary schools should blend skill-based learning with ethical and character development. It should also reflect local labor market needs and national development goals. The following are core components of the curriculum;

- i. **Technical Skills Training:** Hands-on training in specific vocational areas such as mechanics, tailoring, carpentry, agriculture, ICT, and hospitality. Inclusion of modern and sustainable practices to ensure relevance in a rapidly changing job market.
- ii. **Ethical Education and Anti-Corruption Studies:** Modules on ethics, integrity, and accountability. Case studies on the societal and economic consequences of corruption. Training on legal frameworks related to anti-corruption and professional conduct.
- iii. **Entrepreneurship and Financial Literacy:** Basic business management and entrepreneurial skills to promote self-reliance. Lessons on budgeting, savings, and investment to reduce financial vulnerabilities.
- iv. **Soft Skills Development:** Communication, teamwork, and problem-solving skills to prepare students for workplace challenges. Focus on leadership and decision-making grounded in ethical principles.
- v. **Workplace Exposure and Internships:** Collaboration with industries to provide internships or apprenticeships. Real-world experience that links theory to practice.
- vi. **Community Service Projects:** Encouraging students to apply their skills in community development initiatives, fostering a sense of social responsibility.

2. Policy Framework

A robust policy framework is essential to support the successful integration of vocational education into public junior secondary schools. This framework should address funding, governance, partnerships, and evaluation mechanisms. The key policy provisions are;

- i. **Funding and Resource Allocation:** Government budgets should prioritize vocational education in public junior secondary schools. Provision of modern training facilities and equipment to ensure effective learning.
- ii. **Teacher Training and Capacity Building:** Regular training programs for educators to ensure they are equipped to teach both technical skills and ethical principles. Recruitment of industry professionals as guest instructors to provide practical insights.
- iii. **Partnerships with Industry and NGOs.** Collaboration with private sector organizations for curriculum development and internships. Engagement with NGOs to provide ethical training and community outreach programs.
- iv. **Accreditation and Standardization:** Establishing national standards for vocational education to ensure uniformity and quality. Accreditation of public junior secondary schools offering vocational programs.

- v. **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Regular assessments to evaluate the effectiveness of vocational programs in terms of student outcomes and societal impact. Feedback mechanisms involving students, educators, and industry stakeholders.
- vi. **Incentives for Enrollment:** Scholarships or subsidies for students enrolling in vocational programs to ensure accessibility. Incentives for industries partnering with junior secondary schools, such as tax benefits.

3. Implementation Strategies

- i. **Pilot Programs:** Launch vocational education programs in select public junior secondary schools to test the framework and make adjustments before scaling up.
- ii. **Awareness Campaigns:** Promote the benefits of vocational education to students, parents, and communities to overcome societal stigmas.
- iii. **Integration with National Development Goals:** Align the curriculum with broader economic and anti-corruption policies to ensure relevance and impact.
- iv. **Policy Advocacy:** Engage policymakers, educators, and industry leaders in discussions to secure support for the framework.

Key Features of Nigerian Education

1. Curriculum Focus:

The National Policy on Education emphasizes self-reliance, citizenship education, and technological development.

A blend of academic and technical subjects, though implementation of vocational training remains limited.

2. Public vs. Private Education:

Public schools are more affordable but often lack infrastructure and resources.

Private schools offer better facilities but are accessible to fewer individuals due to higher fees.

3. Cultural and Linguistic Diversity:

Nigeria's multi-ethnic and multilingual population is reflected in its education system, which promotes unity and cultural awareness. Efforts are made to teach in local languages at the primary level.

4. Government Policies:

Universal Basic Education (UBE) program ensures free and compulsory education for the first nine years. Emphasis on technical and vocational education, though implementation gaps persist.

Conclusion

Vocational education in Nigeria is a powerful tool for addressing unemployment, poverty, and corruption at the grassroots level. Vocational training fosters economic independence by equipping individuals with technical skills, thereby reducing reliance on white-collar jobs, and supports national development. Despite its significance, vocational training in Nigeria faces several challenges, including inadequate infrastructure, outdated curricula, insufficient funding, and societal stigma. These challenges, however, are not insurmountable. Implementing targeted

strategies such as increased funding, industry collaboration, curriculum reform, and public awareness campaigns will enable Nigeria to unlock the full potential of vocational education and create a skilled workforce capable of contributing to economic growth and societal progress. Ultimately, the successful integration of vocational training into Nigeria's educational system requires a concerted effort from all stakeholders, including the government, educational institutions, private sector, and communities. Through investment, policy reforms, and strong public-private partnerships, Nigeria can enhance the relevance and accessibility of vocational education, providing a pathway to self-reliance and reducing the societal drivers of corruption.

Recommendations

- 1. Increase Government Funding and Investment:** The Nigerian government should allocate more funds to vocational education, with a focus on building and maintaining modern training facilities, providing learning materials, and compensating skilled instructors. This investment will enhance the quality of training and ensure that the system meets the needs of students and the labor market.
- 2. Strengthen Industry-Education Partnerships:** To ensure that vocational education aligns with market needs, vocational institutions should collaborate with industries to design relevant curricula and offer internships or apprenticeships for students. This will give students hands-on experience and improve their chances of employment.
- 3. Update the Curriculum to Reflect Industry Demands:** Regular curriculum updates are essential to keep pace with changing technological advancements and industry practices. Vocational programs should focus on emerging sectors such as digital technologies, renewable energy, and advanced manufacturing to ensure graduates are equipped with market-relevant skills.
- 4. Launch Public Awareness Campaigns:** To reduce the stigma associated with vocational education, public awareness campaigns should highlight successful vocational graduates and emphasize the long-term benefits of technical skills. Collaboration with media, influencers, and success stories can reshape public perception.
- 5. Incentivize Gender Equality in Vocational Education:** Programs should actively encourage female participation in traditionally male-dominated vocational fields. Scholarships, mentorship programs, and inclusive policies should be established to ensure equitable access for women and marginalized groups.
- 6. Strengthen Monitoring and Evaluation Systems:** Implementing robust monitoring and evaluation systems will allow for the continuous assessment of vocational education programs. Feedback from students, educators, and employers can be used to improve curriculum design and teaching methods.
- 7. Promote Lifelong Learning and Adult Education:** Vocational education should not be limited to the youth population. Adult education and retraining programs should be developed to help individuals continuously acquire new skills, especially in rapidly evolving industries.

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