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Original Research Article

INNOVATIVE TEACHING METHODS AND SKILLS ACQUISITION IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION: BRIDGING THE EMPLOYABILITY GAP IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: The advancement of technology in the world has brought about constant changes in innovative teaching methods. For vocational education to achieve its goal of sustainable development due to global technological revolution, the use of digital and information and communication technology (ICT) based tools strategies in teaching and learning must be adopted. This paper therefore, examined the innovative teaching strategies required in vocational education for sustainable development. The paper also examined the concept of vocational education, concept of innovative teaching methods, concept of sustainable development, the need for adoption of innovative teaching method in vocational education, challenges to effect utilization of these innovative strategies in vocational education as well as the way out of the challenges. The paper suggested among others that vocational educators should adopt innovative strategies in teaching Vocational Education programme instructions to equip students with the necessary skills required in the present day business world. Also, educational institutions should regularly organise relevant training for vocational educators to constantly update their knowledge and skills, government should also increase grants given to educational institutions to enable them provide needed ICT and other infrastructural facilities for effective training of students.

Keywords: Innovation, Teaching Methods, Skill Acquisition, Vocational Education, Employability.

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INTRODUCTION

The increase in a country's level of educational attainment will have a corresponding increase in their overall rate of economic growth. Education is the process of acquiring knowledge, skills, attitudes, interest abilities, competences and the cultural norms of a society by people and to transmit life (same) to the coming generations so as to enhance perpetual development of the society. It is a fundamental aspect of human development and it plays a crucial role in shaping individual and society. Any country whose population have high level of education is a fertile soil for information based technology. The world's constant innovative changes have shown that

the future is unpredictable especially as it concerns education, skill competencies and technology which are considered the bedrock of economic, social and political growth.

Furthermore, education opens the door for all citizens to participate in development activities and when citizens are denied education, they are excluded from the development process especially in the emerging knowledge society. The productivity of the teachers and the skills acquired by the learners also determine the quality of a country's education (Gidado et al., 2015). It is clear that technological advances have improved the teaching and learning process. The student's cognitive skills and their creative ideas can be developed by innovative strategies of learning. The innovative strategies not only improve the education system but also help to achieve different goal of the student. Individuals can acquire necessary skills, knowledge, attitudes and values that will enable them handle the challenges of life as they come and be able to contribute their own quota towards national development through an innovative teaching and learning. Innovative teaching method is essential in preparing students for the challenges of the modern world and equipping them with the skills they need to succeed in a rapidly evolving society.

Okoye (2021) stated that as the societal goals and aspirations changes with developments in the environment, the educational system has to change in order to create an enabling environment for continuing human existence. Vocational education as an aspect of education and a programme of study in an educational system is a dynamic course of study that is attained with changes so as to produce functional individuals that are proficient and profitable in the contemporary business world. Vocational education equips individuals with functional skills, knowledge, competences, values and attitudes that enable he/she to be efficient, productive and proficient in his/her field of endeavour. The programme is geared towards producing sound individuals that are well equipped with innovative skills, competence and experience that will enable them meet up with the current challenges in the global economy and field of work.

Somua (2017) in Ebong (2016) stated that vocational education is that aspect of education which deals with business experiences both for specialized occupational uses and for general uses. Vocational education, of recent, has developed into more complex kind of learning which required the knowledge of other subjects to introduce new things, ideas and ways of doing something in better ways. It is more complex due to increase in technology and computerized society which require professionals to equip themselves with all forms of skills to be able to fit in to competitive business world. Vocational education is an essential part of the preparation of youth for dynamic life with innovative living in changing world.

Innovation is the process of creating new way of doing things for proper efficiency and sustainability. According to Okoye (2021), innovation is a re-designed method of application of new ideas, knowledge and processes to the present in order to improve on the prevailing condition. In education, innovation has also become an imperative to bring about qualitative changes alongside the expansion of education systems. Innovation leads to more efficiency and improved outcomes in quality and equity of learning opportunity. In the educational sector, especially in the field of vocational education, for effectiveness of instructional activities, there is serious need for the adoption of innovative teaching strategies at all levels to ensure that the goals/objectives of the programme are achieved.

For vocational education to continue to achieve its objectives of equipping graduates with the relevant skills required in the business world, there is a need to change its method of' teaching from traditional method to innovative teaching methods for sustainable development.

Therefore, this study seeks to determine the innovative teaching methods required in vocational education for sustainable development.

Government's past entrepreneurial and small and medium enterprises support initiatives. According to Ajisafe et al. (2015), the history of entrepreneurial and small and medium enterprises development initiative in Nigeria can be traced to 1964 when the Federal Government set up several institutions and small and medium enterprises, which are listed below:

- The Nigerian Industrial Development Bank (NIDB)
- Industrial Development Centres
- Second Tier Securities Market.
- Work Bank SME 1 and II loan Schemes
- NERFUND (National Economy Reconstruction Fund)
- The Peoples and Community Banks
- Fiscal and Monetary Policies such as:
    - Income Tax Relief Act
    - Import Duty Relief
    - Tax Relief
    - Export Promotion Incentives
    - Foreign Exchange Facilities.
- National Poverty Eradication
- Bank of Industry
- Micro Finance Banks.
- Nigerian Agriculture and Rural Development Bank Credit Scheme and
- The establishment of Entrepreneurial Development Centres (EDC's) in the six (6) geo-political zones of the country by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) as part of its efforts in building capacity for wealth creation and employment generation, as well as compliment the efforts of relevant government agencies.

However, it is regrettable that despite the huge human, material and financial resources invested in this initiatives, they have abysmally failed to produce the desired result as a result of poor implementation. It is either the government plays politics by not backing those plans or initiative with the adequate and timely release of funds and other resources. Thus, these initiative will be crippled and exist only in theory and not in practice. On the other hand, the agencies saddled with the implementation of these initiatives are staffed with unqualified and incompetent staffs (officials) who have no relevant cognate experience and integrity. These officials are mostly appointed on the basis of political affiliations and willingness to manage these agencies for the benefits of their sponsors (usually government officers) to the detriments of the nation. Loans are granted to fellows' politicians, relatives and friends who have no business establishments and nothing to do with the initiatives. Such grants are seen as the individual's share of the national cake. In some cases, poor implementation is as a result of lack of relevant experience and bandwagon effect of corruption on the Nigeria national life.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

Concept of Innovation

Innovation refers to the process introducing new ideas, methods, products, or technologies that bring about significant improvements or advancements. It involves creative thinking, problem-solving, and a willingness to challenge conventional norms to drive positive change and create value in various fields. Innovation is the process of taking something that already exists and improving it, whether it is a product, a service or even a process. Innovation is defined as incremental, radical, and revolutionary changes in thinking, products, processes, or organization (Okoye, 2021). Innovation is the process of creating new way of doing things for proper efficiency and sustainability. It is a process which involves a lot of actions and reactions.

Innovation is a re-designed method of application of new ideas, knowledge and processes to the present in order to improve on the prevailing condition (Okoye, 2021). In the same vein, Gontur and Davireng (2015) defined innovation as implementation of new and improved knowledge, ideas, method, processes, tools, equipment and machinery which leads to new and better products, services and processes. Hudson (2014) saw innovation as the creation, development and implementation of a new product, process or service with the aim of improving efficiency, effectiveness or competitive advantage.

In education, innovation involves creating and implementing new approaches, methods, technologies, or ideas to enhance the learning experience, promote student engagement, and improve educational outcomes. It encourages the use of creative strategies to adapt to changing needs, foster critical thinking, and prepare students for the challenges of the modern world. This can include personalized learning, online resources, gasification project-based learning, and more. It covers a wide range of events including curriculum, teaching and learning methods, equipment, and teachers. Training institutes and all kinds of non-formal and adult programmes, it attempts to introduce student centre, problem-based learning, it also involved certain questions that are related to the user of the change and timing of the change, because change is a necessity. The only permanent thing in life is change.

Concept of Innovative Methods

Innovative teaching refers to the use of new and creative methods, strategies, and technologies to enhance the learning experience and improve student engagement and outcomes. It is the process of proactively introducing new teaching strategies and methods into the classroom. It involves moving beyond traditional instructional approaches and embracing innovative practices that cater for diverse learning styles, fosters critical thinking, and encourage active participation. Innovative teaching is essential in preparing students for the challenges of the modern world and equipping them with the skills they need to succeed in rapidly evolving society.

Innovative strategies are the techniques, strategies, methods that a teacher adopt to meet various learning objectives. According to Mynhayeva et al. (2017), innovative teaching strategies involve new ways of interaction between “teacher-student”, “student-teacher”, and a certain innovation in practical activity in the process of mastering educational material. The teacher here is seen as a facilitator of knowledge rather than the fount of all knowledge. Jayashree (2017) in the same vein noted that innovative strategies make students and teachers more media literate and mostly suggested one is Multimedia.

These innovative strategies help students to walk on the path of independent learning and become strategic learners. They equip teachers to make learning fun and help students to awaken their desire to learn. Innovative strategies focus on not only the educational content hut also on the methods and environment of the teaching and learning process. Students' developmental level, interests and experience are considered while choosing a particular teaching strategy so that they can self-accomplish their goals (Suleiman, 2017). Innovative strategies enable students to focus their attention, organize their learning material for better understanding and help teachers to provide a suitable platform for strategic learning.

The purpose of introducing these new teaching strategies and methods is to improve academic outcomes and address real problems to promote equitable learning. It involves the use of digital and ICT based tools in teaching. Brand in Onyenike (2015) advocated that innovative teaching strategy is seen as a constructivist. social constructivist and student-centered process whereby students should be active learners in a supportive environment, engaging in authentic and relatable problem-solving activities to stimulate learning, in the field of business education, for effectiveness of instructional activities, there is serious need bar the adoption of innovative teaching strategies at all levels to ensure that the goals/objectives of the programme arc achieved.

Concept of Sustainable Development

Sustainable development refers to a concept that aims to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It encompasses economic, social, and environmental dimensions, emphasizing the integration of these three pillars to create a balanced and harmonious approach to development. Oyebamiji and Adekola (2015) defined sustainable development as conservation, reservation, usage and management of resources so that what we do to improve life and living standard today does not compromise future use of such resources and improvement of the quality of life for all the people. Hasna, (2014) contended that sustainable development is concerned with the carrying capacity of natural system with social, political and economic challenges that timed humanity.

Innovative Teaching Strategies Required in Vocational Education for Sustainable Development

Here are some innovative teaching strategies that could be applied in vocational education to promote sustainable development:

- Active Learning: Many innovative teaching strategies promote active learning, where students are actively involved in the learning process through discussions, case studies, group projects, simulations, and hands-on activities. This approach helps students to apply theoretical concepts to practical situations, enhancing their comprehension and retention.
- Critical Thinking and Problem-solving: Innovative strategies encourage students to think critically and solve complex business problems. Case studies, role-playing, and real-world scenarios challenge students to analyze situations from different angles and develop creative. Solutions.
- Personalised Learning: Technology-driven strategies can facilitate personalized learning experiences by adapting to individual student needs and pacing. This enables students to

learn at their own speed and level of understanding, enhancing their overall learning outcomes.

- Guest Speakers and Industry Experts: Invite professionals and industry experts to share their experiences and insights with students. Guest speakers can offer real-world perspectives and practical advice, helping students understand the industry's current demands.
- Team-Based Learning: Promote collaborative learning by organizing students into diverse teams. This fosters teamwork, communication, and networking skills while encouraging diverse perspectives.
- Skill Development: Business education not only involves theoretical knowledge but also the development of practical skills. Innovative strategies can focus on skill-building through experiential learning, workshops, and interactive simulations that closely replicate real business environments.
- Adaptation to Technological Advances: Business fields are rapidly evolving due to technological advancements. Innovative teaching strategies can keep pace with these changes by incorporating the latest technologies, tools, and trends, ensuring that students are well- prepared for the modern business landscape.
- Social Learning: Encourage students to participate in online business communities. Forums, and social media platforms where they can engage in discussions, share ideas, and learn from professionals and peers.
- Global Perspective: Foster a global mindset b incorporating international business topics, cross-cultural communication, and global economic trends into the curriculum.

Challenges to Effective Utilization of Innovative Teaching Method in Vocational Education

There are numerous benefits to implementing innovative teaching strategies in vocational education, there are also several challenges that educators and institutions might face. Here are some common challenges associated with the effective utilization of innovative teaching strategies in vocational education:

- Lack of Adequate Training of Educators: Vocational Educators may not be adequately trained to use new technologies or methodologies effectively. This can lead to suboptimal implementation and reduced learning Outcomes.
- Financial Constraints: The use of new technologies in training institutions is capital intensive. In spite of the roles of ICT in improving the quality and quantity of education, the financial allocation to education still remain very pool. Training institutions need huge financial requirements for sustainable integration of ICT in education.
- Technological Barriers: Some innovative strategies rely on technology tools and plit1ornis, and not all students or institutions have equal access to these resources. This can create disparities in learning experiences.
- Unregularly Lower Supply: The use of technologies in the teaching of vocational education involve the use of power supply, inconsistent power supply in training has made it difficult for the use of computer in education delivery.
- Time and Resource Constraints: implementing innovative teaching strategies often requires additional time and resources for curriculum development, technology integration, and training. Limited resources can hinder their adoption.

- Cultural and institutional Factors: Different cultures and institutional settings might have varying attitudes toward innovation and learning. Adapting strategies to fit diverse contexts can be demanding.

Vocational (Business) Education Programme

Vocational (business) education programme is concerned with teaching the skills, attitude and knowledge necessary for a successful career in office and business world. It can also be defined as that aspect of an educational programme that equips individual to function effectively in the world of work and society in which he lives. Awo (2016) defined vocational education as that aspect of educational training which an individual receives with the primary motive of enabling him to acquire adequate attitudes, concepts, knowledge, understanding and skills in business activities for vocational usage in careers as an administrator, manager or teacher whenever he/she may find himself/herself in the business world.

Vocational (business) education, according to Okoye (2017) is an education programme that orientates students in art of business making (marketing), typing and shorthand skills (currently competing with computer appreciation and operation), service delivery, secretarial jobs, stenography, account clerking, office information system and management. He further elaborated that business education prepares students in two interrelated areas: Education for business and education about business. Onajite (2016) viewed vocational education as education programme for business that encompasses office occupation, economic understanding, entrepreneurship and it seeks to develop in the learner's basic skills for personal use in the future. Vocational education is a field of learning which prepares students for entry and advancement into jobs with in business.

Also, vocational education is education that is focused towards developing the learner to be productive in teaching, paid employment and self-employment, it is also the means of instructing person on happenings in business transactions, offices, banks, markets, among others where there is exchange of resources (Umesi & Ewe, 2025). In the same vein, Ezenwafor (2012) explained that vocational education is a programme of instruction that consists of two parts, namely officer and general vocational education programme which provides the recipients with competencies and skills needed in managing person business affairs and using the services of the business world. Vocational education is an aspect of vocational education, which equips individuals with the necessary skills and theoretical knowledge needed for performance in the business world either for job occupations or tot self-employment.

Objective of Vocational (Business) Education

Vocational (business) education is the type of education that helps an individual to become self-reliant and even a job creator. The focus of vocational education is the orientation of recipients which enhances wealth creation, employment generation and poverty reductions are very important in the people's life. All of which reduce and indeed capable of eliminating youth restiveness, promote national development, cohesion and molding responsible citizenry. All these are dividend of development of a nation's economy and the absence of which portend under-development of the economy. This is necessarily so because with responsible citizenry, less restive youths and peaceful societal coexistence, nationalism and the desire for higher

productivity are embraced by all and sundry. Hence, the aims/objectives of vocational education, as contained in section a, sub-section 49 of the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2014) are to:

- Provide the business knowledge and vocational skills necessary for industrial, commercial and economic development.
- Provide trained manpower in applied technology and commerce, particularly at sub professional grades.
- Provide people who can apply scientific knowledge to the improvement and solution of economic and environmental problems for the use and convenience of man.
- Enable our young men and women to have an intelligent understanding of the increasing complexity of technology.

Furthermore, Umesi and Chukwujekwu (2023) noted that generally accepted and defensible long range aims and objectives for vocational education are to:

- Equip the business students with the capacity to solve practical problems;
- Give the business students the capacity to communicate effectively both verbally and in writing;
- Provide the business students with a detailed knowledge of the intricate performance of a complex economic system; and
- Afford him/her through understanding of the functional areas of business.

CONCLUSION

As technology advances, teaching of business education need to be shifted from traditional method to technologically innovative teaching strategies. This will enable the products of vocational education programme to be properly equipped to face the challenges of ever-changing technological innovations in the business world. The effective utilization of innovative teaching technology in vocational education system delivery is laced with a lot of challenges. These challenges of innovation in teaching and learning in vocational education programmes must be properly addressed to enable the programme achieve its goal of sustainable economic development in the country.

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