

ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL (SDG) ONE THROUGH VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN EMOHUA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, RIVERS STATE

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Abstract

The study examined ways of achieving of sustainable development goal (SDG) one (no poverty) through vocational education in Emohua Local Government Area, Rivers State. Two research questions guided the study. The study adopted the descriptive survey design, with a population of 260 respondents comprising 32 facilitators and 228 beneficiaries in 12 vocational education centres in Emohua Local Government Area, Rivers State. The entire population was adopted as census without sampling due to its small and manageable size. A 17-item researcher's self-designed questionnaire tagged "Achieving Sustainable Development Goal One Through Vocational Education Questionnaire" was used for data collection. The questionnaire was validated, and its reliability index established at 0.82 using Cronbach Alpha statistics. Mean, standard deviation and rank order was used in answering the research questions. The findings of the study revealed among others that carpentry, hairdressing, fashion design, tailoring, automobile repairs, painting, electrical repairs, food processing, craft production and operating kiosk are vocational skills acquired to enhance the achieving of SDG One (No poverty) in Emohua local government area, Rivers State. The study concluded that Sustainable Development Goal one seeks to eliminate all forms and dimensions of poverty within the population, ensuring that individuals can meet their families' basic needs through the acquisition of vocational skills. The study recommended among others that government and non-governmental organizations should establish and adequately fund vocational training centers in Emohua LGA. These centers should be equipped with the necessary tools and materials for the identified skills, such as carpentry, tailoring, and electrical repairs, to provide hands-on training that prepares youths for employment.

Keywords: Sustainable Development, Sustainable Development Goal One, Vocational Education, Vocational Skills Vocational Skills Acquisition.

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Introduction

Poverty remains one of the most pressing developmental challenges in Nigeria, with over half of the population living below the national poverty line (World Bank, 2024). This pervasive issue is particularly acute in rural areas such as Emohua Local Government Area in Rivers State, where limited access to education, employment opportunities, and essential services exacerbates the cycle of deprivation. Poverty in Nigeria is multifaceted, encompassing not only income deprivation but also lack of access to education, healthcare, and other basic services. According to the World Bank, as of 2024, approximately 56% of Nigerians live below the national poverty line, a significant increase from 40.1% in 2018. The Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) further reveals that 63% of the population, or about 133 million people, experience multidimensional poverty, which includes deprivations in health, education, and living standards (Vanguard News, 2023).

Several interrelated factors contribute to the high poverty rates in Nigeria such as, persistent inflation, which reached 33.2% in March 2024, has eroded purchasing power and pushed an additional 10 million Nigerians into poverty in 2023 alone; high unemployment rates, especially among the youth, limit income-generating opportunities and contribute to widespread poverty; mismanagement of public resources and lack of transparency hinder effective poverty alleviation efforts (Nairamatics, 2023). Similarly, Nairamatics (2023) affirmed that Nigeria's reliance on oil exports has led to neglect of other sectors like agriculture and manufacturing, limiting job creation and economic diversification; with about 10.5 million children out of school, the lack of educational opportunities perpetuates the cycle of poverty. The effect and consequences of poverty are far-reaching. Poor living conditions and inadequate healthcare services lead to high morbidity and mortality rates, children from impoverished families often lack access to quality education, limiting their future prospects, high poverty levels contribute to increased crime rates and social unrest. Various initiatives have been implemented to address poverty in Nigeria, including economic reforms and social intervention programs. However, these efforts have often been hampered by systemic issues such as corruption and inadequate infrastructure.

While Rivers State's 2018 poverty rate of 15.7% (for those earning under \$2.15 daily) was relatively low nationally, this average mask the more severe economic challenges in specific LGAs like Emohua (Kazeem & Yomi, 2019). Davies and Eleyi (2024) noted that Emohua has experienced significant communal violence, particularly in Ibaa and Oduoha, stemming from chieftaincy disputes, cult clashes, and resource control. This instability has led to deaths, property damage, and displacement, consequently disrupting economic activity, hindering education, and limiting healthcare access, all contributing to deeper poverty. Research indicates a strong link between violence and food insecurity in Emohua, with farmland destruction and malnutrition being common (Uchendu, Nwobueze & Onwuzor, 2024). The fact that nearly half the population (47.8%) are farmers makes the community particularly susceptible to agricultural disruptions (Matthew, Nwobueze, & Onwuzor, 2023). Poverty has adversely affected educational outcomes in Emohua LGA. A study revealed that the financial constraints faced by parents negatively impact their children's academic performance, the quality of schools attended, and the level of education ultimately attained. This cycle perpetuates poverty by limiting future employment opportunities for the youth (Okanezi, & Adeagbo, 2018). Amadi-Robert, Agbagwa, and Wejinya, (2024) pointed out that the lack of adequate rural infrastructure in Emohua LGA further exacerbates poverty. While some areas have access to pipe-borne water and educational facilities, there is a notable deficiency in electricity, health facilities, and processing facilities. These shortcomings hinder economic development and access to essential services.

Sustainable development is a way of organizing society so that it can exist the long term. This means taking into account both the imperatives present and those of the future, such as conserve, reserve, use and mange resources and undergo the process of development in such a way that what we do to improve life and living standard today does not compromise future use of resources and improvement in life and living standards (Kobani & Mba, 2022; Kobani & Wami, 2022). In view of this, Taylor in Chijiuba (2022) noted that the main issues of sustainable development are economic growth, environmental protection and social equality. Oji and Okemini (2022) asserted that sustainable development is the process of change in which the exploitation of resources, the direction of investments, the orientation of technological development and institutions change are all in harmony and enhance both current and future potential to meet human needs and aspirations. Jhinga (2012) averred that

the aim of sustainable development is the creation of sustainable improvement in the quality of life for all the people.

Sustainable development is a term brought into common use by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) in its 1987 seminar report entitled “our common future”. The Commission built efforts on man whom it was believed as the purvey or end product of development effort. Thus, it becomes imperative for the achievement of Nigeria’s sustainable development goals. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are set of new universal goals, targets and indicators ratified and adopted by the 193 United Nations member states, which kicked-off 1st January, 2016 and expected to last till the end of the year 2030. The SDGs document which is an off-shoot of the Millenium Development Goals (MDGs) has seventeen (17) goals and 169 targets. The goals and targets are expected to influence and guide the agenda and policies, whether political, economic, social, environmental and/or technological policies of governments member states. It is believed that the goals, if realized, have the capacity to transform the world by 2030.

The seventeen (17) SDGs as cited in Ozurumba et al. (2020) are:

- Goal 1: No Poverty
- Goal 2: Zero Hunger
- Goal 3: Good Health and Well-being
- Goal 4: Quality Education
- Goal 5: Gender Equality
- Goal 6: Clean Water and Sanitation
- Goal 7: Affordable and Clean Energy
- Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth
- Goal 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure
- Goal 10: Reduced inequality
- Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities
- Goal 12: Responsible Consumption and Production
- Goal 13: Climate Action
- Goal 14: Life below Water
- Goal 15: Life and Land
- Goal 16: Peace and Justice Strong Institutions
- Goal 17: Partnerships to achieve the Goal.

The aim of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 1 (No Poverty) is to eradicate all forms of poverty across the population. It is believed that everyone should be able to adequately provide the basic needs of their families. In order to decrease the disparities in standard of living and better meet the needs of the majority of the people of the world, all states and all people should cooperate in the essential task of eradicating poverty as an indispensable requirement for sustainable development. Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) one has important linkages to many other SDGs. For instance, the elimination of hunger (SDG two) is central to ensuring poverty eradication and vice versa, as poverty and hunger form a vicious circle. Eradicating poverty in all its forms remains one of the greatest challenges facing humanity (Ozurumba et al, 2020). According to Ozurumba et al, while the number of people living in extreme poverty dropped by more than half between 1990 and 2015, too many are still struggling for the most basic human needs. As at 2015, about 736 million people still live on less than US\$ 1.90 a day; many lack food, clean drinking water and sanitation (world Bank, 2008).

Sustainable Development Goal one which is no poverty by 2030 is focused on seven (7) targets which include:

1. By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere currently measured as people living on less than 1.25 dollars a day.
2. By 2030, reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions.
3. Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve sustainable coverage of the poor and the vulnerable.
4. By 2030, ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services, including micro-finance.
5. By 2030, build the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations and reduce their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related events and other economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters.
6. Ensure significant mobilization of resources from a variety of sources, including through enhanced development cooperation, in order to provide adequate and predictable means for developing countries, in particular least developed countries, to implement programmes and policies to end poverty in all dimensions.
7. Create sound policy frameworks at the national, regional and international levels, based on pro-poor and gender-sensitive development strategies to support accelerated investment in poverty eradication actions (Ozurumba et al., 2020).

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) one targets as enumerated are aimed at ending poverty. Poverty is a plague afflicting people all over the world. It is considered as one of the manifestations of underdevelopment. Poverty is a vicious circle which keeps the poor in a state of destitution and bronchial disillusionment (Oragwu, 2013). Oragwu stated that poverty is pronounced deprivation in well-being and comprises many dimensions. It includes low incomes and the inability to acquire the basic goods and services necessary for survival with dignity. It also encompasses low levels of health and education, poor access to clean water and sanitation, inadequate physical security, lack of voice, and insufficient capacity and opportunity to better one's life.

Nigeria can use vocational education to combat poverty and achieve sustainable development goal one. This is because vocational education is the total of those organized and purposeful experiences essential to the career development in a trade, industrial and technical occupation. These occupations are found in any of the career cluster: manufacturing, construction, communication and transportation, and identifiable in the dictionary of occupations which functions in the designing, producing, fabricating, assembling testing, modifying, maintaining, servicing or repairing of any product or commodity (Uoro in Sunday & Mbanasor, 2012). Vocational education is experience gained directly or indirectly that enables one to participate in socially useful occupation either in or out of school, at various levels and to be sufficiently equipped to become an intelligent creator of goods and services (Sunday & Mbanasor, 2012). Okoro in Oragwu (2013) asserted that vocational education is the type of education which provides the skills, knowledge and attitudes, necessary for effective employment in specific occupation. It is the acquisition of skills and competencies that can help individuals to function productively in industries and commercial

occupations (Abolade in Oragwu, 2013). What is fundamental in vocational education is the acquisition of skill for occupational preparation (Oragwu, 2013).

Vocational skills denote a process of manpower development which one acquires to enable them to achieve optimum performance and subsequently improve productivity (Onyenemezu, 2022). Some vocational skills which citizens can acquire and benefit from include carpentry, hairdressing, fashion design, tailoring, automobile repairs, painting, electrical repairs etc., and entrepreneurial (small scale businesses such as operation of kiosk, buying and selling of spare parts, managing restaurants etc) (Onyenemezu, 2022). Onyebmiji and Adekola in Onyenemezu (2022) identified the specific vocational skills that can be acquired by people to include food processing, craft production, manufacturing, establishment of bulk buying and supermarket businesses and vocational establishment of financial counselling unit.

Vocational skill acquisition is a form of non-formal adult education which covers training and instruction outside the formal school system and ranges from individualized apprenticeship to nationwide literacy designed to provide employment opportunities for youths and other unemployed persons (Eheazu & Nzeneri in Onyenemezu & Amazu, 2012). Vocational skill acquisition is capable of ensuring value re-orientation among the citizens and transforming them into creators of wealth and employers of labour instead of job seekers. The essence of vocational skill education is to enable the citizens acquire appropriate occupational skill that can make them better people, live in peace with others and relate well in the day-to-day life. It is education based on one's aptitude or interest in choosing what suits one in his quest for self-fulfillment. Basically, this will lead to creation of wealth, employment and empowerment, reduce poverty and increase the welfare status of individuals, thus bringing about the achievement of sustainable community development in Nigeria (Onyenemezu, 2022).

Vocational skills acquisition for sustainable development goal achievement will lead to wealth creation, employment and assist in the provision of infrastructure and government capability to improve the economic, political and social well-being of its citizens. Studies have shown that acquisition of vocational skills leads to significant reduction of poverty among those who participated (Onyenemezu, 2022). Gumbari (2014) highlighted the benefits of vocational skills acquisition to include elimination of hunger and poverty, reduction of joblessness and reduction of crime through effective engagement of youths in different act of skills acquisition programmes. Similarly, Ikeagwu, Asiboye, Aromolaran, Ayodeji and Okafor (2014) posited that vocational skills acquisition contributes greatly to elimination of joblessness in Nigeria, reduces poverty, influences the society positively, helps the youths to be self-reliant and develop positive attitudes towards work and labour, help to reduce crime rate in the society, helps the society not to depend on white collar jobs, leads to technological advancement in Nigeria, helps the individual to gain more knowledge, helps to develop entrepreneurial ability, and helps to build self-esteem.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the widely recognized benefits of vocational education in providing people with employable skills, it faces significant challenges in Emohua Local Government Area. Many youths in the area lack the vocational skills needed for employment, making them vulnerable to social and economic problems. This skills gap is a major contributor to unemployment, poverty, and social unrest, pushing young people towards criminal activities such as cultism, militancy, and other vices. This research is therefore motivated by the urgent need to understand how vocational education can be leveraged to address these issues and help

achieve Sustainable Development Goal 1 (No Poverty) in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to examine ways sustainable development goal one (no poverty) can be achieved through vocational education in Emohua Local Government Area, Rivers State. specifically, the objectives were to:

1. Identify the vocational skills that are acquired to enhance the achieving of sustainable development goal one (no poverty) in Emohua Local Government, Rivers State.
2. Determine ways vocational skills acquisition enhance the achieving of sustainable development goal one (no poverty) in Emohua Local Government, Rivers State.

Research Questions

The following research questions were answered in this study:

1. What are the vocational skills that are acquired to enhance the achieving of sustainable development goal one (no poverty) through vocational education in Emohua Local Government Area, Rivers State.
2. In what ways does vocational skills acquisition enhance the achieving of sustainable development goal one (no poverty) through vocational education in Emohua Local Government Area, Rivers State.

Methodology

The study adopted the described survey research design with a population of 260 respondents comprising 32 facilitators and 228 beneficiaries in 12 vocational education centres in Emohua Local Government Area, Rivers State. The entire population was adopted as census without sampling due to its small and manageable size. The instrument for collecting data was researcher's self-designed questionnaire tagged "Achieving Sustainable Development Goal One Through Vocational Education Questionnaire". Response options of the questionnaire items were structured 4-point rating scales of Strongly Agree (SA) = 4points, Agree (A) = 3points, Disagree (D) = 2points and Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1point. The instrument was validated, and its reliability established at 0.82 using Cronbach Alpha statistics. Mean, standard deviation and rank order were used in analyzing the research questions. Decision for the analysis was based on a mean score of 2.50 and above for Agree while below 2.50 was for disagree, this was obtained by taking the mean of the ratings thus: $4+3+2+1 = 10/4 = 2.50$.

Results

The results obtained in this study were analyzed and presented on tables. Out of 260 copies of questionnaires administered to the respondents, only 244 copies were correctly filled and retrieved. This was used for the study.

Research Question 1: what are the vocational skills that are acquired to enhance the achieving of sustainable development goal one (no poverty) in Emohua Local Government Area, Rivers State.

Table 1a: Vocational Skills Acquired to Enhance the Achieving of Sustainable Development Goal One (No Poverty) in Emohua Local Government Area, Rivers State.

S/N	Questionnaire Items	Facilitators		Beneficiaries		Mean Set		Rank Order	Remarks
		(N = 30)	(N = 214)	(N = 30)	(N = 214)	$\frac{X_1+X_2}{2}$			
		\bar{X}_1	SD ₁	\bar{X}_2	SD ₂				
1.	Carpentry	2.86	1.12	2.83	0.90	2.85	6 th	Agreed	
2.	Hairdressing	3.09	1.03	2.67	1.18	2.88	5 th	Agreed	
3.	Fashion design	3.03	1.02	2.56	1.26	2.81	8 th	Agreed	
4.	Tailoring	3.17	0.93	2.81	1.10	2.99	2 nd	Agreed	
5.	Automobile repairs	3.06	0.97	2.86	1.12	2.96	3 rd	Agreed	
6.	Painting	2.81	1.10	2.58	1.19	2.70	10 th	Agreed	
7.	Electrical repairs	2.83	1.14	2.67	1.25	2.75	9 th	Agreed	
8.	Food processing	3.21	0.93	3.17	0.99	3.19	1 st	Agreed	
9.	Craft Production	2.95	0.91	2.92	0.95	2.94	4 th	Agreed	
10.	Operating Kiosk	2.89	1.14	2.75	1.09	2.82	7 th	Agreed	
	Aggregate \bar{X}_1 /SD	2.99	1.03	2.78	1.10	2.89			

Source: Field Survey Data, 2024

Table 1 shows the summary of mean, standard deviation and rank order of facilitators and beneficiaries on the vocational skills that are acquired to enhance the achieving of sustainable development goal one (no poverty). The data indicated that the respondents in their ratings insisted that items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 with rank order of 6th, 5th, 8th, 2nd, 3rd, 10th, 9th, 1st, 4th, and 7th respectively had weighted mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50 with an aggregate weighted mean set of 2.89, it was evident that facilitators and beneficiaries agreed that all items are vocational skills that are acquired to enhance the achieving of SDG one (no poverty) in Emohua Local Government Area, Rivers State.

Research Question 2: In what ways does vocational skills acquisition enhance the achieving of sustainable development goal one (no poverty) in Emohua Local Government Area, Rivers State?

Table 1a: Vocational Skills Acquired to Enhance the Achieving of Sustainable Development Goal One (No Poverty) in Emohua Local Government Area, Rivers State.

S/N	Questionnaire Items	Facilitators		Beneficiaries		Mean Set		Rank Order	Remarks
		(N = 30)	(N = 214)	(N = 30)	(N = 214)	$\frac{X_1+X_2}{2}$			
		\bar{X}_1	SD ₁	\bar{X}_2	SD ₂				
11.	Vocational skills acquisition transforms citizens into wealth creation.	2.95	0.91	2.92	0.95	2.94	1 st	Agreed	
12.	It increases the welfare status of individuals.	2.89	1.14	2.75	1.09	2.82	4 th	Agreed	
13.	It reduces joblessness among citizens.	2.90	0.93	2.58	1.11	2.74	6 th	Agreed	
14.	It eliminates hunger among citizens.	2.95	0.98	2.92	1.11	2.94	1 st	Agreed	
15.	It helps youths to be self-reliant.	2.86	1.12	2.83	1.14	2.85	3 rd	Agreed	
16.	It helps citizens to develop positive attitude towards work.	2.67	1.12	2.67	1.18	2.74	6 th	Agreed	
17.	It helps individuals to develop entrepreneurial ability	2.36	1.12	2.75	1.09	2.81	5 th	Agreed	

Aggregate \bar{X}_1 /SD 2.89 1.04 2.77 1.10 2.83

Source: Field Survey Data, 2024

Table 2 shows the summary of mean, standard deviation and rank order of facilitators and beneficiaries on the ways vocational skills acquisition enhances the achieving of sustainable development goal one (no poverty). The data indicated that the respondents in their ratings insisted that items 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, and 17 with rank order of 1st, 4th, 6th, 1st, 3rd, 6th, and 5th respectively, had weighted mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50 with an aggregate weighted mean set of 2.83, it was evident that facilitators and beneficiaries agreed that all items are ways vocational skills acquisition enhance the achieving of SDG one (no poverty) in Emohua Local Government Area, Rivers State.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study were discussed on the following headings:

Vocational Skills Acquired to Enhance the Achieving of Sustainable Development Goal One (No Poverty)

The study found that a range of vocational skills including carpentry, hairdressing, fashion design, tailoring, automobile repairs, painting, electrical repairs, food processing, craft production, and kiosk operation are essential for achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) one (No Poverty) in Emohua Local Government Area. This finding aligns with established research on the role of vocational education in economic empowerment. This is supported by Onyenemezu (2021), who identified a similar list of vocational skills, such as carpentry, hairdressing, fashion design, tailoring, automobile repairs, painting, and electrical repairs, as being beneficial for citizens. Onyenemezu's work highlights how these skills provide direct pathways to employment and self-sufficiency, which are crucial for poverty alleviation.

Similarly, the findings corroborate the work of Oyebamiji and Adekola (cited in Onyenemezu, 2022), who specifically pointed to skills like food processing, craft production, and manufacturing as key areas for economic development. The inclusion of food processing and craft production in this study's findings underscores the importance of leveraging local resources and traditional skills to create sustainable livelihoods. The finding that kiosk operation is a relevant vocational skill is also consistent with the broader concept of entrepreneurial skills highlighted by Onyenemezu (2021). This suggests that small-scale business management is a critical component of vocational education, enabling individuals to create their own economic opportunities rather than solely relying on formal employment. In essence, the study's results are not merely assertions but are empirically supported by existing literature. The specific skills identified are well-documented as effective tools for poverty reduction, demonstrating a clear link between vocational education and the achievement of SDG

Ways Vocational Skills Acquisition Enhance the Achieving of Sustainable Development Goal One (No Poverty)

The findings of this study confirm that vocational skills acquisition plays a crucial role in combating unemployment and poverty. This result aligns with the empirical evidence

presented by Ikegwu et al. (2014), who found that vocational skills not only help eliminate joblessness in Nigeria but also foster self-reliance among youths. The study's results further support the idea that vocational education positively influences society by reducing crime rates and promoting technological advancement.

This corroborates Onyenemezu's (2022) work that the core purpose of vocational education is to equip citizens with practical, occupational skills. The acquisition of these skills, as demonstrated by the study's findings, directly contributes to individual development by building self-esteem and fostering an entrepreneurial mindset, allowing individuals to pursue opportunities beyond traditional "white-collar" jobs. In essence, the findings of this research do not merely assert the benefits of vocational education; they provide concrete evidence that supports the established empirical work of Ikegwu et al. (2014) and Onyenemezu (2022). The study's results validate that vocational training is a powerful tool for poverty reduction and social improvement in Emohua Local Government Area.

Conclusion

The aim of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 1 (No Poverty) is to eradicate all forms of poverty across the population. It is believed that everyone should be able to adequately provide the basic needs of their families. Everyone should be able to adequately provide the basic needs of their families through the acquisition of vocational skills. Some vocational skills which citizens can acquire and benefit from include carpentry, hairdressing, fashion and design, tailoring among others. Vocational skills acquisition for sustainable development goal achievement will lead to wealth creation, employment, and empowerment and assist in the provision of infrastructure and government capability to improve the economic, political, and social well-being of its citizens.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made by the researcher:

1. Establish and equip vocational training centers: The government and non-governmental organizations should establish and adequately fund vocational training centers in Emohua LGA. These centers should be equipped with the necessary tools and materials for the identified skills, such as carpentry, tailoring, and electrical repairs, to provide hands-on training that prepares youths for employment.
2. Promote entrepreneurial skills alongside vocational training: Since your findings highlighted the importance of kiosk operation, training programs should not only teach a specific craft but also include modules on small business management. This would empower individuals to start their own businesses and become self-reliant, directly contributing to poverty alleviation.
3. Develop skills in local, high-demand areas: The government should focus on promoting and subsidizing training in skills like food processing and craft production, which leverage local resources. This will create jobs and income streams that are sustainable within the local economy of Emohua and help reduce reliance on external markets.
4. Create public-private partnerships: The government should partner with local artisans and businesses in Emohua LGA to provide apprenticeships for youths. This would provide trainees with practical experience in skills like hairdressing, automobile

repairs, and painting, ensuring they gain real-world experience and are more employable upon completion of their training.

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