
EXPLORING VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP SKILLS' DESIGNS IN RESTRUCTURING NIGERIA FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT: 21ST CENTURY ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

FAITH KOMOLAFE Ph.D
FEDERAL COLLEGE OF EDUCATION, KATSINA

AND

PROFESSOR C.C. OKAM Ph.D
UMARU MUSA YAR'ADUA UNIVERSITY KATSINA, KATSINA STATE, NIGERIA

Abstract

Vocational and entrepreneurship skills' designs in education conjure-up variegated abilities and understandings, creative endeavours, attitudes, work-habits and appreciations, encompassed knowledge and information needed by workers and the society at large to enter and make progress in employment on a useful and progressive basis. This frame of thought suggests that, the curriculum imperatives intrinsic in vocational and entrepreneurial endeavours constitute a necessary pedagogical instrument for raising effective citizens and individuals rather than ordinary individuals, who could capitalize on the assets enshrined in self-reliance, self-development and self-realization, as a development design and strategy for harnessing and restructuring the totality of the Nigeria populace for nation-building and national development, that could also guarantee Nigeria's survival in this 21st century. In today's knowledge-driven and crisis-laden global economy, the commitment to vocational and entrepreneurial skills' acquisition in education constitutes one of the assured-avenues of re-vitalizing Nigeria's economy and empowering her citizens with sellable skills that could shelve her populace out of the embarrassingly and pervasive elements of poverty, ignorance and impotence which have inhibited the country from full and equal participation in today's developed world. A successful execution of the tasks envisaged in the development thought-designs and strategies must necessarily derive from competent teachers of vocational and entrepreneurial education whose pedagogical efforts have to be tailored at capitalizing on the assets and virtues of a variety of essential life and generic skills that are constituted into variegated and empowerment structures that are highly indispensable for fostering, harnessing and restructuring the thinking-patterns and creative abilities of the generality of the Nigerian populace in the endorsement and enhancement of sustainable, national development design – structures enshrined in vocational and entrepreneurial skill's acquisition in education.

Introduction

Vocational and entrepreneurship skill's acquisition conjure-up variegated abilities and understandings, attitudes, work-habits and appreciations, encompassed knowledge and information needed by workers and the society at large to enter and make progress in employment on a useful and progressive basis (Enebe, 2000; Ivowi, 2000; Balogun, 2014). Balogun (2014) advances that, in the present millennium;

there prevails a paradigm shift in the global policy on education towards embracement of vocational and entrepreneurship skills as a tool for revamping the economy. He expatiates that, this trend has become more pronounced because the international development community has realized the importance of vocational and entrepreneurial skills, and as such, places a high premium on them. He reflects further that the international community has noted that, into

today's knowledge-driven and crises-laden global economy, one of the ways to revitalize the economy is to empower citizens with sellable skills in order to solve the development challenges facing nations.

Enebe (2000) discloses that a good deal of public interests display that, the rising status of vocational and entrepreneurial skills' acquisition in Nigerian educational system derives from the belief that a skilled work-force is necessary ingredient for technological development. He explains that at the level of the individual, it is believed that a skilled job applicant has better chances of access to employment, higher income and a more satisfying work-life than an unskilled person. Dike (2009) concedes that any society that can efficiently and effectively harness the potentials of the youth and positively orient them to the acquisition of vocational and entrepreneurial skills is most likely to accelerate the pace of her economic development. Thus, Balogun (2014) advances that about 71% of Nigerian graduates have not been able to be employed in the last few years and that was attributable to the view that, they were not equipped with saleable and marketable vocational and entrepreneurial skills. This ugly trend, therefore, calls for training our youths in vocational and entrepreneurial skills' acquisition in order to equip them with the necessary where-with-all such that they become meaningfully productive in the globalized 21st century.

Policies and Strategies that Ushered-in the Emergence and Zeal in the Pursuit of Vocational and Entrepreneurship Skills' Acquisition in Nigeria

The Ashby Commission of the 1960s was largely instrumental for awakening the Nigeria populace to the need for addressing and possibly overcoming vocational and technical man-power shortfalls in this country. This awareness led to the

recognition of the importance and the need for including vocational and technical educational as vital content structures in the Nigerian schools' curriculum. Ivowi (2000) reports that the recommendations of the Ashby Commission and the policy statements that were enshrined in the 1969 national curriculum conference led to the general recognition of the role of Science, Technology and Mathematics Education (STME) in the national development. He discloses that from that period, STME teaching in schools was pursued with interest and great expectation. The federal government's report of the commission on the review of higher education in Nigeria accepted the view that:

The education system should be effectively titled with a bias towards science and technology, with a focus on the creation of science and technology awareness at the primary level, absorption of science and technology knowledge and thinking at the secondary level and actualization of science and technology through design, construction and production at the tertiary level (FRN, 1992).

The foreign recommendation is consistent with the national policy on education and the national policy on science and technology. These policy pronouncements clearly point to government's intention to ensure that STME subjects are taught and learned in school (Ivowi, 2000). The Policy statements and objectives deriving from the foregoing two documents (National Policy on Education and National Policy on Science and Technology) are particularly relevant to the promotion of STME in schools as spelt out in the following terms:

- a) inculcating in the child the spirit of inquiry and creativity for the exploration of nature;
- b) the laying of a sound basis for scientific and reflective thinking; and

- c) equipping students to live effectively in our modern age of science and technology.

Vocational and Entrepreneurship Skills' Structures examined as an Educational Instrument for Restructuring Nigeria for National Development in the 21st Century

Ukeje (2000) advances that the enthronement of development structures in 21st century Nigeria seriously bears on vision which derives a variety of goals, which also impinges on preparing individuals for career option which deals with the acquisition knowledge through practical skills that will enable them to be gainfully employed. The Nigeria National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013), endorses that, these sustainable and developmental goals are intrinsic in the following virtues: (a) advancement of the course of social order of effective and disciplined citizenry; (b) building of a self-reliant populace; (c) development of a dynamic economy; (d) promotion of justice, equity and fair play in all human relations; (e) promotion of the ideals rooted in a democratic society.

National development enhances the need for the demand of a true independence. It endorses the unfettered freedom to direct our affairs, to harness, control and develop our resources, to produce our goods and services, and for growth with development. It enjoins us to the view that, there is nothing we are doing today, no matter how successful, that cannot be improved upon. It tells us that life is a process of continued change and development; it could conjure-up the need for rebirth, renewal, reconstruction. It endorses the vitality in the change process for the purpose of improvement and development (Ukeje, 2000).

Vocational and Entrepreneurship Skills' Acquisition Structures intrinsic in Education examined as a viable strategy for Restructuring Nigeria for National Development

Osuala (2004) visualizes vocational and entrepreneurial skills acquisition structures intrinsic in education as a training intended to prepare individuals and students in an occupation in which success is dependent largely on the mastery of techniques and understandings of laws of sciences and technology as applied to production, distribution and provision of services. UNESCO (2004) accords recognition to vocational and entrepreneurial skills acquisition intrinsic in education designs as functional programmes that can play a crucial role in the socio-economic development and employment creation in any given geopolitical region.

Based on the foregoing theoretical perspectives, Ikoku in Okam (2012) conceptualizes the exploration of vocational and entrepreneurial skills in education for sustainable development as a variable development strategy which the underdeveloped world, Nigeria inclusive, could capitalize in their needs and attempts to work themselves out of the embarrassingly pervasive element of poverty, ignorance and impotence which have inhibited them from full and equal participation in today's world.

The 24th pugwash symposium (1975) on "the places and roles of vocational and entrepreneurship skills acquisition in education as alternative strategies for development" (Cited in Okam, 2012) further explored the main issues as stake. The symposium endorses that, vocational and entrepreneurship skills' acquisition examined in the context of sustainable

development, constitute a form of political and motivational force, a normative concept with a powerful ethical component to it. The call for inductions of strong motivations on the part of the developing countries to explore the concept of 'liberation' to provide, at least, a part of the emotional force needed to bring about the political, social and economic transformations of their societies. They reflect the attitude of wanting to start a 'war' against poverty and oppression.

Secondly, the symposium endorses that the exploration of vocational and entrepreneurial skills in the education for sustainable development demands that, at the national level of each developing country, the 'will' to build –up and use a capacity for autonomous decision-making and implementation on all aspects of the developmental processes, including the exploration of relevance of science and technology, must be put in-place. It emphasizes that, the character, content, direction and pace of social and economic change, whether in rural or urban areas, whether in industrialization, or education, have to be defined and executed with reference to national needs and aspirations. These directives, according to the symposium, endorse opposition to all forms of dependence.

Exploring the structural assets intrinsic in self – reliance, self-development and self-realization within the framework of vocational and entrepreneurial skills' acquisition in education for restructuring Nigeria for national development

The reflections established in this exposition endorse that, the acquisition of vocational skills' structures intrinsic in education constitutes a veritable instrument in the development of human persons. Offor (2013) advances that, when individuals are empowered through vocational skills'

acquisition in functional education, they are better equipped to achieve a number of ends including: (a) living an ordered life; (b) understanding their interests and vocations; (c) possessing and displaying the zeal to succeed amidst odds; and (d) possessing and displaying better focus and desire to put into profitable ventures, the skills and knowledge acquired.

Thus, the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013) endorses that, the Nigerian education system should prepare its products (students) to be able to make new impact and blaze new trails in different aspects of life for the development of the society. Ukeje (2000) reflects that, they conjure-up developmental tasks and ideals which are vitals and tasks are enshrined in the following virtues:

The right, the necessity, the freedom, the capacity, the willingness and the resolve of a people, collectively or individually, to define, articulate, programme and struggle tenaciously to achieve their own goals of individual, community and national development through their own indigenous institutions, indigenous personnel and programme , designed, packaged and operated by the people themselves.

Harnessing Vocational and entrepreneurship skills' designs in education for restructuring Nigeria for national development

Edomareniye (2010) reflects the acquisition of vocational and entrepreneurship skills' designs in education can be viewed as an aspect of human development that is geared at creating in individuals the behavior that emphasizes initiative-taking, the organization and re-organization of social and economic mechanisms and situations to practical account (Hisrich and Peter, 2007). Ekanam (2003) discloses that these vocational skills' designs are often linked with

entrepreneurship activities, and they could significantly affect the economy of any nation by building the economic base and providing jobs for all cadres of people.

Anugwom (2007) advances the exploration of the acquisition of vocational and entrepreneurship skills in education for sustainable development is asking the individual, whether male or female, the following questions amongst others:

- (a) What is your mindset?
- (b) Are you prepared to go the extra mile to seek the “Golden Fleece”?
- (c) Can you work very hard in spite of your circumstance?
- (d) Are you narrow minded or parochialistic in your life style?
- (e) Are you prepared to cultivate the spirit of excellence?
- (f) Are you ingenious and diligent in your sentiment?

The issues involved in the foregoing reflections cut across gender affiliations, and, therefore, need to be capitalized upon so that, the individual could make success of pursuits in vocational and entrepreneurship skills’ acquisition in education in many aspects of sustainable development. Umar (2011) opines that at the present, the level of technical and vocational skills’ acquisition in education development has become the basis for determining the socio-economic, cultural and sustainable growth in most nations of the world.

Umar (2011) entertains the view that vocational skills’ education, if properly developed, could be useful as an instrument for meeting the manpower needs of the country.

The necessity for effective integration of vocational and entrepreneurship skills’ acquisition in education through the services of competent teachers in the tasks entailed in restructuring Nigeria for national development in the 21st century

The problems of contending with the soaring unemployment crisis, which cuts across Nigeria, seriously demands that government has to consider instituting and establishing support programmes that are rooted in vocational skills’ acquisition within the framework of education. Government has to encourage academic institutions to design programmes for generating ‘vocational’ spirit amongst all students. The aim is to equip these students, on graduation, with skills designed to make them entrepreneurs rather than job seekers. Nwankwo (2000) advances that entrepreneurs are marked by their zeal to achieve; this exceptional drive, according to him, is reminiscent of the four pillars of education which are centered on : (a) learning to acquire knowledge ; (b) learning to become.

Vocational and entrepreneurial skills’ education in this country cannot be achieved in the absence of an intelligent, well- educated and professionally qualified teachers who must be knowledgeable in what it takes to be critical and creative. On the whole, however, these teachers must necessarily be committed to the advancement of the core areas of vocational and entrepreneurial skills’ education which, according to Edomareniye (2010:111), include:

- (a) Endorsement and development of such personal qualities as creativity, spirit of initiatives , critical thinking, hard-work, perseverance and diligence amongst all cadres of learners;
- (b) Emphasizing amongst members of society , the need for early contact with the world of work, business and knowledge and the role of a variety of vocations;
- (c) Creating the awareness amongst all cadres of learners to visualize self-employment, self-reliance and self- actualization as a career option.

This exposition advances that vocational and entrepreneurial skills' acquisition is designed for exploring ways of integrating individuals in the productive labor force in order to counter and bring about a reduction of the menace of un-productivity and unemployment (Edomareniye, 2010).

Towards a re-invigorated education in enhancing vocational and entrepreneurship skills' designs for restructuring Nigeria for national development in the 21st century

As a socio-economic construct, vocational and entrepreneurial skills' designs underscore the emphasis on a functional use of curriculum structures and perspectives in order to convey the meanings and implications of the issues, demands and obligations enshrined in the concepts. The attachment of this reinvigorated education, according to Obanya (2004), calls for ensuring excellence at all levels, so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy and essential life-skills.

Obanya (2007) endorses that this re-invigorated education process, among other things, calls for a paradigm shift from narrow specializations to broad-based knowledge and from specific knowledge to "generic skills". Obanya advances that the assets and merits of these "variegated skills" could be explored and appropriated through a re-invigorated vocational skills' designs intrinsic on education for effective socio-economic development and change in Nigeria. Obanya (2007) advances that these essential life-skills and generic skills could be inculcated through virtually any subject discipline. He recounts a number of these "skills structures" thus: "analytical power", "problem-solving skills", "team spirit", "life-long learning skills", "information

technology assets", "communication power" and "creativity". The vocational skills worker has to recognize that the ideals in "team spirit" demand from him a practical display of a number of "social skills" such as: (a) ability to cooperate harmoniously with others on small and large group projects; (b) the ability to contribute meaningfully to group activities in a wide variety of forms; (c) the ability to supply leadership when, and if necessary and appropriately. The issues recounted here are all "social values" and are designed to engender and foster the spirit of co-operation and oneness amongst divergently and ethnically different populations. A frame work of this nature is a major ingredient for sustainable development in the 21st century Nigeria.

Tanner and Tanner (2008) submit that "reflective thinking" is in essence, the "scientific method" applied in all human problems, ranging from the simple problem of daily living to complex problems and abstract intellectual issues and problems. It is considered that there are essentially five phases in any act of thought involving the process of "problem-solving skills" (Tanner and Tanner, 2008). These phases are not steps in the sense that, they are necessarily in sequence, rather they represent indispensable traits of "reflective thinking". These five phases embrace; (a) defining a problem; (b) noting the background conditions including the theoretical principles surrounding the problem, that is, identifying the significant factors which bear on the problem; (c) raising questions and formulating hypotheses for deriving positive solution to the problems; (d) elaborating (reasoning out) the probable value of the various questions and hypotheses raised on formulated questions and hypotheses raised on formulated in terms of solving the problem. Banke (2005) emerges with the view that only creative individuals who are armed with such behavior abilities and

potentialities as “insight”, “initiative”, “cooperation”, “originality”, “persistence”, “emotional stability”, “perseverance”, “judgment”, “communication skills” and “reflective thinking”, would be able to improve the human conditions in a given democratic social frame work.

“Life-long learning skills” call for the internalization of a variety of skills on the part of the vocational skills’ worker. These include: (a) skills required in enabling him to be so oriented as to capitalize on many other education forces which exist in the society for his own progress; (b) skills required in enabling him come into contact with a wide variety of realistic learning experiences and maximizing the dividends that are accruable; (c) skills required in helping him control his own learning; (d) skills required in helping him determine the overriding purpose in his life; (e) skills required in helping him break down the dichotomy between work and play.

“Information technology (IT) assets” constitute a discipline in its own right for a vocational skills’ worker to explore its assets and advantages for the purpose of embracing the ideals in sustainable development. Its skills could be acquired as tools in order to lend support to other disciplines and life activities. Gusen (2009) submits that the application of Information Communication Technology (ICT) has caused significant changes in education generally. He discloses some of these as follows (a) formation and provision of a gaming tool; (b) provision of administrative and management tool; (c) constitutes a teacher tool; (d) provides a research tool; (e) constitutes a communication tool.

In a further expatiation, Gusen (2009) visualizes ICT itself as a catalyst for change in all facets of human endeavor. He discloses that in order to meet up with the challenges dictated by the accelerating political, socioeconomic, demographic

forces, technological and educational challenges in Nigeria, there is the need for a vocational skills’ worker to explore and covet a number of its assets as follow: (a) acquisition of basic computer literacy skills relevant to his subject area as an academic discipline; (b) improving access to remote resources and materials that are of relevance in education; (c) improving communication skills between himself and others; (d) improving higher order thinking skills for both himself and others; (e) provision of content materials and resources such as CDROM, WWW, USB etc.

In line with the foregoing reflections, Ramzan (2004) advances that ICT is ushering in improvements in curriculum designing in many dimensions in the frame work of education on the context of the following: (a) revolutionizing teachers’ methods of teaching the various subjects; (b) rendering new pedagogical strategies for handling these subjects in our classrooms, and (c) providing access to quality teaching and learning materials on the internet.

Conclusion

The vitality of education examined in the context of exploring and employing entrepreneurship and vocational skills’ designs in the task of achieving sustainable development and change in the 21st century Nigeria has been highlighted. Vocational education seeks to provide skills and innovation to encourage entrepreneurial success in our schools’ settings from primary or secondary schools through university graduate programmes (Offor, 2013). Thus, vocational skills in education are prompt responses to the yearnings of people for functional education. This is necessary because if there is no reduction in the unemployment situation of school leavers in this country, then vocational education can hardly be said to have succeeded. The success in vocational

endeavors requires attitudinal change on the part of students who, through education, are called to appreciate the beauty of success through hard work.

Suggestions/Recommendations

From the discourse rendered in this exposition, it is suggested that our various governments, educational planners and curriculum developers need to recognize and live up to these challenges if we are to explore and employ vocational education in addressing our socio-economic problems in the task of creating the necessary base for sustainable development and change in the 21st century Nigeria. Thus, our various governments should provide adequate funding for vocational education, set up vocational skills' centres, and equip them for meaningful teaching and learning to thrive and prevail. Vocational education can be taught beyond the general education course to a more specific training on how to create and nurture businesses. However, a number of key issues must necessarily be put in place for enhancing vocational skills in education, particularly if it is to be explored and employed for addressing a number of issues and problems which bear on the attainment of sustainable development in the 21st century Nigeria. The following criteria are important:

- (a) There is a need for the establishment of the necessary framework for vocational skills acquisition to thrive and become sustained in this country.
- (b) Vocational education has to be integrated within the framework of our national curriculum from the grassroots to the tertiary education.
- (c) Government has to institute frameworks for translating policy commitments into concrete resources and tangibles in vocational skills.

- (d) We need to develop schemes for determining adequate indicators and mechanisms for monitoring progress in vocational education programmes.
- (e) There is a need for the government to establish vocational pilot schools which are designed to cater for the "workmanship-interest" of students and learners.

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