

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAMME: REBUILDING SUSTAINABLE TRUST IN A CHANGING WORLD OF WORK IN RIVERS STATE

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Abstract

The study investigated how vocational education programme can rebuild a sustainable trust in a changing world of work in Rivers State, Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive survey. The population comprised of 95 entrepreneurs from SMEs in Port Harcourt metropolis and 72 lecturers from the Department of Vocational and Technology Education in the Rivers State University and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rivers State. All 167 respondents were sampled using the total enumeration technique. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire tagged “Rebuilding Sustainable Trust in a Changing World of Work Questionnaire” (RSTCWWQ). The instrument was subjected to face validation by three experts in business education, two from Rivers State University and one from Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rivers State. The internal consistency of the instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha method to obtain a reliability coefficient of 0.81. Data collected for the study were analyzed using mean in answering the research questions while the null hypotheses were tested using z-test at 0.05 level of significance. The result revealed that both the lecturers and entrepreneurs from SMEs in Port Harcourt metropolis agreed that competency; innovative and competitive skills possessed by vocational education graduates enhanced sustainable trust building. It was then recommended amongst others that there should be synergy between tertiary institutions and industries and that there should be regular in-service training for lecturers in vocational education programmes.

Keywords: Rebuilding Trust; Sustainable; Changes; World of Work; Vocational Education

Introduction

Education is important in nation building as it decides a nation’s level of development; it is important and has lasting beliefs or ideals shared by the members of the same culture about what is good or bad and desirable or undesirable. The growth and improvement of any economy depends largely on the kind of skills that the undergraduates in higher institutions are equipped with (Wagbara, 2016). A countries economic strength and vitality, their productivity and international competitiveness, depends on their capacity to build and maintain a quality work force, as the economy continue to evolve in response to technological developments and the need to compete in a global market, the nation needs a highly skilled and flexible workforce (Kanu & Otemuyiwa, 2019). Skill acquisition is the process of acquiring or gaining effective and ready knowledge in developing ones aptitude and ability in a particular field of study. In Nigeria, there

is too much emphasis on university education and its acquisition of mere paper qualifications, not bordering whether the graduates possesses the pre-requisite skills or the mental competency to fit into world of work, this has resulted to less importance to inculcation of the much needed technical/vocational expertise geared towards equipping the recipient for a sustainable livelihood (Ighakpe, 2019). Azih (2011) observed that there is tremendous transformation in the way office workers discharge their duties. In the vein Oladunjoye (2016) posited that this innovations in office work required adjustment in the teaching curriculum to curb the current demands in the office. The acquisition of competency skills is paramount as it is described as a group of related abilities, commitments, knowledge and skills that allow individual to operate effectively in a job circumstances, it indicates sufficiency of knowledge and skills that enable someone to act in a wide variety of situations.

Interestingly, Mortaki (2012) stated that vocational education is a form of education that aims to the acquirement of qualifications related to a certain profession. Vocational education as an effective-based discipline can be used to rebuild trust and achieve poverty reduction among graduates by instilling in them those employability skills employers expects from the workers. Uzo-Okonkwo and Oduh (2016) in Binuomote, Idike and Mong (2020) stressed that the teachings of vocational education skills in institutions of higher learning exposes students upon graduation to numerous self-employment opportunities ranging from marketing consultancy services, portfolio management, secretarial services, credit and issuing of cash transactions and financial planners etc. Vocational education offers fresh graduates alternative opportunities to own and manage startups businesses of their own (Binuomote, Idike & Mong, 2020). Binuomote, Idike and Mong (2020) maintained that all the opportunities vocational education offers will automatically reduce poverty, graduate dependency on government and white collar jobs.

From the forgoing therefore, the relevance of vocational education programme can only build sustainable trust in Nigeria if the students are taught entrepreneurial skills such as competitive, competency and innovative skills and knowledge that are very essential and capable of making them adjust swiftly to the rapid changes in the world of work. Sustainable trust is a belief that a person or group of persons will be able and willing to act appropriately in a certain situation (Tapia & Meljem, 2017). To be fit for the world of work upon graduation requires graduates of vocational education to be in tune with the economic demands and apply the necessary skills demanded.

Paliszkievicz (2013) succinctly put, that trust enables people to feel more safety in the very fast changing world. Trust is a veritable instrument to strengthen societal imbalance and its major faulty foundations, vocational education practitioners need to build and rebuild trust in the world of work through the teachings on their students certain essential innovative skills like generating new business ideas, incubating, prototyping and developing promising ideas, replicating and scaling-up businesses and analyzing and learning from past records; trust enhances the ability to change and to support radical change. This implies that trust could assist in accepting, creativity and innovation in vocational education programmes. Therefore, for vocational education which encompasses business education, agricultural education and home economics education programme to be relevant in providing needs of individuals and that of

the society, it must be set for a drastic turn around on rebuilding sustainable trust on its students for socio-economic demands of the society.

Almeida, Behrman and Robalino (2012) emphasized the need for high quality vocational education, because it is evidenced that in less developed countries, the education of youths with practical vocational skills is considered a promising means to build self-responsible learning attitudes and knowledge which might better prepare youths for the requirement of the modern work place. Therefore, it is expedient to examine how vocational education programmes will help in rescuing our graduates from economic stagnation.

Statement of the Problem

Education for sustainable development is a lofty programme of the United Nations. Its philosophy was anchored on education that encourages changes in knowledge, value and attitude to enable a more sustainable and just society for all. However, with the amount of graduates that Nigerian tertiary institutions turns out every year the unemployed rates among youths still soared tremendously, this is exemplified by some notable scholars who argued that most of the Nigerian graduates are not employable because they do not possess the required employability skills needed by the employers. Furthermore, this lack of job could also be traced to the changes or lack of pre-requisite skills on our teeming graduates to function in the world of work. On this note, Oduma (2010) in Binuomote, Idike and Mong (2020) declared that any tertiary institution that lack the courage to create skills (like competency, innovative and competitive skills) that could be explored as entrepreneurial opportunities or how to be self-employed on its teeming graduates should be allowed to starve.

This scenario poses a huge threat and may build distrust as it is presently perceived that most young graduates of Nigerian universities exhibit poor competency, competitive and innovative skills which are needed to function effectively and efficiently in the world of work. The above problems identified notwithstanding, vocational education students can still escape through the quagmire of unemployment and frustration if vocational education lecturer's evolved employability skills (competency, innovative and competitive skills) on their students. It is on this note that the present study examined empirically vocational education programmes can rebuild the sustainable trust on students upon graduation in a changing world of work.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent do competency skills required by vocational education students enhance sustainable trust building in a changing of world of work in Rivers State?
2. To what extent do innovative skills in vocational education students enhance sustainable trust building in a changing world of work in Rivers State?
3. To what extent do competitive skills in vocational education students enhance sustainable trust building in a changing world of work in Rivers State?

Null Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study:

1. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of entrepreneurs and lecturers on the extent competency skills required by vocational education students enhance sustainable trust building in a changing of world of work in Rivers State
2. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of entrepreneurs and lecturers on the extent innovative skills in vocational education students enhance sustainable trust building in a changing world of work in Rivers State
3. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of entrepreneurs and lecturers on the extent competitive skills in vocational education students enhance sustainable trust building in a changing world of work in Rivers State

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey design with a population of 95 entrepreneurs from SMEs in Port Harcourt metropolis and 72 lecturers from the Department of Vocational and Technology Education in the Rivers State University and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rivers State. All 167 respondents were sampled using the total enumeration technique. This was because the population size was small and manageable. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire tagged “Rebuilding Sustainable Trust in a Changing World of Work Questionnaire” (RSTCWWQ). The instrument was validated by two experts in Vocational Education and one expert in Measurement and Evaluation. The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha method in correlating the results of the pilot test. A reliability coefficient of 0.81 was obtained which showed the instrument was reliable. The researcher administered the instrument to the respondents with the aid of three trained research assistants. Two of them are lecturers while one was an entrepreneur. Data collected for the study were analyzed using mean, standard deviation and z-test statistics. The mean and standard deviation were used in answering the research questions while the hypotheses were tested using z-test at 0.05 level of significance. Mean scores above 2.50 were considered “high extent” while those below were considered “low extent”. Similarly, the null hypotheses were rejected if the calculated z-value is greater than the table value. The null hypotheses were accepted if the calculated z-value is less than the critical table value at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question 1: To what extent do competency skills possessed by vocational education graduates enhance sustainable trust building in a changing of world of work in Rivers State?

Table 1: Competence Skills Possessed by Vocational Education Enhance Sustainable Trust Building

S/N	Items	Lecturers	n =72
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		\bar{X}	Decision	\bar{X}	Decision
1	Development of verbal and reasoning abilities	2.89	High Extent	3.01	High Extent
2	Understanding the dynamics in computer technology	2.75	High Extent	2.92	High Extent
3.	Understanding the changes in global market	3.08	High Extent	2.59	High Extent
4.	Recognizing the dynamics in the production processes	2.60	High Extent	2.81	High Extent
5.	Ability to search and get personal for a particular job	3.20	High Extent	3.11	High Extent
6	Monitoring the dynamics in prices	2.69	High Extent	2.74	High Extent
7	Ability to design reactive and timely policy intervention	2.85	High Extent	2.80	High Extent
8	Checking the demographic changes for management decision making	3.00	High Extent	2.96	High Extent
9	Monitoring the changes in the way firms operate	2.67	High Extent	2.70	High Extent
10.	Encouragement for innovation and creativity	2.98	High Extent	2.9+-9	High Extent
	Grand Mean	2.87	High Extent	2.86	High Extent

The data in Table 1 revealed that the mean scores and standard deviation for entrepreneurs and lecturers as shown in items 1-10 are above the criterion mean of 2.50. This implies that majority of the respondents (entrepreneurs and lecturers) agreed that the various competency skills possessed by graduates as listed in items 1-10 enhances sustainable trust building in a changing of world of work in Rivers State to a high extent.

Research Question 2: To what extent do innovative skills in vocational education graduates enhance sustainable trust building in a changing world of work in Rivers State?

Table 2: Extent to which Innovative Skills Enhance Sustainable Trust

S/N	Items	Entrepreneurs N = 95		Lecturers N = 72	
		\bar{X}	Decision	\bar{X}	Decision

11	Designing diversification strategies	2.55	High Extent	3.01	High extent
12	Applying professional skill to prioritize tasks to manage time	3.00	High Extent	2.53	High Extent
13	Ability to identify strengths and weaknesses and match them with opportunities and threats	2.98	High Extent	3.01	High Extent
14	Design strategic thinking skills	3.11	High Extent	2.66	High Extent
15	Demonstrate strong motivation to competition	2.45	Low Extent	2.13	Low Extent
16	Ability to recognize opportunities and gain clients patronage	2.68	High Extent	2.59	High Extent
17	Improve career planning skills	2.56	High Extent	2.70	High Extent
18	Good interpersonal relationship communication skills in a changing market environment	3.00	High Extent	3.10	High Extent
19	Ability to influence and gain customer support through product modifications	2.71	High Extent	2.66	High Extent
20	Ability respond to changes in technology,	3.00	High Extent	2.78	High Extent
	Grand Mean	2.80	High Extent	2.66	High Extent

The analyzed data in Table 2 showed that the mean scores and standard deviation for entrepreneurs and lecturers as shown in items 11-20 are above the criterion mean of 2.50 except item 15 which had mean scores of 2.45 and 2.14 for entrepreneurs and lecturers respectively and standard deviation of 0.43 and 0.33 respectively. This implies that majority of the entrepreneurs and lecturers agreed that except for item 15, the innovative skills possessed by vocational graduates as listed in items 11-20 enhances sustainable trust building in a changing world of work in Rivers State to a high extent.

Research Question 3: To what extent do competitive skills in vocational education graduates enhance sustainable trust building in a changing world of work in Rivers State?

Table 3: Extent Competitive Skills Enhance Sustainable Trust Building

S/N	Items	Entrepreneurs N = 95		Lecturers N =72	
		\bar{X}	Decision	\bar{X}	Decision

21	Prioritizing task for results	3.10	High Extent	3.15	High Extent
22	Understanding other peoples perspective	2.79	High Extent	2.98	High Extent
23.	Having knowledge of globalization markets dynamics	2.88	High Extent	2.91	High Extent
24.	Appropriate steps to protect official secrecy	3.02	High Extent	2.81	High Extent
25.	Understanding of digital development in product design	2.72	High Extent	2.67	High Extent
26	Monitoring and understanding customer reaction	2.63	High Extent	2.65	High Extent
27	Active involvement in corporate decision making	2.60	High Extent	2.58	High Extent
28	Demonstrate concern and awareness for firms wellbeing	2.89	High Extent	2.77	High Extent
29	Increased access, to and use of internet technologies	3.01	High Extent	3.04	High Extent
30	Grand Mean	2.86	High Extent	2.86	High Extent

The data in Table 3 revealed that the mean scores and standard deviation for entrepreneurs and lecturers as shown in items 21-30 are above the criterion mean of 2.50. This implies that majority of the respondents (entrepreneurs and lecturers) agreed that the various competitive skills possessed by graduates as listed in items 21-30 enhance sustainable trust building in a changing of world of work in Rivers State to a high extent.

Test of Null Hypotheses

H₀: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of entrepreneurs and lecturers on the extent competency skills possessed by vocational education graduates enhance sustainable trust building in a changing of world of work in Rivers State.

Table 4: Analysis of Hypothesis 1 Using Z – Test statistics

Respondents	N	\bar{X}	SD	Df	Z-cal	z-tab	Ls	Decision
Entrepreneurs	95	2.87	0.64	165	0.13	± 1.96	0.05	Accepted
Lecturers	72	2.86	0.63					

The data analyzed in Table 4 above, shows that z – calculated value of 0.13 is less than the z critical table value of ± 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance and 165 degree of freedom. Since the z-calculated value is less than the z critical table value, the null hypothesis was accepted indicating that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of entrepreneurs and lecturers on the extent competency skills possessed by vocational education graduates enhance sustainable trust building in a changing of world of work in Rivers State.

Ho₂: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of entrepreneurs and lecturers on the extent innovative skills in vocational education graduates enhance sustainable trust building in a changing world of work in Rivers State.

Table 5: Analysis of Hypothesis 2 Using Z – Test Statistics

Respondents	N	\bar{X}	SD	Df	Z-cal	z-tab	Ls	Decision
Entrepreneurs	95	2.80	0.67	165	0.14	±1.96	0.05	Accepted
Lecturers	72	2.66	0.58					

The analyzed data in Table 5 above revealed that the Z – calculated value is 0.14 while z – critical table value is ± 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance and 165 degree of freedom. Since the calculated z is lesser than the critical table value, the null hypothesis was accepted indicating that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of entrepreneurs and lecturers on the extent innovative skills in vocational education graduates enhance sustainable trust building in a changing world of work in Rivers State.

Ho₃: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of entrepreneurs and lecturers on the extent competitive skills in vocational education graduates enhance sustainable trust building in a changing world of work in Rivers State.

Table 6: Analysis of Hypothesis 3 Using Z – Test Statistics.

Respondents	N	\bar{X}	SD	Df	Z-cal	z-tab	Ls	Decision
Entrepreneurs	95	2.68	0.59	165	0.01	±1.96	0.05	Accepted
Lecturers	72	2.68	0.56					

Table 6 revealed that z – calculated of 0 .01 is less than z – table value of ± 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance and 165 degree of freedom indicating that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of entrepreneurs and lecturers on the extent competitive skills in vocational education graduates enhance sustainable trust building in a changing world of work in Rivers State.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study in research question one revealed that competency skills possessed by vocational education graduates enhance sustainable trust building in a changing world of work in Rivers State to a high extent. Some of these competency skills as revealed in the analyzed data include understanding the dynamics in computer technology, changes in global market and development of verbal and reasoning abilities. Others are ability to search and get personal for a particular, monitoring the dynamics in prices, ability to design reactive and timely policy among others. Similarly, the findings for hypothesis one revealed that the opinion of entrepreneurs and lecturers do not differ on the extent these identified competency skills possessed by vocational education graduates enhance sustainable trust building in a changing world of work. This finding is supported by the findings of a study by Binuomote, Idike and Mong (2020) who maintained that engagement of vocational education students into courses that

borders on exploration and adoption of entrepreneurial opportunities will bring rapid changes and positive growth in the economy and also project the nation in the ranks among world economy giants.

The findings of the study in research question two also revealed that innovative skills in vocational education graduates enhance sustainable trust building in a changing world of work in Rivers State to a high extent. These innovative skills are ability to design strategic thinking skills, good interpersonal relationship skills, ability to influence and gain customer support through product modification, strong motivation to competition among others. The result of the findings in hypothesis two further revealed that entrepreneurs and lecturers share the same opinion on the extent innovative skills of vocational education graduates enhance sustainable trust building in a changing world of work.

This finding is supported by Organization of Economic Cooperation Development (2016) who stated that innovations can improve learning outcomes and the quality of education provisions and that changes in the educational system or in teaching methods can help customize the educational process, this means that new personalized learning rely heavily on new ways of organizing schools and the use of ICT. Also, the above findings corroborate with Wagbara (2019) who posited that the acquisition of innovative skills will greatly improve the reduction of business education unemployment in 21st century Rivers State.

The result of the findings for research question three revealed that competitive skills possessed by graduates enhance sustainable trust building in a changing of world of work in Rivers State to a high extent. These competitive skills include understanding other people's perspective to issues, monitoring and understanding customer reaction, having knowledge of globalization markets dynamics, appropriate steps to protect official secrecy among others. Both lecturers and entrepreneurs agree to this findings as seen in the result of hypothesis 3 which revealed that there is no significant difference in the mean rating of entrepreneurs and lecturers on the extent competitive skills possessed by graduates enhance sustainable trust building in a changing of world of work in Rivers State.

Conclusion

The study concluded that rebuilding trust in a changing world of work suffices as an instrument that enables people to feel more safety in the very fast changing world as it redresses societal imbalance and its major faulty foundations. Thus, vocational education programmes have the potentials to build and rebuild trust in the minds of the entrepreneurs by instilling on its graduates those competency skills that are required for both self and industry growth.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended among other things that:

1. There should be synergy between tertiary institutions and industries as a role in securing additional resourceful information for higher education. This linkage can promote innovation and technology transfer, and ensuring that graduates have the skills and knowledge required to effectively and efficiently contribute to the workforce.
2. Efforts should be intensified to constantly review business education curriculum to meet the current trends of advancement in technology and equip the students on the challenges they are to face in the world of work.

3. Government at all levels should as a matter of necessity appropriate adequate funds for education more in particular vocational education programme because well funded vocational education will yield a promising means to build self-responsible learning attitudes and knowledge which might better prepare youths for the requirements of the modern work place.
4. There should be regular in-service training for lecturers in vocational education programmes through workshop and seminars as a means of encouragement and educating them on the modern office equipments and their usage.
5. There should be regular auditing of facilities in the school setting for the implementation of vocational programmes in all the tertiary institution by government through its agencies as to get first hand information for maintenance and adequate replacement of obsolete facility.

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