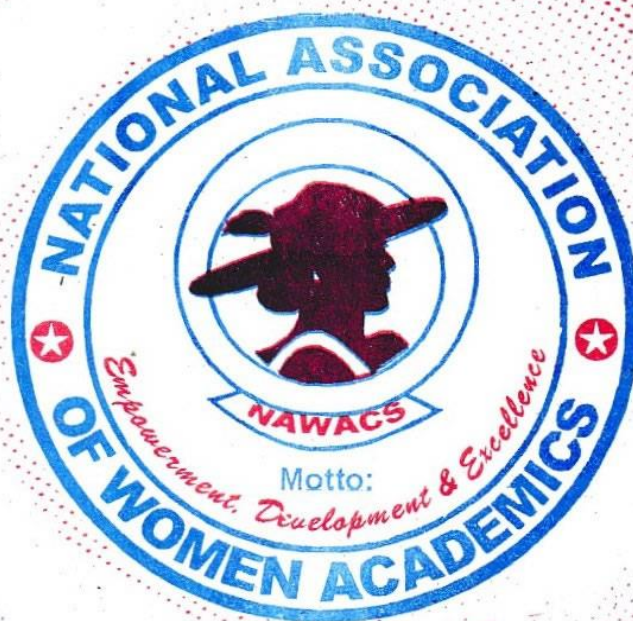


**JOURNAL OF
WOMEN IN ACADEMICS.
(JOWACS)**



Vol. 1 No. 1 September, 2000

WOMEN IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION: ATTITUDINAL APPROACH TO JOB CHOICE

E. B. Usoro (Mrs)

Vocation Educational Department, University of Uyo.

Abstract:

The general objective of Vocational Education is to minimize individuals' realistic occupational crises based on sound facts and experiences and their progress in career endeavours in a self-fulfilling and productive basis. It also enables individuals to prepare for both gainful employments with flexibility for both horizontal and vertical career mobility. In recent times, the participation of women in vocational careers have not been very encouraging, whereas they are expected to participate and excel in vocational careers as a mean of work fulfilment. This paper, therefore, gives a philosophical picture of what roles women could play in vocational education and their attitude towards vocational education in general.

Many factors are considered in the occupational choices of the individual. They include interest in the work, opportunities to meet people, value of work to the community, job security freedom from supervision and undue strain as well as availability of time. Job characteristics like prestige, status, opportunities for advancement, etc. play good roles in the choice of many women.

Ironically, female vocational interest had been the subject of after-thought of our founding fathers. It has also, to a great event, been a subject of stereotype by the society. Traditionally, Nigeria has a pattern of behaviour about female education and particularly women in occupational education.

Vocational education is the total of those organised and purposeful experiences essential to the career development in a trade, industrial or technical occupation. The programme enables an individual to learn about, expore, and prepare for a trade, industrial or technical occupations. These occupations are found in any of the career clusters (manufacturing, construction, communication and transportation), and identifiable in the dictionary of occupations which directly functions in the designing, producing, processing, fabricating, assembling, testing, modifying, maintaining, servicing or repairing of any product or commodity.

The general objective of vocational education crises based on sound facts, and experiences and their progress in career endeavour in a self-fulfilling and productive basis. It also enables individuals to prepare for both gainful employment with flexibility for both horizontal and vertical career mobility.

Vocational education programmes are flexible and are offered at the following levels: Upper levels of Post primary schools, vocational technical schools, colleges and universities. The nature and history of vocational education in Nigeria can be traced with our women folk who were either in training, far behind in their male counterparts or not participating at all. From the government survey of most schools established in 1908 in Lagos and later in Uyo State, vocational courses were later introduced in 1931 then the establishment of the YabaHigher College in 1932. The mid-western State Government in an effort to rekindle the objective upon which the school were established in 1968 seperated male and the female students in Asaba and Agbor campus respectively. The

female school died after two years. Students were later transferred to some other secondary schools in the state.

Women in vocational schools were either non-existent or only partly participating. Today, after one hundred and thirty-four years from the school established by the C. M. S. at Badagry in 1864, which incorporated vocational skills, training of vocational education, Nigerian women still trail behind their male counterparts.

In the Northern Region, the Ministry of Trade and Industry in collaboration with the Ministry of Education established a Business and Apprenticeship Trade Centre in Kaduna in 1965. The centre was to provide vocational training for local artisans and for small business entrepreneurs, and their workers. Trainees were to achieve skills and trades of motor mechanics, building, carpentry, plumbing, welding, bricklaying, etc. Although these were more or less male-oriented skills and trades, the vocational improvement centre programme spread to other parts of Nigeria. The interest of the womenfolk was later reflected as causes like catering, textile and designing, needlework, sewing, knitting, home management and others were offered.

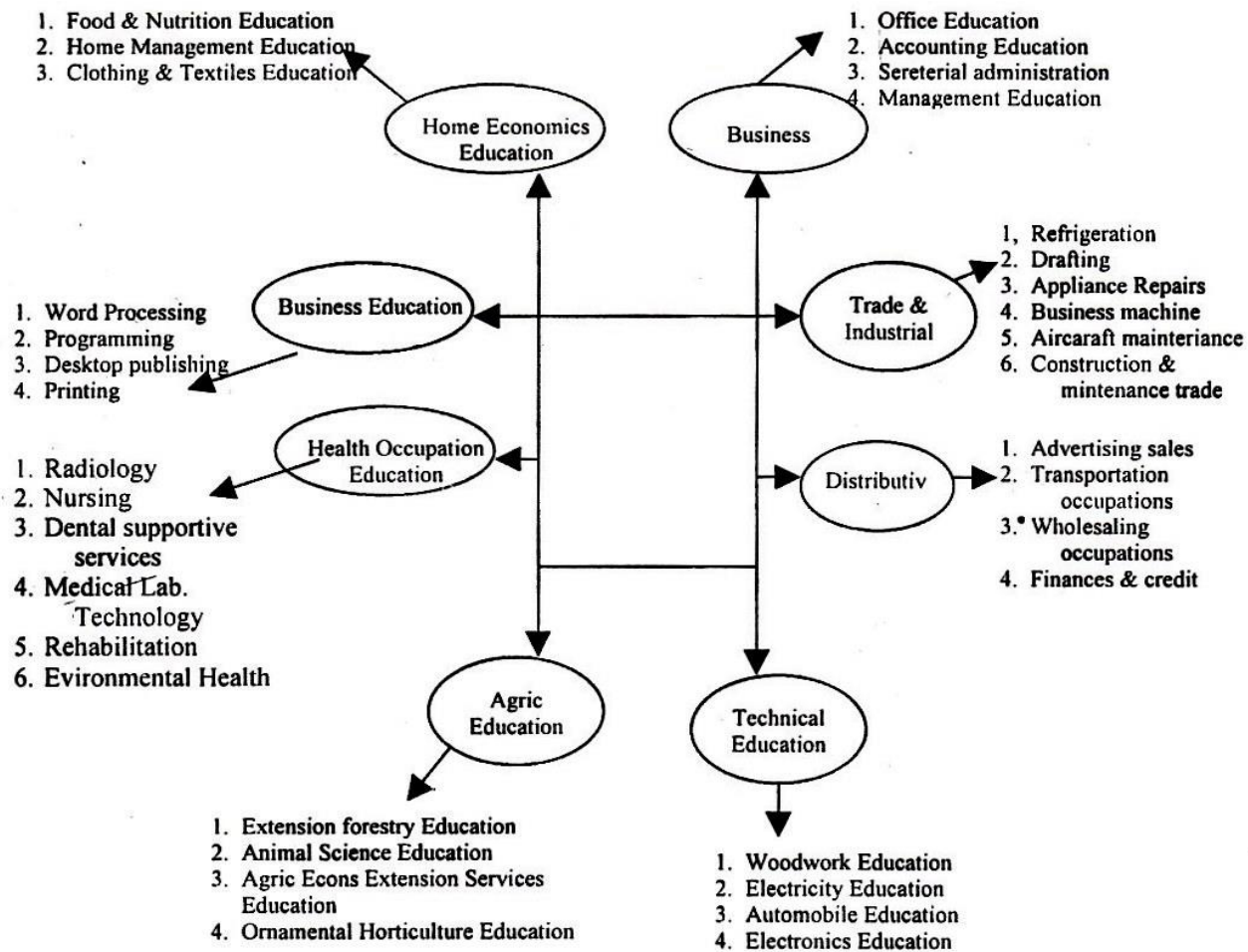
Suggested Areas Where Women Could Exploit Some Of Their Vocational Skills

1. Food Processing, Preservation, Storage Oil Extraction (Palm oil, kernel, groundnut and melon seed oil)
 - Fish smoking
 - Grains Milling (rice, maize, millets, etc.)
 - Cassava Processing
 - Fruit Juices, tomato puree, Jam processing
 - Baking
2. Crafts Production
 - Pottery
 - Knitting
 - Sewing
 - Tie and dye
 - Rope making
 - Weaving (clothes, shopping and school bags. etc.).
 -
3. Manufacturing
 - Pomade
 - Soap
 - Toys
 - Candles
 - Toothpicks

AREAS IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

Figure 1

Interrelated Fields of Vocational Education



Sources: Akpan, V. C. J. (1997) Administration and Supervision on Vocational Education Dorand Publishers, Uyo.

Barriers to Women involvement in vocational education stems from many areas. Among them are the gender stereotyping in some professions. This has reduced women involvement from wider areas of vocational education to specific area like Nursing, secretarial catering and teaching. The technical occupation are dominated by men.

There are also family and parental barriers where parents and the family influence daughters to choose sterotyped cluster of occupations. This often arises from parental, family and sometimes societal negative opinion towards vocational education and vocational occupation. Parents and societies influence women to choose vocations that will enhance marital and family life since family life cannot and must not be compromised for professional and vocational excellence.

Gender separation caters for another form of barriers where some schools are disignated Boys Schools and some Girls Schools. A closer look at their curricular

suggested implied barriers. Finally, there are also traditional belief, value, norms, customs and religious practices which expect only certain behaviours and professions from women. Low social status of women in societies not so involved in policy and decision-making, negative attitude to career women, high premium placed on marriage, belief that science and technology are men's job and not feminine are just a few of the barriers on social areas.

Women Enrolment in Vocational Education

One of the major defects in the old Nigeria education system is the low priority accorded to technical and vocational education. Technical education is that "aspect of education which leads to the acquisition of practical and applied skills as well as basic scientific knowledge" (National policy on Education 1981). For the subsequent reason, education in Nigeria has witnessed a progressive evolution to make for the deficiencies and the unsuitability of the colonial system of education. The afore mentioned system operates the 'grammar' school curriculum which was too literal and geared towards the production of men of the book" who are white collar job seekers. In support of this view Phelps Stokes committee (1925) indicated from their findings that:

...The content of education was too narrow and not adapted to the needs of the African communities; and recommended that technical and vocational training courses were to be attached to school curriculum"

The introduction of science and technology in our educational system is quite obvious. In the views of Usman (1991) "The world is globally a technological village today". Virtually most operations in recent times depend heavily on science and technology. Therefore grammar schools will be de-emphasised in favour of technical/vocational and business subjects which are crucial to the nation's aspirations for a technological take off. As a developing country, Nigeria needs a system of education oriented towards the requisition of technological knowledge and practical skills both technology and socio-economic development.

The new 6-3-3-4 system of education recognises and emphasises the study of introductory technology at the first tier of the two tier secondary school in Nigeria. In view of the technological awareness in the Nigerian education scene, the Nigerian National Policy on Education revised (1981) stated in section 4, subsection 19, article 4 that the Junior Secondary School (JSS) will be pre-vocational and academic. The prevocational subjects include; woodwork, metal work, electronics, mechanics, local craft, Home Economic and business studies.

The success of the above policy depends largely in the nature of students enrollment in Colleges of Education (technical) Polytechnics and Universities. This is because the manpower needed for effective teaching of introductory technology stems from the above institutions.

Euler-Ajayi (1989) aptly pointed out that the participation of women in science and technology professions in Nigeria is critical to the future of technological development of this country. This is because based on 1991 census females constitute about half of the total population yet most of them lack the necessary education in the science and technology and have a low participation rate in the science and technology. One

wonders what the state of introductory technology will be by the year 2000. Technology generally is accepted to be the application of scientific and other organised knowledge to practical tasks.

Skills acquisition is one form of education taught before the introduction of Western Education in Nigeria. Skills taught as part of the indigeneous system of education in Nigeria includes: weaving, sculpturing, blacksmithing, carving, timkery etc. However, they were not institutionalised.

The first major recommendation for the introduction of technical and vocational education as earlier mentioned, was made in 1931 when the commissioner of higher education in West Africa proposed that the premises of the defunct Yaba Higher College should be converted into technical institution. In support of this view Fafunwa (1984) observed that; far too long we have produced army of clerks and pen pushers and few technicians and craftsmen. It is an army of the artisans engineers and the like that in the long run can change the face of this nation.

Introductory technology is one of the innovations in the Junior Secondary School of the 6-3-3-4 system of education in Nigeria. It forms part of the pre-vocational subjects of the JSS. The introduction of Introductory Technology as part of the general system is not peculiar to Nigeria alone. It is accepted throughout the world under different names. In USA and Canada, it is known as industrial art, in UK as handicraft. Some other countries have named it development technology, Basic technological education etc.

Role of Women in Influencing Female Involvement in Vocational Education

The question we seek to answer at this point is what role should women adopt to ensure that vocational education is a reality in Nigeria? Women constitute a greater percentage of the Nigerian population according to the 1991 census figures. Therefore if any meaningful result must be achieved in the area of vocational education development, the relevance of women cannot be over emphasised. Women and their resources have to be mobilised and properly channelled in order to achieve the desired goals. A failure to harness the potentials of women in this direction automatically spells doom for any measure adopted towards attaining this development.

Nature has endowed the female folks with the capacity to bear and rear children, thus spending more time with them. Therefore women can be seen as the custodians of the future. When the children are born, it is the women who take the primary duties of nurturing them, through which they can instill work values, independence in choice and appreciation of skills in the process. Values and morals should be transmitted to these children by the women in their daily interactions. Such values range from simple toilet habits, feeding habits, to issue of manipulative production. The children are also taught how to play with toys that construct or raise skill development in them. Therefore, if a good percentage of women are properly educated on the elements of vocational development and their desirability, then such women will be properly equipped to transmit values that could enhance vocational development to the children. Toy stereotyping should be discounted and female children exposed to some toys as the males. Girls must be encouraged into wider vocations through good career counselling in schools. Vocational educators must become dissatisfied with the present trend and encourage principals of schools and school counsellors to expose the students to career prospects in vocational areas.

Also Heads of Department in Universities and other tertiary institutions must encourage higher admission rates for girls in vocational areas. The mass media - print and air media could be used to educate girls on the need to train in vocational education and how to go about that.

References

- Akpan, V. C. J. (1997) Admission and Supervision in Vocational Education. Dorand Publishers, Uyo.
- Euler-Ajayi, O. (1998) "Training Women: A reflecting on he Nigerian Experience Education For Today A Quarterly Journal of the Federal Ministry of Education. Vol. 3 No. 1. .
- Evans, R. N. and Har, E. L. (1978): Foundational of Vocational Education: Columbus. Charles E. Merrill Publishing Co.
- Lee, C. D. (1971) ed: The Encyclopedia of Education Vol. 9 Macmillan Company and the free press.
- Tucker, G. and Asser, E. S. (1980) Implimating Sex Equity in Vocational Education: A review of selected Literature Journal of Vocational Education Research Vol. (2) 49 - 64.