



## Quality Education and Skill Acquisition: A Veritable Tool for Youth Empowerment and Sustainable Development

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### Abstract

*The need to improve on the instrumentality of quality education and skill acquisition in relation to youth empowerment for sustainable development necessitated this study. It emphatically stresses that through quality education, members of the society, especially the youths will acquire functional entrepreneurial and vocational skills requisite for independent living and sustainable socio-economic development. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. Two research questions guided the study. The sample size of the study comprised 50 students from the Department of Business Education, Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria, through purposive sampling technique. The instrument for data collection was a structured-validated questionnaire with a reliability coefficient of 0.76 using Cronbach Alpha. Data collected were analyzed using arithmetic mean. Findings revealed that institutional oriented strategies are necessary for enhancing skill acquisition and youth empowerment and sustainable development for the youth to become productive to the society. It was recommended among others that youths/students should be encourage to be creative and innovative because wealth is said to flow directly from innovation.*

**Keywords:** Quality Education; Skill acquisition; Youth Empowerment; Sustainable Development.

### Introduction

Education is the most powerful instrument, which can be used to change the world. This is why its quality is very important. Quality education requires skilled professionals such as teachers. It is believed that through relevant education, the recipients become capable of living a better life. This is made possible through functional (relevant) education as it equips the beneficiaries with knowledge, basic literacy and numeracy skills. However, education has been considered paramount in the development of the cognitive, manipulative, perceptual, spatial and motor/psychomotor skills in the individuals, especially the youths. Other skills include the following: collaborative, creative and communication skills, etc. If the students are assisted to develop these skills during the course of their studies, they will be able to delve into diverse fields of human endeavours, such as agriculture, fashion and designing, carpentry and laundry services, etc. indeed, the era of looking forward to securing a white-collar job upon leaving school is gone, and in the present era, getting a job is no longer totally guaranteed. The youths in particular and the members of the society in general can become empowered by learning and developing saleable skills. Again, young school leavers, regardless of their different fields of specializations, could also be made to understand that they can excel outside their disciplines.

Furthermore, quality relevant education aims at developing a balanced set of capabilities of children which they require to become economically productive, develop sustainable livelihoods, contribute to peaceful and democratic societies and enhance individual well-being (Amaele, 2007). Akin to the above, Aigbomain (2012) suggest that quality education should be fully accessible to all students, and should embrace diversity and engage the cultural assets of all children and their families. It should be community-centered and should provide services and activities that benefit students and

their families. This type of education should be supported by full, robust and equitable funding from the appropriate government sources.

Similarly, skill acquisition services is a solid rock upon which the individual members of the society, especially the able-bodied men and women (youths) could become empowered. For instance, the youths are exposed and trained on different entrepreneurial and vocational skills, such as carpentry, poultry management, catering, computer maintenance and operation as well as small scale businesses, etc. Gobet and Chassy (2008) suggest that out trainings are designed to provide a platform to train and educate individuals on skills that can help create wealth, taking into consideration the broad framework of the (UNDP's Millennium Development Goals (MDG's) e.g. eradication of poverty. Besides, it helps the participants to be trained as to foster better-informed skill acquisition and produce more creative and well-thought-out services that result in better offerings to the consumers. Appreciating the benefits of skill acquisition especially to the youths, the researchers emphasized that with skills acquisition combined with the education attained by the recipients, effective function is offered to the institution he works or is going to work in.

Youths are the cornerstone of any meaningful and sustainable development. Agagu (2005) aptly captures the youths as the young people between the ages of 13 and 35 years. The youths are vibrant, energetic, inquisitive, adventurous, gregarious, risk takers and identity seekers. They often clash with the adults, having arrived at the apex of intelligence. Acknowledging the suave attribute of the youths, youth empowerment may be explained as the process of directing and supporting the young persons to discover and claim personal power through skill acquisition for sustainable development. To buttress this further, Creswell (2003) asserts that youth empowerment is a process where children and young people are encouraged to take charge of their lives. He adds that they do this by addressing their situation and then take action in order to improve their access to resources and transform their consciousness through their beliefs, values and attitudes.

Sustainable Development is a multi-faceted concept embracing educational, human, political and socio-economic development, etc. approaching it from this perspective, Ofoeze (2015) maintains that economic development is concerned with efforts directed towards the improvement of socio-economic and materials well-being of man in the society in terms of his standard of living. Besides, the researchers perceive sustainable development to be a process for meeting human development goals while strengthening the ability of natural system to continue to provide the natural resources and ecosystem services upon which the economy and society depend.

It should be noted that motor-skill acquisition follows a pattern in which learning accompanied by practice. All these skills are transmitted to the recipients of education. Hence, through them, the recipients become empowered for active participation in the society. Duke (2007) observes that empowerment is focused on creating greater community change relying on the development of individual capacity. In the same vein, youth empowerment occurs in homes, at schools, through youth organizations, government policy making and community organizing campaigns. Youth empowerment through quality education and skill acquisition can be realized through teaching, research, job creation, information dissemination and services to the community (Okereke & Emenalo, 2008). The researchers contend that youth empowerment comprises of entrepreneurship training, skill acquisition, access to credit facilities and qualitative education with unlimited life-enhancing opportunities.



## Statement of the Problem

It is no exaggeration to assert that certain teething factors militate against the realization of the objectives of youth empowerment and sustainable development. They include lack of conducive teaching and learning environment, shortage of qualified teachers and resource persons, inadequate funding, paucity of skill acquisition centers, inadequate infrastructure facilities, poor remuneration of staff, quest for materialism, get-rich-quick syndrome and amazing interest in search of white-collar jobs on the part of the youths among other obvious factors. In line with this, Akinkuotu and Olufowobi (2010) state that many countries, particularly the developing countries are facing acute shortage of qualified teachers, while serving teachers are paid poorly (and sometime irregularly) because of the scant qualification needed to get entrance into the system, it suffers from low social and professional status. Regrettably, most youths especially the graduates have become perpetual job seekers; worst still is that some of them are unemployable sequel to the fact that they have nothing to offer with regard to knowledge and saleable skills. Rucci (2009) observes that one of the problems of education system of Africa is that it lacks imparting skills on the students. The researchers opine that youthful age is a period when youths exhibit their innate qualities and show-case their God-given talent, but it is regrettable that most times, youths live, study and work under precarious conditions, sometimes they are dehumanized and underrated and their freedom abused leading to insecurity, marginalization and neglect.

## Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to ascertain if quality education and skill acquisition as veritable tool for youth empowerment and sustainable development. Specifically, the study sought to:

- i. determine the government-oriented strategies for enhancing skill acquisition for youth empowerment and sustainable development.
- ii. ascertain institutional oriented strategies for enhancing skill acquisition for youth empowerment and sustainable development.

## Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the government-oriented strategies for enhancing skill acquisition for youth empowerment and sustainable development?
2. What are the institutional-oriented strategies for enhancing skill acquisition for youth empowerment and sustainable development?

## Method

The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The sample of the study comprised 50 students from Business Education Department, Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria, through purposive sampling. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled Quality Education and Skill Acquisition Questionnaire (QESAQ) developed by the researchers. The questionnaire was subjected to expert validation. The reliability of QESAQ yielded 0.76 based on Cronbach Alpha Coefficient. Data collected were analyzed using arithmetic mean.

## Results

**Table 1**  
**Mean responses on the government-oriented strategies for enhancing skill acquisition for youth empowerment and sustainable development**

S/N	Items	Mean	Remarks
1.	Plan occasional excursions for students	2.51	Agreed
2.	Provision of more entrepreneurial centres and facilities	3.50	Agreed
3.	Proper placement of students in different companies for their industrial training programmes	3.92	Agreed
4.	Draw up and follow through a standard entrepreneurial curriculum content for the students	3.63	Agreed
5.	Recruiting qualified teachers and educator of entrepreneurial studies	3.71	Agreed

The result in Table 1 showed that the respondents agreed with all the items as the government-oriented strategies for enhancing skill acquisition for youth empowerment and sustainable development. This is because the mean responses fall within the range of 2.51-3.92, which is above the criterion mean of 2.50.

**Table 2**  
**Mean responses on the institutional-oriented strategies for enhancing skill acquisition for youth empowerment and sustainable development**

S/N	Items	Mean	Remarks
6.	Launching more youth entrepreneurial programs like YouWin and Sure-P	3.40	Agreed
7.	Financing and nurturing students with good entrepreneurial spirits and skills	3.71	Agreed
8.	Building of more governmental facilities and entrepreneurial development centres for students	3.32	Agreed
9.	Reinforcing students that have good entrepreneurial idea by providing scholarship to them	3.81	Agreed
10.	Partnering and supporting profit and non-profit vocational centres	3.20	Agreed

The result in Table 2 showed that the respondents agreed with all the items as the institutional-oriented strategies for enhancing skill acquisition for youth empowerment and sustainable development. This is because the mean responses fall within the range of 3.20-3.81, which is above the criterion mean of 2.50.

## Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study revealed the government-oriented strategies for enhancing skill acquisition and youth empowerment and sustainable development. That the relevance of quality education in this regard is obvious for instance it serves as a prerequisite to the acquisition of skills and armed with these skills, the youth would become empowered both for independent living and for sustainable socio-economic development. The finding is supported by Anderson's (2000) submission that quality education leads to empowerment as it is a process of strengthening individuals, organizations and communities to get more control over their own situations and environments. Quality education is a crucial factor in combating poverty and inequality in the society. Also emanating from the findings revealed institutional-oriented strategies for enhancing skill acquisition



and youth empowerment and sustainable development. For the youths to become productive to the society, the need to acquire requisite functional skills. The finding is supported by Duke (2007) who observed that empowerment is focused on creating greater community change, relying on the development of individual capacity. Also, youth empowerment occurs at homes, in the schools, through youth organization, government policy making and community organizing campaign. Youth empowerment through quality education and skills acquisition can be realized through teaching, research, job creation, information dissemination and services to the community.

## Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that governmental-oriented and institutional-oriented strategies were considered effective and appropriate strategies needed for enhancing skill acquisition and youth empowerment.

## Recommendations

Based on the finding of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Curriculum developed for, and at every level of education should be geared towards self-employment through entrepreneurship.
2. Entrepreneurial culture should be inculcated into students by encouraging SIWES programme to a high extent and thoroughly monitor the programme during the training so as to ensure that all students participated in the training.
3. Youth/Students should be encouraged to be creative and innovative because wealth is said to flow directly from innovation.
4. Encourage the establishment of functional skill acquisition centres and making same assessable to all and sundry.

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