

Indigenous Education versus Occupational Skills Acquisition for Sustainable Development: The Igbo Example

AFOMA ROSEFELICIA OKUDO
University of Lagos, Nigeria

Abstract. In southeastern part of Nigeria, the Igbo people emerged as the most entrepreneurial and skillful group who travelled to various parts of Nigeria and in many cases migrated to other parts of the globe for settlement. In recent years, the rate with which globalization and changes in technology affects the way people work and socialize remains amazing, if conscious effort is not targeted towards preserving national heritage for improved economy, certain skills which our forefathers proudly transferred will gradually become extinct. This paper examined the use of indigenous education for enhancing the younger generations' acquisition and development of occupational skills for improved economy especially in the globalized and technology driven era. It also discusses the challenges for effective occupational development towards transferring and preservation of the cultural heritage of the Igbo people of Anambra State (southeastern part) of Nigeria. Purposive sampling technique was used to select 100 entrepreneurs craftsmen (respondents) from seven different occupational and popular skills of the Igbo people namely – Palmwine tapping, Weaving of both brooms and baskets, Fishery, Blacksmithing, Animal rearing, Farming and Woodcarving. The population of the study comprises different artisans from different popular occupational skills of Anambra State (the Igbo people) randomly selected from the twenty-one local government areas of the State. Data was collected using Questionnaires and

Observation techniques. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze data collected. The study found that many challenges are facing the development of occupational skills for sustainable development and improved economy among the artisans; and that the younger generations no longer appreciate and value them as means of livelihood due to migration and urbanization which are inevitable situations in the globalized era. Suggestions and recommendations are made on how to improve those occupational skills so that the younger generations will be motivated to take them, for improved economy

Keywords: The Igbo people; traditional occupational skills; globalization; sustainable development and economic growth; cultural heritage

1. Introduction

Education involves the inculcation of knowledge, skills, values and abilities, leading to the development of mental powers, the right attitudes to life and living as exemplified in human characters as well as skills to eke out a living and contribute to the growth and development of one's community and nation (Gbenedion, 2012). This entails that education is core to whatever we want to do as a nation. Education remains one of the most viable and sustainable ways of developing human capital.

The education we give to our youths should be the type that will enable them to make good use of not only their brains, but also their skills. However, in the formal education setting much of the training given is theoretical, producing generalists and theoreticians and clearly preparing recipients for white collar jobs. This will never lead to good turn-around of the nation and its economy.

The secondary school curriculum in Nigeria, for a long time has been criticized for its insensitivity to the dynamic expenses and contemporary life of the society. Poverty, unemployment, change of jobs and loss of employment has become common occurrence. Nigeria inherited its formal educational system from colonial government which prepares students for employment. Securing a government or private sector paid employment remains an index of measuring success. Yet in all developed economies, education for self reliance has taken the centre stage and is recognized as the driver of economic growth and competitiveness in the labour market (European Commission 2004; Schaider, Kailer and Feldbauer – Durst Mueller, 2005).

In the traditional African society, education was purely informal and given for skill acquisition using indigenous education. The purpose was to equip the individual with marketable skills for wealth creation. Every individual was trained and empowered to create wealth. Rote memorization and accumulation of scientific facts no doubt, have failed us in terms of sustainable development (Osuafor, Okeke, and Nnorom, 2012).

With the current global dispensation and economics recession, it becomes imperative for the nation to have a re-think on the way of empowering the youths for sustainable development through indigenous education and occupational acquisition skills. This paper examines the strategies for enhancing the occupational development and youth empowerment for sustainable development and the factors that pose challenges to effective transferring of the occupational skills for sustainable development and ultimately for

preservation of cultural heritage among the people of Anambra State, Nigeria.

2. Statement of Problem

In today's world where hands on education, entrepreneurship and technology education are seen to be imperative for national development, education so far given to Nigerians is ill-suited for such development and progression. The education given being largely theoretical has created more problem than it has solved. Some of the problems include lack of saleable skills and the consequent unemployment among the youths, high rate of crime, the total disrespect for our value system etc. (Gbenedion op.cit). Given the above scenario, one can rightly say that our education has been largely defective and unsound. It would naturally be unable to form the bedrock for community and national economic development unless educational system can fashion innovative curricular to reverse this trend. The Anambra people of the Southeastern are mainly craftsman by nature but the younger generations are not equipped with the desired skills needed to be successful in the industry especially in this globalized era (Aina, 2000). However, if conscious effort is not targeted towards preserving their occupational heritage, certain skills which their forefathers proudly transferred to them will gradually become extinct. This paper therefore examines the challenges of indigenous education versus occupational skill developments for youth empowerment and sustainable development among the entrepreneurs of the popular craftsmanship in Anambra State, Nigeria.

3. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to:

- Determine the extent which the younger generations of Anambra State aspire to learn occupational skills in the informal setting for economic growth and sustainable development.
- Find out the challenges facing the artisans/craftsmen in transferring/teaching their younger generations their occupational skills in

the informal setting for sustainable development.

4. Research Questions

This study was directed by the following research questions:

- To what extent do younger generations aspire to learn occupational skills in the informal setting for sustainable development?
- What are the challenges of artisans/craftsmen in teaching the younger generations their occupational skills in the informal setting?

5. Literature Review

It is important to note that youths comprise nearly 30% of the world population. Hence, the involvement of today's youths in environment and development decision-making and in the implementation of programmes is critical for long term success in any country's plan for sustainable development (Gbedion, op. cit). Youth empowerment is an attitudinal, structural and cultural process whereby young people gain the ability, authority, and agency to make decisions and implement change in their own lives and the lives of other people. It is often referred to as a gateway to intergenerational equity, civic engagement and democracy building.

Sustainable development was defined by Adebola (2007) as the kind of development that can be initiated and managed properly in such a way as to give attention to continuity and presentation as people explore an explicit available resources. Okeke (2009) also posited that for development to be sustainable there must be human development and also training in human resources development should be geared towards giving an individual necessary skill to become an entrepreneur. These entrepreneurs are believed to be using informal education and thereby are not adequately developing the work skills needed in the industry. In essence craftsmen need to be more creative and social in the work place (Brown, 2003). The continual

decline in the number of youths taking up the craftsmanship job and its consequential continuous unemployment of the youths is a major source of worry to the concerned stakeholders. Okoro (2001) observed that there are large number of unemployed youths either roaming the street or engage in okada riding business. The underlying factor of these unemployment problems is assembled as the inappropriate training/teaching skills and languages of instruction that would motivate the youths to take up these artisan works.

6. Strategies for Enhancing Occupational Skills Acquisition

The Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2004) through its National Policy on Education requires primary school pupils to acquire manipulative skills through some planned practical work taught by the teachers or through resource persons from the town where the school is located. At the secondary school level, effective teaching through practical work is also emphasized. But despite the provisions, only the theory -accumulation of facts – is still being emphasized by the teachers (Olorukooba, 2007). Okeke (2002) opined that by adopting the life-long education as the nation's education, policies, the National Policy on Education ensures that:

Each individual in society should have the opportunity of getting any type of training he wants at any time not just deny school period ... and that there should be a link between the school and the community and the home, that formal school learners should be related to community realities(2004).

Okeke (op. cit) therefore added that community-based curriculum and informal education should be encouraged whereby the teacher serves as a guide and the home and other societal agents should be seen as the resource for the school. This emphasizes the need for school activities to relate to the immediate communities and environments of the children to encourage

transfer and application of what is learnt in the school to everyday life.

7. Methodology

7.1 Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. This method was deemed the most appropriate design for this study because it involves selecting chosen samples from a large population to discover the relative incidence distribution and interrelations of some important variables.

7.2 Population and Sampling Techniques

The study was carried out in the 21 local government areas of Anambra State of Nigeria. Purposive random sampling was used for the study. The local governments were divided according to the geographical locations and the type of craftsmanship popularly known in those areas (i.e. what they are known for). Seven types of craftsmanship namely: Palmwine tapping, Weaving of broom and baskets, Fishery, Blacksmithing, Animal rearing, Farming and Woodcarving were selected in the areas where they are popularly known for.

8. Data Analysis

The data were analyzed with descriptive statistics involving the use of frequency counts and percentages.

Results

Table 1:- The extent occupational skills would inspire younger generations to learn it for in the informal setting for sustainable development

S/N	ITEMS	YES	%	NO	%
1	My occupational job skills will help the youths to achieve economic progress	90	90	10	10
2	My occupational job skills will give the youths opportunity to articulate their ideas and vision for successful living	70	70	30	30
3	Craftsmanship has the ability to be identified by the government so as to attract youths in the industry	100	100	0	0
4	Occupational skills needs of the youth will be empowered through indigenous education for sustainable development	100	100	0	0
5	Craftsmanship should be part of the formal school system	90	90	10	10
6	I would recommend my child /ward to learn this craft/job for sustainable development and employment purposes	80	80	20	20
7	This job has been sustaining me	90	90	10	10
8	Do you want this job/craft to continue after you.	90	90	10	10

Then twenty occupational artisans were chosen at random from the popularly known occupational skills in such areas.

7.3 Instrumentation

Questionnaire and observation techniques were used to elicit information from the samples. Some of the artisans cannot write and as such the questionnaire was read out to them and the researchers with their assistants marked/ticked the questionnaire options on behalf of the respondents. The administration of questionnaire took four weeks. The instrument was designed based on the purpose of the study.

7.4 Validation of the Instrument

The content and face validity of the questionnaire were established by the experts in the vocational education of the University of Lagos. The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach – Alpha method. Pilot study was conducted using 40 occupational craftsmen who are not part of the main study. This was to ensure that the instrument was valid for the study. Data collected and analyzed yielded a reliability coefficient (internal consistency estimate of the items) of 0.86. The research questions were answered after analysis using percentage.

Concerning the extent the youths would aspire to learn the craftsmanship, 90% of the respondents agreed that their occupational skills would help the youths to achieve economic progress. While only ten percent disagreed with the statement. All the sampled population agreed that their craftsmanship have all the abilities and potentials to be identified by the government which will in turn help to attract the youths in the industry. Also, 70% of the sampled population agreed that their occupational job skills would give the youths opportunity to articulate their youthful ideas and visions for successful living if they embarked on these jobs, while 30% of the population rejected the statement. All the respondents agreed that

occupational skills needed by the youths will be empowered through indigenous education for sustainable development.

Ninety percent of the sampled population opined that craftsmanship should be part of the formal education system while 10% disputed to that statement. Eighty percent of the sampled population opined that they would recommend their occupational job skills to their child/ward, while only twenty percent objected to the statement. Ninety percent of the sampled population agreed that their craftsmanship sustained them and they would like them to continue after them. The remaining ten percent objected to the two statements respectively.

Table 2- Challenges of artisans/craftsmen in teaching the younger generations their occupational skills in the informal setting

S/N	ITEMS	YES	%	NO	%
1	Language of instruction poses a challenge for the youths to come into craftsmanship	30	30	70	70
2	Traditional tools and equipment pose a big challenge to the craftsmanship industry	50	50	50	50
3	Globalization and urbanization has influence on the way youths perceive this occupation.	70	70	30	30
4	Many youths aspire to learn /join craftsmanship	20	20	80	80

Concerning the challenges of artisans/craftsmen in teaching the younger generations their occupational skills in the informal setting, table 2 depicts that only 30% of the respondents agreed that language of instruction is influencing the youths' aspirations to enter into the craftsmanship/ their traditional occupational skills. While the greater number of 70% objected to the statement. Seventy percent opined that globalization and urbanization have influenced the perceptions of the youths concerning their traditional occupational skills, while 30% of the population objected to the statement. Half of the respondents agreed that the use traditional tools in the industry pose a conspicuous challenge, while the remaining half objected to that. Lastly, concerning the extent the youths are aspiring to enter into craftsmanship, 20% opined that youths are willing to take up the craftsmanship, while the greater number of 80% opined that youths are not willing to join the craftsmanship industry.

Mueller,(2005), education for self reliance is very imperative and is recognized as the driver of economic growth and competitiveness in the labour market. This is in congruence with this study since 90% of the respondents agreed that their occupational skills would help the youths to achieve economic progress. While 70% of the sampled population agreed that their occupational job skills would give the youths opportunity to articulate their youthful ideas and visions for successful living if they embarked on these jobs.

Community-based curriculum and informal education should be encouraged whereby the teacher serves as a guide and the home and other societal agents should be seen as the resource for the school (Okeke, 2009). This emphasizes the need for school activities to relate to the immediate communities and environments of the children to encourage transfer and application of what is learnt in the school to everyday life. This is in agreement with this study because the respondents opined that craftsmanship should be part of formal education system. Again, if it becomes part of the formal education system, the issue of language of instruction posing as a

9. Discussion of Findings

According to (European Commission 2004) and Schaidler, Kailer & Feldbauer – Durst

challenge should be ameliorated. Ninety percent of the sampled population attested that their occupational job skills have been sustaining them. This showed that the involvement of youths would be beneficial. It concurs with the Gbenedion(2012) that the involvement of the youths in community development, decision-making and in the implementation of programmes is critical for long term success in any community and country's plan for sustainable development. Thus, the development of the individual to be self- sufficient in a trade is as well of great importance especially in these days of increased unemployment (Cyril, 2010).Finally, this study agreed with the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) that it is very important to train craft-men who will be enterprising and self- reliant so as to improve sustainable development and ultimately to sustain the survival of indigenous cultural heritage.

10. Recommendations

For Indigenous Peoples:

They should enhance efforts to utilize indigenous technologies over modern technologies and to prioritize the continuance of this knowledge transmission between generations.

They should encourage youths to appreciate and pursue traditional occupations, and to be repulsive to the modern technologies and values that have negative impacts on traditional norms and values.

They should take concrete measures to combat the disappearance of indigenous knowledge that leads to the erosion of customary law and governance of natural resources.

For Government and Stakeholders:

They should legally recognize the principles of indigenous economic systems based on sustainability and self-reliance, and allow indigenous communities the freedom to practice and apply these principles.

They should increase funds allocated for conservation and natural resource management

projects subject to the consent of indigenous communities as a means of revitalizing the use of indigenous knowledge and technologies, and economic systems that are based on collective social responsibility and reciprocity.

They should provide technical assistance in renewable energy development and other sustainable and environment friendly technologies in enhancing the self-reliance and comprehensive development of indigenous communities.

Ultimately, the government should be involved in educating and creating awareness to the masses using the concerned stakeholders, on the importance of occupational skills acquisition and development especially among the younger generations for economic growth to social provisioning and sustainable development which would serve as an approach to ending global problem.

References

- Adebola, H.E. (2007). Standard in Mass Literacy. Adult and Non-Formal Education: Capacity Building and Sustainable Development in Nigeria. *UNIZIK Orient Journal of Education* 3(1), 19-133.
- Aina, K. (2000). A Curriculum Analysis of Skill Specification: Learning Abilities and Individual Differences. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory of Cognition*, 16, 883 – 901.
- Gbenedion, U.B. (2012). *Education for National Transformation: Institutional Innovation Challenges and Prospects*. A Keynote Address Presented at the National Conference Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikwe University, Awka.
- European Commission (2004a). DG Enterprise 2004 Annual Management Plan Bruxelles.
- European Commission – enterprise Directorate General (2004b), Final Report of the Expert Group “Education for Entrepreneurship”. October, Bruxelles.
- Schaeur, R., Kailer, N. & Feldbauer – Durstmüller B. (eds) (2005):

Mittelstaendische Unternehmen – Probleme der Unternehmensnachfolge, Linz.

- Osuafor, A.M.; Okeke, O.C; & Nnorom, N.R. (2012): Strategies and Challenges to Entrepreneurship Education is Science for Sustainable Development. *UNIZIK Orient Journal of Education*. Vol.5, No1. 30-37.
- Okoro, O.M. (2001). *Measurement and Evaluation in Education*. _____Obosi, _____Anambra State. Pacific Publication Nigeria Limited.
- Olorukooba, S.B. (2007). Science, Technology and Mathematics (STM) education is for all students: Promoting effective teaching of STM subjects in our schools through teacher preparation in Uchenna Nzewi (ed) Proceedings of the 50th Anniversary Conference.
- Okeke, S.O.C. (2002). A Critical Study of the National Policy on Education (NPE) in terms of its strengths and weaknesses. *Interdisciplinary Education Journal (INTEJ)*. 4(2)-47-65.
- Okeke, S.O.C. (2009). Teaching Science for Capacity Building. A Commissioned Paper Presented at the Anambra State STAN Luncheon and Award Night, Awka July, 30.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004). *National Policy on Education*. 4th Edition