



Empowering the rural poor through vocational skills acquisition: Nasarawa state in focus

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Abstract

The study investigates how acquisition of vocational skills by the rural people has empowered them, against the backdrop of intervention programmes by government and NGOs. Empirical evidence highlights institutional arrangements by Government and other stakeholders on strategies for lifting the living standard of the rural people of Nasarawa State. This study therefore examines the extent to which vocational skills acquisition have stimulated income raising above critical minimum level, with a view to taking the rural people out of the vicious cycle of poverty. The study applied social action theory, quantitative and qualitative method of data collection was used. Three hundred questionnaires were administered to respondents, selected via random and purposive sampling techniques. The study employed descriptive statistics in the analysis of data. The research asserts that among the common vocational skills spread across Nasarawa State are carpentry/wood work and tailoring services. The study indicates that the respondents (80%) were satisfied with their training programs, whereas 83.32% of participants affirmed that vocational skills acquisition would greatly improve the quality of life of the rural poor. About 66.6% of the trainees were however of the opinion that the cost of their training was high. The implication is that fewer rural people would have access to the training due largely to the cost. The study recommends that a minimum of 5% of States and Local Government Estimates be consigned to vocational skills acquisition as well as the integration of apprenticeship into the formal school curriculum. The study also recommends that parents/guardians should allow their wards to choose the type of vocational skills they would want to have. The study concludes that stakeholders should undertake grass root mobilization through the mass media on the imperatives of vocational skills education for improved standard of living and eradication of poverty among the rural populace.

Keywords: Empowerment, Vocational Skills, Rural Poor, Nigeria

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1. Introduction

The term empowerment has of recent captured the attention of politicians, administrators, development planners, analysts as well as academicians in trying to see how best they can solve the problem of poverty. Poverty is with us, it is in us and will continue to be with us for a long time especially in the rural areas, if adequate measures are not taken. Poverty is not unique to Nigeria alone nor is it peculiar to Nasarawa State but it is in every country, particularly the developing and the underdeveloped world, where it is the major cause of many problems of development. To empower the people requires the provision of enabling environment for their productive and intellectual abilities to be realized.

The economy of this country is rather stagnant and poverty remains a grave concern as large segments of the population are poor in physical and economic terms, all these contributing to policy instability. Nigeria appears to be caught in the web of poverty crises of unprecedented proportions with far reaching consequences for its teeming population. As we grapple with the complex and multidimensional development predicament and past failures, the need for a rethink of what constitutes meaningful national development and in particular rural development is not only necessary but imperative. We therefore, need to reflect and focus on options yet untried in our development strategies within the context of vision 2030.

2. Statement of the problem

Poverty has been identified by many Authors (e.g. Olisa and Obiukwu, 1992; Ijere, 1992; Charisman, 1997; Aliyu, 1998) as the main area of concern that has to be looked into if the nation is to get out of its economic and political predicament. Many policies and programmes meant to eradicate or alleviate poverty, especially in rural areas have not been successful due to corruption, inadequate finances, poor planning, and poor administration of the programmes as well as lack of political will. Government effort at reaching out to the rural communities and providing the enabling environment that would make them acquire vocational skills so as to supplement their incomes have been abysmal. This study is therefore undertaken to encourage the need for the rural people to acquire vocational skills in various trades as a means of improving their quality of life.

3. Objectives

The objective of this study is to examine the role of vocational skills acquisition in empowering the rural poor in Nasarawa State. However, the specific objectives are:

- 1) To examine whether vocational skills acquisition by the rural poor would have any impact in empowering them.
- 2) To evaluate the existing institutional arrangements by the Government and Non-Governmental Organizations on their strategies for lifting the living standard of the rural people of Nasarawa State.

- 3) To see whether vocational skills acquisition by rural dwellers would stimulate income rising above critical minimum level.

4. Theoretical justification

4.1. Human Capital Theory (HCT)

Human capital theory was developed in early 1964 by Gary Stanley Backer (1930–2014) and Jacob Mincer (1922-2006). The term Humancapital as popularized by Becker and Mincer (1964), emphasizes the creation of higher economic productivity gained through a collaboration of economic resources such as skills, technical know-how and ingenuity, etc. These resources are the total capacity of the people that represents a form of wealth which can be directed to accomplish the goals of the nation or state or a portion thereof.

Central to the human capital theory (HCT) is the fact that any investment in the development of the human person in advancement of his skills translates to the increase in the desired workforce needed to advance the goals and objectives of the organization. Goldin (2014) defines Human capital as “the skills the labor force possesses and is regarded as a resource or asset.” Of prime importance is the idea that there are investments in people in terms of education, training, etc., which desirably results in increase in the individual’s output. Higher productivity is the major factor underlying the HCT and it is thought to be motivated only when workers and people see the need to raise their knowledge base by acquiring more technical knowledge and skills they may require to advance and increase their capital (financial) base (Kirzner, 1997). In his argument, Kirzner (1997) noted that although the entrepreneur may have identified the opportunities for new business, his ability or acquired skills needed to provide the required services is all he needs to realize the opportunities.

Backer and Mincer (2014) opined that the investment made in the acquisition of skills was central to the development and advancement of societies. Their scholars argue that although such technical training requires huge investment in terms of financial resources, they could be no other sure way to stimulate and sustain rapid development (Scott and Brown, 2005).

Backer and Mincer (2014) anchored their research on vocationalism paradigm which according to Scott and Brown (2005) emphasizes the utilitarian considerations of educational curriculum. As a paradigm, vocationalism advocates a direct link between knowledge gained at school and knowledge expended at the occupational or industrial workforce. Although Scott and Brown (2005) stated that the particular focus of Gary Becker’s and Jacob Mincer’s analogy of HCT was that full-time education was most central to the realization of a productive workforce (Bartel and Sickerman, 1995), however argue that there is a weaker relationship between educated persons and those who are genetically endowed with vocational skills ability or those who acquire it through family indenture.

Human Capital Theory best explains vocational skills acquisition as the sure therapy to check raging poverty in, and stimulate rapid socio-economic development of the rural poor of Nasarawa State. Okoye (2017) has noted that the panacea to youth unemployment in Nigeria is entrepreneurial education.

Entrepreneurship would hardly yield the desired result unless it is accompanied with skills acquisition/knowledge component (Tende, 2011). Vocational skills therefore becomes indispensable for economic growth (Scott and Brown, 2005).

Human capital theory has attracted widespread criticisms from scholars who see it as the bedrock of bourgeois individualism (Scott and Brown, 2005), insisting that it made emphasis on private considerations by workers and stretching the feud between capitalists on the one hand, and their employees on the other. However, as Charles (2010) opined, HCT can as well be addressed from the structural strand of rational choice theory.

While considering the socio-economic factor in choosing a vocational skill to acquire, the rural poor should also have at the back of their mind that vocational skill which would reward them more by way of raising their social as well as economic potentials in the long run

5. Conceptual framework

5.1. The concept of Vocational education/skill

Vocational education/skill and technical education are used interchangeably (Kpanja 2003) because to many, the line of distinction is rather blurred. The British Ministry of Overseas Development Report (HMS. 1970) contends that “Technical Education” is a descriptive term, which embraces the field of vocationally oriented education.

Roberts (1971) opined that vocational skill type of education is concerned with learning to work, a view supported by Cote (1980). Risher (1983) and Kpanja (2003) further defines vocational skill as the education, which addresses itself primarily to the performance aspect of work’s role.

Olaitan (1985) conceives of vocational skill as a highly useful education as its occupational content is such that the trainee acquires skills, attitudes, interest and knowledge to perform socially and economically scientific knowledge. This view is supported by Denga (1983) and Osuala (1995) in Udo et al. (2001). Osagie (1991) contends that by and large, the education that produces technician is technical education while vocational skill is all embracing since it prepares its recipient for a living. This is anchored by Banjo (1974).

Fieldman (1968) stressed that vocational skill should be redefined “at least in part as that aspect of educational experience or skill which helps in working towards a career.” The National Policy on Education (1981 revised) defined vocational Education as an aspect of education, which leads to the acquisition of practical and applied skills as well as scientific knowledge (Udo et al., 2002, pp. 2-3).

5.2. The concept of poverty

Chinsman (2000) opined that there are as many perceptions of poverty. Continuing, Chinsman feels that poverty is relative to people, country, context, developmental approaches and national wealth distributions. The UNDP, however, identified three types of poverty namely absolute, relative and material poverty. This

study aligns with the definition of absolute poverty which refers to lack of resources to be capable of a certain minimum number of activities. Other scholars such as Greenwald (1965), Todaro (1985), Atoloye (1991), Arinze (1995), and Ajegen (2002) gave varying conceptualization of poverty all leveraging on individual's minimum socio-economic potentials.

Using indicators as illiteracy, access to safe water, declining purchasing power, increasing income inequality, poor housing, severe child malnutrition and very high under five mortality rates, there is sufficient evidence to show that poverty is widespread and severe in Nigeria and Nasarawa State in particular.

Either in its descriptive or structural sense, poverty is a situation that must be transformed in order to substantially improve the quality of life of the majority of the people. It is in this notion that we feel that vocational skills acquisition will help in this direction.

5.3. The Concept of empowerment

Empowerment is broad based. Obi and Adjekophori (1999) defined empowerment as a series of interventions, policies and actions tailored towards enhancing the capacities of individuals and social groups. Empowerment, of necessity, they said, would involve mobilizing people power for the decentralization of highly centralized structures of economic and political power. It involves the provision of enabling environment for their productive and intellectual abilities to be realized.

The National Planning Commission (NPC) through its document titled NEEDS (2004) states that empowerment is giving voice to the weak and vulnerable groups through increased participation in decision making and implementation. In the context of this study, empowerment means strengthening the people in the rural areas through enterprise development and institutional capacity building through vocational skills acquisition, to enable them intervene decisively in decision making processes, generate enough income through vocational skills already acquired and exercise increasing control over production, distribution and consumption of goods and services.

5.4. Evolution of vocational skills education/acquisition in Nigeria

Vocational training in traditional Nigerian societies was largely run on the apprenticeship system. Fafunwa (1974) in Awotunde (1988) states that this vast apprenticeship training system began as part of a wider education process in which indigenous societies of Nigeria passed on their cultural heritage from one generation to the next.

Okoro (1993) in Hime (2003) and Kpanja (2003) all confirmed that apprenticeship was the method of vocational skills acquisition and training before establishment of vocational and technical schools. Okoro further maintained that due to inadequate vocational and technical schools, apprenticeship system still supplies the bulk of Nigeria's skilled and semi-skilled workers. Hime (2000) further revealed that the Federal Republic of Nigeria through National Directorate of Employment (NDE) launched the apprenticeship scheme in a bid to fight unemployment and provide individuals with psychomotor skills. There was a slight deviation

from the conventional apprenticeship because it was free, and in addition, the trainees were paid, monthly. Akande (2001) however asserted that the scheme failed because it lost some of the major attributes of the system.

Nkeweke (2007) cited in Abassah (2011) argues that in efforts geared to brace up to the challenge of industrialization, over the years, governments, institutions and managements emphasized the need for practically oriented technical education curriculum and provision of effective teaching of technical subjects in Nigerian colleges. In line with the above, ITF (2014) admits that citizens' acquisition of relevant skills is a sine qua non for industrial and by extension, economic development. Also, Mba (2008) cited in ITF (2014) asserts that for any nation in search of high level of industrialization to succeed, provision of relevant skills must be given serious consideration.

Section 5(42) of the National Policy on Education (NPE) stipulates that each State and Local Government in conjunction with appropriate agencies shall organize relevant apprenticeship training schemes. The various arms of government did not show enough concern in this area to improve apprenticeship situation. Most apprenticeship trainings were and are still in the hands of the private sector or informal sector without proper guidance and coordination. Organized vocational skills acquisition, on the other hand, started in Nigeria with various government departments such as Nigeria Railways, Public Works, and Marine etc. The ten year colonial development plan (1946-56) recommended handcraft centers for trainings in manual arts, trade centers for training skilled craftsmen. The regional government implemented the programme with financial assistance from central government such that by 1960 there were twenty nine (29) organized vocational and technical schools in Nigeria (Awotunde, 1985). This also brought in the era of Relevant Technology Boards. In Nasarawa State, the board is being run as a formal education and skills acquisition programme with the diminished impact on the citizenry and the target beneficiaries.

5.5. Poverty in Nigeria

Nigeria is described as a paradox by the World Bank (1996). The paradox (Obadan, 2001) is that the poverty level in Nigeria contradicts the country's immense wealth. Nigeria is enormously endowed with human, and natural resources many which are still left untapped. Particularly worrisome, Obadan (2001) contended, is that the country earned over US \$300 billion from petroleum resources within three decades after independence, there is little in terms of socio-economic development, to show for the huge revenues accruing to the commonwealth of the nation. Nigeria retrogressed to become one of the 25 poorest countries whereas she was among the richest 50 in the early 1970's.

The data in Figure 1 indicates that the North West region has the highest poverty level (80.90%) in the country followed by North East with poverty rate of 76.80% and North Central 45.70%. The South West, South and South East have the following rates of poverty in Nigeria; 19.3%, 25.20% and 27.36% respectively.

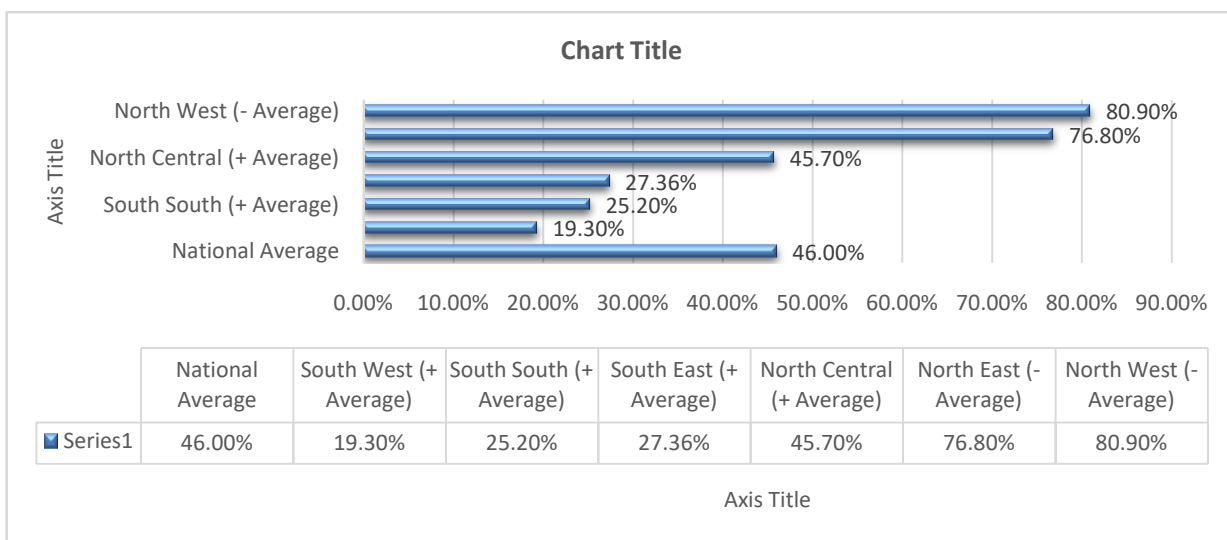


Figure1. National/Regional incidence of poverty rate in Nigeria (Sources: The Global Multidimensional Poverty Index by the U.N 2017)

Table 1. State by State incidence of poverty rate in Nigeria

S/N	State	Rate In %	S/N	State	Rate In %
1	Lagos	8.50%	19	Plateau	51.60%
2	Osun	10.90%	20	Nasarawa	52.40%
3	Anambra	11.20%	21	Ebonyi	56.00%
4	Ekiti	12.90%	22	Kaduna	56.50%
5	Edo	19.20%	23	Adamawa	59.00%
6	Imo	19.80%	24	Benue	59.20%
7	Abia	21.00%	25	Niger	61.20%
8	Rivers	21.10%	26	Bornu	70.10%
**	Federal Capital Territory (FCT)				23.50%
9	Kwara	23.70%	27	Kano	76.40%
10	Akwa-Ibom	23.80%	28	Gombe	76.90%
11	Delta	25.10%	29	Taraba	77.70%
12	Ogun	26.10%	30	Katsina	82.20%
13	Kogi	26.40%	31	Sokoto	85.30%
14	Ondo	27.90%	32	Kebbi	86.00%
15	Enugu	28.80%	33	Bauchi	86.60%
16	Bayelsa	29.00%	34	Jigawa	88.40%
17	Oyo	29.40%	35	Yobe	90.20%
18	Cross River	33.10%	36	Zamfara	91.90%

Sources: The Global Multidimensional Poverty Index by the U.N 2017

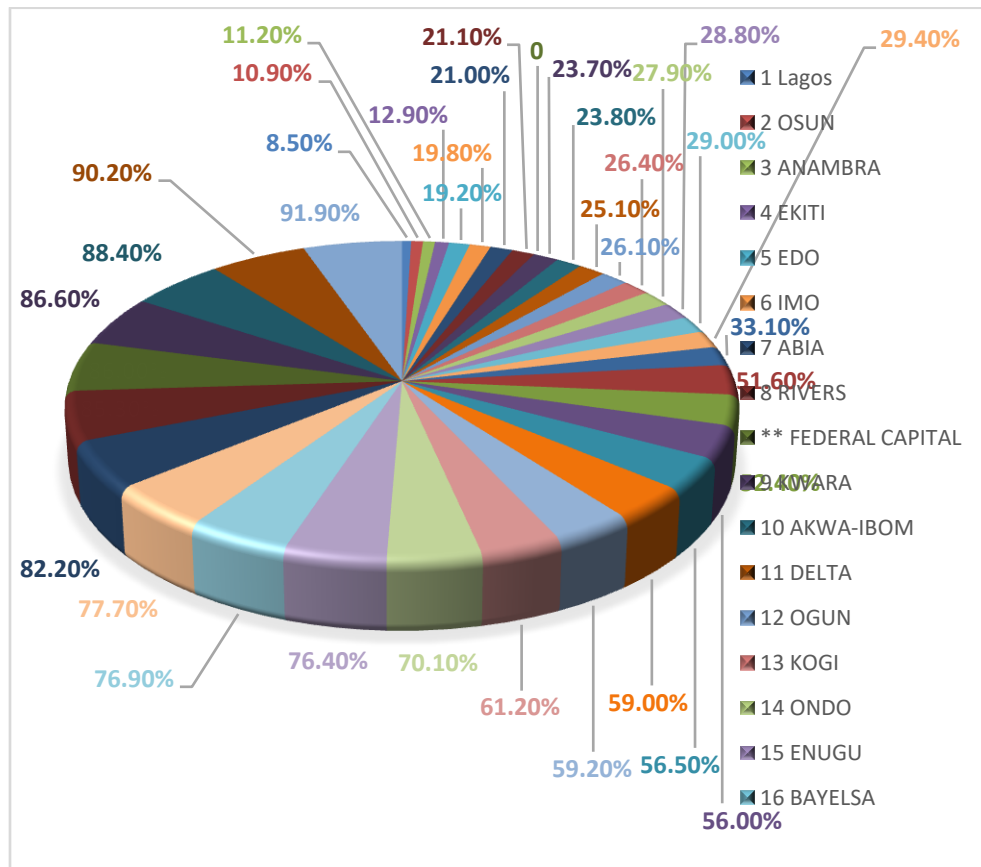


Figure 2. Showing State by State incidence of poverty rate in Nigeria (Sources: The Global Multidimensional Poverty Index by the U.N 2017)

6. Methodology

This study was conducted in Nasarawa state. The state was created out of Old Plateau State on October 1, 1996. It is comprised of 13 Local Government Areas namely: Akwanga, Awe, Doma, Karu, Keffi, and Lafia. Others include Nasarawa, Nasarawa-Eggon, Obi, Toto, Wamba, Keana and Kokona (Agwadu, 2005).

Nasarawa State is heterogeneous in its ethnic composition and language groups; prominent among these are Afo, Alago, Eggon, Gabgi, Migili, Gwandara, Egberra, Kantana, Kanuri, Fulani, Tiv, Jukun, Gade and Nyankpa. Others are Mada, Koro, Ninzam, Bassa, Agatu and Arum. Located in the middle belt or the North Central geo-political zone of the country, Nasarawa state lies between latitudes 70 and 90 North and longitudes 70 and 100 East (Inyang, 2015). It shares common boundaries with 5 of the 36 States of the Federation and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). The state is flanked to the south and west by Benue and Kogi States respectively, Kaduna and Plateau states to the North-East and Taraba to the South-East. Generally, most parts of Nasarawa State have a pleasant climate with mean temperatures of 600F and 800F. Rainfall varies from 131.73cm in some places to 145cm in others. Its Savannah vegetation grows thicker southwards,

with dry harmattan winds around December, January and February (Nasarawa State Ministry of Information, 2001).

Survey research design was adopted for the study, with a sample size of 300 selected using creative research systems survey software calculator (2014). Structured and semi-structured questionnaire that elicited relevant information from respondents formed the instrument of data collection. Purposive and Accidental sampling techniques were used in selecting vocational skills acquisition Centres from the three senatorial districts of the state. The sample drawn was made up of trainees, trainers, Government training Centres and the general public. Data was analyzed using frequency tables. The mean value was used to answer the research questions. A mean value of 2.5 and above was interpreted negatively. This implies that a mean value of 2.5 and above was seen as significant and positive conclusion was drawn. Qualitative data was analyzed using variation report and ethnographic summaries.

6.1. The structure of vocational training in nasarawa state

6.1.1. Engineering

The formal and informal organizations responsible for vocational trainings and skills acquisition Centres engaged in local engineering works. This structure can be sub-divided into electrical and electronics works. Others are mechanical and auto mechanics workshops and Centres for training technicians.

Textiles: Apprenticeships are available in local waving and dyeing of clothes in various colours suitable to different traditional wears as well as dye. Other local textile vocations are hand woven sweaters made for children and even adults to prevent colds. The Lafia dyeing pit has gain national and international recognition, products of which are in demand by tourists visiting the State.

6.1.2. Wood work and carpentry

Training workshops either owned by government, organized private sectors and individuals are available in various types of woodworks and carpentry, woodcarvings around Toto, Umanisha, Gadabuke and Loko are common.

6.1.3. Welding, foundry and metal fabrication

This is one of the fast growing structures of training in Nasarawa State. Welding work that either use electricity or gas are sited alongside mechanized and auto mechanics workshops in both formal and informal sectors.

Foundry and metal fabrication training receive boosts as a result of the criminal activities of some Nigerians. Families and organizations had to us strong iron doors, windows and gates locally fabricated to provide strong security to their houses and organizations. Some agricultural processing machines are also being locally fabricated in the state. Such machines include maize shelling, melon shelling, rice thrashing, cassava grater and cereal dehusting machines.

Leather works: Traditional leatherwork skill trainings are available in Lafia, Doma, Keffi and Nasarawa towns of the state. This involves removing the skins of animals such as goats, cows, hyenas, lions and even reptiles such as snakes for various uses. Leather bags and skins of animals used for displays in homes and public places flourish, in the state. The de-skinning of the animals requires professional skills. Trainings through family indenture, dominate this area. The skills are handed down from generation to generation within the family lineage. *Calabash carving and crafts:* Calabash artistic carvings abounds in the state particularly Lafia and Keffi areas. The Calabash are carved and decorated in many colours and designs to the delight of users. The finished products are mostly used by the Fulani people as well as for exhibitions at museums. They can be used as souvenir to local and international visitors to the state.

Pit-indigo dying is another art form which the Jukuns segment of the population in the state specializes. They are found in Awe, Tunga and Wuse areas of Awe Local Government Area. In Lafia, craft skills such as Calabash works, cap making, indigo-dying, embroidery work and blacksmithing are commonplace.

Masonry/Architectural Draughtmanship: This category of sub-structure involve building technology and an art of architectural draughtmanship. Young boys train under experienced masons in building techniques. Modern buildings with its innovative and latest architectural designs requires careful skills. In Nasarawa State, today, Government Relevant Technology Centers trains youth in the art of building. The informal or private sectors are not left out too. Qualified architects train youths in architectural draughtmanship to design different sizes, patterns and models of building.

Home Economic Services: The structure of this vocational skill included tailoring, fashion designing, catering, bakery and confectionary. Tailoring trainees take between two to three years depending on the ability of the trainee to quickly acquire the skills. Fashion is the in thing in contemporary living, and trainees are acquiring skills in various kinds of fashion designing.

6.2. Existing vocational skills acquisition centers/agencies in Nasarawa state

There are government and non-government agencies and centers responsible for skills acquisition in Nasarawa State. They are mostly formal skills acquisition centers. Some of which include:

- I. Vocational and relevant technology centers at Wamba, Doma, Nasarawa and Lafia.
- II. Women Education Centers at Lafia, Nasarawa and Akwanga.
- III. Multi-purpose women development centers at Lafia.
- IV. Agricultural training center at Ekposagye in obi-LGA, which is run by YMCA, a non-government organization.
- V. Basic skills development centers, a UNDP job creation and sustainable livelihood at Obi, Doma, Nasarawa Eggon, Lafia, Akwanga, Keffi, Karu, Nasarawa and Toto.
- VI. Gemstone cutting and polishing skills center at Nasarawa.
- VII. Center for Women, Youths and Community Action (NACWYA).

7. Results and discussions

Table 2. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variables	Categories	Frequencies	Percentage %
Sex	Male	200	71.17
	Female	81	28.82
	Total	281	100
Age	Below 30	150	53.38
	31-40	65	23.13
	41-50	36	12.81
	51-60	23	8.18
	61and above	7	2.49
	Total	281	100
Religion	Christianity	151	53.73
	Islam	112	39.85
	African Trad. Religion	16	5.69
	Total	281	100
Education	No formal edu.	44	15.65
	Primary School	58	20.64
	SSCE/GCE/NECO	140	49.82
	OND/NCE/IJMB	29	10.32
	HND/First Degree	10	3.55
	Total	281	100
	Marital Status	Married	137
Single		93	33.09
Divorced		8	2.84
Separated		17	6.04
Widow/Widower		26	9.25
Total		281	100
Category of Trade	Carpentry/Wood work	120	42.70
	Tailoring Service	80	28.46
	Metal fabric./metal work	34	12.09
	Masonry/block moulding	22	7.82
	Others	25	8.89
	Total	281	100

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Table 2 is an analysis of the demographic characteristics of respondents engaged in the study. With a total of 281 (93.66%) questionnaires returned out of the 300 sent out, a greater percentage of the respondents are below the age of 30, specifically 53.38%. In the sex category, there were more male participants (N=200 or 71.17%) with fewer females (N=81 or 28.82%). Religious affiliation of respondents recorded as follows; Christianity (N=151 or 53.73%), Islam (N=112 or 39.85%) and African Traditional Religion (16 or 5.69%). On educational characteristic, 44 (15.65%) indicated they had no formal education, 58 or 20.64% had primary school, 140 or 49.82% had either of SSCE, GCE or NECO certificates. Those with OND/NCE/IJMB or HND/first degree were few (N=29 or 10.32) and (N=10 or 3.55%) respectively. Among the respondents, the

married were more (N=137 or 48.75%), followed by the singles (93 or 33.09%). The category of vocational skills trade available in the research instrument and the nature of responses to them were carpentry/woodwork (N=120 or 42.70%), tailoring services (80 or 28.46%), metal fabrication/metal work (N=34 or 12.09), masonry/block moulding (N=22 or 7.82%) and others (25 or 8.89%) respectively.

Table 3.Types of Vocational Skills available in Nasarawa State

Vocational skills	No. of respondent	% Responses
Carpentry/woodwork	130	46.26
Tailoring Services	60	21.35
Metal Fabrication/Metal Work	25	8.89
Mechanical/Electrical/Electronics	25	8.89
Masonry/Block Molding	26	9.25
Others	15	5.33
Total	281	100

Sources: Field Survey, 2017

Table 3 presents respondents' opinion on the types of vocational skills available in Nasarawa state which were expressed as follows; 130, representing 48.26% indicated that carpentry/woodwork are commonly found in Nasarawa State. This is followed by tailoring service (N=60 or 21.35%), metal fabrication/metal work had 25 responses representing 8.89% and mechanical/electrical/electronic has 25 respondents or 8.89% of the total. Masonry/block molding had 26 (9.25%) and others 15 or 5.33% respectively. This shows that the major trades available are carpentry/wood work and metal fabrication/metal works.

The study considered certain factors to be responsible for the choice of training to be engaged in. findings reveal that siting of the vocational skills center, ease and affordability of the training, are among the reasons for the choice. Other factors considered by respondents include parents/guardians making the choice, and the economic rise of those already in the trade. Results also indicates that although the training programmes some times are economically demanding, trainees are however satisfied with the trade they are engaged in. this satisfaction according to the research is derived from the income they hope to make upon graduation and the fact that they now have a trade to start a living on their own.

A large percentage (97.78%) of respondents are of the view that the quality of life of the rural poor would improve tremendously if they acquire vocational skills in addition to their primary occupation. Facility upgrade is also in dire need at some of the Centres according to respondents. This would make for better achievement of set objectives of such skills acquisition Centres. In their separate opinion, Aliyu (1998); Olisa and Obiukwu (1992) contend that the high cost of training in some of the Centres is capable of reducing entries into the training programmes by those who need them but cannot afford the cost. In his study, Ogba (2014) in his study, argue that poor funding of technical and vocational education was making participants not able to achieve the goals of the agencies which leaves the cost of procurement of tools and other equipment on them. However, Center for Education Innovation (CEI) (2015) observed that although vocational training was primarily targeted at rural communities, their disadvantaged and low-income status makes it difficult for such communities to afford the cost. ITF (2014) painted a gory picture of the cost of

acquiring technical skills and achieving desired goals by the centers. It noted that sadly, in spite of huge expenditure, skill level has not been adequately enhanced, neither have Skill-Gaps been bridged nor expected jobs created as unemployment is still rife in the country. Scholars' opinion on cost of training for participants and their low income level is unanimous and agrees with the findings of this study that although stakeholders are doing their best in other to leverage the situation (Aliyu, 2012), there is still much to be done.

8. Conclusion and policy options

Evident from this study are the following conclusions. There is urgent need for vocational skills acquisition Centres/workshops in the rural areas so that the rural communities can take advantage of, as a secondary occupation besides their primary subsistence occupations of agriculture and petty trading. This is with a view that such critical intervention would raise the poverty level among rural people of Nasarawa state economically, socially and politically. Data from the study show a greater population of those who patronize the vocational skills acquisition centers are in the working population bracket. This is a vital information for policy makers to rely on, and plan for stop-gap structures to check looming unemployment among the youth, and engender rapid socio-economic development of the state. Results also show that the available vocational skills available in Nasarawa state are grossly inadequate to meet the economic and entrepreneurial needs of the state. Statistics show that stakeholders need to do more in this direction in order to squarely prepare the state for national and global competitiveness in industry, entrepreneurship and economic development.

Policies on apprenticeship/vocational skills acquisition should be defined in both public and private sectors should address issues of child labour in the system.

It is recommended that apprenticeship be integrated into the formal school system so that upon leaving secondary school, students/trainees would have already acquired basic skills in their chosen vocations. This no doubt, would increase their access to more vocational trainings.

The study further recommend collaborative effort of the three tiers of government as well as NGOs to develop and sustain vocational/apprenticeship training programmes which is a unique and veritable instrument for accelerating the attainment of self-reliance for individuals, communities, states and the nation at large.

Increased awareness programmes through the mass media is recommended for the rural people on the imperatives of vocational skills acquisition as a means to sure up their economic potentials and contribute to state and national development.

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