

## Towards Enhancing the Vocational Maturity Status of Nigerian Secondary School Students

<sup>1</sup>Adegoroye, A.O.S; <sup>1</sup>Batunde, J.O; <sup>1</sup>Ibimiluyi, F.O; and <sup>2</sup>Ajagbe, 'Shina

<sup>1</sup>Department of Guidance and Counselling, Faculty of Education,  
University of Ado-Ekiti

<sup>2</sup>Osun State College of Education, Ila-Orangun.

**Corresponding Author: Adegoroye, A.O.S**

---

### Abstract

*This paper calls attention to the seeming lack of traits and characteristics that need describe vocationally mature youths among secondary school students at the terminal points of the secondary school level of education, that is, JSS3 and SSS3. Using a randomly selected sample of 480 secondary school students from Ekiti state of Nigeria, the authors drew data with a validated set of questionnaires on the status and level of their vocational maturity. Data revealed that more than half of the sample are low on the maturity status while another considerable percentage are just barely mature, displaying traits of not having a specific job/vocation in mind, not spending time to think through possible employment in the society, never consulting with adults on the demands of the world of work among other immature traits. Possible school activities and the needed governmental policy to improve the status of the youths' vocational maturity status were suggested as a conclusion*

---

**Keywords:** enhancing, vocational maturity, status, Nigerian, secondary school students.

---

### INTRODUCTION

By the assumptions of vocational psychologists, the period between the ages of 15-24 years being the stage of explorations, need have individuals being aware of the range of vocations and career available in the society and in their environment, being aware of their personal capacities, capabilities, skills and special endowments that would serve them in the world of work, awareness of the places where their capabilities could best be developed for self enhancement and societal emancipation. Further, the individuals should be able to make reflections on self, others and the environment, familiarity with employment patterns and status and should engage in construction of personal occupational plans based on personal characteristics, educational and trial work experiences. All these are a demonstration of the fact that the individual realises that work is an important part of living.

For these reasons, vocational and career guidance became an important part of the services that educational and other training institutions offer their recipients, especially in Nigeria and other nations of the world. A summative evaluation of the impact of the over three decades old vocational guidance and counselling program that appears central among the Nigerian instituted school guidance policy (N.P.E.1977) suffices. This is against the fact that evidences abound that the programme may need revitalization of its content, objectives and approaches as scientific, technological, social, psychological and especially economic events in the

world and affecting the world of work and the youths for who the guidance policy was designed have been in the least, dramatic demanding a new series of adjustments.

Also, informed observations, research reports and notable actions of and on the youths for who the programme was designed reveal a hollow in their display of measures of vocational maturity that comprised of traits and characteristics of self understanding, understanding of the demands of the world of work, being active at consulting with the present significant others in their life and who occupy positions in the world of work, and possessing and displaying the ability to make informed decision about vocations and careers that are available as well as making efforts within the available space at participating in the world of work as a promise of meaningfully occupying such position in the immediate and nearest future.

These reasons among several others combine to make the growing case for constant assessment of youths' vocational maturity as the construct had shown over time to be significantly influenced by changing culture and time specific occurrences in the world of work and social life generally. Other factors that must be taken into account are issues that directly or otherwise influence planning, exploration and adaptations of the youth. On the account of the above challenges rest the need to take a measure of the Career/ Vocational Maturity of the youths of Nigeria as well as of the fact that informed

observation appears to show that they are not only undescriptive of the traits of vocational maturity, but as buttressed by print and electronic media reports, for example ,African Independent Television (AIT) Newstrack 12:00; 28<sup>th</sup> May 2010, a large number of them 17.5 million have chosen to venture into the menial world of work (during the times they are supposed to be in school ), both male and female youths now flood and roam the streets of commercial city as bus conductors, shoe shiners, hawkers of wares and consumables, being shop attendants, jobs and duties that demand no training and poses no challenge to their intellectual capacity and capabilities.

Even in the school where they are supposed to be receiving intellectual instructions and engaging in activities to equip them for self sustenance, they appear not motivated as many of assignments given to challenge their industry and capability to do manual work as in their vocational traits are at best shoddily done. It seems appropriate to highlight at this juncture that a notable percentage of these youths, both in the rural and urban centres are however intelligent and are quick and display a surprisingly large amount of understanding of the use of the information technology hard and soft wares and have taken a fore front in using same for 'business transactions'. This is with unsuspecting foreign partners who they defraud of fantastic sums of money. The sudden wealth so made are displayed in very reckless manner as in buying exotic cars, building mansions, renting hotel apartments and organizing wild parties. They have attracted the name 'the yahoo boys/ girls for themselves.

It need be said that these acts have not only attracted international attention and deserved condemnation and drawn the attention of law enforcement agents, but also stands as a challenge to Nigerian people and government's stand on training youths for appreciation of dignity of labour and engagement in decent and honest source of livelihood .In summary a considerable number of the youths have lost torch with the indices of vocational maturity, especially that of (1) and (2).

Whereas, youths in nations like, China, South Korea, India, Brazil and India that Nigeria shares the nomenclature of developing economy with, and where their public(government) and private policies are sincere about effecting and monitoring their youths' vocational maturity, now have their rewards in these youths engagement in activities that had helped in producing comparable consumables and other commodities in the world market as the ones produced in the advanced nations and that have acted to transform their nations' economy. These nations' experiences and the surprises they spurned before the world at a period of worldwide depressions are

testimony to the fact that where the vocational maturity demands of the youths are understood, nurtured, guided and exercised, scientific, technological and industrial advancement are foregone conclusions. That Nigeria still hoped to advance and break-forth in scientific and other world scales of growth and development measurements, calls for a revisit to how her youths' rating on the scale of vocational maturity with a view to properly addressing issues that may have affected the status of the youths on the construct.

#### **Content of the Universe of Vocational Maturity.**

Maturity as a concept is central in all aspects of psychological studies, viz, personal, social, educational, sports and vocational .It refers to peoples' display of resolution of certain tasks in their past and that have left them as possessing subjective happiness and contentment, sufficient frustration tolerance and flexibility to meet and deal with stress without undue anxiety. The central theme is that all traits that are essential for human functioning at all existential conditions follow a pattern of growth passing through delineable stages with specific and notable characteristics before reaching the maximum point where they could be used for some pre-determined purposes. It is at this point that the law of readiness is defined.

Vocational psychology identified five stages embracing; Growth, Exploratory, Establishment, Maintenance and Decline of human vocational development with these stages coinciding with notable stages as childhood, adolescence, early adulthood and the adulthood stage that eventually terminates in retirement. In other words, vocational development is a life long process. At each of the identified stages are individuals expected to exhibit traits and other relevant and related behaviours if the individual would be rated as mature and preparing to contribute to the survival and continuity of the society.

Along this line of argument is an individual considered mature when he/she is physically, mentally and emotionally capable and accountable for the duties he/she performs to fulfil a reward- able activity that may be found in the spectrum of defined professions in his/ her social environment.

The Holland's(1973) picture and classifications of the world of work and the progressions as well as modifications made in them, it need be said, are present in the Nigerian 21<sup>st</sup> century social and work milieu with the required special demands of each of the classes of vocations on individuals wishing to enter in to them remaining intact

#### **Youths' Expected Vocational Maturity Indices**

A combination of a youth's readiness cognitively and affectively to cope with the vocational tasks set for

their stage of development (Gonzalez,2008) remains their vocational maturity index. Ipaye (1980) described it as the capability of the individual to be able to attend to the tasks, expectations and obligations that arise and have to be met during a broadly defined period of life. He argued further that they are defined in skills, knowledge, functions and attitudes that the individual must acquire through physical maturation, social expectation, cultural dictates, personal efforts and motivation. These are measured in their :

- Decision making strategies,
- Involvement in relevant experiences,
- Independence in carrying out or testing one's ability in real life situations,
- Orientation to service

#### **Measuring/Assessing Youths' Vocational Maturity**

Demonstration of ability to make a realistic and stable career choice with awareness of what is required to make an appropriate career decision and function in the chosen career are issues that mark the level of vocational maturity(Prideaux2001). Though the range of accumulated support for these items and the variable they represent are yet to be appraised, the competency test or instrument for measuring vocational maturity should contain items related to: Self appraisal, seeking relevant and usable occupational information, goal selection based on awareness of the offerings in the world of work, planning and problem solving as it relates to knowledge as to what it takes to practice and function in each of the different occupations available in the society. Seeking chances to try-out job experiences Arguments of Singg (2006), Coertse and Schepers (2004) and Onivehu (1990) and Onyejiaku (1985) emphasized that the vocational maturity concept needs to be revitalized to make it more appropriate in times like the 21<sup>st</sup> century that there are apparent changes in career patterns and career vocational maturity issues demanded .These issues they claim, are daily been made more applicable to a wider range of societal groups. Such a re-formulation however needs to retain its general principles while providing theoretical momentum for current and future works.

#### **The Question to Ask and That Need Be Empirically Answered Include:**

- How would a sample of Nigerian secondary school youths consider themselves on the content of the universe of vocational maturity?
- What influence would demographic factors play in the ratings of the chosen sample on vocational maturity?
- Would these youths have issues they consider as limiting/ enhancing their vocational maturity status?

#### **METHODOLOGY**

The design for the study is of the descriptive survey to determine the status of vocational maturity of secondary schools students in Ekiti state of Nigeria .Ekiti is one of the 36 states in Nigeria. The state was christened 'the fountain of knowledge' as her indigenes have a dominance of the population of the Nigerian nation's cream of intellectuals and professionally trained experts. It is one of the few where the indigenes are a homogeneous group with a pedigree for schooling and intellectual pursuit. It is on the assumption that the youths of a state of this nature would show evidences of vocational maturity having the opportunity to be exposed to accomplished models in different vocational fields and also have the opportunity to be exposed to professional counselling as established in Nigerian secondary schools in the last 3 decades. Further, Secondary school students at the transitional points of their schooling of the 6-3-3-4 system of education that the Nigerian nation had been running in the last 3 decades represent the target population, that is, Junior Secondary School (JSS3) level and the Senior Secondary School (SSC3). At these transitory points, it is assumed they would be described by the characteristics of the vocationally mature.

#### **Population and Sample**

The 16,000 students in the JSS3 and SSS3 classes in the 167 secondary schools in the 3 Senatorial Districts of Ekiti State of Nigeria represent the Population of the study.

To draw the sample of this study, the stratified sampling method was adopted. First, 2 Local Government Areas(LGAs) were selected from each of the 3 Senatorial districts making a total of 6LGAs out of the total 16 that the state has. In each of the 6 LGAs, 2 communities to represent Rural and Urban setting were selected. In each of these 12 communities, secondary schools were selected. It is in these 12 schools that a total of 420 students representing the respondents of the study were derived.

#### **RESEARCH INSTRUMENT**

A set of 50 questionnaires focusing issues related to the universe of youths vocational maturity status was designed and validated by the authors. Some of the items seek to know whether the respondents are aware of the state and status of employment in the society, give thoughts to the fact that it is needful to get certain kinds of training before they could be engaged anyhow in the modern day world of work, whether they have been asking employed adults what their employment/job roles demand, what sort of caution need be exercised in seeking for work and in places of work when and if employed, whether they spend their leisure time on acquiring skills that would make them employable in their desired places of work, whether they are aware of groups of youths in

employment that are respectable in the Society (Dhillon and Kaur, 2005; Fouad, 1988; Gonzalez, 2008). Further, respondents are to express whether they are conversant with electronic media programmes related to work life and whether they are giving much more thoughts to employment that people would demand for a reasonable length of time. Also are the respondents to express whether they are aware of peculiar characteristics in their person that would make them fit for a particular kind of work. Do they ever spend time to think through the kind of work they wished to do?

**Validation Process**

**Validity**

In the design of the questionnaires ,the content of the universe of the variable of youths’ vocational maturity indices were visited in the literature and covered by the selection process of the items included on the final format of the questionnaires. This satisfies the face and content validity which Anastasi and Urbina(1997) considers the strongest technique for the questionnaire method. Agreement of 2 Vocational Psychologist further support the validity status of the Instrument.

**Reliability**

In a test-re-test exercise within a period of 2 weeks with 50 select secondary school students who were never part of the final respondents, a coefficient of 0.57 was derived and was considered high enough for data collection in this study.

**Scoring and Classifications Possible by and on the Instrument**

On the set of Questionnaires with a total of 50 items, a possible score of 150 is for highly mature respondents agreeing that each of the vocational maturity index is much descriptive(3),and minimum of 50 for respondents with Low level of maturity finding the items un-descriptive(1). Respondents who find the items sometimes descriptive are Moderately mature are to mark them as (2).With these it was possible to rate respondents as High on vocational maturity with a score range 125-150,Moderately mature 75-124 and low when with a score range of 1-74.

**Administration of the Instrument and Data Analysis**

With the help of some research assistants, the questionnaires were administered on the respondents at their schools and were immediately retrieved after completion. The properly completed ones were collated and machine treated for analysis. Both oral/in-depth interviews and focused group discussions were also adopted with the respondents. The result of the data analysis are presented below:

**RESULTS**

Table 1 Demographic Distribution of the Sample & Maturity Level Score (N=480)

Age 12-15	61	123.5
16-18	39	128.7
Sex M	58	127.2
F	42	130.4
Loc Rural	44	98.6
Urban	56	122.7
S.E.B High	38	128.6
Low	62	121.3
Class J.S.S	48	121.4
S.S.S	52	122.6

Table 1 shows the distribution of the sample along the statistics of Age, Sex, Location, Socio-Economic Background and the Class. Also, the mean score of the groupings on the Scale of measure of their vocational maturity(the data collecting Instrument) were computed for classification and for statistical comparisons.

Table2: Score Range and Classifications of the Vocational Maturity Level of the Sample(N=480)

MATURITY LEVEL	SCORE RANGE	FREQUENCY COUNT	%
High	125-150	80	16.7
Moderate	75-124	120	25
Low	50-74	280	58.3
		480	100

(N= 480)

Table2 shows the classification of the sample by the Instrument of the study. In it, a majority of the sample(58.3% ; 280) classified as low on vocational maturity indices.

A further analysis show that characteristics on the indicated items as:

- ( )Not having a specific job/vocation in mind
- (0)Not spending time to think through possible employment in the society.
- (0)Never consulting with adults on the demands of the world of work.
- (0)Not being aware of personality characteristics peculiar to self that may make for special success in selected professions.
- (0)Consciously developing skills that could be employed by others.
- (0)Seeking to participate in socially approved activities that have financial rewards
- (0)They are expressed as un-descriptive by a considerable percentage of the Sample.

Table 3: One –way Analysis of Variance on the Mean Scores of the Sample by their Statistics

	SS	MSS	Df	F cal	F tab
Between	6059.538	1514.681	4	10.136	2.37
Within	109046.9	109.595	480		
Total	115106.4				

p.<0.05

A one way Analysis of Variance performed on the mean scores of the demographical groupings of the sample show that there is statistical differences along the grouping’s scores as F calculated is higher than the table value.

Table 4: Post-hoc Turkey Multiple Comparison test of Demographic variables’ Impact on Vocational Maturity

Sample	S.E.B	age	Sex	Loc	Class
Age		*			
Sex			*		
Loc				*	
Class					*
S.E.B					

Mean Difference significant at p<0.05 level

From Table 4, all the demographic variable of the sample show a measure of difference in the vocational maturity level of the Sample. Taking a look at Table1, it could be inferred that, respondents who are Female,16-18years old, living in the Urban areas,who are from Higher socio-economic background and in the Senior Secondary Classes have a higher vocational maturity scores that their counterparts who are not.

**DISCUSSION**

The results of data analysis indicating a low level of vocational maturity and competence and mediated by the demographic variables of the Nigerian youth’s in this study compares with similar studies such as Singn (2006), Dhillon and Kaur(2005) and Gonzalez (2008) and calls for the various bodies concerned with vocational education and employment e.g. National Directorate of Employment(NDE), National Board for Technical Education(NABTEC), and Polytechnics and Monotechnics in theNigeria, to design and implement a novel national framework for generating interest in vocational training. As much as the sample in this study expressed a wish to be competent in skills( that would enhance their capabilities of contributing to the sustainance of the society), and hence their vocational maturity status there are no places to develop such competences and where there are such training grounds, there are no institutional support. This need vis-a –vis the rhetoric of informed leaders as to the importance of having a set of youth skilled in the needed area of vocational competence and the unwillingness of the youth to prepare themselves to acquire the competence must be addressed.

First at the secondary school level where these respondents were drawn, there is a need to reawaken and tingle the interest of the youths in vocational competence acquisition based on assurance that they would be employed and guaranteed a pension able career in a chosen vocational area of interest. In this , the several industries that have taken leave of the nation in the wake of global economic downturn and the inability of the nation to supply the power generation requirements to run their machines and therefore settled in the nearby sister country, Ghana to be precise, where such provisions are made, must be lured back.

These industries that run on industrial machines and require men of vocational competence and orientation to operate and run may need to supply information to these various institutions as to the nature of competence they required or would require of the manpower to run these production machines. To give them the kind of machines they need and probably ask them to fabricate such would be a tall dream that would not be attained.

The finding in this study show that a greater percentage of the sample/ respondents classify as low and another large bulk as minimally vocationally mature while only a negligible number exhibit appreciable level of vocational maturity is not unique/peculiar to this study. Some of the other complimentary findings with similar samples drawn in some other parts of the Nigerian nation in this regard include Achebe (1982), Carew (1985), Ipaye (1989) Onivehu (1990) and Salami (2008).They all argued as the reason for such unbecoming situation as the failure of the Nigerian education system to make for and provide vocational maturity inducing ingredients such as policies and institutional supports for programmes that links schooling with employment.

That Nigerian youths of adolescent age and at the turning point of completion of their high school exhibit a low level of vocational maturity relates to the ill preparation that the schools make of them while they are in the school, for example ,no time exist on their time table to discuss the structure and demands of the world of work, the job role designs and their essence, the approaches that the individuals wishing to enter into are expected to have, and some vocational skills and competence that they may require. These, one thinks, are some of the salient ingredients of preparation for work and for life that the 6-3-3-4 system of education emphasizes, but which now appears lacking. Further and that may need to be mentioned as accounting for the low level of vocational maturity of the population is that many of the machines that were imported from the Scandinavian countries some three decades ago when the nation woke up to the need for her youths to be

vocationally skilled and competent, are now outdated, broken down and only constitute relics in the privileged schools that have them. Further, teachers of technical and vocational subjects not only run outdated curriculum and syllabi for the different levels of the high school classes, making the lessons boring and unchallenging, they are also acutely in short supply. This has left the school-going youths to contend with the traditional Arts, Social Sciences and in special cases the Science subjects. Even at this, many of the teachers are wont of making the youths see the relevance to daily living and eventually to the world of work, the knowledge gained in these various traditional school subjects. Many of these youths in the transitional classes, especially at the senior secondary school, are thus left to join in the frustrating race of gaining admission into the poorly equipped and funded Tertiary Institutions.

#### **IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The implications of the findings of this study portends grave signals for the policy makers and those on the watch for the future of the nation vis-a-vis the employability status of the youths of the nation. In the first instance a notable percentage of them expressed an unwillingness to learn any trade or craftsmanship as taught by the aging and fast dwindling statistics of artisans in the various areas of needs in the country.

To revert this unacceptable trend, there ought to be a clearly identified skills, competences and talents at the various sectors of the Nation's economy, for example, the Asian countries identified participation in the information technology and diverted her youths attention to manufacturing the ICT microchips and now have the youths fully engaged in this and equally found herself in contention with the World leading nation in the information technology race. Also, like Britain of the 1980s, there is a need for the initiation of 'Skills talk' that would build into Skills Task Force or the 'Learning and Skills Council' as a Para-ministerial department in the Ministry of education to monitor the expected change in what obtains (Winch and Hyland, 2007). The body would also serve to unify the goals of acquiring skills for industrial growth and knowledge-driven economy. Doing this would cover all aspects of education, vocational training, the economy, employment and social life; in short, it would be an exercise in developing and running a competence-based education.

The suggestion above portends a great challenge to Nigerian vocational psychologists and counsellors who would not only have to be ready to advocate, initiate and present fora upon which the various segments of the society would meet and be sensitized to the immediate and social problem of a population of youths without usable and sellable skills and

competence signifies, (who knows, the world may soon begin to look beyond athletics, sports and entertainment for who to appreciate as stars of their generation). Nigerian vocational psychologists must begin to put together for presentation to the nation's law-makers, policy formulators and implementers, the white paper on the programs to effect a filling of this manifest hollow in the vocational life of a large number of Nigerian youths.

#### **REFERENCES**

- Achebe, C.C. (1982) Assessing the vocational maturity of students in East Central State of Nigeria. *Journal of Vocational Behaviour* 20 :153-156
- Anastasi, P. and Urbina D.M (1997) *Research Design in Counseling*. Paris: I.T.P coy.
- Carew, P.F.C.(1985) Vocational Development among Borno State Secondary School students. *The Nigerian Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, 1:72-80.
- Coertse, S and Schepers, J.M (2004) Some Personality and Cognitive correlates of Career Maturity. *South African Journal of Industrial Psychology*,30 (2), 56-73.
- Dhillon, U and Kaur, R. (2005) Career Maturity of School Children. *Journal of India Academy of Applied Psychology* 31(1-2):71-76.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria (1977) *National Policy on Education (NPE)*. Lagos: Federal Govt. Press Ltd.
- Fouad, N. A. (1988) The construct of Career maturity in the United States and Israel. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*,v37, 49-59.
- Gonzalez, M.A. (2008) Career Maturity: A priority for Secondary education. *Electronic Journal of Research in Educational Psychology*, 6(3):749-772.
- Ipaye, 'B. (1989) Vocational Guidance in Nigeria Prospect, 19(1); 65-73.
- Lovinson, E.M., Ohler, D.L., Casewell, S. and Kiewra, K (2001) Six Approaches to the Assessment of career maturity. *Journal of Counselling and Development*76 (1):475-482.
- Onivehu, A.O. (1990) Some factors Influencing the Career Maturity of Nigerian Adolescents. Unpublished Ph. D Thesis in the Department of Guidance and Counselling, Faculty of Education, University of Ilorin Nigeria.
- Onyejiaku, F.O. (1985) Intra-sex Differences in Vocational Maturity of Nigerian Adolescents. *The Nigerian Journal of Guidance and Counselling* 1 (1):61-71.

Prideaux, I. and Creed, P.A. (2001) Career maturity, career decision-making, self-efficacy and career indecision: a review of accrued evidence. *Australian Journal of Career Development* 10(2):1-22.

Salami, S.O.(2008) Gender, Identity Status and Career Maturity of Adolescents in Southwest Nigeria. *Journal of Social Sciences* 16 (1):35-49.

Singg, S. (2006) Worker Status, Responsibility and Career Maturity of College Students. Unpublished manuscript Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

Winch, C and Hyland, T.(2007) *A Guide to Vocational Education and Training*. N.Y. Continuum International Pub. Coy.