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Trade Subjects as Compulsory Subjects at the Senior Secondary Schools in Nigeria: A Subject for Re-Consideration

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Abstract:

Trade subjects otherwise known as entrepreneurial subjects were introduced into the new Senior Secondary School curriculum in Nigeria which was launched by the Federal Ministry of Education on March 14, 2011. These includes thirty four (34) subjects by National Examinations Council and thirty-nine (34) subjects by West African Examinations Council meant to cater for the nation's drive towards technological advancement and self-reliance making the total subjects to seventy-seven (77) respective examinations by West African Examination Council and National Examinations Council. This paper looks at the implications of running such courses when there are technical colleges in the country, the capacity of secondary schools to handle such courses taking cognizance of the personnel and facilities required.

Keywords : Education, Entrepreneurial, Vocational, Technical, Trade

1. Introduction

Secondary education is that form of education received after primary school education. It is the education received after primary education and before the tertiary stage. According to Federal Republic of Nigeria, (2004). The broad goals of secondary education shall be to prepare the individual for useful living within the society and higher education. The student at such period is expected to be in school for six years categorized into Junior Secondary and senior secondary. The first three years at the junior secondary level and the second part at the senior secondary level. At the end of the first three years, a student is awarded the Basic Education Certificate after passing the necessary examination(s). At the senior secondary level, students offered different subjects as classified under different areas such as science studies, technology studies, humanities, business studies and compulsory cross-cutting subjects (FRN, 2009).

Going by FRN, 2004, students who complete junior secondary school shall be streamed into the senior secondary school; the technical college; an out-of-school vocational training centre; or an apprenticeship scheme based on the result of tests to determine ability, aptitude and vocational interest which will make students offer six core subjects, a maximum of two elective subjects from vocational electives and two from non-vocational electives should register the maximum of nine subjects at the Senior Secondary Examination.

After the first three years of secondary education which is now the completion of Basic Education. A child is free to move to senior secondary school or technical college. Technical colleges are meant to provide trained manpower in the applied sciences, technology and business particularly at craft, advanced craft and technical levels; provide the technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, commercial and economic development; give training and impart the necessary skills to individual who shall be self-reliant economically.

At present, the country runs 9-3-4 system of education (Ementa, 2013), the nine-year basic educational programme captures students within the ages of 0-15 years is free, universal and compulsory for all children (FRN, 2009). Nine-year basic education comprises of 6 years in primary education and 3 years of junior secondary education at the end of which students can proceed to senior secondary school or technical college which is not free, universal and compulsory as basic education. The last 4 years is meant for tertiary which is also optional

2. Concept of Entrepreneurship Education

Entrepreneurship is the ability to set up a business enterprise as different from being employed. It involves the acquisition of skills, ideas and managerial abilities necessary for personal self-reliance (Nwaokolo, 1997). Entrepreneurship, according to Omolayo (2006) is the act of starting a company, arranging business deals and taking risks in order to make a profit through the education skills

acquired. Another view of entrepreneurship education is the term given to someone who has innovative ideas and transforms them to profitable activities. To him, entrepreneurship can be described as “the process of bringing together creative and innovative ideas and coupling these with management and organizational skills in order to combine people, money and resources to meet an identified need and create wealth (Arogundade, 2011).

Anyakoha (1993) in Ementa (2013) defines entrepreneurship education as the education that aims at helping the students acquire skills which can help them to be self-reliant adding that for an individual to be self-reliant, he/she must have acquired the right habits, attitudes, and skills with which to explore his environment. Entrepreneurship education is that form of education which empowers the recipient with all it takes for him to explore his environment and make a living out of it without dependence on anyone. The purpose of entrepreneurship education at the secondary level in Nigeria is to limit the number of senior secondary school graduates who have nothing to do with their hands and thereby constituting nuisance in the community.

3. Objectives of Entrepreneurship Education at the Senior Secondary School

The present Nigerian education curriculum at the senior secondary is the re-aligned curriculum meant to meet the targets of the reform in the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategies (NEEDS) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which can be summarized as: value-reorientation, poverty eradication, job creation, wealth generation and using education to empower people(Obioma, 2007). Objectives of entrepreneurship education at the senior secondary school according to Paul (2005) in Ementa (2013) are as follows::

- i. To offer functional education for the youths that will enable them to be self-employed and self-reliant.
- ii. Provide the youth with adequate training that will enable them to be creative and innovative in identifying novel business opportunities.
- iii. To stimulate individual and economic growth of rural and less developed areas i.e. reduce rural-urban drift.
- iv. Provide small and medium business enterprises with the opportunity of recruiting graduates who will be trained and tutored in skills relevant to the management of small business centres.
- v. Inculcate the spirit of perseverance in the youth which will enable them persist in any business venture they embark on.
- vi. Offer graduate adequate training in the acquisition of skills that will enable them meet the manpower needs of the society.
- vii. Create employment opportunities for the youth.
- viii. Provide youths with training and support that will enable them to establish a career in small and medium sized business.

4. Reconsidering Entrepreneurship /Trade Subjects in Senior Secondary School in Nigeria

According to NERDC (2008), the senior secondary education curriculum consists of 34 trade entrepreneurship subjects which are:

1. Auto Body repair and spray painting
2. Auto Electrical work
3. Auto Mechanical work
4. Auto Parts merchandising.
5. Air Conditioning Refrigerator
6. Welding and Fabrication Engineering Practice
7. Electrical installation and Maintenance Work
8. Radio, T.V and Electrical Work
9. Block laying, Brick Laying and Concrete Work
10. Painting and decoration
11. Plumbing and pipe fitting
12. Machine Woodworking
13. Carpentry and Joinery
14. Furniture Making
15. Upholstery
16. Catering and Craft Practice
17. Garment Making
18. Textile trade
19. Dyeing and bleaching
20. Printing Craft practice
21. Cosmetology
22. Leather Goods Manufacturing and Repair
23. Keyboarding
24. Shorthand
25. Data processing
26. Store keeping
27. Book keeping
28. GSM maintenance etc
29. Photography

30. Tourism
31. Mining
32. Animal Husbandry
33. Fisheries
34. Marketing and Salesmanship

Each school is free to adopt one or some of the entrepreneurship subjects above for the students and a student must choose one entrepreneurship subject in Senior Secondary 1 (SSI) and offer such till Senior Secondary 3 (SS3). The philosophy behind it is that every senior secondary graduate should have been well prepared for higher education as well as acquired relevant functional trade/entrepreneurship skills needed for poverty eradication, job creation and wealth generation.

This however calls for re-considerations taking cognizance of enabling environment and the attending factors.

4.1. Duplication of Technical/Vocational Subjects

FRN, (2004) categorized subjects offered at the senior secondary school into three which are core subjects, vocational electives and non-vocational electives. Under the vocational electives are; Agriculture, Applied Electricity, Auto-mechanics Building Construction, Electronics, Clothing and textiles Food and Nutrition, home management, metal Work, Woodwork, Fine Art and Music, some of which were repeated in the present curriculum as trade subjects

4.2. Lack of Professionals to Teach the Trade Subjects

There were no enough teachers to handle technical and vocational subjects within the old curriculum which was a major reason for the poor implementation of the old curriculum. This should have been resolved before coming up with additional courses which are more demanding. Ementa (2013) submitted that the aims of these trade subjects are bound to fail due to shortage of proficient teachers.

4.3. Lack of Proper Subject Combination

The subject combination lacks correlation and confusing to the implementers. Trade subjects going by its objectives are meant to complement the students chosen main subjects hence the trade subject should not inhibit or clash with the main subject. It is surprising to know that the West African Examination Council (WAEC) also was confused. This was reflected in the May/June 2015 Senior Secondary School Examination time table, Electrical Installation and Maintenance Works 2 & 1 (Friday, 15th May, 2015, 2:00pm-5:00pm) was slated for same day and same time with Technical Drawing 3 (Friday, 15th May, 2015, 2:00pm-4:45pm). The implication is that a student offering Technical Drawing will be at fix after paper 2 & 1 which ends at 12:15pm. The student may end up forfeiting a paper or if the Supervisor permits, the students will probably be writing exams that day for over six hours (from 9:30am). This may initiate examination malpractice which is counterproductive.

4.4. Lack of Monitoring/Poor Monitoring

The examinations bodies (NECO & WAEC) were meant to go round schools to check the availability of equipment and materials required for running a trade subjects before they can be allowed to register students for such. If this was done at all, it must have been poorly done because most schools do not have the equipment and materials required especially public schools.

4.5. Lack of Proper Consultation/Relevance

Computer studies was made compulsory in the new curriculum and was registered as such last year but was deleted from compulsory subject this year, this shows that something was missing somewhere. If proper consultation was made, it would have been discovered that not every school (public schools especially) in Nigeria can afford computers, printers, scanners, flash drives coupled with alternative power source in case of electricity power outage. Also, the trade subjects are not relevant for admission into higher institutions hence it does not carry weight as expected, for instance electrical installation and auto mechanical works could have been an edge for prospective engineering students if proper consultation was done with Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB).

4.6. Duplication of Institution/Programme

Trade subjects in senior secondary school in Nigeria are duplication of subjects/courses in technical college. It is evident in National Policy on Education-4th Edition (2004) that the main features of the curricular for technical colleges shall be structured in foundation and trade modules whose goals shall be to;

- i. Provide trained manpower in the applied sciences, technology and business particularly at craft, advanced craft and technical levels;
- ii. Provide the technical and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, commercial, and economic development;
- iii. Give training and impart the necessary skills to individual who shall be self-reliant economically. FRN, (2004).

The range of courses in technical colleges according to FRN, (2004) shall be as wide as possible and include but not limited to the 37 (thirty seven) listed courses hence the trade subjects at secondary school are duplication of courses and examinations. This might cause reduction in enrolment in technical colleges, additional expenses to examination bodies and increased running cost to the school.

4.7. Possibility of Poor Implementation

The possibility of poor implementation of the programme is very high, to start with, the National Business and Technical Examinations Board (NABTEB) have the mandate to handle technical examinations and so have enough expertise, materials and experience to do that than any other examination body in Nigeria. This may be the reason why Electrical Installation and Maintenance Work practical examination in WAEC May/June 2015 was an alternative to practical instead of real practical which is a serious deviation from the goal of the subject.

4.8. Lack of Text Books and Instructional Materials

Implementation of entrepreneurial subjects at the senior secondary level in Nigeria will not be complete without necessary text books and instructional materials. Up till date, text books for the trade subjects are very infrequent and expensive. Negedu in Ementa (2013) submitted that entrepreneurship education can be effective only when the text books and materials are readily available for use by teachers because it's a herculean task for teachers to work without textbooks. The students will equally not get the best out of the lessons.

4.9. Issues with School Calendar and Industrial Training

According to FRN, (2009), Industrial Training Fund (ITF) shall organize staff and student's industrial attachment as appropriate but this is yet to be fulfilled after turning out students for the past two academic sessions. Also, this seems impossible because such was not captured in the school academic calendar for secondary school students in Nigeria.

4.10. Issues with Number of Subjects Students are offering

Introduction of Civic Education and one entrepreneurship subject at the senior school level without necessary adjustment by examination bodies is a disadvantage to the students. Students now have to drop some vital subjects which may be useful to them for admission, course requirement and other reasons in future yet, the examination bodies WAEC and NECO still maintained that students should register maximum of 9 subjects as previously done.

4.11. Issues with Effective Participation in Practical Works

According to FRN, (2004), teacher- student's ratio for effective participation of students in practical work in technical college shall be kept at 1:20 whereas the teacher-pupil ratio at post basic education (senior secondary school) level shall be 1:40 (FRN, 2009). This is quite unhealthy for practical activities. Also, senior secondary schools in Nigeria are more populated than relative technical colleges thereby making the goal of introducing trade subjects in senior secondary schools quite unrealistic.

5. Conclusion

Introduction of trade/entrepreneurial subjects in senior secondary education curriculum in Nigeria is a welcome development but the subjects are too many, the programme was not given enough consultation, preparation and consideration before the implementation. If trade subjects will not fail in the senior secondary school as it failed during the 6-3-3-4 system of education; technical and vocational teachers must rise to the task. Also, secondary education is quite different from technical education and in no way must we allow interchange, replacement or anything that will affect the goals of establishing technical college in the interest of our nation.

6. Recommendations

From the foregoing assertions, the following recommendations were made;

- i. Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council should re-visit the entrepreneurship/trade subjects curriculum at the senior school in conjunction with teachers of such subjects in public and private secondary schools, examination bodies (WAEC, NECO, NABTEB and JAMB), and other stake holders to fine tune proper implementation, effectiveness and relevance for further studies and continuity.
- ii. Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council in conjunction with stake holders should see to availability of text books and materials, possibilities of industrial training for teachers and students taking cognizance of the academic calendar and enabling environment.
- iii. Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council in conjunction with the National Business and Technical Examinations Board (NABTEB) should work on the possible trade subjects at senior secondary schools thereby reducing the number of subjects for effectiveness and to avoid duplication of courses in technical colleges.
- iv. Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council in conjunction with examination bodies should see how to either remove the trade subjects from examinable subjects or only allow the school or NABTEB to award certificate of competency and showing the level of competence on each trade.
- v. Teachers, publishers and professionals in Nigeria should be encouraged to publish text books in line with the new curriculum and make such available to the public. Government should also subsidize the printing cost so that the rate of purchase will be high.
- vi. Principals, teachers, proprietors, ministry of education and other stakeholders should be practically involved for implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the programme.

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