

## **PERCEIVED RELEVANCE OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION TO THE ACQUISITION OF ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS BY STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS**

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**ABSTRACT:** *The need to improve performance of persons with special needs in the world of work necessitated this study to determine the perceived relevance of vocational education to the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills by special needs students. The study adopted a descriptive design. The population comprised fourteen (14) lecturers and ninety four (94) students. The researchers sampled ten (10) lecturers out of fourteen (14) and sixty (60) students out of ninety four (94) students respectively from the Department of Special Needs Education Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Owerri. The instrument for data collection was a 8 item questionnaire. Results revealed that society is not friendly with persons with special needs and that lecturers of special needs student are often truants which distort consistent teaching and learning. It was recommended among others that government should ensure that funds and amenities be made available for special needs students and special education resource centres are well utilized so that teaching and learning would take place in a conducive environment.*

**KEYWORDS:** vocational education, entrepreneurial skills acquisition, special needs student.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

It is a well-known fact that every society has its own inevitable share of persons with special needs whom such general education strategies do not suit because of their exceptionality. They therefore required special education to meet their valued unique needs. According to (Obani, 2004) opined that special education is the education specially designed to suit the persons with special needs who may experience learning problems and learning difficulties as a result of disabilities or handicaps of other forms of special education needs. (Arunachalam, 2010) further assert that this process involves an individually manned and systematic monitored arrangement to teaching procedures, adapted equipment and materials, and other intervention designed to help learners with special needs achieve a higher level of personal self-sufficiency and success in school and community that would be available if the students were only given access to a typical classroom education.

Vocational development is the bedrock of national development plans of numerous civilizations. This is because it helps to develop human resources, make them more productive and useful to the society and leads to massive economic expansion and advancement. Irrespective of this conspicuous contribution of vocational education to the development of any nation, Nigeria unfortunately seem not quite able to tap from this aspect of human resource development. The neglect of vocational education and marginal attention given to the sector by the government is undoubtedly one of the reasons why there is massive unemployment among graduates in Nigeria (Inibehe, and Otobong, 2016).

Vocational education is the education that prepares people to work as technicians in various jobs, trade or craft. Here, students are trained in skills on craft, such as knitting work, leather work, carpentry, hair dressing, etc. All these blend with entrepreneurial and ICT training. Vocational education is sometimes referred to as career and technical education. A vocational school is a type of educational institution specifically designed to provide vocational education. Vocational education is established to equip persons for industrial/commercial occupations. It may be obtained either formally through trade and technical secondary schools, on-the-job training programme or more informally, by picking up the necessary skills on the job.

Entrepreneurial skill acquisition is defined as acquiring knowledge and expertise in skills that enhance the entrepreneurial personal livelihood through their involvement in enduring business startups, that can further enhance employment opportunities, and promoting economic development, growth and independent living. According to Maigido, Saba and Namkere (2013) entrepreneurial skill acquisition can be defined as not just about acquiring skill but acquiring knowledge and driving towards enterprise in skills that enhance personal livelihood through enduring business startups, enhancing employment opportunities, and promoting economic development and growth. The only way to empower the special needs students is to encourage them in acquiring adequate and qualitative entrepreneurial skills in order to make them job creators, self-employed and self reliant. Maigida, Saba and Namkere, further opined that entrepreneurship skills is a platform that helps the students acquire the mind set and know-how tailored towards successfully being self-employed or having viable career option. According to Odia and Odia (2013), “entrepreneurial skills acquisition can be obtained through various avenues such as; attending entrepreneurial training, development programme and through attending tertiary institution etc. Government should undertake sensitization campaigns in institutions for special needs education to create awareness of its various agencies and the services they offer in support of entrepreneurial activities.

Entrepreneurship skills provide benefits to the society even beyond their application to business activities and can be useful to persons with special needs in their daily responsibilities. Business skills need to be provided to these persons with special needs who choose to be self-employed and self reliant to start their own ventures (Edu, 2016).

Vocational education is however a special educational programme that can be adopted to suit persons with special needs (Nnanjwan and Owojaiyo, 2019). It is designed to help careers with special needs to acquire effective entrepreneurial skills which will lead to specialization in specific occupations for employment and national development.

Entrepreneurship is associated with several activities concerned with the establishment and operation of a business enterprise (Okeke and Obidiegwu, 2015). There is need for the government and organized private sector to employ more efforts to support entrepreneurial training programme in tertiary education system and on the need to reduce unemployment through entrepreneurship education among persons with special needs. Inculcating entrepreneurial skills to special needs students while in school will go a long way in helping them become self-reliant and successful in the world of work after graduation. It is against this background that this study is being undertaken to explore the relevance of vocational education to the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills by special needs students.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The problem which this study is set to investigate as envisaged by the researchers is on the perceived relevance of vocational education to the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills by special needs students. The study is imperative considering the importance of vocational education to student of special needs and general altitude towards them. It is a known fact that person with special needs are unfairly treated in the society, short changed in the world of work and regarded as misfits, never-do-well, people with no vision and without skills, abilities and aspirations to excel in a given career. This explains why most of them are dependant, beggars, destitutes and school dropouts. However, some of them are in tertiary institution such as Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Owerri. This study is focused on ascertaining the perceived relevance of vocational education to the entrepreneurial skills acquisition by students with special needs, students to enable them fully contribute their own quota to the development of the nation, and the self-reliant and independent.

Many at times it may be as a result of poor family background and poverty rate, that they are automatically given lower standards as those without disabilities. The government should as a matter of urgency address this ugly trends by extending the free education to the persons with special needs from to tertiary education level. This will afford them the opportunity to formal education, and to be aware that vocational/entrepreneurship education is becoming a global phenomenon due to world growing unemployment and poverty. It is conceptualized as a process of imparting in exceptional person, attitudes, skills and knowledge of managing risk involved in reasonable venture that can enhance their capacity and self-dependence in the society in which they belong (Iroegdu and Unegbu, 2017).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of the study was to ascertain the perceived relevance of vocational education to the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills by the student with special needs. Specifically, the study sought to:

- Find out the perception of the society toward the students of special needs in acquiring entrepreneurial skills.
- Find out the role played by parents, lecturer and government in the education of students with special needs.

### **Research Questions:**

The following research questions guided the study:

- What is the perception of the society toward the special needs student in acquiring entrepreneurial skills?

- What role do parents, lecturers and government play in the education of students special needs?

## METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The population of the study comprised fourteen (14) lecturers, and ninety four (94) students respectively from the Department of special needs education, Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Owerri. The instrument for data collection was a 8 item questionnaire titled “perceived relevance of vocational education to the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills by the students special needs questionnaire (PRVEAES)” developed by the researchers. The questionnaire was subjected to validation by experts. Data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions.

## RESULT

### Research Question 1: What is the Perception of the Society towards the Students with Special Needs in Acquiring Entrepreneurial Skills

**Table 4.1:** Society perception towards the students with special needs

S/ N	Statement	SA	A	SD	D	$\sum fx$	N	X	Decision
		<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>				
1.	The society tends not to be friendly with persons with special needs.	40	17	9	4	233	70	3.3	Agree
2.	Parents encourage the education of their children with special needs.	10	8	32	20	116	70	1.65	Disagree
3.	There is a culture of truancy or inconsistent attendance to school which frustrate lecturers.	20	31	10	9	202	70	2.88	Agree
4.	The government has done much to sensitize the society towards contributing to the education of the special needs students.	11	21	16	22	161	70	2.3	Disagree
	<b>Grand mean</b>							<b>2.53</b>	

Analysis above shows responses of the respondents relating to the society's attitude towards the special needs students. Item 2 and 4 of this table show that respondents disagree that parents encourage the education of their children with special needs and that the government has contributed to the education of special needs student. The respondents in item 1 and 3 agree that the society is not friendly with persons with special need and that the teachers of special needs students do not give them utmost attention to facilitate learning. The grand mean shows that the attitude of the society towards special needs student is negative.

### Research Question 3: What are the Roles of Parents, Teachers and Government in the Education of Special Children?

**Table 4.3:** What can parents, Lecturers and Government play in the education of special needs students.

S/ N	Statement	SA	A	SD	D	$\Sigma f_x$	N	$\bar{X}$	Decision
1.	The parents of special children place value and equally protect the self-esteem of their children with special needs.	12	10	29	19	155	70	2,21	Disagree
2.	Persons with special needs are given equal right, privilege and opportunity to education and societal contribution.	10	13	24	23	150	70	2.14	Disagree
3.	Special education teachers make learning easy for persons with special needs, protecting the learners interest.	4	14	20	32	130	70	1.85	Disagree
4.	Government organizes counseling programmes for parents and teachers of special needs student	17	9	21	23	160	70	2.4	Disagree
<b>Grand mean</b>								<b>2.15</b>	

**Table 4.3:** Analysis of the role of parents, lecturers and government in the education of special needs students. Item 1, 2, 3, and 4 of this table with the mean of 2.21, 2.14, 1.85 and 2.4 respectively show that the respondents have disagreed that parents, teachers and government play their role effectively in the education of students with special needs.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Findings emanating from the analysis revealed that the society show negative attitude toward the education of special needs students. This findings is supported by (Penny Tassoni, 2003) They state that the way people handle persons with special needs affect their care and education. Some parents may deny them the opportunity to acquire entrepreneurial skills that will afford them the opportunities in the world of work and make them to be self-employed. The finding reveals also that parents, lecturers and government represents Tetfund which has supplied equipment, provided money to supply equipment do not play their roles properly in the education of persons with special needs. The findings agrees with the position of (Oket, Even and Kutosi, 2000), who make it clear that parents are expected to play a vital and crucial role in the education of the students with special needs not only focusing their attention and efforts on their normal children whom they believe will yield result in the future.

## CONCLUSION

Every Nigeria youth/students including special needs persons stand the chance to be self-employed and must be encouraged to take entrepreneurial skills for granted. The study

presented the concept of entrepreneurial skills acquisition as a panacea for unemployment among persons with special needs in our society. It exposed the need for the society to encourage persons with special needs and not to neglect their efforts so as to avoid terminating their dreams and aspirations.

Civil society and government should join hand in the fight to give the persons with special needs all the needed care at home, in school and good learning facilities to aid the teaching and learning for all these needed entrepreneurial skills, and their acquiring entrepreneurship skills will be the key in facilitating their self-employability.

### **Recommendations:**

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

- Government should ensure that fair policies are put in place in order to encourage persons with special needs involvement in the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills.
- Education/Curriculum planners and educational policy makers should ensure that they include entrepreneurial skills training in the course content of persons with special needs while in school, to enable them acquire entrepreneurship skills that will make them self-reliant after graduation.
- The government should establish more entrepreneurial training and workshop programmes for persons with special needs even while in secondary school for them to be acquainted with knowledge of entrepreneurship and vocational skills before entering into tertiary education to have the broad knowledge.
- Government should ensure that more funds and amenities are adequately allocated to the Department of Special Needs Education and other special education resource centres etc. as well as ensure their affective utilization so that teaching and learning would take place in a conducive environment.

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