

# Volume 8 Number 1 March 1996

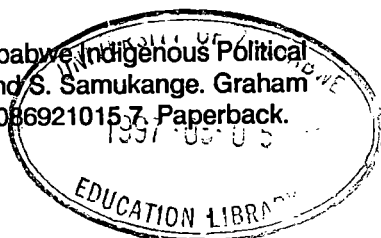
ISSN 1013-3445

## CONTENTS

- Mainstream Children's Attitudes Towards Integration With the Disabled in Zimbabwe's Secondary Schools  
*Fred Zindi* 1
- Relevance of School Education to Employment: Expectations of Employers in Harare  
*Onward S. Mandebvu* 12
- Boys and Girls in Science: Does the Gender Composition of the School Matter?  
*James A. Opore* 27
- Assessing Gender Factor in Some Secondary School Mathematics Textbooks in Nigeria  
*O.A. Oyedeji* 45
- Education For All by the Year 2000 (EFA 200): Its Feasibility in Some Countries in Africa: Can Teacher Education Ensure Quantity, Quality, and Relevance for Education in the Year 2000?  
*Obert P. Ndawi* 55

## LITERATURE SOURCES

- Hunhuism or Ubuntuism: A Zimbabwe Indigenous Political Philosophy, by T. Samukange and S. Samukange. Graham Publishing, Harare, 1980. ISBN 0869210157. Paperback.  
*Ngoni Makuva* 75



# RELEVANCE OF SCHOOL EDUCATION TO EMPLOYMENT: EXPECTATIONS OF EMPLOYERS IN HARARE

*Onward S. Mandebvu  
Department of Technical Education  
University of Zimbabwe*

## ABSTRACT

*The link between education and development has been fairly well established. Education has been accepted as an investment while the human resource has been accepted as a critical factor in any economic development initiative. What is problematic is achieving the type of education that is most relevant to a country's stage of economic development.*

*In industrialising countries, the problem of educational relevance assumes an even greater enormity. There have been numerous attempts at solving the problem, the most universal of which has been the vocationalisation of education — an initiative whose basic premise is that there is a mismatch between what traditional school education develops in learners on one hand, and the needs of the world of work on the other.*

*A lot of literature has been generated in the debate on the efficacy, or lack of it, of the vocationalisation initiative. It does, however, appear most of the literature does not emanate from industrialising countries, and where it does, it does not often reflect the researched views of what business and industry actually expect from the school nor does it indicate whether employers think that vocationalisation of education leads to a better fit between education and the world of work. This study was an attempt to fill this gap in the literature.*

## **Introduction**

A number of studies of employers' expectations of education and on how they can participate in education and training have been done in industrialised countries (Noah and Eckstein, 1988; Fargerlind and Saha, 1983; Brooks, 1992). Most of these studies have concluded that employers in these countries are unhappy with their education systems, criticising the education systems of being too academic. The employers have also decried the lack of close collaboration between them and governments on education and training. The same studies have concluded that employers' requirements in school-leavers appear to be overwhelmingly on attitudinal attributes rather than on specific vocational skills. The attitudinal attributes that have been identified are the ability to learn, to get on well with other people, to communicate, to be reliable, to use knowledge in solving new problems, and an understanding of how wealth is created (Noah and Eckstein, 1988).

The need to promote close business-school partnerships appears to have been established and a variety of ways of promoting such partnerships have been identified (Noah and Eckstein, 1988; Pretorius, 1993). The forms of partnerships identified include work observations, career guidance, holiday job opportunities, attachment of teachers to industry and business, the financing of problem solving competitions by the business world and joint curriculum development projects. There may, however, be impediments to this cooperation. Pretorius (1993) identifies mutual mistrust, prejudice and misperceptions, and conflicts in aims and values, among others, as obstacles to partnership between employers and schools in educational practice and development.

The present study was aimed at finding out if the views of commerce and industry in industrialising countries are shared by their counterparts in Harare, Zimbabwe. To put this study in proper context, it is considered essential to briefly describe the Zimbabwean system of secondary school education.

## **Secondary School Education in Zimbabwe**

Secondary school education in Zimbabwe stretches over six years, with examinations taken every two years. The majority of the pupils terminate their studies at the end of four years of secondary education, years during which pupils study practical (technical) subjects alongside the traditional academic subjects. The practical subjects are intended to be part of general education, although a definite vocational emphasis has now been added with the introduction of the Zimbabwe National Foundation Certificate (ZNFC) studies – studies which are meant to qualify school-leavers for entry-level jobs in such industries as construction, furniture manufacturing, metalworking and clothing manufacturing. The pupils who take the ZNFC subjects do this in addition to the normal load of "O" level subjects.

## **The Study**

The study was a survey carried out in Harare. Two hundred questionnaires were sent out to business and commercial organisations, the majority of whom were randomly selected from registers of business and commercial organisations in the city. Other business and commercial organisations were purposefully selected because they were known to be large employers of labour. A number of questions were asked which were aimed at determining:

1. commerce and industry's degree of satisfaction with the present system of education and the reasons thereof;
2. commerce and industry's position on school-based vocational training;
3. the attributes that employers value most in employment seekers; and
4. whether responding companies were in favour of direct participation in education and, if so, the form of participation they preferred.

## Methodology

A questionnaire, comprising mostly close-ended questions, was developed in consultation with a practising human resources person, for the investigation. The questionnaire, together with self-addressed return envelopes, were mailed to the human resources executives of selected companies in Harare. Follow-up telephone calls were made to companies which had not returned the questionnaire two weeks after it had been posted out. In the end, eighty-two companies (41%), employing between them about 24 000 people, returned the questionnaire.

## Results

Employers were asked whether the level of education of an employee affected the workers' productivity (Table 1).

**Table 1**  
**Higher Education Leads to More Worker Productivity**  
**(N = 74)**

Yes		No	
N	%	N	%
68	91.9	6	8.1

Table 1 shows that 91.9% (68) of the respondents said "Yes" and only 8.1% (6) said "No".

On the question of in-house job training Table 2 reflects responses from the employers.

**Table 2****Does Your Company Offer In-house Job Training? (N = 76)**

Yes		No	
N	%	N	%
65	85.5	11	14.5

Table 2 shows that 85.5% (65) offer in-house job training.

**Table 3****Correlation Between Education and Trainability (N = 64)**

Response	N	%
Education makes no difference	3	4.7
The more educated are more trainable	61	95.3
The less educated are more trainable	0	0.0

On the relationship between level of education and the trainability of a worker, 95.3% (61) of the employers who responded to this question, said that they found the better educated employees more trainable (Table 3).

**Table 4****Frequency With Which Employers Consider School-leavers for Job Openings (N = 74)**

	N	%
Always	26	35.1
Sometimes	36	48.7
Never	12	16.2

As shown in Table 4, when asked how often they considered school leavers for entry-level jobs, 48.7% (36) said "Sometimes", 35.1% (26) said "Always" and 16.2% (12) said "Never".

**Table 5**  
**Schools Should Teach Job-specific Skills (N = 76)**

Yes		No	
N	%	N	%
68	89.5	8	10.5

Table 5 shows that the majority of the respondents, 89.5% (68) felt that schools have a responsibility to equip pupils with employment skills.

Their suggestions on how the schools should do this were varied. Most respondents felt that schools should relate education more closely to the world of work, promote parity of esteem between practical subjects and academic subjects, introduce career education, and promote the virtues of discipline, reliability, responsibility, and good work ethics.

When asked whether they felt that the present system of education sufficiently prepared pupils for work, 78.9% (60) said that it did not and only 21.1% (16) said they were satisfied (Table 6).

**Table 6**  
**Employers' Satisfaction With Job Preparedness of School-leavers (N = 76)**

Satisfied		Not Satisfied	
N	%	N	%
16	21.1	60	78.9

Table 7 shows the school subjects (and their frequencies) that employers said they would expect a job-seeking school-leaver to have passed at "O" level. Only English and Mathematics were named by all the respondents.

**Table7****Most Preferred "O" Level Subjects for Employment (N = 81)**

Subject	Frequency	
	N	%
English	81	100
Mathematics	81	100
A relevant practical subject	62	76.5
Science	54	66.7
Accounts	53	65.4
Commerce	48	59.3
Shona	15	18.5
Ndebele	10	12.3
Religious Studies	4	4.9

On the question of the subjects which employers place importance on vis-a-vis employment, 76.5% (62) said they would also consider a relevant practical subject (e.g. Building, Woodwork, Metalwork, and Dress-making and Textiles which tend to focus on the development in pupils of job-related competencies). Science was considered less relevant, with a frequency of 66.7% (54) while Accounts with 65.4% (53) and Commerce 59.3% (48) were considered far more important than Shona, Ndebele, and Religious Education.

Employers were given a list of attributes and asked to rank how desirable they thought it was for a job-seeking school-leaver to possess them.



**Table 8**  
**Ratings of Some Attributes of School-leavers**

Attribute	Important		Unimportant		
	N	%	N	%	
Discipline	79	100.0	0	0.0	N = 79
Ability to follow instruction	82	100.0	0	0.0	N = 82
Punctuality	79	100.0	0	0.0	N = 79
Possession of vocational skills	54	67.5	26	32.5	N = 80
Oral communication skills	76	94.0	5	6.0	N = 81
Written communication skills	74	91.4	7	8.6	N = 81
Computation skills	70	85.3	11	14.7	N = 82
An inquisitive mind	72	88.9	9	11.1	N = 81
Problem-solving ability	76	93.8	5	6.2	N = 81
Ability to work in a team	76	93.8	5	6.2	N = 81
Leadership potential	64	78.1	18	21.9	N = 82
Potential for creativity	65	82.3	14	17.7	N = 79
Adaptability	76	97.5	2	2.6	N = 78

*lv*

Table 8 shows that discipline, ability to follow instructions, and punctuality were rated as important by all respondents.

**Table 9**

**Academic Education is the Best Form of Employment Preparation for Pupils (N = 81)**

Agree		Disagree		Undecided	
N	%	N	%	N	%
4	4.9	75	92.6	2	2.5

As Table 9 shows, over 90% of the respondents disagreed with the suggestion that a purely academic education was the best form of education for the country.

**Table 10**

**School Education Should Concentrate on General Education (N = 81)**

Agree		Disagree		Undecided	
N	%	N	%	N	%
64	79.0	14	17.3	3	3.7

Instead 79%(64), as shown in Table 10, considered that the system of education should concentrate on the development of general life skills rather than on specific vocational skills.

**Table 11**

**Schools Should Provide Vocational Training (N = 81)**

Agree		Disagree		Undecided	
N	%	N	%	N	%
63	77.8	9	11.1	9	11.1

Rather interestingly though, when the suggestion for school-based vocational training was prefixed by the fact that there is high unemployment of school-leavers who would need the skills in self-employment, 77.8% (63) of the employers (Table 11) then agreed to the introduction of skills training into the school.

Table 12

**Practical Subjects Serve a Purpose in School Education  
(N = 82)**

They do		They do not		Undecided	
N	%	N	%	N	%
55	67.1	16	19.5	11	13.4

When it was suggested that the practical subjects in Zimbabwe's present curriculum do not serve much purpose, the majority, 67.1%(55) felt this was not true (Table 12).

Table 13

**Vocational Courses Recently Introduced in Schools Lead to  
Better Preparedness Among School-leavers (N = 80)**

Agree		Disagree		Undecided	
N	%	N	%	N	%
56	70.0	17	21.2	7	8.8

Although the recent introduction of the vocational Zimbabwe National Foundation Certificate (ZNFC) courses, alongside "O" levels was seen by most of the respondents as a progressive move, as Table 13 reflects.

Table 14

**There Should be Streaming After Form Two (N = 81)**

Agree		Disagree		Undecided	
N	%	N	%	N	%
60	74.1	17	21.0	4	4.9

The majority of them still felt that there should be streaming of pupils after Form Two, with those not academically inclined going for low-level vocational training (Table 14).

When asked if their companies would be in favour of participation in school education, 69.3%(53) said "Yes" and 30.7%(23) said "No". Those willing to participate were asked to indicate the form of participation they would prefer. Permitting familiarisation tours and offering attachment opportunities to teachers and/or pupils were the most preferred forms. Also of significance is that 17 companies indicated that they were willing to offer scholarships (Table 15).

Table 15

**Most Preferred Forms of Participation in Education**

Form of participation	Frequency (N)
Permitting familiarisation tours	46
Offering attachment to teachers and pupils	39
Sponsoring problem-solving competitions	21
Supporting mini-business programmes	19
Twining with a school	17
Offering scholarships	17

On impediments to commerce and industry's participation in education, respondents felt that there was inadequate consultations by government, particularly on education policy, that there tended to be mistrust of each other and that there were insufficient incentives for the private sector to participate in education and training.

## Discussion

The results of this study suggest that employers recognise that education is essential in enhancing the trainability and productivity of employees, and that schools have a role to play in preparing students for the world of work. The fact that 97.8% of the respondents indicated that they considered school-leavers for entry level jobs suggests that these employers are properly placed to judge the importance of education in the world of work.

Like their counterparts in the industrialised countries, employers were unhappy with the current education system in Zimbabwe, criticising it of being too academic and lacking in the inculcation of a proper work ethic. While this can be viewed by some as the perennial cry of commerce and industry who would want to reduce their training costs by asking schools to do most of the preparatory work for them, it, nevertheless, points to a need for close cooperation between employers and government in identifying the specific role that each can play in this exercise of human resource development.

The results of this study are inconclusive on what the employers feel regarding school-based vocational training. Indeed, one gets mixed messages. While in the vocationalism debate there is a school of thought that says schools should be left to provide general education, and that vocational training should be left to after-school training programmes (Wilson, 1992; Tilak, 1988; Condon, 1993; The World Bank, 1991), this is not the unequivocal message that one gets from the results of the present study. While the employers on one hand, rank as least important the possession of specific vocational skills as an attribute in a job-seeking school-leaver (Table 8) (a position that can be interpreted as being against

school-based vocational training) the respondents go on to say that neither is academic education the best form of education for Zimbabwe (Table 9). While they think that the practical subjects in Zimbabwe's current school curriculum have an important educational value (Table 12), they, however, think that the role of the subjects is not in the development of specific job competencies but in the development of broad transferable skills (Table 10). ✓✓

Also, the respondents agreed with the suggestion that, given the high level of school-leaver unemployment in the country, schools should offer vocational training so that the school-leavers will have skills to fall on when they fail to find employment (Table 11). It thus appears necessary to carry out more comprehensive studies on this aspect before firm conclusions can be drawn. ✓✓

Be that as it may, it appears possible to interpret this apparent contradiction as an indication of the need for an education system that is neither purely academic nor outright vocational. Indeed, this is the position in vogue in the debate on the vocationalisation of education. That, in this world of rapidly changing technology where change is the only constant, the best form of education is one that, using the home and current work environments as sources of learning experiences, teaches the learner how to learn. In this technological world any specific vocational skills taught in school are likely to be already obsolete by the time the learner leaves school. In any case schools lack the necessary manpower and technology to offer meaningful vocational skills training, the best they can do being to, using the technology they have, develop those skills in learners as are transferable from one work type to another in the real world of work. (For a summary of this debate see Mandebvu and Kademaunga, 1994). The position of the respondents that they provide on-the-job training can be taken as a clear indication of the contention that it is not possible for conventional schools to offer vocational training that would adequately prepare the school-leavers for jobs in commerce and industry. Commerce and industry have, in any case, to provide company-specific training and indications seem to be that they would rather do their own training.

Another interesting finding of the study is that the majority of the responding companies were willing to participate, in a variety of ways, in partnerships between schools and the private sector, including the offering of scholarships. This can only augur well for the development of educational relevance.

## Conclusion

It is clear that a significant percentage of the respondents see the importance of education in economic development. They also are agreed that a purely academic education no longer has a place in today's world of work and that the chasm that exists between education and the world of work must be closed. The challenge then is for government and business leaders to get together more meaningfully than hitherto, so that Zimbabwe can develop an education system that will give her economy a competitive edge in the Southern African region. A start can be made in developing the attributes in school-leavers that commerce and industry desire by government investing in the training of teachers, more specifically Science, Mathematics, and the technical subjects teachers (both preservice and inservice) in order to equip them with the teaching and learning methodologies that would bring about these attributes. There is need to emphasise the methodologies of problem solving and design.

In this study, the author is aware of the small size of the sample used and the limit this places on the significance of the findings. Nonetheless, the findings remain illuminating.

## References

- Brooks, W.E. (1992). A vision for education. *Vocational Education Journal*, 67 (7), 68.
- Condon, J. (1993). *Vocational and pre-vocational skills training in Zimbabwe*. Unpublished master's thesis, University of Manchester.

Mandebvu, O.S. & Kademaunga, C. (1994). Education and the world of work. Monograph No. 4. In Hodzi, R. (Ed.). *Education for all – Teacher education package*. Harare: Unesco.

Noah, H.J. & Eckstein, M.A. (1988). Business and industry involvement with education in Britain, France and Germany. In Lauglo, J. & Lillis, K. (Eds.). *Vocationalising education: An international perspective*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.

Oxenham, J. (1988). What do employers want from education? In Lauglo, J. & Lillis, K. (Eds.). *Vocationalising education: An international perspective*.

Pretorius, S.G. (1993). Business and industry involvement in education. In Dekker, E.I. & Lemmer, E.M. (Eds.). *Critical issues in modern education*. Durban: Butterworths.

Tilak, J.B.C. (1988). Vocational education in South Asia: Problems and prospects. *International Review of Education*, 34, 244-257.

Wilson, D. (1992, July). National reform efforts in technical/vocational education: A comparative analysis. Unpublished paper presented at the VIIIth World Congress of Education, Prague, Czechoslovakia.

World Bank. (1991). *Vocational and technical education*. Washington, DC: World Bank.



**Volume 8 Number 1 March 1996**

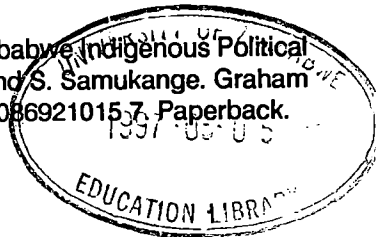
**ISSN 1013-3445**

**CONTENTS**

- Mainstream Children's Attitudes Towards Integration With the Disabled in Zimbabwe's Secondary Schools  
*Fred Zindi* 1
- Relevance of School Education to Employment: Expectations of Employers in Harare  
*Onward S. Mandebvu* 12
- Boys and Girls in Science: Does the Gender Composition of the School Matter?  
*James A. Opore* 27
- Assessing Gender Factor in Some Secondary School Mathematics Textbooks in Nigeria  
*O.A. Oyedepi* 45
- Education For All by the Year 2000 (EFA 200): Its Feasibility in Some Countries in Africa: Can Teacher Education Ensure Quantity, Quality, and Relevance for Education in the Year 2000?  
*Obert P. Ndawi* 55

**LITERATURE SOURCES**

- Hunhuism or Ubuntuism: A Zimbabwe Indigenous Political Philosophy, by T. Samukange and S. Samukange. Graham Publishing, Harare, 1980. ISBN 0869210157. Paperback.  
*Ngoni Makuva* 75



Search

University of

we

sory Board

da Chisholm  
nd University  
Mkandawire  
y of Namibia  
ohn Schwillie  
ate University  
nar Fagerlind  
of Stockholm

Zimbabwe  
Three Year

US\$ 155  
US\$225

# RELEVANCE OF SCHOOL EDUCATION TO EMPLOYMENT: EXPECTATIONS OF EMPLOYERS IN HARARE

Onward S. Mandebvu  
Department of Technical Education  
University of Zimbabwe

## ABSTRACT

*The link between education and development has been fairly well established. Education has been accepted as an investment while the human resource has been accepted as a critical factor in any economic development initiative. What is problematic is achieving the type of education that is most relevant to a country's stage of economic development.*

*In industrialising countries, the problem of educational relevance assumes an even greater enormity. There have been numerous attempts at solving the problem, the most universal of which has been the vocationalisation of education — an initiative whose basic premise is that there is a mismatch between what traditional school education develops in learners on one hand, and the needs of the world of work on the other.*

*A lot of literature has been generated in the debate on the efficacy, or lack of it, of the vocationalisation initiative. It does, however, appear most of the literature does not emanate from industrialising countries, and where it does, it does not often reflect the researched views of what business and industry actually expect from the school nor does it indicate whether employers think that vocationalisation of education leads to a better fit between education and the world of work. This study was an attempt to fill this gap in the literature.*

## **Introduction**

A number of studies of employers' expectations of education and on how they can participate in education and training have been done in industrialised countries (Noah and Eckstein, 1988; Fargerlind and Saha, 1983; Brooks, 1992). Most of these studies have concluded that employers in these countries are unhappy with their education systems, criticising the education systems of being too academic. The employers have also decried the lack of close collaboration between them and governments on education and training. The same studies have concluded that employers' requirements in school-leavers appear to be overwhelmingly on attitudinal attributes rather than on specific vocational skills. The attitudinal attributes that have been identified are the ability to learn, to get on well with other people, to communicate, to be reliable, to use knowledge in solving new problems, and an understanding of how wealth is created (Noah and Eckstein, 1988).

The need to promote close business-school partnerships appears to have been established and a variety of ways of promoting such partnerships have been identified (Noah and Eckstein, 1988; Pretorius, 1993). The forms of partnerships identified include work observations, career guidance, holiday job opportunities, attachment of teachers to industry and business, the financing of problem solving competitions by the business world and joint curriculum development projects. There may, however, be impediments to this cooperation. Pretorius (1993) identifies mutual mistrust, prejudice and misperceptions, and conflicts in aims and values, among others, as obstacles to partnership between employers and schools in educational practice and development.

The present study was aimed at finding out if the views of commerce and industry in industrialising countries are shared by their counterparts in Harare, Zimbabwe. To put this study in proper context, it is considered essential to briefly describe the Zimbabwean system of secondary school education.

## **Secondary School Education in Zimbabwe**

Secondary school education in Zimbabwe stretches over six years, with examinations taken every two years. The majority of the pupils terminate their studies at the end of four years of secondary education, years during which pupils study practical (technical) subjects alongside the traditional academic subjects. The practical subjects are intended to be part of general education, although a definite vocational emphasis has now been added with the introduction of the Zimbabwe National Foundation Certificate (ZNFC) studies — studies which are meant to qualify school-leavers for entry-level jobs in such industries as construction, furniture manufacturing, metalworking and clothing manufacturing. The pupils who take the ZNFC subjects do this in addition to the normal load of "O" level subjects.

## **The Study**

The study was a survey carried out in Harare. Two hundred questionnaires were sent out to business and commercial organisations, the majority of whom were randomly selected from registers of business and commercial organisations in the city. Other business and commercial organisations were purposefully selected because they were known to be large employers of labour. A number of questions were asked which were aimed at determining:

1. commerce and industry's degree of satisfaction with the present system of education and the reasons thereof;
2. commerce and industry's position on school-based vocational training;
3. the attributes that employers value most in employment seekers; and
4. whether responding companies were in favour of direct participation in education and, if so, the form of participation they preferred.

## Methodology

A questionnaire, comprising mostly close-ended questions, was developed in consultation with a practising human resources person, for the investigation. The questionnaire, together with self-addressed return envelopes, were mailed to the human resources executives of selected companies in Harare. Follow-up telephone calls were made to companies which had not returned the questionnaire two weeks after it had been posted out. In the end, eighty-two companies (41%), employing between them about 24 000 people, returned the questionnaire.

## Results

Employers were asked whether the level of education of an employee affected the workers' productivity (Table 1).

**Table 1**  
**Higher Education Leads to More Worker Productivity**  
**(N = 74)**

Yes		No	
N	%	N	%
68	91.9	6	8.1

Table 1 shows that 91.9% (68) of the respondents said "Yes" and only 8.1% (6) said "No".

On the question of in-house job training Table 2 reflects responses from the employers.

**Table 2****Does Your Company Offer In-house Job Training? (N = 76)**

Yes		No	
N	%	N	%
65	85.5	11	14.5

Table 2 shows that 85.5% (65) offer in-house job training.

**Table 3****Correlation Between Education and Trainability (N = 64)**

Response	N	%
Education makes no difference	3	4.7
The more educated are more trainable	61	95.3
The less educated are more trainable	0	0.0

On the relationship between level of education and the trainability of a worker, 95.3% (61) of the employers who responded to this question, said that they found the better educated employees more trainable (Table 3).

**Table 4****Frequency With Which Employers Consider School-leavers for Job Openings (N = 74)**

	N	%
Always	26	35.1
Sometimes	36	48.7
Never	12	16.2

As shown in Table 4, when asked how often they considered school leavers for entry-level jobs, 48.7% (36) said "Sometimes", 35.1% (26) said "Always" and 16.2% (12) said "Never".

**Table 5**  
**Schools Should Teach Job-specific Skills (N = 76)**

Yes		No	
N	%	N	%
68	89.5	8	10.5

Table 5 shows that the majority of the respondents, 89.5% (68) felt that schools have a responsibility to equip pupils with employment skills.

Their suggestions on how the schools should do this were varied. Most respondents felt that schools should relate education more closely to the world of work, promote parity of esteem between practical subjects and academic subjects, introduce career education, and promote the virtues of discipline, reliability, responsibility, and good work ethics.

When asked whether they felt that the present system of education sufficiently prepared pupils for work, 78.9% (60) said that it did not and only 21.1% (16) said they were satisfied (Table 6).

**Table 6**  
**Employers' Satisfaction With Job Preparedness of School-leavers (N = 76)**

Satisfied		Not Satisfied	
N	%	N	%
16	21.1	60	78.9

Table 7 shows the school subjects (and their frequencies) that employers said they would expect a job-seeking school-leaver to have passed at "O" level. Only English and Mathematics were named by all the respondents.

**Table 7****Most Preferred "O" Level Subjects for Employment (N = 81)**

Subject	Frequency	
	N	%
English	81	100
Mathematics	81	100
A relevant practical subject	62	76.5
Science	54	66.7
Accounts	53	65.4
Commerce	48	59.3
Shona	15	18.5
Ndebele	10	12.3
Religious Studies	4	4.9

On the question of the subjects which employers place importance on vis-a-vis employment, 76.5% (62) said they would also consider a relevant practical subject (e.g. Building, Woodwork, Metalwork, and Dress-making and Textiles which tend to focus on the development in pupils of job-related competencies). Science was considered less relevant, with a frequency of 66.7%(54) while Accounts with 65.4% (53) and Commerce 59.3% (48) were considered far more important than Shona, Ndebele, and Religious Education.

Employers were given a list of attributes and asked to rank how desirable they thought it was for a job-seeking school-leaver to possess them.



**Table 8**  
**Ratings of Some Attributes of School-leavers**

Attribute	Important		Unimportant		N
	N	%	N	%	
Discipline	79	100.0	0	0.0	N = 79
Ability to follow instruction	82	100.0	0	0.0	N = 82
Punctuality	79	100.0	0	0.0	N = 79
Possession of vocational skills	54	67.5	26	32.5	N = 80
Oral communication skills	76	94.0	5	6.0	N = 81
Written communication skills	74	91.4	7	8.6	N = 81
Computation skills	70	85.3	11	14.7	N = 82
An inquisitive mind	72	88.9	9	11.1	N = 81
Problem-solving ability	76	93.8	5	6.2	N = 81
Ability to work in a team	76	93.8	5	6.2	N = 81
Leadership potential	64	78.1	18	21.9	N = 82
Potential for creativity	65	82.3	14	17.7	N = 79
Adaptability	76	97.5	2	2.6	N = 78

Table 8 shows that discipline, ability to follow instructions, and punctuality were rated as important by all respondents.

**Table 9**  
**Academic Education is the Best Form of Employment Preparation for Pupils (N = 81)**

Agree		Disagree		Undecided	
N	%	N	%	N	%
4	4.9	75	92.6	2	2.5

As Table 9 shows, over 90% of the respondents disagreed with the suggestion that a purely academic education was the best form of education for the country.

**Table 10**  
**School Education Should Concentrate on General Education (N = 81)**

Agree		Disagree		Undecided	
N	%	N	%	N	%
64	79.0	14	17.3	3	3.7

Instead 79%(64), as shown in Table 10, considered that the system of education should concentrate on the development of general life skills rather than on specific vocational skills.

**Table 11**  
**Schools Should Provide Vocational Training (N = 81)**

Agree		Disagree		Undecided	
N	%	N	%	N	%
63	77.8	9	11.1	9	11.1

Rather interestingly though, when the suggestion for school-based vocational training was prefixed by the fact that there is high unemployment of school-leavers who would need the skills in self-employment, 77.8% (63) of the employers (Table 11) then agreed to the introduction of skills training into the school.

Table 12

**Practical Subjects Serve a Purpose in School Education  
(N = 82)**

They do		They do not		Undecided	
N	%	N	%	N	%
55	67.1	16	19.5	11	13.4

When it was suggested that the practical subjects in Zimbabwe's present curriculum do not serve much purpose, the majority, 67.1%(55) felt this was not true (Table 12).

Table 13

**Vocational Courses Recently Introduced in Schools Lead to  
Better Preparedness Among School-leavers (N = 80)**

Agree		Disagree		Undecided	
N	%	N	%	N	%
56	70.0	17	21.2	7	8.8

Although the recent introduction of the vocational Zimbabwe National Foundation Certificate (ZNFC) courses, alongside "O" levels was seen by most of the respondents as a progressive move, as Table 13 reflects.

**Table 14****There Should be Streaming After Form Two (N = 81)**

Agree		Disagree		Undecided	
N	%	N	%	N	%
60	74.1	17	21.0	4	4.9

The majority of them still felt that there should be streaming of pupils after Form Two, with those not academically inclined going for low-level vocational training (Table 14).

When asked if their companies would be in favour of participation in school education, 69.3%(53) said "Yes" and 30.7%(23) said "No". Those willing to participate were asked to indicate the form of participation they would prefer. Permitting familiarisation tours and offering attachment opportunities to teachers and/or pupils were the most preferred forms. Also of significance is that 17 companies indicated that they were willing to offer scholarships (Table 15).

**Table 15****Most Preferred Forms of Participation In Education**

Form of participation	Frequency (N)
Permitting familiarisation tours	46
Offering attachment to teachers and pupils	39
Sponsoring problem-solving competitions	21
Supporting mini-business programmes	19
Twining with a school	17
Offering scholarships	17

On impediments to commerce and industry's participation in education, respondents felt that there was inadequate consultations by government, particularly on education policy, that there tended to be mistrust of each other and that there were insufficient incentives for the private sector to participate in education and training.

## Discussion

The results of this study suggest that employers recognise that education is essential in enhancing the trainability and productivity of employees, and that schools have a role to play in preparing students for the world of work. The fact that 97.8% of the respondents indicated that they considered school-leavers for entry level jobs suggests that these employers are properly placed to judge the importance of education in the world of work.

Like their counterparts in the industrialised countries, employers were unhappy with the current education system in Zimbabwe, criticising it of being too academic and lacking in the inculcation of a proper work ethic. While this can be viewed by some as the perennial cry of commerce and industry who would want to reduce their training costs by asking schools to do most of the preparatory work for them, it, nevertheless, points to a need for close cooperation between employers and government in identifying the specific role that each can play in this exercise of human resource development.

The results of this study are inconclusive on what the employers feel regarding school-based vocational training. Indeed, one gets mixed messages. While in the vocationalism debate there is a school of thought that says schools should be left to provide general education, and that vocational training should be left to after-school training programmes (Wilson, 1992; Tilak, 1988; Condon, 1993; The World Bank, 1991), this is not the unequivocal message that one gets from the results of the present study. While the employers on one hand, rank as least important the possession of specific vocational skills as an attribute in a job-seeking school-leaver (Table 8) (a position that can be interpreted as being against

school-based vocational training) the respondents go on to say that neither is academic education the best form of education for Zimbabwe (Table 9). While they think that the practical subjects in Zimbabwe's current school curriculum have an important educational value (Table 12), they, however, think that the role of the subjects is not in the development of specific job competencies but in the development of broad transferable skills (Table 10). ✓

Also, the respondents agreed with the suggestion that, given the high level of school-leaver unemployment in the country, schools should offer vocational training so that the school-leavers will have skills to fall on when they fail to find employment (Table 11). It thus appears necessary to carry out more comprehensive studies on this aspect before firm conclusions can be drawn. ✓

Be that as it may, it appears possible to interpret this apparent contradiction as an indication of the need for an education system that is neither purely academic nor outright vocational. Indeed, this is the position in vogue in the debate on the vocationalisation of education. That, in this world of rapidly changing technology where change is the only constant, the best form of education is one that, using the home and current work environments as sources of learning experiences, teaches the learner how to learn. In this technological world any specific vocational skills taught in school are likely to be already obsolete by the time the learner leaves school. In any case schools lack the necessary manpower and technology to offer meaningful vocational skills training, the best they can do being to, using the technology they have, develop those skills in learners as are transferable from one work type to another in the real world of work. (For a summary of this debate see Mandebvu and Kademaunga, 1994). The position of the respondents that they provide on-the-job training can be taken as a clear indication of the contention that it is not possible for conventional schools to offer vocational training that would adequately prepare the school-leavers for jobs in commerce and industry. Commerce and industry have, in any case, to provide company-specific training and indications seem to be that they would rather do their own training.

Another interesting finding of the study is that the majority of the responding companies were willing to participate, in a variety of ways, in partnerships between schools and the private sector, including the offering of scholarships. This can only augur well for the development of educational relevance.

## Conclusion

It is clear that a significant percentage of the respondents see the importance of education in economic development. They also are agreed that a purely academic education no longer has a place in today's world of work and that the chasm that exists between education and the world of work must be closed. The challenge then is for government and business leaders to get together more meaningfully than hitherto, so that Zimbabwe can develop an education system that will give her economy a competitive edge in the Southern African region. A start can be made in developing the attributes in school-leavers that commerce and industry desire by government investing in the training of teachers, more specifically Science, Mathematics, and the technical subjects teachers (both preservice and inservice) in order to equip them with the teaching and learning methodologies that would bring about these attributes. There is need to emphasise the methodologies of problem solving and design.

In this study, the author is aware of the small size of the sample used and the limit this places on the significance of the findings. Nonetheless, the findings remain illuminating.

## References

- Brooks, W.E. (1992). A vision for education. *Vocational Education Journal*, 67 (7), 68.
- Condon, J. (1993). *Vocational and pre-vocational skills training in Zimbabwe*. Unpublished master's thesis, University of Manchester.

Mandevu, O.S. & Kademaunga, C. (1994). Education and the world of work. Monograph No. 4. In Hodzi, R. (Ed.). *Education for all – Teacher education package*. Harare: Unesco.

Noah, H.J. & Eckstein, M.A. (1988). Business and industry involvement with education in Britain, France and Germany. In Lauglo, J. & Lillis, K. (Eds.). *Vocationalising education: An international perspective*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.

Oxenham, J. (1988). What do employers want from education? In Lauglo, J. & Lillis, K. (Eds.). *Vocationalising education: An international perspective*.

Pretorius, S.G. (1993). Business and industry involvement in education. In Dekker, E.I. & Lemmer, E.M. (Eds.). *Critical issues in modern education*. Durban: Butterworths.

Tilak, J.B.C. (1988). Vocational education in South Asia: Problems and prospects. *International Review of Education*, 34, 244-257.

Wilson, D. (1992, July). National reform efforts in technical/vocational education: A comparative analysis. Unpublished paper presented at the VIIIth World Congress of Education, Prague, Czechoslovakia.

World Bank. (1991). *Vocational and technical education*. Washington, DC: World Bank.

## BOYS AND GENDER C

Dep

### ABSTRACT

The study was designed to investigate the views of the schools students on the sciences for their careers. This study also shows that the science majors from these schools are more likely to choose science majors in mixed-sex schools than in single-sex schools. The implications of the findings are discussed.

### Introduction

Development theories of the society's scientific and technological progress accounting for its gender equity that the key to scientific and technological progress is scientific and technological and receptive capabilities. The function of formal education in developing countries is to develop indigenous scientific and technological capabilities.