

**INDIGO DYE SKILL ACQUISITION AND YOUTH
EMPOWERMENT AMONG VOCATIONAL STUDENTS
OF COLLEGES OF EDUCATION IN SOUTH - WEST NIGERIA
AS A SPRINGBOARD FOR SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT.**

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ABSTRACT

The youths in Nigerian society today, are experiencing serious unemployment problem and this has made them to be involved in all sorts of vices. These youths attend different tertiary institutions with the hope that qualifications obtained, would be like magic winds that would enable them secure employments. Generally, the reason for this mass unemployment is the global recession, which has made it almost impossible to access office jobs. Other reasons could be poverty caused by search for real wage that is commensurate with their expected life style, underground economy which encourages unofficial jobs such as drug peddling, robbery and kidnapping. However, indigo dye skill acquisition performs an important function in the effectiveness of acquiring the psychomotor skills and growth empowerment guidance for students in Colleges of Education in South-West Nigeria will be the spring board for sustainable economic development. Today in Nigeria, skill acquisition and youth empowerment are becoming the most viable and effective panacea for economic problems faced by the country. The implication being that every youth empowered will be self-reliant and in some cases become employer of labour. Education enhances lives, thus ends generational poverty and provides a sustainable groundwork for our nation's progress.

KEYWORDS: *Skill acquisition, youth empowerment, economic development*

INTRODUCTION

Myriad of graduates are turned out of our various tertiary institutions in Nigeria yearly, having spent the stipulated time and met the stated conditions for the award of certificates on their various campuses, yet these graduates are sent into the labour market to search for job in other to make ends meet. Many are looking for white collar jobs which are not available, thereby leaving them with their different certificates to roam about the streets. Some because of this nasty experience joined bad gangs of armed robbers, internet fraudsters, money ritualists, kidnappers among others.

Poverty and unemployment are some of the problems bedevilling the Nigerian society. The most affected groups are youth and graduates of our tertiary institutions who believe that something worthwhile await them after graduating from their different institutions. The reason for this can be traced to global economic meltdown which shut doors at white collar jobs; insecurity is another reason for poverty and unemployment. The effectiveness of the skills acquisition and growth empowerment training for Vocational Students in Colleges of education in South – West Nigeria will be a springboard for sustainable economic development.

The major reason for unemployment and the increase in social vices from a lack of marketable skills on the part most school graduates (Akpan&Udoh 2014). In Nigeria today, there is an increasing rate of poverty, unemployment and other social problems that had bedevilled the Nigeria public. The incidence of poverty and unemployment is high as the number of students graduating from various levels of the education system is increasing. This may have resulted from the lack of appropriate skill acquisition by graduates in the education system. The National Bureau of Statistics (2012) and Central Bank of Nigeria. Survey (2007) indicates that the unemployment trends in Nigeria, from 2010 – 2014 are as follows: in 2010; 21.1 per cents 2011; 23.9 per cents 2013; 28.5 per cents and 2014; 30 per cents.

Ochiagba (1995) defined skill acquisition as the process of demonstrating the habit of achieve thinking or behaviour in a specific activity. He further stated that skill acquisition is seen as the ability to do or perform an activity that is related to some meaningful exercise, work or job. He maintained that for skill to be acquired, appropriate knowledge attitudes, habits of thought and qualities of character are learnt to enable the acquire development intellectual, emotional and moral character which prepares him/her for a brighter future.

Douli (2002) is of the view that skill acquisition is the manifestation of idea and knowledge through training which is geared towards instilling in individuals, the spirit of entrepreneurship needed for meaningful development. He stressed that if individuals are given the opportunity to acquire relevant skills needed for self-sustenance in the economy, it will promote their charisma in any work environment. He further maintains that skill acquisition increases competition and cooperation among people.

Accordingly, Magbagbeola (2004) posited that skills acquisition requires the accumulation of different skills that enhances the performance through the integration of both theoretical and practical forms of knowledge. Acquisition of skills and youth empowerment is becoming the most viable and effective solution for economic problems faced by the country; whereby every youth empowered will be self-reliant and in some cases become employer of labour. Education enhances lives. It ends generational poverty and provides a sustainable foundation for nation's development.

Wiki encyclopaedia (2006) defines empowerment as not giving people power but letting out the power in them. If youth acquired useful skills and they are empowered to do more, the possibility for economic growth becomes apparent. Youth empowerment according to Jimba (2006) involves the different ways the youths can be facilitated to cause positive change in their life style. He maintained that youth empowerment means a way of inculcating into the youth and spirit of transformation of ideas seen as means of exposing the youths into skills or something that makes them productive.

In line with the above view, Ogbe (1996) stated that wealth creation acquired through youth empowerment is expected to reverse the structural weakness in the economy by providing strategic focus and direction and inculcating in the youths the right ethics, discipline, values, hard work, honesty, respect and humility among others. The problem of this study is the alarming and unprecedented increase in the number of unemployment graduates from institutions in Nigeria and this demand for diversifying the economy and encouraging practical acquisition of skills through inculcating spirit of entrepreneurship in students of all higher Institutions in Nigeria. This empowerment is envisaged in the acquisition of knowledge in vocational education among undergraduates that can encourage self - reliant activities. This has not allowed general overhaul and systematic investigations into the nature and progress expected in vocational and technical education in tertiary institutions. This study is expected to fill this gap and provide a data base for future researchers in the field of study.

According to Akegbejo (2011) Vocational Education is defined as an aspect of education that leads to acquisition of practical and applied skill as well basic scientific knowledge, Alademirin (2004) posits that Vocation education is an aspect of education that aim at the development of human abilities in term of knowledge, skill and understanding so that human may serve happily and effectively in carrying on activities in the vocational pursuit of his choice or career.

Duru (1996) notes that Vocational education is an aspect of education that leads to high degree in solving most of nation's social ills as means of poverty eradication and contribute immensely to the technological development of a nation. Vocational education is a step into technological development and self-reliance of a nation, as was in academic programs that makes it possible for graduates of all

levels of education to be employed. He noted that vocational education is a training designed to prepare the learner to earn a living or increase his earning. They also note it as an education that involve information and understanding the law of science and technology as applied to modern design, production, distribution and services.

Ogunduyile (2004) observe that art has gone through many stages and a lot of techniques have been introduced to meet the demands of the individuals. In Nigeria, the production of textile has been noted as one of the oldest industries that catered for the fundamental need of the individuals in the aspect of clothing, protection and decoration. Although, the traditional craftsmen were not tutored in the rudimentary of European design principles, but with their creativity, dexterity, practice, they were able to take conscious artistic decisions.

Textile in Nigerian Community is seen as a dynamic social activities and the end products are often unique, beautiful and of high quality. Though the textile craftsmen understand the process of fabrics production that is: planting, harvesting, collection of fabrics, ginning, carding, spinning, and weaving; he also know the technology of preparing dyes and bonding them together with the minerals in such as a way that they do not damage.

Akinrujoku (2002) notes that: the traditional woven textile has made it possible for high chiefs in the community to be recognized in their prestigious local woven fabrics. Various traditional festivals, traditional society and their ritual enhance. Ogunduyile (2001) points out the traditional textiles wear has been an age long practice in Nigeria and these existed in every part of the country as far back as the 10th century, which have the use of looms (vertical and horizontal). For any wear to achieve its aims and objectives there must be a good serviceable loom with adequate space and sufficient yarns, where the weaver uses technical - know - how to consider the length and width of the weaver, number of colours to be the weaving fabric, the threading order and the lifting plan.

Horizontal looms are narrow band loom with heddles and treadles known as Sudanese loom with a wide distribution in West Africa. There are variations in horizontal looms which includes, heddles beaters, pulley and foot loops. Horizontal looms re used by men, while vertical looms are used by women. Verticals looms are fixed with frame, a heddle stick and no treadle, but the origin of the technology is not clear, some authorities suggested that it came from Congo Basin, Syria and Palestine areas. The loom is of less sophistication in technology than the horizontal loom, though there are variations in structural details. The production of such loom varies according to geographical locations but the method has the same basic apparatus. The weaver makes use of horizontal narrow loom for Aso - Oke with its end product used for Agbada, Gbarye, Dansiki, Kembe, Akwete, Onigoriga, etc.

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Accordingly, Magbagbeola (2004) posited that skills acquisition requires the accumulation of different skills that enhances the performance through the integration of both theoretical and practical forms of knowledge. Douli (2002) is of the view that skill acquisition is the manifestation of idea and knowledge through training which is geared towards instilling in individuals, the spirit of entrepreneurship needed for meaningful development. He stressed that if individuals are given the opportunity to acquire relevant skills needed for self-sustenance in the economy, it will promote their charisma in any work environment. He further maintains that skill acquisition increases competition and cooperation among people.

Youth Empowerment

There are Three-Skills Approach to Vocational Education Development with Analysis of Interventionist Agencies: This approach is based not on what good vocational are (their innate traits and characteristics) but rather on what they do (the kind of skills), which they exhibit in their strategic management approach towards vocational development. A skill implies an ability which can be developed, not necessarily inborn, and which is manifested in performance, not merely in potential. "so the principal criterion of skilfulness must be effective action under varying condition" (Weihrich and Koontz (2005) the approach suggest that effective vocational development in Nigeria rest on three basic development skill which obviate the need for identifying specific traits and which may provide a useful way of looking at and understanding the vocational process. There has been a long-held that successive entrepreneur's pose innate trait that drives their behaviour (Amaeshi, 2007, ;Kassicieh, Padosevich and Banbury 1997). However, no one has ever been able to identify even a single innate characteristic that found across the entire population of successful vocational. A compelling literature has emerged that suggests that vocational are made rather than born (Fiet 2002).

Instead of focusing on descriptive characteristic of vocational, which can be misleading or unhelpful when it comes to vocational development, attention should be paid to their level of skills and how they can advance that level. Skill can be cultivated or developed (Lichtenstei and Lyons 1996, Fiet 2002). In this section, an attempt has been made to define and demonstrate what these three skills are, namely: Conceptual skill, Human skill, Technical skill, which an analysis of

government interventionist agencies established to encourage entrepreneurial development in Nigeria. It is assumed avocational is one who directs achieving certain objectives through these government efforts. Within this definition, successful vocational development appears to rest on these three basic skills. It would be unrealistic to assert that these skills are not interrelated: yet there may be real merit in examining each one separately, and assess the extent of government interventionist agencies had on entrepreneurial development in Nigeria.

The purpose of skill acquisition programme as means of youth empowerment according to Ogundolowo (1998) is to prepare and equip the youths with appropriate skills that can be beneficial to them in future. He maintained that the ideal skill acquired is capable of ensuring the value re - orientation among the youth and transforming them into creator of wealth and employment instead of job seekers. Basically, the creation of wealth and employment will lead to poverty reduction and increase of welfare status of an individual in the country. In line with the above view Ogbe (1996) stated that wealth creation acquired through youth empowerment is expected to reverse the structural weakness and imbalance in the economy by providing strategy focus and direction and inculcating in the youth the right ethics, discipline, values, hard work, honesty, respect and humility among others. To meet up with these challenges facing the youths, different skill acquisition programme were initiated and put in place by federal and state government throughout the country is instill in them the habit of acting through repetition and practice.

Jimba (2006) involves the different ways the youths can be facilitated to cause positive change in their life style. He maintained that youth empowerment means a way of inculcating into the youth and spirit of transformation of ideas seen as means of exposing the youths into skills or something that makes them productive. It encompasses different ways youth can be exposed into different trades that may make them to engage in sustainable paid and self - employment.

Types of an Empowerment

The various youth empowerment programme can be classified into four main types' namely economic empowerment, productive empowerment, marketing empowerment and skill acquisition empowerment.

*** Economic empowerment**

Economic empowerment, according to Ogbe (1996) is the way of motivating individuals in the society to be productive and self-dependent by inculcating into the individual's entrepreneurship skills as personal business initiatives and basic skills in business development. In fact, the best foundation for any business success is to have several possibilities for creating profits. However, point creation is determined by the choice of the business, self-concept interest

resources, and aspirations which in turn would enable the person to achieve self-development, self-actualization and self-fulfilment.

* **Production empowerment**

Production empowerment, according to Idachab (2006) is a basic focus of entrepreneurship initiatives. It is determined by what the person trained wants to produce, how to produce and to whom those goods are produced. Personal trait and initiative will instinct in the person on what to produce which depends on the resource available. How to produce the goods depends on the factors of production available to him. Finally to whom such goods are to be produced depends on the market. Knowledge of the factors of production which determined how the goods are to be produced and to whom they are to be produced can be imbibed mostly through training and marketing strategies.

* **Marketing empowerment**

Marketing of goods and services produced in any economic according to Magbagbeola (2004) is one of the crucial attributes of a businessman. This is because it creates in a businessman or woman the ability to convince a customer that what has been produced is the best. Acquisition of adequate marketing skill through training enables the entrepreneurs to market their product easily. Usually, different marketing strategies are learnt and are applied to convince the customers of the need to purchase the products. The marketing strategies include effective communication, self-confidence and self-esteem.

* **Skill development empowerment**

Skills are acquired as an ability for individual or group of individuals to acquire more skills for the resolution of a particular status. Youth empowerment as an act of skill development therefore signifies a different creative measure of developing basic ideas through training in skills that are relevant to the social and economic survival of the nation (Ochiagha 1995). The above empowerment strategies are expected to imbibe in the youths the spirit of craftsmanship and entrepreneurship which makes them job creators instead of job seekers. However, most youths in the country fall short of this empowerment either because they fail to participate in the youth empowerment schemes.

History of Indigo Dyeing

Indigo dyeing is one of the crafts practiced by the Yorubas of South Western Nigeria in which the Yoruba clothing culture has evolved over the years. Olorunlegan (2011) notes that: there is about 1, 100 plants that can be used for dyeing and the best which has it is (indigo tinctoria) which has distinctive blue colour. Oguntona (1986) states that the art of indigo dyeing is a global phenomenon,

many tribes in West African identified with this art but the technique of production and the use of materials differ from one traditional form of fabric decoration to another. He explains that before the colonial era. The Yoruba had dye pits located at the back of their houses where the art of dyeing was practised. Unfortunately the traditional dye pits of the ancient time have gradually disappeared in most dyeing centres in Yoruba land. Out of these dyeing centres Abeokuta and Oshogbo remain very active in the practice.

Ogunduyile (2004) alludes to the fact that the cave man was said to have used sharpened stone to strip the hide of a dead animal, trimmed it and sew it together with a dreadful bone needle to form his early garment and the early developed from there to a stage when he realized that shrubs and ropes could be interlaced together to form a flat covering that can be suitable for fairness and hunting. The Yoruba weavers who were in the forefront of fabrics production and embellishments realized that the locally woven fabrics would appear more beautiful and serve their religions. Cotton, which is the major raw material is in abundance in Nigeria, and the process involved considerable skill in the technology and chemistry of colour and these colours were gotten not only from indigofera but also extracted from tree barks, woods, fruits, leaves, etc. the art of dyeing did not only cater for the fundamental clothing needs of the people, but also provide employment for the local populace.

Methods of Traditional Dyeing

One of the oldest art forms in Nigeria is perhaps the art of dyeing fabrics and fibres mostly found among the Yorubas and Hausas. The leaves of a plant called (lonchocarpusi) and having a variety of local names from the main ingredient and such local names for the plant are Elu in Yoruba, Babarini in Hausa, Uri in Ibo and Okukun in Efik. The method of production involves three stages, the mordant ash, the mordant water and the dye ball. (Ogunduyile, 2004).

The mordant ash: The Yorubas make a round mud kiln about 120.20cm wide and 20.20cm high thick wall in regularly shape form with an extremely high temperature; dry logs are used for the firing from the bottom of the kiln. Green fresh leaves and pieces of woods are arranged in two layers sieve and sprinkled with old fibres. The ball are now arranged on top of this prepared platform in a dome made from wood ash mixed with exhausted dye water and allowed to dried probably for about three days in the sun. Firings are usually done for a whole day and during the process of firing the ash ball becomes red. It takes another day to cool off and new balls are then mode from this powder.

Mordant water: The local dyers prepare the mordant in a technological know – how which is very interesting. The indigo dyers make use of pots specially made for the

purpose. These pots are reinforced either inside or outside with cement to disallow cracking and keep the pot waterproof. One of the pots has small round holes at the bottom and the other with a big hole on the side. One is slightly bigger and partly buried in the ground for firmness. The other one is placed on top of the one partly buried in the ground, but inside the top pot, pieces of wood, grasses are laid cross – cross and arranged so as a sieve. A quantity of ash balls are arranged on the sieve and water is poured down to drain the salt down into the bottom pot. The right mordant water has a slightly weak urine look with a bitter taste. The quantity can be controlled either by adding more fresh water from the top pot to weaken the solution or by adding more ash balls to increase the concentration.

The dye ball: Fresh indigo leaves are pounded in mortar with pestle and made into balls which are dried in the sun. These balls are used in the past as trade by barter, usually in exchange for food stuffs. The dye solution is made by dissolving the elu balls into the mordant water and stirred gently and allowed to remain for more than 5 days before use. Textile materials are now dipped into the dye bath and left for ten or more minutes to allow for oxidation and continue until the desired effects are achieved.

Indigo Dye Method

Ogunduyile (2004) is of the opinion that the technique and preparation of indigo dye include the following: the dye ball (Elu) mordant ash water, mortar, a pot and a long stick. About twenty to forty of the dye balls are crushed in a mortar and put in a clean pot and the prepared mordant water will be poured over the dye ball; until the pot is almost filled and mixed thoroughly with the long stick then covered for about five or six days for it to mature and ferment. The colour will be changing every day until when it turns to blue, which is the indigo colour, and then fabrics can then be dyed.

Dyeing Techniques Used by Traditional Dyers

According to Ogundipe (2001) a lot of methods have been introduced and developed to prevent dyes and to create a unique pattern on fabrics. The traditional dyers in Nigeria use tying with strings, raffia or applying paste as a resistance agent.

The above methods are used to produce *adireeleko*, *adireeleso* and *adire*. The *adire* method, some portions of the fabric are picked according to the planned design and pattern then tied, folded, pleated, twisted or sewn so that the solution will not penetrate into the tied portion. *Adireeleso* stones or pebbles are tied according to the design planned in a designated area before dyeing while *Adireeleko* technique is quite different, Cassava paste is prepared, and applied on zinc, stencil in a repeated pattern on the fabric and allowed to dry thoroughly in the sun before immersed into

a dye solution. The cloth stays inside the dye solution for about three (3) minutes so that the starch does not get soaked and dissolved. The fabric is brought out to allow for oxidation and uniformity in colour.

Dyestuff Content and Factors Influencing of Indigo Dye

Like essential oils or tanning agents, plant dyes are secondary plant metabolites (Olorunnegan 2011). Dyestuff is contained in the whole plant or only in certain parts like flower, leaves, roots, bark or wood. Plant species always contain several components (e.g. water, alcohol). However, the extraction method for indigo is different and more complicated. Indigo is a vat dye plant always containing precursors of indigo. In the Indian the precursors are transformed via (enzymatic) hydrolysis into indoxyl which is transformed oxidatively into indigo.

Vat dyes are organic pigments which are insoluble in water. During the dyeing process, they can only be fixed on the fibre being transformed into soluble substance. The fibres are put into the soluble substance. After oxidation in the air the indigo pigment is formed again and now set in the fibre. The aim of dye plants cultivation should not be a high hectare yield but also a product of high quality (which means high content of valuable photochemical), with few foreign elements and free of toxic residues.

Development in Dyeing Technology

Indigo is a challenging dye to use because it is not soluble in water: to be dissolved, it must undergo a chemical reduction when a submerged fabric is removed from the dye bath, the indigo quickly combines with oxygen in the air and reverts to its insoluble form, colouring the fabric blue.



During the pre-industrial period, the process used was to dissolve the indigo in state urine. Urine reduces the water - insoluble indigo to a soluble substance known as Indigo white or leucoindigo, which is yellow, but because small amounts are easily oxidized to indigo the solution is often yellow, -green fabric dyed in the solution turns blue after the indigo white oxidizes and returns to indigo. Synthetic urea to replace urine became available in the 1800s.

Another pre industrial method used in Japan was to dissolve the indigo in a heated vat in which a culture of thermophilic anaerobic bacteria was maintained. Hydrogen, a metabolic by product of such bacteria reduces the dye to indigo which is

used to dye fabrics. Around 1880 the glucose process was developed. It finally enabled the direct printed of indigo unto fabric and could produce inexpensive dark indigo prints. Since 2004 freeze dried indigo, or instant indigo has become available, in this method the indigo has already been reduced and then freeze dried in a crystal. The crystals are added to warm to create the dye pot. As in a standard indigo dye pot care has to be taken to avoid mixing in oxygen. Freeze dried indigo is simple to use the crystals can be stored indefinitely as long as are not exposed to moisture. (Oguntona 1986)

CONCLUSION

The absence of white collar jobs in Nigeria has left the certified graduates miserable thereby making them engage in various vices. However, the government at all levels can save the country from this predicament by adopting the following recommendations:

- * Government at all levels should place well-funded entrepreneurial centres for undergraduates as it will enable them to acquire at least a vocational skill, one of which is Indigo Dye Skill
- * Government should set aside loans for graduates willing to start up personal workspace regarding the skill he/she has acquired
- * Government should make provision for proper monitoring of instructors and trainees under training in such centres
- * Tax levied on imported materials to be used by the fresh school leavers should be reduced to make purchase possible in large quantity for quality and mass production to serve as springboard for sustainable economic development in Nigeria.

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