

VOCATIONAL SKILL ACQUISITION: A PANACEA FOR SUSTAINABLE ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT IN AN ECONOMY IN RECESSION

*ADESOPE, O.M. AND **AGWAZIE, B.

*Department of Agricultural Economics and Extension,
University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria. Email: olufemi.adesope@uniport.edu.ng

**College of Education, Agbor, Delta State, Nigeria.

Email: agwaziebridget484@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Vocational skill acquisition has to do with obtaining relevant skills. Such skills involve the use of hands for professional purposes. Vocational skills have to do with creativity, innovation, professionalism, entrepreneurship and development of new or existing skills or ideas. Attainment of such skills has become paramount given to the increased number of unemployment and poverty rates in Nigeria. The study took a quick view of the different vocational and entrepreneurial skills that is possible in Nigeria. It was concluded that for Nigeria to attain that level where people no longer job hunt in search of greener pastures, the development of certain skills should be the goal of both universities and college students, government and the Nigerian citizens' at large. Thus, it was recommended that the Nigerian citizens should engage themselves in the attainment of sustainable skills or improvement of existing skills by the actual practising of such skills for profit making purposes.

Key words: Vocational skill, entrepreneurship, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

It is no news that the Nigerian economy is in recession and that the unemployment rate has escalated from 7.8 percent as at January 2014 to 14.2 percent as at January 2017 (tradingeconomics.com). In the country today, we have fresh graduates out in the market place, seeking for greener pastures but are disappointed not to find any. In that disappointment, many resort to the crime like kidnapping, robbery, internet fraud, cultism, unrest, vandalisation and so on. The reason for this could be tied around the fact that most graduates from the university have the mind-set of working for others; probably in the banking sectors, oil and gas sectors, educational sectors and so on. Very few have actual thought of developing their skills or starting up their own business. This goes to show that most of the Nigerian citizens are not entrepreneurial or skill acquisition driven despite the efforts made by the Nigerian government through the organisation of several skill acquisition programmes to elevate poverty, unemployment and its like. The study aims to outline the available vocational activities for improved entrepreneurship and skill acquisition in Nigeria.

Vocational activities are those activities that require the expert use of hands aimed at practical skills, attitude, and habits thereby making one innovative, creative and resourceful (Waheed, n.d.). If individuals in Nigeria could embrace to the development of their skills and actually using such skills as a means of livelihood then skill acquiring could be a sure way of completely coming out of and never returning to recession in Nigeria. This is because poverty will be reduced a whole lot, unemployment problem would be a thing of the past, dependence on the government would reduce, and as such the economic development would be sustained (Waheed, n.d.). This shows the acquiring of skills could lead to increased number of self-employed fellows, improvement in technology, increased and better standard of living and of course political stability (Waheed, n.d.). Vocational skill acquisition is the pivot of any country's development (Waheed, n.d.).

In the world today, many countries (Nigeria inclusive) regarded Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) as an important factor in training young people with adequate vocational skills that would allow them gain a livelihood (Maigida & Saba, 2013). Hence, there is a need to empower Nigerian citizens on the importance of acquiring vocational and entrepreneurial skills. It is important to note that no matter your area of specialization, there are skills related to that area. That is, vocational skills are skills that improve the application of certain knowledge. So the exposure to vocational and entrepreneurial skills would assist in a better career choice especially for young Nigerians (Maigida & Saba, 2013). This will to a great extent increase the usefulness of citizens as they will be innovators, productive and self-driven to make profit. This is because there is always job for the skilled (Adebisi, 2015).

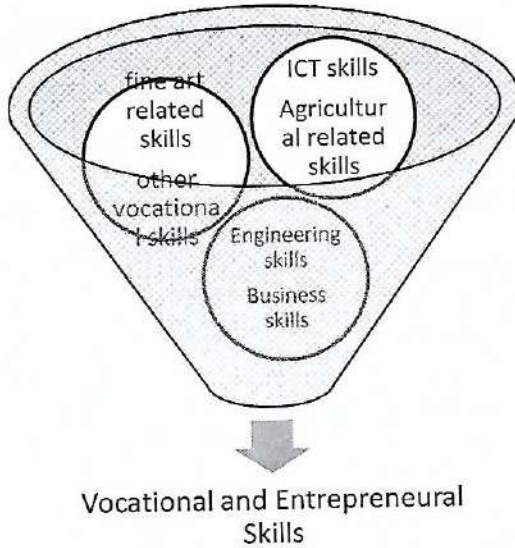
In present times, entrepreneurship and acquisition of skills have been incorporated in the higher education (such as universities and polytechnics) academic curricula. This was done to meet up with the demand of self-employed, innovative, creative and job providing fellows and not graduates who are totally dependent on what the world can offer to me instead of what I can offer to world. However, Mamman, Chadi, Jirgi, & Mubaraka (2013) suggested that such curricula should be incorporated right from the secondary level.

At this point, it is necessary to define the concept entrepreneur and entrepreneurship. An entrepreneur is defined as the person who provides inputs and transforms them to worth more than it was in the past, and also has the ability to bring changes, innovations and new ideas, so that the business can grow (Maigida & Saba, 2013). Entrepreneurship is the process being innovative which eventually leads to reward, monetary and personal satisfaction (Daluba & Odiba, 2013). This entrepreneurial skill could be passed down through education.

Recently, we just concluded a project called 'Strengthening University capacity to enhance competitiveness of Agribusiness in East and West Africa' where selected undergraduates and farmers were sensitised and trained on related skills in agriculture and the business of Agriculture (Agribusiness). At the end of the day, funds were dispensed to these participants to start up an agribusiness enterprise. The aim of this project was to empower and improve participant's agri-entrepreneurial skills and competitiveness in the agricultural sector. Also, to improve the collaboration within the University and private sector. Today, most of the beneficiaries are agri-entrepreneurs and self-sufficient. They are engaged in job creation, innovation and skill attainment.

Vocational and Entrepreneurs Skills in Nigeria

We have different vocational skills in Nigeria and this will be discussed based on the different sub-discipline that exist in the country and they are Agricultural related skills, Fineart related skills, Information and Communication (ICT) skills, Business and Administrative skills, Engineering related skills, and other vocational skills. These can better be presented as:



Agricultural related skills

Agriculture provides us with a range of ways in which skills can be improved through acquisition of necessary vocational knowledge. Vocational skill in agriculture are those skills that improves the application of the knowledge of agriculture in the actual production, processing, marketing and all other activities in agriculture. These skills are intended to ensure that those agricultural skills are done more appropriately and effectively. Some of the skills is shown in fig. 2 below:

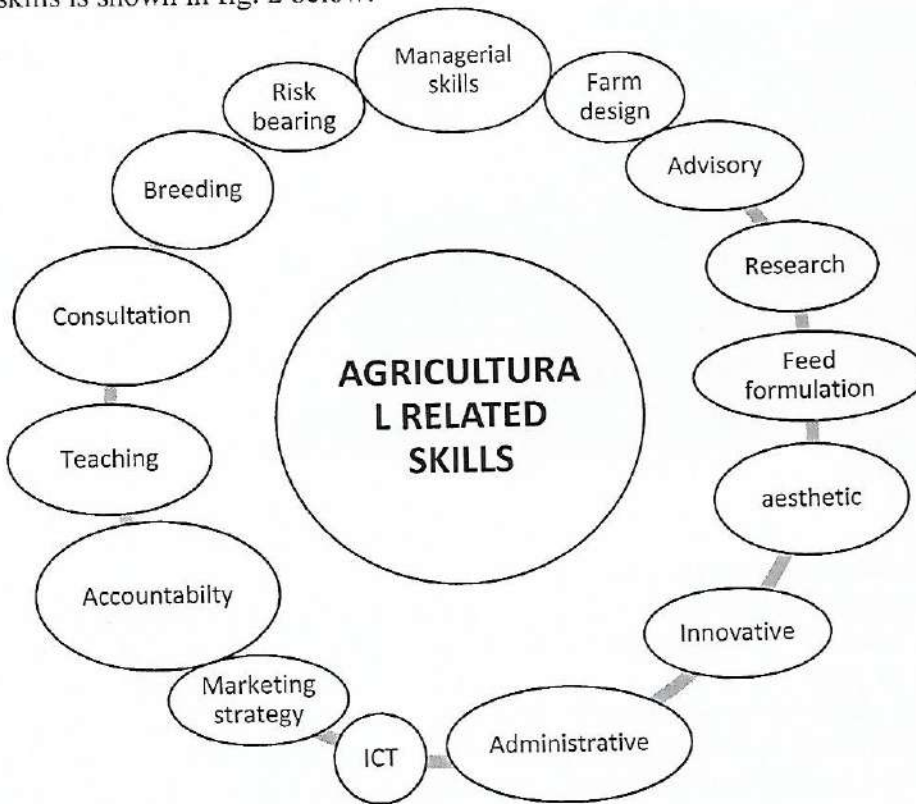


Fig 2: Agricultural related skills

It takes skill to be able to process a typical agricultural produce and transforming it into a new product using local and available resources. Some examples can be given with this regards and they includes:

Coconut fruit	Transformation →	coconut oil, flour and candy
Palm oil fruit	Transformation →	palm oil, palm kernel oil, etc
Shear butter	Transformation →	shear butter oil
Almond	Transformation →	almond oil, flour, nuts

Fine art related skills

These are skills related to the field of fine art. Such skills exist to improve the knowledge of fine art and they include textile production and designs, paintings, ICT, architectural skills, music, poetry, acting, dancing, theatre, film, video production and editing, drawing, poster, fliers and pamphlet production, decorations, sculptures, photography and other related art works. In recent times, art has developed into something unimaginable and mind blowing. An example is an incredible life-sized drawing of animal that looked 3D drawing and is shown below:

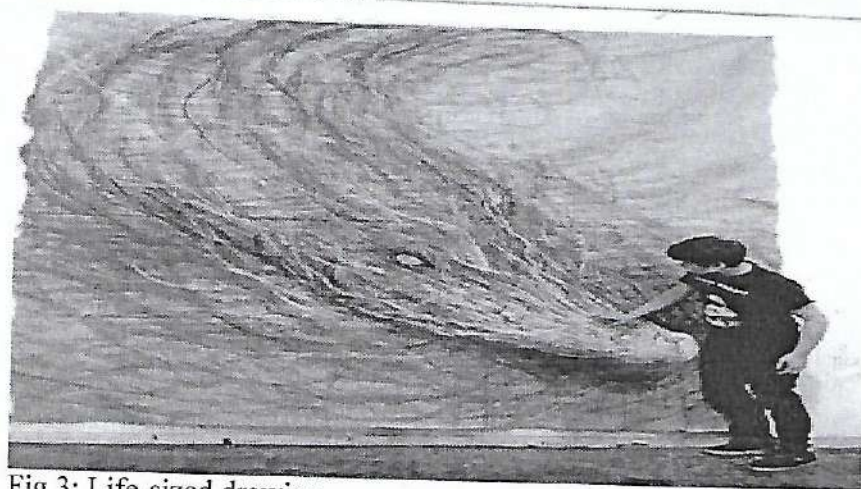


Fig 3: Life-sized drawing

Source: Zhang, 2014

Information and Communication (ICT) skills

The skill is a phenomenon skill because it cuts across all other skills mentioned in this paper. This could be as a result of the technological advancement or civilization that Nigeria have attained over the past years. ICT skills would include web design, programming, internet, graphics and design, database, communication tools like phones and computer, repairs of such tools, software developers, modelling, programs, email, internet operators, data analysis, problem solving with computer and development of communication aid. It also cuts across the educational sector as most of its tools are used for teaching, presentation, research and communication.

Business and Administrative related skills:

In business, it is necessary to acquire certain skills in order for that business to flourish. Such skills includes management skills, decision making skills, negotiation skills, manipulative, marketing, risk bearing, practical, creative, personnel management, professional, productive, innovative, controlling, administrative, demonstrable, financial resource, time management, self-motivation, accountability and ICT

Engineering related skills:

These are skills that could result in technological advancement for the nation as it concerns itself with creativity and innovative ideas. These skills are dependent on the different fields of engineering which is represented below in no particular order:

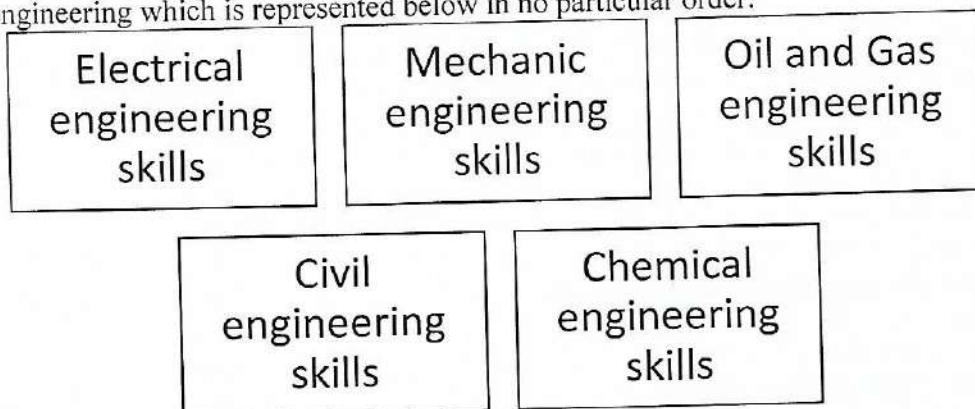


Fig 4: Forms of Engineering Skills

Specifically, these skills include construction skills, designing, computer modelling software, engineering workshop, building, consultation, ICT, research, chemical formulation, advisory services, drilling, manufacturing (e.g. cars, tractors, and other mechanical aids), electricians, motor mechanic workshop, panel beating, welding and so on.

Other vocational skills

These skills cut across all other areas in the society. Such skills includes fashion designing, hair dressing saloon, barbering, cleaning ventures, laundry, fumigation, photography, soap making, carpentry, book binding, painting, tailoring, driving, hall decoration, catering services, event planning, baking, sales personnel, delivery services, interior decoration, shoe manufacturing, car washing, restaurant and fast food services, etc.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In order for Nigeria to remain out of recession, there is a great need to foster the entrepreneurship and vocational skill of its citizen as this is a sure way to reducing unemployment rate in the country. The great thing about skills is that, no matter the skill, it is relevant and viable in the economy provided there is creativity and professionalism in it. However, the skill provider should always seeks for means to keep improving ones abilities and skills through training and further research on such skills. Therefore, the following recommendations are made:

1. Unemployed citizens of Nigeria should get themselves enrolled in one skill acquisition or the other. Better still, focus on improving existing skill(s) and look for more creativity and innovative ways in which such skills could be applied and be relevant in today's Nigeria.

2. Since most schools and colleges already have vocational and entrepreneur studies embedded in its curricula, students are hereby advised to take such courses seriously as these skill could serve as a means of livelihood in the future
3. The government should make available sustainable skill acquisition programmes to train interested individuals. Also, previously organised programmes could be revamped with better management for continued skill acquisition programmes for poverty and unemployment reduction.

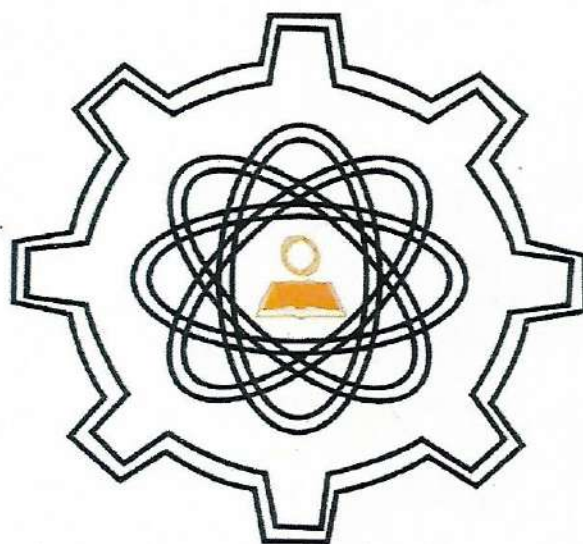
REFERENCES

- Adebisi, T. A. (2015). Acquisition of entrepreneurial skills by Polytechnic Students in Osun state, Nigeria. *Journal of Educational and Social Research*, 5(1), 83-94.
- Daluba, N. E., & Odiba, I. A. (2013). Evaluation of entrepreneurship skills development in students of vocational and technical education programmes in Colleges of Education in Kogi state, Nigeria. *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences*, 3(2), 32-38.
- Maigida, J. F., & Saba, T. M. (2013). Entrepreneurial skills in technical vocational education and training as a strategic approach for achieving youth empowerment in Nigeria. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 3(5), 303-310.
- Mamman, J., Chadi, A. M., Jirgi, I. M., & Mubaraka, C. M. (2013). The role of vocational and technical education in skill acquisition in Nigeria. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 4(10), 46-49.
- Waheed, M. A. (n.d.). *Skill acquisition and national development*. Abeokuta, Nigeria: Academic Planning Unit, University of Agriculture.
- Zhang, J. (2014, April 29). *My Modern Met*. Retrieved from mymodernmet.com/fiona-tang-art/

JOURNAL
OF
TECHNOLOGY AND EDUCATION
IN NIGERIA

JOTEN

www.ajol.info/journals/joten



Vol. 22, Nos. 1&2 2017

ISSN 1118 - 5570