

## ENTREPRENEURSHIP/VOCATIONAL SKILLS ACQUISITION AS CORRELATE OF CURBING UNEMPLOYMENT IN ONDO STATE

By

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### **Abstract**

*The rising tide of unemployment and its concomitant ugly effects on the society remains a major concern to nations, including Nigeria. The ambitions of Nigerian Youths especially graduates call for urgent attention, hence, the need for entrepreneurship education. Entrepreneurship has no definite definition. In order to curb unemployment among students at graduation, it is imperative that all hands must be on deck. This study therefore examined the entrepreneurship/vocational skills acquisition as correlate of curbing employment in Ondo State, Nigeria. The study was streamline to Akure South Local Government Area of Ondo State where, Federal University of Technology, Akure was purposively used for the study. One Hundred (100) students from all the departments in the institutions were randomly selected for the study. It was evident in the study that curbing unemployment is as important as schooling itself. Furthermore, it was evident that female students do well in entrepreneurship skills than the males. It was concluded that unemployment is on its verge in Nigeria. Considering the numbers of graduates each year, the incidence of unemployment is an indication that the nation is set on the part of un-productivity. The need to adequately cater for this incidence therefore can be ameliorates through vocational and entrepreneurship teachings. Among others, it was recommended that grants should be encouraged by philanthropists, governments and all and sundry in order to encourage vocational and entrepreneurship skills among students.*

**Keywords:** Entrepreneurship, Vocational skills, Tertiary institution, Unemployment among students

### **Introduction**

Vocation is an act of preparing the youths for doing a particular job, providing them with specific knowledge in the field of vocational specialization. It is conducive to acquire skills and habits of professional activities, developing major talents, interest within disciplines directly and indirectly connected with the given profession and it also implements self-study if vocational skills are taught. It provides professional qualifications for working in a particular profession. Vocational and technical education therefore provides and prepares people with specific trade, crafts, skills and techniques for self-dependence and reliance. The rising tide of unemployment and its concomitant ugly effects on the society remains a major concern to nations, including Nigeria. The ambitions of Nigerian Youths especially graduates call for urgent attention, hence, the need for entrepreneurship education. Entrepreneurship has no definite definition. Various scholars have defined it in various ways. It is a process through which individuals identify opportunities, allocate resources and create value. This

creation of value is often through the identification of unmet needs or through the identification of opportunities for change (Nkechi, Emeh & Uka, 2012).

Emeruwa (2005) states that entrepreneurship is the term used broadly in connection with innovative and creative modern industrial business leaders. It is often defined in respect of functions of an entrepreneur as the man who perceives business opportunities and takes advantage of the scarce resources to use them profitably (Akinbode, 2009). Owoseni (2009) described entrepreneurial education as a specialized training given to students of vocational and technical education to acquire the skills, ideas and managerial abilities and capacities for self-employment rather than being employed for pay. Okojie (2009) contended that the entrepreneur is believed to possess some traits which includes; boldness, confidence, personal leader and force. Carson (2003) saw an entrepreneur as someone who specializes in taking judgmental decisions about the coordination of scarce resources. Brown (2003) viewed an entrepreneur as someone who is alert to opportunities for project. Suleiman (2010) believed that entrepreneurship education seeks to prepare people particularly the youths, to be responsible, enterprising individuals who became entrepreneurs or entrepreneurial thinkers by immersing them in real life learning experiences whereby they can take risks, manage results and learn from the outcome. Entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship education have been suggested to help redress the problems of unemployment and poverty among the teeming youths and graduates in Nigeria as they will make them not only to be job creators but also wealth creators. According to Small Business Service (2005), “the possession of entrepreneurial skills to create new knowledge based social enterprises is vital to addressing these social and environmental issues effectively”. In the face of the global meltdown, entrepreneurship is a central pillar to economic growth and development, employment generation and poverty alleviation (Unachukwu, 2009). It is evident from the foregoing that entrepreneurship education would not only rid the Nigerian society from unemployment but also turn around the economic fortunes of Nigeria through creation of jobs and wealth. It would also propel millions of Nigerian youths to identify investment opportunities and help them to harness untapped natural resources that abound in the country.

Entrepreneurship education is a lifelong learning process, starting as early as elementary school and progressing through all levels of education, adult education inclusive. The standards and their supporting performance indicators are a framework for teachers to use in building appropriate objective learning activities, and assessment for their target audience. Using this framework, students will have more progressive challenging educational activities; experiences that will enable them get the insight needed to discover and create entrepreneurial activities, and the expertise to successfully start and manage their own businesses to take advantage of these opportunities (Wikipedia, 2010). Arvanties Glasgo and Slumpf (2009) are also of the view that innovative educational methods are needed to develop the entrepreneurial spirit and talents that are necessary to function effectively in an environment of strong market forces and divergent people. They added that for entrepreneurship education to be most successful. It must address and develop in students, the skills necessary as an entrepreneur.

### **The Concept of Vocational and Technical Education**

Vocational and technical education can easily be traceable to the different interpretations attached to them. It is common to find the terms used compositely when they should be used in a restricted sense and vice versa. Sometimes, where the terms are used separately, conjointly or interchangeably, some individual interpret ‘vocational’ to mean business subjects or studies, and ‘technical’ to mean technical subjects or studies, or that which has to

do with engine or metals. When used in relation to school, 'vocational school' is taken to mean where only business subjects are taught, while technical school is taken to mean where only technical subjects are taught. This goes to support the general notion that 'vocational' means that which has to do with business studies, while 'technical' stands for that which has to do with technical studies. Vocational and technical education used as a twin term is geared towards occupations requiring manipulative and technical skill application. Vocational education focuses on manipulative skills in non-technical occupations as reflected in fields such as agriculture, business, home economics, painting and decoration. Technical education, on the other hand, is more science-oriented with emphasis on the application of scientific and mathematics principle as applied in such fields as engineering, electronics, electrical, mechanical and automobile trades. Technical Education involves the use of knowledge of science, materials and energy to solve problems and improve daily lives and our environment while vocational education may be referred to as that aspect of education which leads to the acquisition of practical and applied skills; both vocational and technical education aim at production.

Vocational education is defined as the activities which aim at acquiring the skills, knowledge and attitudes that are required for employment in a particular occupation, cluster of related occupations or a function in a field of economic activity including business, agriculture, hotel, catering, fine and applied arts, tourist industries, private and public services, etc. In a nutshell, vocational education is concerned with the skills, understandings, attitudes, knowledge, abilities and competences which a person needs to acquire in order to do or carry out a particular job. It is also a form of education that emphasizes the development of occupational and procedural skills needed as preparation for work. Akaninwor (2004) defines vocational education as a type of education or training designed for preparing the individual learner to earn a living (to be self-reliant). Osuala (2004) opined that any education which is necessary for effective employment in an occupation is vocational. He further explained that vocational education assumes that a choice of occupation has made and that appropriate training is needed to enable an individual enter or advance in his chosen occupation. Vocational education, as part of a general education programme, essentially constitutes any form of education with the primary purpose of preparing people for useful employment in a recognized occupation

### **Suitable Vocational programmes for Persons with Hearing Impairment**

According to Szymanski and Parker (2003) Vocational programmes are subsumed under seven different areas which are agriculture, business and office, distributive, health, home economics, trade and industry and technical occupations. McCrea and Miller (2004) opined that vocational programmes are further simplified to include mushroom farming, batik/ tie dying, basketry, weaving, carpentry, poultry, bead making and calabash work which constitute an important component of preparing individuals with intellectual disabilities to enter the world of work.

However, vocational programmes should not end as employment begins, developing career is important at all stage of one's working life. Whether one is starting out and need to gain new skills to enter a profession or is an experienced professional who needs to remain up-to-date with skills in their job, developing career is vital to being successful in a particular line of work. Activities must be adapted to meet the needs of individuals with hearing impairment because the interaction of their developmental and the developmental nature of career

education can lead to a variety of impediments in career instruction for individuals with hearing impairment.

Vocational programmes need to be dynamic and life long process because individuals with hearing disabilities can change as they grow. Vocational training programme focuses on helping them to acquire skills and techniques that are used in vocational training to assist such individuals to acquire relevant skills that will allow them to become self-employed. It can be contended that the selection of vocational programmes should be relevant to individuals with hearing impairment, and the activities should be simple and repetitive such that they will be able to master such skills in a very shortest time. In their vocational interest, learners with disabilities (hearing impairment inclusive) may lack realistic information about occupation and vocations in which to base their interest. Regarding individuals' preferences, teachers and parents can help indentify short-term skill areas that will be developed into long-term vocational outcomes.

Jones and Howley (2010) posited that an individualized vocational programme should be developed according to the students' individual needs. This is a specially designed programme with inputs of team members (i.e. the disabled child, parents and class teacher) to meet an individual's needs. Involving individuals with hearing impairment in decision making in terms of vocational programme choices will create opportunities for them to have a say in their own education and future. There should be on-going support services to help individuals with hearing impairment to continue vocational training programmes. Given the importance of support services, the authors suggest the following:

- To arrange for extensive vocational training
- To observe the individuals at their job sites
- To provide additional remediation in academic subjects.
- To teach necessary skills needed to succeed in their career.
- To liaise with the employer to bring in improvement in the performance
- To lead them towards independent living and attend quality of life
- To organized social warning exercise for better acceptability in the work community

### **Benefits of Vocational Education to Persons with Hearing Impairment**

**Transition to Job Opportunities:** vocational education prepares learners with learning disabilities for job opportunities. It equips them with the sills and qualities required to do a particular job aside education. Many time, the curriculum for courses undertaken is prepared after taking suggestions from the local employers, hence, learners with learning disabilities are able to acquire knowledge practically.

**Easy Employment/Self-Employment:** vocational education makes it easier for learners with learning disabilities to easily find job or better, be self-employed, and therefore contribute their quota to the development and transformation of national economic.

**Lesser Education Cost:** most time, parents of learners with learning disabilities prefer to stop their schooling of their wards on the basis that they cannot waste money on unproductive child. Vocational skills will therefore fill the gap at which they need to progress. For parents of learners with learning disabilities, vocational courses could be cheaper alternative in order for such child not be idle.

Promotes Entrepreneurship: after doing a vocational course, learners with learning disabilities are equipped enough to start their own business. This course of action is taken up by many vocational course pass out students. Thus, such course promotes entrepreneurship, which is a very good thing for the economy. Furthermore, vocational education promotes and increases small scale business.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Entrepreneurship goes beyond mere starting a business. It is more of a process through which an individual identify opportunities, allocate resources and create jobs and wealth. According to Paul (2005), the need for entrepreneurship education includes to offer functional education to youths to make them self-employed and self-reliant, provide the youths and graduates with adequate training to make them creative and innovative in identifying novel business opportunities and establish a career in small and medium scale business, reduce high rate of poverty and rural-urban migration and create employment and serve as a catalyst for economic growth and development. Hence, the need to provide entrepreneurship and vocational skills to persons with hearing impairment would go a long way to sustain them.

### **Research Questions**

The following questions are devised in order to guide the study

- i. Does vocational education reduced unemployment among students in Ondo State?
- ii. Does entrepreneurship studies ameliorate incidence of unemployment among students in Ondo State?
- iii. Do vocational acquisition, vocational skills and entrepreneurship studies provide enough knowledge to help curb unemployment students in Onodo State?
- iv. Are there any gender discrepancies among students in relation to vocational skills?

### **Methodology**

The research work was carried out in Akure South Local Government Area of Ondo State, Nigeria. Therefore, Federal University of Technology, Akure was used for the study. Survey research design were adopted in order to investigate vocational and entrepreneurship skill acquisition as it was used to curb incidence of unemployment among persons with hearing impairment. The population for this study comprises of all students with in tertiary institutions in Ondo State, Nigeria. The samples of one hundred (100) students were randomly selected five levels from Federal University of Technology Akure which cut across all departments of the institution. The research instrument adopted for this study is a self – constructed questionnaire which consisted of twenty-one items structured questions which is to elicit information about variables under study. The researcher visited the selected institution and sought for the permission from the school authority. With the help of a research assistant, the questionnaires were distributed to the respondents and thoroughly explained for proper clarifications and at the completion of the exercise, the researchers retrieved the questionnaires from the respondents for data analysis Data collection would be analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient.

### **Results**

#### **Testing Research Questions**

**Research Question 1: Does vocational education reduced unemployment among students in Ondo State?**

**Table 1**

*Correlation between vocational education and unemployment among students*

Variables	Mean	SD	N	df	r	P	Remark
Vocational Education	9.77	1.998			0.896	-	-
Rate of unemployment	10.51	2.225	100	12	.430**	0.000	Sig

\*Correlation Significant at 0.05 level

The table above revealed that there were significant relationship between independent variable (vocational education) and rate of unemployment among students. That is, vocational education correlates with rate of unemployment ( $r=0.896$ ,  $P<0.05$ ). It can be concluded that there were significant relationships between independent variable (vocational education) and unemployment rates among students.

**Research Question 2: Does entrepreneurship studies ameliorate incidence of unemployment among students in Ondo State?**

**Table 2**

*Correlation between entrepreneurship studies and unemployment among students*

Variables	Mean	SD	N	df	r	P	Remark
Entrepreneurship studies	11.17	1.012			0.922	-	-
Rate of unemployment	14.11	3.213	100	12	.430**	0.000	Sig

Table 4.2 revealed that there were significant relationship between independent variable (entrepreneurship studies) and rate of unemployment among students. That is, vocational education correlates with rate of unemployment ( $r=0.922$ ,  $P<0.05$ ). Therefore, it can be concluded that there were significant relationships between independent variable (entrepreneurship studies) and unemployment rates among students.

**Research Question 3: Do vocational acquisition, vocational skills and entrepreneurship studies provide enough knowledge to help curb unemployment among students in Ondo State?**



**Table 3**

*Summary of Regression Analysis of the combined prediction of vocational skills, entrepreneurship studies and vocational acquisition to curb unemployment among students*

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate			
0.900	0.810	0.804	0.986			
ANCOVA						
	Sum of Square	df.	Mean Square	F	P	Remark
Regression	597.616	5	119.523			
Residual	139.878	144	.971	123.046	.000	Sig.
Total	737.493	149				

Table 4.3 shows that there was a significant joint contribution of the independent variables (vocational acquisition, vocational skills and entrepreneurship studies) to the dependent variable (unemployment among students). The table also shows a coefficient of multiple correlations (R) of 0.900 and a multiple R square of 0.810. The significance of the composite contribution was tested at  $P < 0.05$  using the F-ratio at the degree of freedom ( $df=5/144$ ). The table also shows that the analysis of variance for the regression yielded a F-ratio of 123.046 (significant at 0.05 level)

**Research Question 4: Is there any gender discrepancies among students in Ondo State in relation to vocational skills?**

**Table 4**

*Correlation between male and female on vocational skills acquisition*

Variables	Mean	SD	N	df	r	P	Remark
Male Respondents	13.17	2.212			0.401	-	-
Female Respondents	16.83	4.001	100	12	.430**	0.000	Sig

From the table above, it is clear that male students function better in vocational acquisition. That is, female students function well in entrepreneurship studies than males.

**Discussion of Findings**

It was evident in the results of the study that vocational education is an integral part that provides for unemployment reduction among students. It was found that vocational education reduced unemployment among students where  $r=0.896$ ,  $P < 0.05$ . This study therefore corroborates the findings of Akaninwor, (2004) who found and submitted that vocational education provides students regardless of abilities and disabilities with the opportunity to be self-employed if not gainfully employed by government and private parastatals. He further stressed that vocational education is encouraged among students such that they will be able to

perform better at work especially those that involved practical. Therefore, it can be concluded that vocational education reduced employment among students since they can actually practice without necessarily looking for white collar jobs. The results also show that entrepreneurship study is capable of reducing incidence of unemployment among students. According to the findings of Akinbode (2009), entrepreneurship study ameliorates incidence of unemployment in Nigeria. This is however true as the result of the present study shows that entrepreneurship is encouraged among students such that it is capable of promoting self-employment. It can however be submitted that entrepreneurship studies ameliorate incidence of unemployment among students.

### **Conclusion**

Unemployment is on its verge in Nigeria. Considering the numbers of graduates each year, the incidence of unemployment is an indication that the nation is set on the part of unproductivity. The need to adequately cater for this incidence therefore can be ameliorated through vocational and entrepreneurship teachings. From the foregoing, it can be concluded therefore that vocational and entrepreneurship skill acquisitions are adequate means of curbing unemployment among students in Nigeria. Vocational and entrepreneurship skills should be taught further to students regardless of abilities and disabilities in order to achieve the aim of reducing unemployment among graduates.

### **Recommendations**

From the above findings, the following recommendations are made

- i. Parents should encourage their wards to go for vocational skill acquisition programme even before they gain admission into tertiary institutions. This will help in becoming self-employed or self-reliant and as such, they will be productive.
- ii. Governments at all level are encouraged to provide for conducive environment and equipment necessary for teaching vocational and entrepreneurship skills in tertiary institutions.
- iii. Grants should be encouraged by philanthropists, governments and all and sundry in order to encourage vocational and entrepreneurship skills among students

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