

ACCOUNTING EDUCATION VALUES, SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE AND THEIR GRADUATES COMPETENCE AT WORK PLACES FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTH SOUTH REGION OF NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examined the relationship between accounting education graduates acquired values, knowledge and skills and their competence at work places in South- South Nigeria. Descriptive research design was adopted and multi stage sampling technique was used in selecting respondents. Reliability coefficient of 0.92 was obtained for the instrument which showed that the instrument was reliable. The instrument was administered to 518 accounting education graduates from which 500 were retrieved. Three research hypotheses were formulated and tested using Pearson correlation. The findings showed a significant relationship between accounting education acquired values and competence at work places. Also, a significance relationship was obtained between accounting education graduates acquired knowledge and their competencies at works. Result obtained for the acquired skill was insignificantly related to their competence. Hence recommendations included SIWES period extension, provision of equipment and facilities, funding and objective supervision for perfection on accounting education skills for national development.

According to Obinaju (2012) the rate of national unemployment moved from 13.1% in the year 2000 to 19.7% in 2009. In the views of Usoro, Usoro, and Akpan (2012) one of the reasons for this ugly situation is the failure of higher education to

provide the diversity and comprehensiveness of education opportunity needed by millions of students who are entering a changing world of work. And for Nigeria to meet up with the prime requirement for economic and industrial globalization, vocational education within which accounting education belongs must be given proper attention.

Accounting education, when properly administered has values, skills and knowledge can provide the much needed solution to the above national problem. Values such as honesty, integrity and objectivity inherent in accounting education are supposed to promote accountability, essential to national development. Also, accounting education skills such as proper recording, classifying, analysing, summarizing and interpreting accounting information for decision making are pre requisite for employment. When these skills are properly and efficiently acquired makes the graduates concerned employable. In addition, a fair knowledge of accounting education (theory and practical) definitely helps the graduates concerned to subsequently educate others in the field.

Vocational education including accounting education has clearly been portrayed as a form of education that trains people to acquire skills, knowledge, attitude and values in chosen occupation at any entry level as job oriented form of education.

According to Asuquo and Emeh (2005) the philosophy behind vocational education is that the learner should be self -reliant and employable in the face of the menace of unemployment problem prevalent in the society. Rather, accounting education in Nigeria tertiary institutions in plagued with rapid expansion in the number of students in the field without corresponding increase in facilities, equipment, personnel, funding, technology, instructional material variety and current textbooks. In the face of the above mentioned problems, this paper examined the relationship between accounting education graduates acquired values, skills and knowledge and their competence at work place for national development in south-south region of Nigeria.

Skills in Accounting Education

Okorie (2000) defined skill as expertness, practical ability, dexterity and tact, an organized sequence of action, proficiency executed and usually displayed in flexible but systematic temporal pattern. Here the author viewed skills as manual dexterity through repetitive performance of an operation or task. Elijah (2006) described skill as well established habit of carrying out a task. It involves the acquisition of performance capability. To acquire skill is to acquire habit of acting, thinking and behaving in a specific pattern in such a way that the process becomes natural to the individual through repetition and practice. Study by Ben (2001) showed that skills acquisition is important in harnessing nations' natural resources and for providing economic stability.

According to Usoro and Usoro (2010) there is an imbalance between theory and practice of vocational education. Accounting education is not an exemption. This is probably caused by the poorly built, poorly equipped and sometimes no vocational laboratories and lack of properly trained teachers to manipulate the existing facilities in training for skills acquisition. In this circumstance teachers find themselves emphasizing the theoretical aspects of vocational education to the detriment of learners' psycho productive skills development. One of such consequences is the production of accounting education graduates who do not possess the desired skills for the world of work or even further pursuit of the professional course. Following this Latin expression *Nemo da quo non habent* meaning one cannot give what he has not, the graduates of the accounting education who were taught using the traditional pedagogy may not be completely functioning in skills such as costing, stock valuation, auditing, statement of Account preparation, budgeting, taxation and in computerized accounting. Equally they may not be adequately proficient in speed, accuracy, neatness of work, and proper account enteries, postings with balancing expected at the real work place. Also, poorly groomed accounting education graduates in turn may not teach their students to acquire skills to meet up with the global demands from the comtemporal world. On this note, Uduma and Nkuma (2000) opined that in the face of growing need for skilled workers and industrial organizations. The changing industrial and business demands, the ever increasing rate of unemployment, there is renewed public interest for a deliberately designed, organized and well executed educational system geared towards self reliance, self confidence, competence and qualification for job opportunities for the citizens in the present computer age.

Values in Accounting Education

Accounting education is one of the vocational courses with skills and methods maintained by high standard and conduct. Ofor (2007) declared that 99% of Nigerians never tell the truth and whereas integrity is the hallmark of the accounting profession. Thus, it is accounting education that could possibly train teachers to bring up prospective accountants, business persons and teachers with career opportunities open to them in both private and public sectors of the Nigerian economy. These include banks, insurance, agriculture, transportation, hotels and tourism, hospitals, auditing firms, armed forces, educational institutions, mining, forestry, government ministries and parastatals among others.

Unfortunately, Nigerian economy among its contemporaries is in the era of business growth and complexities, globalization, inflation, naira revaluation proposal and deregulation. Thus, accounting education as a vocational and teachers' education is supposed to play a vital role in Nigeria as it centers on human development to instill sanity in a country like Nigeria. And if accounting education is placed on a sound footing, it should be able to produce graduates full of integrity for proper accounting for

goods and services, prudence, assets and inventory valuations, objective and independent auditors' opinion and budgeting amongst others. Hence, the values enshrined in accounting education when given consideration in the course of training and evaluation can ensure the production of graduates of conscience for proper accounting in the Nigerian economy.

Knowledge in Accounting Education

Accounting education is one of the major options in business education unit of vocational education, preparing teachers who will in turn prepare secondary school students to become accountants, accounting officers, cost managers as well as accounting teachers. In accounting education, the knowledge gained by the graduates concerned as evidenced from certificates should be matched with requisite competence to perform elsewhere. There could be many jobs available in the relevant areas without competent hands to handle them. Thus, for Nigeria to develop, accounting education formal training is often followed up with Industrial attachment through Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme for one or two months, often punctuated by incessant periods of industrial action instead of a more reasonable period for meaningful learning. Currently, accounting education among other vocational courses has not moved forward by imbibing the current trends from the industrialized nations operating vocational training schemes such as United States of America, Germany and Japan. Efficient human resources, physical resources, material and financial resources do facilitate knowledge in accounting education.

National Development

In the views of Umoh (2007) national development is sometimes associated with human development. And when we are concerned with accounting education contributing to national development we turn to tertiary institutions offering the course and graduating students from them with the purpose of providing them with necessary vocational skills for gainful employment and job creation for national development. According to Mbosoh (2007) it was in this direction that the federal government of Nigeria came out with national economic empowerment and development strategy (NEEDS) recognizing education as a veritable instrument and vital transformational tool for economic empowerment. Hence, the overall focus of NEEDS in education include among others enhancing the efficiency, resourcefulness and competence of teachers and other educational personnel through training, capacity building and motivation. On this note, accounting teachers and graduates are not left out from this expectation.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to examine the relationship between the acquired values, skills and knowledge from higher institutions of learning and

competence at work places exhibited by accounting graduates from the south- south region of Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to

- (1) Examine the relationship between accounting education values acquired from tertiary institutions and the professional competence at work places.
- (2) Find out the relationship between accounting skills acquired from tertiary institutions and the graduate competences at the work place.
- (3) Examine the relationship between accounting education knowledge gained from tertiary institutions and the graduates' competences at job situation.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated

- (1) There is no significant relationship between accounting education graduates ethics gained from tertiary institutions and their professional competences at work places.
- (2) There is no significant relationship between accounting education graduates skills acquired from tertiary institutions and their professional competences at work places.
- (3) There is no significant relationship between accounting education graduates knowledge gained from tertiary institutions and their professional competence at work places.

Methodology

Descriptive survey design was adopted. The target population of the study comprised accounting education graduates currently teaching the course in tertiary institutions within the south- south region of Nigeria. The researcher self developed questionnaire was used to collect data. The instrument consisted of twenty (20) items rated on a four point likert scale of strongly disagree, disagree, agree and strongly agree options. The validity of this instrument was enhanced through experts' opinion and the reliability of the instrument was also tested using cronbach alpha reliability analysis. Reliability coefficients of 0.92, 0.84, 0.91 and 0.93 were obtained for values, knowledge, skill and competence scale respectively. Five hundred and eighteen (518) questionnaires were administered with five hundred (500) retrieved and the multi stage sampling technique was used in selecting respondents. Data collected were analyzed using the Pearson product moment correlation. Statistical significance was tested at 5% significance level.

Results

Hypothesis one

Table 1: Analysis of the Relationship between Accounting Education Values Acquired From Tertiary Institutions and their Professional Competences at Work Places

N= 500

Variables	$\sum X$	$\sum X^2$	$\sum XY$	calculated r
	$\sum Y$	$\sum Y^2$		
Accounting education values gained from tertiary institution (X)	6202	91968	90064	0.53*
Professional competences at work places (Y)	6671	1011621		

rcritical = 0.139, degree of freedom = 498, *significant at 0.05 level of significance

The results of the testing for hypothesis one as shown in Table 1 above show a significant relationship between accounting education values acquired from tertiary institutions and their professional competence at workplace place(r calculated = 0.53, r critical = 0.139). This result means that the accounting education values acquired in their respective tertiary institutions transform to their professional competence at work places.

Hypothesis two

Table 2: Analysis of the Relationship between Accounting Education Graduates' Skills Acquired from Tertiary Institutions and their Professional Competences at Work Places

N= 500

Variables	$\sum X$	$\sum X^2$	$\sum XY$	calculated r
	$\sum Y$	$\sum Y^2$		
Accounting education skills acquired from tertiary institution (X)	5011	54199	67095	0.03 ^{NS}
Professional competences at work place (Y)	6671	1011621		

rcritical = 0.139, degree of freedom = 498, NS not significantly related at 0.05 level of significance

The results of hypothesis two testing as summarized in Table 2 revealed an insignificant relationship between accounting education graduates skills acquired from tertiary institutions and their professional competences at work places(r calculated = 0.034, r critical = 0.139). This means that the skills acquired by accounting education graduates do not really commensurate with their professional competence at their work places.

Hypothesis three

Table 3: Analysis of Relationship between Accounting Education Graduates Knowledge Gained From Tertiary Institutions and their Professional Competences at their Work Places

N= 500

Variables	$\sum X$	$\sum X^2$	$\sum Y$	$\sum Y^2$	$\sum XY$	calculated r
Accounting education skills acquired from tertiary institution (X)	6603	98267	6671	1011621	99522	0.97*
Profession competences at job place (Y)						

$r_{critical} = 0.139$, degree of freedom = 498, * significantly related at 0.05 level of significance

Result of Table 3 as displayed above revealed that accounting education graduates knowledge gained from tertiary institutions has a significant relationship with their professional competences at work place(r calculated =0.97, r critical =0.139). This means that the knowledge, theory, and practical acquired by accounting education graduates from various institutions of higher learning do affect their professional competence at work place.

Discussion of the Findings

The results of this study have revealed a significant relationship between accounting education values acquired by accounting education graduates and their competences at work place. This result is in line with the Holland’s Typology Theory of Vocational Education Behaviour which states that the way each individual adjusts to working environment determines how well he will fit. Thus, in terms of values the graduates of accounting education are believed to have transformed the norms and ethics acquired from academic work to the work place.

Moreover, an insignificant relationship was obtained between the accounting education graduates acquired skills and their competence at work place. This is contrary to the findings by Ben (2011) which showed that skills acquisition is important in providing economic stability and that emphasis should be placed on the development of skills in any nation's works force as empowerment tool for national greatness.

In addition, there was a significant relationship between accounting education graduates knowledge gained from tertiary institutions and their professional competence at work place. This coincides with the views of Umoh (2007) that human development give rise to national development. Hence the accounting education graduates transfer of knowledge acquired from tertiary institutions to their work place is positive contributing to national development.

Conclusion

National development can only be attained when proper human development is assured. And to ensure this, accounting education like other vocational education courses has to be taught with emphasis on skills for professional competence necessary for national development and global needs.

Recommendation

- (1) Students' Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) period should be extended to at least one year.
- (2) Accounting education graduate teachers should be retrained on modern teaching strategies and techniques to meet up global standard.
- (3) Modern accounting education equipment should be provided to each tertiary institution offering the course. Students' assignments tests and examination should emphasize skill for competence.
- (4) Accreditation panels should ensure efficiency in accounting education values, skills and knowledge to bring about balance between theory and practice
- (5) Federal Government of Nigeria should provide adequate financial assistance to undergraduates of accounting education.

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