

Towards More Effective Vocationalisation of Business Education in Universities in South East of Nigeria

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Abstract

The objective of the study was to ascertain the extent of vocationalization, of business education in universities in South East zone of Nigeria where lecture method dominated lesson delivery. Students had become more passive and engaged in lots of endless hard work. It could hardly be easy to state the differences between business education practices and other education deliveries in this study, which is a descriptive survey, the researchers, had to randomly select 240 final year students from four of the universities in the zone. A 30 – item structured questionnaire, validated and reliable, was distributed and analyzes for the study. Findings indicated students dissatisfaction with level of skills taught and absence of interactive relationship practices at classes, lack of study-driven relationships models and poor use of reflective and contextual approaches. Computer based material were insufficient, time for studies was not enough and the restructuring of the curriculum to reflect a more effective teaching method than the lecture method. More relationships and more use of reflections, models and contexts in teaching

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

Vocational training and skills is a type of training that emphasizes skills for job functions. Vocational education on the other hand is a special programme that nurtures values in the learners alongside skill learning obtained at different levels of education. In the process of vocational training, the students are exposed to scientific and technological trends, skills and ideals that lead to better adjustment to work through innovativeness and problem-solving (Sign, 2000).

Vocationalization according to Fien and Mclean (2008) means placing a greater emphasis on skills development for employability, and for economic and labour force needs of the society. However, in this paper, vocationalization is a term designed to suggest the need for a serious re-adjustment of theoretically based vocational education to more practical approaches. It is a need for re-assertion of the broader vision of vocational education, one that looks beyond skills acquisition to more practically beneficial attitudes and knowledge in vocational teaching. This approach encompasses the use of models, reflection, relationships and context in the teaching by Faraday, Overton and Cooper (2011).

Effective vocationalization is a call for higher quality of teaching and learning in the classrooms, workshops, laboratories and other places in which the vocational education takes place. Vocationalization requires competent teachers, engaged students, well-designed courses, and facilities that are fit for purpose. Vocationalization implies an understanding of these five elements: skills, reflection, relationship, models and context teaching as they interact. Vocationalizing business education is vital in mobilizing more students to interact and gain experiences stated in learning theories. It results in student-centered learning, co-operative learning, creativity and the development of the learners. Vocationalization reflects on teaching models. That means that it incorporates holistic vocational education that can be managed, which saves time for other teaching activities, and which blends theories and practice, actions and reflection. A model focuses on the increasing prominence of life skills which encompass social attitudes, basic knowledge and practical skills.

A look at vocational education programmes in universities in the South East zone of Nigeria shows that business educators in an effort to teach many items in syllabuses adopt the lecture method. This delivery mode for many skills courses is too passive and uninspiring to the students. The average student's interests are not aroused nor retained. Varieties of illustrations and real-life problems are not utilized, indeed the time available hardly allows students to respond to matters presented for study. Their backgrounds, experiences, aspirations, values and cultures are not even sought nor utilized. Vocationalization encourages teachers to use a range of teaching strategies including questioning and answering (with the whole class involved) individual exercises, group discussions and practical activities. These strategies deepen the contexts, meet learners' needs, and teach subject matter (Brophy, 1999).

Statement of the Problem

The inability of vocational education graduates to apply their knowledge and skills to improve their daily lives or generate gainful employment is causing them to question the very essence of vocational education programme offered to them. Effective vocational education is supposed to equip students with life skills such as problem-solving, skills in critical thinking, decision-making, abilities to manage stress and feelings, to develop self-awareness and self-confidence, to communicate well, and teamwork among others. However, in many vocational education programmes in the South East zone of Nigeria, courses are taught theoretically without the use of modern equipments and instructional inputs. This makes it difficult for students to develop life skills needed for the 21st century. Nwachukwu (2006) observed that the inability of vocational teachers to use adequate instructional strategies (models) does not enhance students' acquisition of skills and development of self-concepts as well as interests. Nsa (2002) equally noted that lack of use of project methods alongside other strategies does not encourage originality at work. The reluctance of vocational education lecturers to use teaching models when deciding on teaching strategies to use to respond to particular learning objectives implies that though courses are repeated, students are ill-prepared to meet future challenges. Effective vocational education programme in the zone is also constrained by having lecturers of vocational courses that lack information and communication technology (ICT) expertise. It is normal for them to impose textbooks on students, use outdated curriculum, teach topics that are irrelevant to modern business offices, use theory to shut out the practicals. It is against this background that the paper was aimed at ascertaining the extent of Vocationalization of business education in universities in the South East of Nigerian.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to ascertain the extent of vocationalization of business education in universities in South East of Nigeria. Specifically, the study will:

1. Ascertain the extent business education teachers teach skills, generate relationships, initiate models, practice reflection and respond to contexts in universities in South East of Nigeria.
2. Ascertain the constraints to effective vocationalization of business education universities in South East of Nigeria.

Significance of the Study

The result of this study will help in exposing the current status of business education programme in South East zone and Nigeria in general to the relevant stakeholders, while the recommendations of this study will help authorities in improving the effective delivery of business education programme. Also, the results and findings of this study will further open up the need for research in this area.

Research Questions

1. To what extent do business educators teach skills, generate relationships, initiate models, practice reflection and respond to contexts in universities in South East of Nigeria?
2. What are the constraints to effective vocationalization of business education in universities in South East of Nigeria?

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Conceptual Framework

Vocationalization according to Psacharopoulos, Loxley and Hoopers (1996) is the introduction of practical or vocational subjects, teaching and learning that offers the learners an opportunity for fieldwork or visit to the industry for practical exposure, providing vocational guidance and a more applied way of teaching vocational education. Fien, Maclean and Park (2008) defined Vocationalization as education that places greater emphasis on skills development for employability so as to meet the economic and labour force needs of the society. Kenya (1999) referred to vocationalization as core of generic skills that aid students to better communicate, work in teams with less supervision, use ICT to access new ways of doing things, and promote entrepreneurship education.

The rationales for vocationalization are categorized into Personal Development Goals which points to an ideal, well-rounded education that can educate the whole person and not just cognitive knowledge. The Socio-Political Goals involves a diversified curriculum structure seen as a means to greater equality of opportunities that caters for a wider range of talents and prepares for a wider range of future activities than do purely academic curricula. The Economic Goals involves provision of skilled and semi-skilled man-power, reduction of wasted resources caused by weak articulation between education and the labour market, technological literacy, and generally facilitating economic growth and national development (Laughlo, 2004).

Business education according to Igboke (2000) is a dynamic field of study geared towards producing responsible, productive and self-reliant citizens. This highlights the importance of Business Education in

inculcating in the recipients knowledge, values, attitudes and skills needed not only in the business world but also to contribute to the development of the society.

Theoretical Framework

Experiential learning theory developed by Kolb (1984) sees learning as a process of knowledge creation through the transformation of experience. It is a theory in which educators purposefully engage students in direct experience and focus reflection in order to increase students knowledge, develop their skills and clarify their values. Experiential learning is also referred to as learning through discovery and exploration. The key element of this theory is the student, and that learning takes place (the knowledge gained) is a result of being personally involved in the pedagogical approach.

Unlike the traditional classroom situations where students compete with one another or remain uninvolved or unmotivated, and where the instruction is highly structured, students in experiential learning classrooms cooperate and learn from one another in a more semi- structured approach. Instruction is designed to engage students in direct experiences tied to real world problems and situations in which the instructor facilitates rather than directs students' progress (Davis, 2011).

Theoretical Studies

Teaching Skills in Vocational Education

The main goal of teaching vocational education in Nigerian universities is to prepare students for the world of work through the acquisition of theoretical and practical skills. However, changes in the economic, technological, demographic, societal, educational context, and work force demands that vocational educators must equip students not only with vocational skills but with life skills that are now recognized as useful for self-reliant, independent and productive in work situations, and to contend with personal demands at home and society at large (Okwelle, 2013). These life skills according to Dalors (1996) are skills in the areas of:

- a. Learning to know: thinking abilities such as problem-solving, critical thinking, decision-making, understanding consequences,
- b. Learning to be: personal abilities such as managing stress and feelings, self-awareness, self-confidence,
- c. Learning to live together: social abilities such as communication, negotiation, assertiveness, teamwork, empathy, and
- d. Learning to do: manual skills such as practicing know-how required for work and tasks.

However, Oduolowu (2007) regretted that teaching in vocational classes in Nigerian universities focused more on rote learning and memorization, and regurgitation of facts instead of teaching life skills for 21st century.

Generating Relationships in Vocational Education

The relationships business educators build among students give them opportunities to support students academic and social development at all levels of schooling (Baker, 2006). Positive-student relationships enable business education students to feel safe and secure in their learning environments and provide framework for learning important social and academic skills (O'connor, Dearing Collins, 2011; Silver, Measulle, Armstron & Essex, 2005). Positive teacher-student relationships are classified as exhibiting closeness, warmth, and interaction thereby providing a secure base from which they can explore the classroom and school setting (Hamre & Pianta, 2001).

Teaching Reflections in Vocational Education

Teaching reflection involves teachers' articulation, questioning, considering and debating the range of knowledge to make meaning of theories and practices. The questions are the starting points for reflecting on, monitoring and assessing the effectiveness of instructional delivery in business education. Business educators should be able to offer their students opportunities to reflect on formal, designated classroom experiences. Students should be guided to think about their learning before, during and after a lecture or sets of lectures. Oral reflections encourage students to talk in the class about the lesson, to ask questions about what they learned, to say what is hard and easy about the lecture, and summarize what they will tell a friend who was absent from the lecture.

Teaching Models in Vocational Education

A model according to Brady (1985) is a guide to the preparation and implementation of teaching. It involves structuring teaching used to set a curriculum, design teaching materials and to guide classroom instruction. Brady maintained that vocational educators should adopt models that give students initiative, such model must be adaptable to individual differences, to students learning goals, developed with appropriate theory of learning, must be internally valid and supported by new technologies and media.

Lucas, Spencer and Claxton (2012) suggested that teaching models that facilitate learning through conversation, real-world problem-solving and through enquiry are needed for effective vocational educators. Such teaching models must breed self-examination, self-directed learning, enlightenment, students' self-optimization and transformation. These models of teaching according to Rochintaniawati (nd) include: problem-solving model, inquiry model, learning cycle model, inductive model and science environment technology society (STS) model. Ajibola (2008) identified problem-based, tutorial based, project based and computer based models for vocational educators to adopt. However, it appears that vocational educators do not use teaching models when deciding teaching objectives (Faraday, Overton & Cooper, 2011).

Context teaching in Vocational Education

The context in which vocational education is delivered is characterized by challenging situations, opportunities for self-discovery, authentic real-world experiences, and a place where students objectively self-evaluate and reflect upon their experiences (Davis, 2011). A quality vocational education learning context should be full of opportunities for adequate feedback both from the teachers and students. It encompasses adequate learning environment which include: studio, workshop, classrooms fit for purpose, laboratories, computer suite and virtual space which afford different opportunities for learning and teaching.

Constraints to Effective Vocationalization of Business Education

Business education in Nigeria is faced with numerous constraints which have adversely affected its operation. Oranu (2004) identified these constraints as poor teaching strategies by business educators. Business educators are too theoretical and prefer lecture method than other teaching strategies such as demonstration, questioning method, discovering or inquiring method among others. Administrators also misconceive of the nature of business education. Underfunding of business education programme affects the provision of up to date facilities and equipments such as conducive classrooms, workshops, ICT laboratories, studios and materials needed to train students of the 21st century. Poor quality curriculum is another major concern in business education delivery. This is closely linked to the quality of teachers of vocational education who are not adequately trained and t also lack sufficient knowledge of ICT (World Bank Report, 2006).

Review of Empirical Studies

Osam (2013) carried out a study to examine the implementation of vocational and technical education programmes in Rivers State. A descriptive survey design was used for the study and the population comprised of five public technical colleges in Rivers State. A sample of 144 academic staff was selected using a stratified random sampling technique. This study found that the quality of teaching staff in vocational and technical schools was relatively inadequate. Vocational and technical school facilities in Rivers State were also inadequate and in poor condition. Osam and the present study are related in that both seek to ascertain how effective teaching and learning in vocational education are, and the constraints that hinder effective delivery of vocational education. However, the two studies differ in that while Osam study was conducted in Rivers state, the present study covers South East zone of Nigeria.

A study conducted by Okwelle (2013) on appraisal of theoretical models of psychomotor skills and applications to technical vocational education and training (TVET) system in Nigeria showed that effective technical and vocational education and training consists of interaction of skills, knowledge and attitude. Okwelle recommended that the programme should aim at developing all three domains of learning but with greater emphasis on practical skills. Okwelle's study relate to the present study in that both studies aimed at ascertaining effective vocational education programme. However, while the present study is restricted to South East zone on Nigeria, Okwelle study was not.

METHOD

A descriptive survey research design was used for the study. The purpose was to collect detailed and truthful information regarding the extent of Vocationalization of business education. The study was conducted in South East zone of Nigeria comprising of five states namely: Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo states, each with a federal and a state university. The population of the study comprised all the final year students of business education from four universities offering business education in the South East zone. The universities include: Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, Abia State University Uturu, Ebonyi State University Abakaliki, and University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The choice of final year students stems from the fact that they had undergone training in vocational education. They are in the best position to respond on the extent business education is vocationalized. A simple random sampling technique was used to select 240 (60 final year students of 2014/2015 academic session from each university) from the four universities in the South East zone.

The instrument used was a structured questionnaire titled "Questionnaire on Effective Vocationalization of Business Education (QEVBE)". Face and content validity were established by giving initial draft of the

instrument to two experts from Vocational Education Department at Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka and one expert from Measurement and Evaluation Unit there too. They were requested to assess the instrument in terms of the content coverage, relevance of questions to research questions and language used in developing the items. They made useful inputs and comments which were used in modifying the instrument. Test re-test method was used to ascertain the reliability of the instrument. Twenty copies of the instrument were administered to twenty final year students outside the sample and after an interval of two weeks; the instrument was administered to them again. Spearman rank order correlation coefficient was applied in the analysis of their responses and the average coefficient of 0.77 was estimated thus, meaning that the instrument was 77 percent reliable. This was considered adequate for the study. 30 item structured questionnaire was then administered to the respondents. Out of the 240 copies of the questionnaire administered, 228 copies were correctly filled and returned, giving a percentage return of 95. Data collected were analyzed using frequency and percentages.

DATA ANALYSIS

Research Question One:

To what extent do business education teachers teach skills, generate relationships, initiate models, practice reflection and respond to contexts in universities in South East of Nigeria?

Responses to this research questions are presented in tables 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6

Table 1: respondents frequency and percentage responses on skills taught (N = 228).

| S/N | Business education skills taught by business education teachers | Yes | | No | |
|-----|---|-----|----|-----|----|
| | | F | % | F | % |
| 1 | How to teach skills | 172 | 75 | 56 | 25 |
| 2 | How to lead others | 123 | 54 | 105 | 46 |
| 3 | Ability to identify new trends/roles of accounting in the business world | 98 | 43 | 103 | 57 |
| 4 | Familiarity with various new skills in sales and salesmanship | 102 | 45 | 126 | 55 |
| 5 | Ability to use different office machines/equipment, and ICT facilities | 100 | 44 | 128 | 56 |
| 6 | Ability to determine and interpret factors which indicate extent and strength of competitors around and in future | 84 | 37 | 144 | 63 |
| 7 | Ability to manage time effectively | | | | |
| 7 | Learning to know e.g. critical thinking | 115 | 50 | 113 | 49 |
| 8 | Learning to be e.g. managing inadequate feelings | 109 | 48 | 119 | 52 |
| 9 | Learning to live with others e.g. teamwork | 89 | 39 | 139 | 61 |
| 10 | Learning to do e.g. working with fingers as in offices | 110 | 48 | 118 | 52 |
| 11 | | 92 | 40 | 136 | 60 |

Source: Field Survey (2015)

Table 1 shows that apart from teaching skills, leadership skills and ability to manage time effectively which the respondents agreed they have been taught, respondents do not think that they have been taught the other skills.

Table 2: Respondents frequency and percentage responses on level of satisfaction with skills learned from business education.

| Responses | Frequency (F) | Percentage (%) |
|--------------|---------------|----------------|
| Satisfied | 112 | 49 |
| Dissatisfied | 116 | 51 |
| Total | 228 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey 2015

Table 2 shows the responses of the respondents on the level of satisfaction with skills learned from business education. While 49 percent of the respondents feel satisfied with the skills learned, 51 percent are dissatisfied with it.

Table 3: Respondents frequency and percentage responses on extent to which business educators generate relationships (N= 228)

| S/N | Extent of relationships generated by business educators | Yes | | No | |
|-----|--|-----|----|-----|----|
| | | F | % | F | % |
| 12 | The relationship existing between students and vocational education lecturers in your department is encouraging | 82 | 36 | 146 | 64 |
| 13 | There is need for more closeness, warmth and interaction between students and lecturers so as to improve students' learning, achieve more. | 156 | 68 | 72 | 32 |
| 14 | There should be more communications about vocational education lecturers whereabouts during office hours. | 156 | 68 | 72 | 32 |

Source: Field Survey 2015

Table 3. 64 percent do not think the relationship existing between teachers and students is encouraging. Infact 68 percent of the respondents think there is need for more closeness, warmth and interaction between teachers and students, while 68 percent believe that communication of lecturers' whereabouts is needed.

Table 4: Respondents frequency and percentage responses on extent to which business educators initiate models (N= 228)

| S/N | Extent of models initiated by business educators | Yes | | No | |
|-----|---|-----|----|-----|----|
| | | F | % | F | % |
| 15 | vocational education lecturers offer you sufficient illustrations of real life events while teaching in your discipline | 89 | 39 | 139 | 61 |
| 16 | Giving of real life examples to illustrate points | 140 | 61 | 88 | 39 |
| 17 | You get exposed to sufficient real life problem to practicalize your studies or in connection to your studies | 81 | 36 | 147 | 65 |

Source: Field Survey 2015

Table 4 shows that 61 percent of the respondents do not agree that lecturers offer sufficient illustrations of real life events. 61 percent agree that teachers give real life examples to illustrate points, but 65 percent of the respondents do not agree that they are being exposed to sufficient real life problems.

Table 5: Respondents frequency and percentage responses on extent to which business educators practicalize reflection (N= 228)

| S/N | Extent of reflection practicalized by business educators | Yes | | No | |
|-----|--|-----|----|-----|----|
| | | F | % | F | % |
| 18 | Reflecting on each day and weeks activities so as to handle them better | 88 | 39 | 140 | 61 |
| 19 | Watching videotape to show what was learnt or not and often be corrected | 38 | 17 | 190 | 83 |
| 20 | Repeating initial difficult lecture sessions so as to achieve objectives expected through demonstrations, questions and answers. | 99 | 43 | 129 | 57 |

Source: Field Survey 2015

As shown in table 5, 61 percent do not think that business educators provide opportunity for students to reflect on each week's activities. 83 percent of the respondents said teachers do not show videotapes. In fact 57 percent also stated that teachers do not repeat initially difficult lecture sessions through demonstrations, questions and answers.

Table 6: Respondents frequency and percentage responses on exposure to interactions

| S/N | Exposure to interactions | Often | | Rarely | |
|-----|---|-------|----|--------|----|
| | | F | % | F | % |
| 21 | Creating revision opportunities to consolidate what was taught | 108 | 37 | 120 | 53 |
| 22 | Encouraging students to engage in tutorials to further their learning | 79 | 35 | 149 | 65 |
| 23 | Helping students to solve individual and group problems | 89 | 39 | 139 | 61 |
| 24 | Encouraging students to engage in project based discussion groups | 94 | 41 | 134 | 59 |

Source: Field Survey 2015

Table 6 shows that majority of the respondents indicated they are rarely exposed to teacher guided interactions by teachers.

Research Question Two

What are the constraints to effective teaching and learning (Vocationalization) of business education in universities in South East of Nigeria?

Table 7: Respondents frequency and percentage responses on constraints to effective Vocationalization (N= 228)

| S/N | Constraints | Yes | | No | |
|-----|--|-----|----|-----|----|
| | | F | % | F | % |
| 25 | Epileptic power supply | 152 | 67 | 76 | 33 |
| 26 | Insufficient time for teaching skills | 147 | 65 | 81 | 36 |
| 27 | Insufficient hardware and software | 154 | 68 | 74 | 32 |
| 28 | Apparently outdated curriculum | 130 | 57 | 198 | 43 |
| 29 | Use of lecture method by lecturers | 145 | 64 | 83 | 36 |
| 30 | Administrators misconception of vocational education | 123 | 54 | 105 | 41 |

Source: Field Survey 2015

A table 7 show that 67 percent of respondents agreed that epileptic power supply is one of the greatest constraints to effective teaching and learning. 65 percent said insufficient time for teaching skills, while 68 percent of the respondents think that insufficient hardware and software is the most challenging factor hindering effective vocationalization. Other constraints are outdated curriculum (57 percent), use of lecture method (64 percent) and administrators' misconception (54 percent).

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study showed that the respondents felt vocational skills were not being adequately taught, neither did business educators generate adequate relationships, practise reflection, initiate models. The study has revealed that epileptic power supply, insufficient hardware and software, insufficient time for teaching skills, apparently outdated curriculum, the use of lecture method among others are major constraints to the attainment of effective vocationalization of business education. Ukeje (1980) as cited in Osam (2013) likewise outlined some of the constraints of vocational education programme as the use of obsolete tools and techniques, poor teaching habits, under funding of the programme, shortage of research work, and insufficient workshops and laboratories.

Conclusion

The authors have been able to show that vocational education in universities in the South Eastern zone of Nigeria is not sufficiently vocationalized. The study showed that important elements such as teaching of relationships, reflection, models and contexts in the business education programme is not adequately practiced.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, this paper recommends the following:

1. Business education curriculum should be restructured to incorporate emphases on teaching of skills, relationships, reflections, models and context in better ways than lecture method.
2. School administrators, governments and all stakeholders should provide enabling environments and stimulate the active participation of the private sector, communities, civil society, organizations, and development partners in providing the necessary equipments, machines facilities and infrastructure needed for effective teaching and learning of vocational and technical education.
3. In recruiting business educators, more consideration should be given to those with industrial

experiences.

4. There should be more proper administration and supervision of the schools and learning program to ensure that the desired goals are achieved also to promote hard-work and discipline in schools. Schools need to be adequately equipped with good teaching and learning environments, workshops, laboratories as well as good libraries. These should be available to make teaching and learning easier and enjoyable.

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