

FACTORS NEGATING THE EFFECTIVE TRANSFORMATION OF ACCOUNTING EDUCATION IN HIGHER INSTITUTIONS IN AKWA IBOM STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The need to ensure effective teaching/learning of accounting education at higher institutions in Akwa Ibom State and in Nigeria necessitated this study. Survey research design was employed for the study. The population for the study was 32 lecturers drawn from University of Uyo, Uyo, Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic, Ikot Osurua and College of Education, Afaha Nsit. The size of the population was small, hence, there was no sampling size, hence entire the population was involved. A 41- item questionnaire developed by the researcher was used to obtain data from the respondents. Data obtained were analyzed using mean statistics. The study revealed that accounting education plays important role by creating employment and inculcating appropriate skills and competence in teaching /learning among others. The study revealed that lack of text books in accounting education, poor funding, lack of government concern about teaching and learning of accounting, poor and inadequate facilities and equipment constitute the challenges of accounting education. To address the indentified challenges, the state government should provide adequate funds to tertiary institutions teaching accounting; provide enough facilities and equipment for the teaching of accounting for acquisition of accounting knowledge, skills and competence. Institutions should ensure that there is a balance of the transformation of the accounting education in Nigeria.

The significance of education in this present dispensation and economic emancipation, technologically and otherwise cannot be ignored. There are remarkable changes in the global economy at present, hence the need to develop an enduring commitment and sacrifice to the development of theories, approaches and philosophies to address the dynamism of the new world order (Isaac, Ibe-Bassey and Evanson, 2008). Any country aspiring for any development intent, must strive at all cost to inculcate in its people the knowledge of accounting.

Accounting is a profession that has an important function to play in the economic development of any nation. Accounting assists an individual to develop the knowledge and skill that could help him to carry out his work effectively. Accounting involves the measurement and reporting information system, covers micro and macro economic activities. It involves various subsystems which relate to the economic events and decisions. According to Badejo in Okolie and Amos(2014) explained that the subsystems are major accounting fields such as business accounting, government accounting, social accounting, auditing and taxation that aid in economy planning, project appraisal, capital formation and others.

An appropriate level of accounting education should embrace the development of the character of the aspiring accountant, possess strong moral code, a sense of discretion, total commitment to the confidentiality of the information established as a result of work carried out; enquiry and analytical mind consistent with providing clients with high standards of professional services; an ability to assess data and situations and to prepare records in such a way as to impress upon the users of accounting services that their problems have been addressed in ways consistent with the highest ideals of a true professional, a sense of dress and carriage designed to develop a confidence in the competence and probity of the practitioners within the profession(Kimmel, 1995, Maher, 2000, and Okolie & Amos, 2014).

Concept of Accounting and Accounting Education

The study of Accounting requires a combination of both sound practical education and theoretical knowledge. Thus, accountants could utilize modern accounting techniques in finding solutions to complex business problems. The need for accounting arouse as a result of the expansion and complexity of business enterprises as well as stewardship reporting, accountability and reliable accounting information (Ogundele, 1991 and Okolie & Amos, 2014).

Accounting is seen as the business of identifying, recording, analyzing, classifying, summarizing, measuring and communicating economic information to permit informed judgments and decisions by users of the information (Agbata, 1980). Accounting is also used in the measurement and reporting of the information system of both micro and macro economic activities. Accounting provides qualitative information, primarily financial in nature, about economic entities that are intended to be useful in economic decisions (Ajayi, 1997 and Romanus & Arowoseghe, 2014). Accounting is viewed as a discipline concerned with the recording, analyzing and forecasting of the income and wealth of a business and other entities. Accounting is a discipline that has a dual purpose of developing a tool for efficient business operations and positive personal attributes such as self-control, patience and self-actualization. Eduok (2001) enumerated certain functions of accounting to include:

1. Helping to measure the resources held by specific entities

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2. Reflecting the claims against and the interest in those entities
3. Measuring the changes in those resources, claims and interest
4. Expressing the forgoing in terms of money as a common denominator in accounting.

The growth of large industries, medium and small scale businesses, the ever increasing need for record keeping are the need for accounting education. Accounting education is an area of study which involves the development of accounting knowledge and impacting the knowledge to others in a well-designed and articulated form of accounting (Eduok, 2001 and Akamobi, 2005)). Accounting education is designed to equip individuals with adequate knowledge, skill and orientation that are essential for gainful employment. It helps in the development of accounting personnel with vested knowledge, quality ability and determination to discharge functions both in private and public sectors. Accounting education further prepares for the management of scarce resources. It enables the stakeholders to ascertain whether funds appropriated and disbursed for a particular project are judiciously utilized or misappropriated. Every business undertaking requires the use of money. Therefore, the financial resources of any business entity backed by sound management determine the success or misfortune of such an entity. Accounting recognizes that people live in a world of scarce resources. Accounting plays an important role in obtaining a higher standard of living as it helps to identify efficient and inefficient users of resources (Okolie & Amos, 2014).

Statement of the Problem

Accounting education is part of business education in vocational education. Accounting teachers are highly needed in Nigerian secondary schools for the purpose of training students to acquire required knowledge, skills and competence in accounting. But in spite of government's efforts as well as institutional involvement, the level of performance is not encouraging. This arises as a result of shortage of accounting teachers in secondary schools. The role of accounting education in economy development is still unclear to even the elites, what are the challenges against the effective operation of accounting education? What strategies could be adopted in transforming accounting education to reality? The answers to these questions are not readily available because of the very limited research that has been carried out in this area. Whatever may be regarded as the answer may either be opinion based or born out of un-comparable research situation to the one at hand. It is however, the absence of, or limited research evidence to indicate the extent of influence in transforming accounting education in Nigeria that provided the focus of the problem for this investigation.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the extent to which accounting education is transformed into reality. Specifically this study was designed to:

1. identify the role of accounting education as perceived by accounting educators in Nigeria;
2. identify the challenges faced by accounting educators in the teaching and learning of accounting courses; and,
3. ascertain strategies necessary for transforming accounting education as perceived by accounting educators in Nigeria.

Research Questions

To guide the investigation, the following research questions were posed:

1. What are the roles of accounting education perceived by the accounting educators in Nigeria?
2. What are the challenges faced by accounting educators' effective teaching and learning of accounting courses in Nigeria?
3. What strategies are necessary for the transformation of accounting education for teaching and learning of accounting courses?

Literature Review

Accounting education has been accorded very low image in the country. It has been regarded as education meant for those who could not meet the rigours of academic in the classroom, this is because, it is a part of business education vocational course that provides individual opportunities for the acquisition of relevant skills, abilities and competency for an individual to live in and contribute to the development of the society. Accounting education is training designed to equip students with adequate knowledge, skills and orientations that are essential for gainful employment. Accounting programme is only separated in university as it is designed as a management course. As a vocational subject, students take specialty after year three to be trained as accounting teachers who are expected to teach in our secondary schools. Unfortunately, many graduates of accounting from university are unwilling to join their counterparts in other fields to enter classroom because of the assumption that they are to work in offices as "Accountants" after undergoing additional training and write prescribed professional bodies examinations (Isaac, Ibe-Bassey, Evanson, 2008). This has been one of the major reasons why the teaching of financial accounting suffers today in our senior secondary schools. University, Polytechnics and Colleges of education are different. Universities award B.Sc and B.Sc Ed. degree in Accounting or accounting education to her recipients; Polytechnics award HND Accounting to her graduates who also wish to work in offices. But Colleges of Education are teacher

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institutions awarding NCE business education (Accounting option). Business education is emphasized at the detriment of Accounting.

Accounting is required to serve some broader social obligations. Accounting information is needed by the interest groups such as government, employees, managers, competitors, creditors, proprietors, shareholders, public, and tax authorities. Okolie and Amos (2014) opined that for thorough accounting information; accountant utilizes modern accountancy techniques in finding solutions to complex business problems. The information allows users to make reasoned choices among alternative use of scarce resources in the conduct of business and economic activities.

Accounting education is education suitable for all youths in the society because it involves the acquisition of knowledge, attitudes and skills needed to be effective in economic understanding and communication in the society. It allows the desire to make judicious use of scarce resources, accumulate wealth and produce high quality of goods and services in a competitive economy. Accounting education, according to Ogbomo (1997), Inanga (2000) and Ravensuroft (2003), performed certain roles such as preventing waste of human resources, encouraging spirit of enquiry and creativity, increasing public investment. It further helps individual to enhance commitment to national objectives. It reduces income inequality as well as total dependence of people on government job.

The progress of accounting education in Nigeria is faced with attendant problems such as co-ordination and computation problem, inadequate accounting research materials/information which could be built on current situation based upon, poor attitudes of some State governments toward teaching of accounting in schools and colleges, shortage of equipment, inadequate planning, lack of reading materials in accounting, poor funding and delay in settlement of staff remuneration (Ogbomo, 1997 and Brewer, 2000)

Method

A survey research design was adopted for this study. The area of the study was Akwa Ibom State. The study covered University of Uyo, Uyo, Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic, Ikot Osurua and College of Education, Afaha Nsit. The population for the study comprises of 32 accounting lecturers made up of 8 from University of Uyo, 16 from College of Education, Afaha Nsit and 8 from Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic, Ikot Osurua. The entire population was studied because the size was small. A structured questionnaire containing 40 items was used for data collection. A -4 point response option of strongly agree (SA-4), agree (A-3), disagree (D-2) and strongly disagree (SD-1) was the rating scale. The instrument was validated by 4 experts in accounting education for face and content validity. Frequency count and mean computation were used in answering research questions. Any item with a mean rating that is equal or greater than 2.5 was accepted while mean score that is less than 2.5 was rejected. Thirty

two copies of questionnaire were distributed and all were collected indicating 100% response rate.

Result:

The results of the investigation are presented according to the research questions that guided the study as follows:

Research Question 1:

What are the roles of accounting education as perceived by the accounting lecturers in Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean responses of accounting lecturers on the role of accounting education in Nigeria

S/N	Roles of Accounting Education	SA (4)	A(3)	D(2)	SD(1)	TOTAL	MEAN	DECISION
1.	creates employment	20	12	-	-	32	3.6	Accepted
2.	Reduces number of people who depend on government job appropriate	15	10	2	7	32	3.2	Accepted
3.	inculcates appropriate knowledge, skills and competence in teaching	21	11	-	-	32	3.7	Accepted
4.	prevents waste of human resources	11	12	7	2	32	3.0	Accepted
5.	provides intellectual and professional background for adequate assignment	18	10	4	-	32	3.4	Accepted
6.	popularizes accounting education among the younger generation	13	12	2	5	32	3.0	Accepted
7.	encourages spirit of enquiry and creativity	17	10	5	-	32	3.4	Accepted
8.	helps individual to enhance their commitment to national objectives	16	12	4	-	32	3.4	Accepted
9.	increases public investment	20	12	-	-	32	3.6	Accepted

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10.	enables government to impose control order on certain activities and inspection of programmed implementation	10	20	-	-	32	3.1	Accepted
11.	supervises business ventures	4	6	15	7	32	2.2	Disagreed
12.	reporting on the custodianship of investible resources	5	8	9	10	32	2.3	Disagreed
13.	enhances income equality among people	13	19	-	-	32	3.4	Accepted
14.	enhances proper stewardship of government operation and finance investment	18	14	-	-	32	3.7	Accepted
15.	brings about economic development	15	17	-	-	32	3.5	Accepted
16.	helps costing of projects and other business ventures	16	10	4	2	32	3.3	Accepted

The summary in Table 1 indicated that 14 items have mean value above 2.5 which is the stipulated positive decision rule while 2 items had less than cut off mean. This indicated that 14 these are the basic roles played by accounting education while the other 2 did not in Nigeria.

Research Question 2:

What are the challenges faced by accounting educators' effective teaching and learning of accounting courses in Nigeria?

Table 2: Mean responses of accounting educators on the challenges of teaching/learning of accounting courses in Nigeria.

S/N	Challenges of effective teaching /learning of Accounting Education	SA(4)	A(3)	D(2)	SD(1)	TOTAL	MEAN	DECISION
17.	co-ordination and computation problem	13	14	2	3	32	3.2	Accepted

18	inadequate of Accounting research information	20	12	-	-	32	3.6	Accepted
19	poor attitude of many state government to assist provide the needed manpower to teach accounting in public schools	18	14	-	-	32	3.6	Accepted
20	unqualified accounting teachers	10	14	6	2	32	3.0	Accepted
21	inadequate teaching methods	13	14	3	2	32	3.2	Accepted
22	non-availability of teaching materials/equipment	20	12	-	-	32	3.6	Accepted
23	incessant promotion of accounting teachers	2	4	20	6	32	2.1	Disagreed
24	poor academic performance of students	17	13	-	2	32	3.4	Accepted
25	inadequate planning	16	16	-	-	32	3.5	Accepted
26.	poor funding	12	18	2	-	32	3.3	Accepted
27.	low education level of accounting staff	16	12	2	2	32	3.3	Accepted

The data in Table 2 reveals that 10 items on the challenges of effective teaching/learning of accounting education were accepted by the respondents while only 1 out of 11 items attracted a mean value of 2.1 was not accepted. The item mean scores range between 3.3 – 3.6 and 2.1 respectively.

Research Question 3

What strategies are necessary for the transformation of accounting and learning of accounting courses in Nigeria?

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Table 3: Mean responses of accounting educators on the strategies for the transformation of accounting education.

S/ N	Strategies for transforming accounting education	SA(4)	A(3)	D(2)	SD(1)	TOTAL	MEAN	DECISION
28	strong government concern	12	13	2	5	32	3.0	Accepted
29.	provision of adequate finance to institutions	20	12	-	-	32	3.6	Accepted
30.	employment of qualified teachers	18	12	2	-	32	3.5	Accepted
31.	provision of instructional materials	15	15	2	-	32	3.4	Accepted
32.	encouraging accounting teachers retrenchment	-	6	16	10	32	1.9	Disagreed
33.	mass mobilization about accounting skill acquisition	16	16	-	-	32	3.5	Accepted
34.	adequate workshop/laboratories for training	12	18	2	-	32	3.3	Accepted
35.	use of information communication technology in teaching and learning of accounting	13	14	2	3	32	3.2	Accepted
36.	regular and improved payment of teachers' salaries and allowances	18	10	2	2	32	3.4	Accepted
37.	encouragement of economics self-reliance awareness	18	14	-	-	32	3.6	Accepted
38.	large class size	12	12	6	2	32	3.1	Accepted
39.	security operatives involved in transforming accounting	10	6	2	14	32	2.3	Disagreed

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40.	enrolment of fewer number of students into the program	6	8	10	8	32	2.4	Disagreed
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The data in table 3 reveals that 9 items have mean scores ranging between 3.1 – 3.6 which means that all the respondents accepted those ten items as important strategies to be applied in the transformation of accounting education for teaching/learning in accounting courses. Only 3 items with mean score below 2.5 were not accepted as strategies accounting education could use to transform teaching and learning.

Summary of Findings:

Based on the responses to the three research questions items, the following findings were made:

1. Accounting education performs important roles in the transformation of the society.
2. The effectiveness in the teaching and learning of accounting education in Nigeria was hindered by attendant challenges.
3. Transformation of accounting education into practical reality in higher institution in Nigeria can be achieved by the application of the identified strategies except encouraging accounting teacher's retrenchments, security operatives in transforming accounting education and enrolment of less number of students into the programme.

Discussion

The findings of this investigation revealed that accounting education as a course of study plays significant role in the area of creating employment, reducing total dependence on government job, preventing waste of human resources. Others are maintenance of accountability, maintenance of reporting on the custodianship as well as popularizing the accounting education among the younger generation. The findings are in support of Ogbomo (1997) and Okolie and Amos (2014) who confirmed that accounting education has contributed immensely to the well being and socio-economic activities of the society. They added that its roles have continued to give credit to the teaching and learning of accounting education as perceived by the accounting educators.

The findings also revealed that accounting education in spite of the efforts of the accounting educators and that of the government as well as institutions of learning, that the issues of accounting education have not been adequately attended to in order to produce quality products as needed/useful to the larger society. The problems are lack of text books in accounting education, poor and irregular payment of teachers' salaries, poor funding, and low educational level of accounting teachers. Ogundele (1991),

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Ezeani (2011) and Okolie and Amos (2014) pointed that the quality of accounting education is still poor as a result of the challenges facing accounting education in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Low quality delivery and implementation in tertiary education apparently means poor performance for sustainable development in Akwa Ibom State. The findings of the study also revealed that certain strategies could be adopted to improve upon the teaching and learning of accounting education in the country.

Conclusion

On the bases of the findings and discussion of same, it is concluded that accounting education cannot achieve its role and objectives in the face of the prevailing challenges. The effective teaching and learning of accounting education in Nigeria will be enhanced when government and members of the public are concerned about the fate of accounting education programme in high institutions. The transformation of accounting education into practical reality in institutions of learning will be facilitated only on the accurate attainment and adoption of intended strategies.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were offered based on the findings made:

1. Accounting profession should be distinguished between academic professional and academic qualification,
2. The basic instructional materials and facilities for effective teaching and learning should be provided for schools.
3. Regular and prudent supervision and monitoring of the activities of the accounting educators should be carried out for the growth of the accounting education.
4. Accounting educators/ teachers should be paid their salaries regularly as and when due to give them encouragement for better services.
5. Government must show concern on the teaching/learning of accounting education to ensure that its roles and objectives are achieved for the good of the society.

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