



ENHANCING VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION FOR EFFECTIVE ENTREPRENEURSHIP

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Abstract

This paper discusses strategies for improving the quality of Technical and Vocational Education as necessary step for insuring effective entrepreneurship. One of the serious socio-economic problems facing Nigeria as a Nation is high rate of unemployment. Most school learners usually depend on Government for employment since they have no quality skills to be self-employed and enterprising. In recent times, attention has been shifted to entrepreneurship by the Governments,

because they realized the potentials of this sector for employment generation and poverty reduction. Governments and institutions have therefore given attention and support in terms of credit facilities and enabling environment for entrepreneurship development. What remains to be done is to acquire the rightful skills, attitudes and values. The strategies for enhancing T.V.E that would produce graduates who will start owning successful business enterprise were high-lighted. The paper also recommends, among others, that there should be a link between industries and Technical and Vocational Institutions; Improvement of Professionalism, commitment and provision for better career prospects, special salaries, good conditions of service and incentives for TVE teachers and government funding for small and medium enterprises should be empowered for effective performance.

Introduction

Technical and Vocational Education (TVE) has been recognized to play a pivotal role in the economic and social development and in self - employment and employment creation (UNESCO, 2003). In Nigeria as early as in the 1980's Technical and Vocational Education had been made an integral aspect of general education. The 6-3-3-4 education system saw to the vocationaliation of the Post Primary School curriculum in Nigeria.

Technical and Vocational Education is said to have suffered enormous setback in Nigeria due to the low status accorded to it in general. Part of the problem seems to emanate from the various interpretations of Technical and Vocation education policy as well as by the implementation of such policies on Technical and Vocational Education. New policies are however, needed to clarify the important role of Technical and Vocational Education.

The National Board for Technical Education (NBTE), established in 1985, gives recognition to three broad classifications of Technical Institutions and their different missions in meeting the needs of the society. The three groups of institution are vocational schools, Technical colleges and Polytechnics/Colleges of Technology/Colleges of Education (Technical). Commenting on Technical Colleges, Section 6 NPE (2004) on Technical Education (i.e. Prevocational and Vocational Schools, the Technical Colleges, the Polytechnics and Colleges of Education (Technical) item 49 stated that, one of the aims of Technical Education should be to give training and impart the necessary skills leading to the production of craftsmen, technicians and other skilled personnel who would be enterprising and self-reliant.

Telentino (2004) observed that Entrepreneurship and enterprising behaviours are important objectives for education and lifelong learning policies. It is seen as a source of flexibility and innovation, as well as creator of jobs for the economy and at the same time, as an interesting possibility for individual development, fulfillment and citizenship. The question now is, are the products of the Institutions (Technical and Vocation Education) enterprising and self-reliant? If the answer is not in affirmative, then enhancement of Technical and Vocational Institutions for effective entrepreneurship becomes necessary.

Consequently, the quality of instruction at all levels of the education enterprise is geared toward values such as shared responsibility for the common good of society and acquisition of competencies necessary for self-reliance. Education is the key to national development. To this extent, it unlocks the economic potentials of a people; empowers and equips the individuals in the society to participate in, and benefit from their national economy; facilitates economic development; and provides the basis for transformation. Therefore, time has come for us to be repositioned in such a way that we can be wealth and job creators and not job seekers. Thus, Entrepreneurship education and programme should be encouraged in our education system. It is already happening in Europe, America, Canada, China (Wilson, 2007 and Wang, 2007).

Entrepreneurship programme has a definite role because it is the master key that unlocks the doors of prosperity.

Concept of entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship is the willingness and ability of an individual to seek out investment opportunities in an environment, and be able to establish and run enterprise successfully based on the identified opportunities (Nwafor, 2007).

Aluwong (2008) defined entrepreneurship as using skills, aptitudes and attitudes to turn opportunities into reality; it is a way to improve every aspect of life; it is a new way to live, work and achieve; it is a way of life! This process, therefore, involve time, planning, discipline, money and perseverance. The entity engaged in this process is entrepreneur. In this paper, however, the term entrepreneur is used to describe any enterprising person working either within or outside an organization.

An entrepreneur, therefore, is a person (man or woman) who creates a business venture from the raw materials of his/her own ideas. An entrepreneur starts his/her own business from the scratch and nurtures it into a success venture. He is essentially a risk-taker and innovator because he/she uses various resources to create and sustain wealth; pursues opportunities even in areas other see as problems.

Types of entrepreneur

There are different of entrepreneurs, however, they can be classified into sole proprietors, partners, limited liability companies (private or public), corporation/public utilities, etc. The following are characteristics or traits of Entrepreneurs, as observed by Aluwong (2007). Innovation, Risk-taking; Self Confidence; Hard work; Goal-Setting; Accountability, Self-Reliance, Independence, Achievement drive. All of the above with some experience, market/product, good basic or general education and some capital to start with are necessary requirements for entrepreneurship.

Present status of technical and vocational education in Nigeria

Technical and Vocational Education is said to have suffered enormous setback in Nigeria. The policies measure intended to expand and improve Technical and Vocational Education have not been effective, just like other good policies of the Government; problems are experienced in the implementation process.

Generally, the problems of Technical and Vocational Education in Nigeria include:

1. Limited resources for expansion
2. Lack of guidance services
3. Inadequate training of technical and vocational teachers.
4. Lack of teaching resources.

Specifically, the problems associated with this type of education include: Firstly; the public

perceptions of Technical and Vocational Education as having low status; Secondly, the tendency of well-trained Technical and Vocational Teachers seeking jobs in the private sectors rather than in the public sector due to higher remuneration incentives and prestige offered in the private sectors; Thirdly, there is a significant mismatch between training and practice, especially between teachers trained abroad and those trained in Nigerian Institutions. It is worth noting that the Technical Teachers Training Programme, which was a scheme for training technical teachers abroad, was domesticated and subsequently scrapped; Fourthly, the existing policies on Technical and Vocational Education are said to be inadequate, and are not informed by experiences elsewhere, which might suggest strategies to produce both highly skilled professionals as well as Technical assistants. Lastly, the merger of technical education and science education units at the Federal Ministry of Education has impacted negatively on Technical Education due to lack of understanding of the peculiar funding needs for technical education. Funds for technical and vocational education are occasionally diverted to other sectors.

National seminar on TVE in Nigeria (2000) observed that, quantitatively, technicians are short in every technological field and qualitatively; the best brains look down on technology as unrewarding. Unless steps are taken to arrest this situation, economic development will be in everlasting jeopardy, self-reliance and entrepreneurship will be unattainable, importation will continue to grow and the value of Naira will continue to depreciate.

Strategies for enhancing technical and vocational education

1. Quality delivery of Technical and Vocational Education. Training for high quality skills require appropriate training equipment and tools, adequate supply of training materials and practice. Other requirements include relevant textbooks and training manuals and qualified instructors with experience in enterprises.
2. Enhancement status and attractiveness of Technical and Vocational Education. Technical and Vocational Education should be promoted as a tool for economic empowerment in Nigeria. For this reason, the use of role models in Technical and Vocational Education and the involvement of successful entrepreneurs in motivation campaigns will be necessary.

3. A National policy framework with clear implementation guidelines and policy roles for various actors as well as action plans for resources mobilization and allocation. There should be a political commitment to the revitalization effort TVE Programme.
4. Part-time programmes, Sandwich programmes, long vacation courses and weekend programmes should be introduced for workers as well as training programmes relevant to the needs of the society.
5. In this era of economic meltdown, emphasis should be on self-reliance. Programmes that appears to be out of tune with current realities should be scrapped Polytechnics and Technical Colleges should continue to offer a wide range of skills improvement courses ranging from few weeks to a session for different categories of workers.
6. There must be links between industries and Technical and Vocational Education. Where they exist, they should be improved and strengthened. There must be adequate funding and the quality assurance systems need to be revised and strengthened.

Need for technical and vocational education and entrepreneurship

The United Nations (one world. Net, 2007) warns that the whole Sub-Saharan Africa will fail to meet the goals set in 2000 for eradicating global poverty by 2015. From all indications, Nigeria may not achieve the MDGs by 2015. As at now, the entire world is, unfortunately, hungry because of natural disasters such as Isunamis, droughts, earthquakes (Aluwong, 2008). This situation is further aggravated by global economic crises where thousands have lost their jobs. The fight against poverty by 2015 seems lost.

The solution now lies in the type of education the citizens of this country have. The type of education that can bail us out of this economic crisis is Technical and Vocational Education which offers training in knowledge and skills acquisition for effective enterprising and self-reliance.

Entrepreneurship is a necessary ingredient for stimulating economic growth and employment opportunities in all modern societies. This is because small business enterprises are the primary engines for job creation, income growth and poverty reduction.

Entrepreneurship therefore, involves the ability to set up a business enterprise as different from being employed. According to Danko (2006) in Zahradeen, Aliyu, Kurya and Kurfi, this ability should be acquired and differ in some aspect from abilities acquired to enable a person obtain a paid employment. It involves the acquisition of skills, idea and management abilities necessary for personal self-reliance on an Individuals.

Entrepreneurship education, as a tool for fighting poverty and unemployment. According to Alwong (2008), has the prosperity to continually:

- i. Provide more vocational business skills to all Nigerians (Youths and Adults) irrespective of sex, intellectual ability, physical disability, culture, religion or ideology:
- ii. Produce more Semi-skilled, skilled and professional manpower needed to revitalize, operate and sustain the Nigerian economy.
- iii. Reduce unemployment and inescapably poverty, brought about the lack of specific job skills and motivation.
- iv. Raise and sustain a generation of Job creators rather than Job seekers in the country and
- v. Raise and sustain more honest Nigerians who will fight corruption practices and other social vices.

The personal or individual self-reliance efforts when put together transforms into national self-reliance because when the individual is gainfully employed and productive through self-reliance, entrepreneurship will be enhanced. Enhancing Technical and Vocational Education should include the entrepreneurship education being entrenched in its curriculum.

Conclusion

The present status of technical and vocational education calls for enhancement for quality TVE Programme to meet the present realities. Entrepreneurship education should be introduced into our school curricular. The issue of entrepreneurship education in all Nigeria's Higher Institutions cannot be over emphasized. It would be ground breaking to expose all our youths and adults to the world of entrepreneurship. If the objective of Technical and Vocational Education for self-reliant and enterprising are to be achieved, the quality of Technical and Vocational Education must be enhanced for effective entrepreneurship.

Recommendations

On the basis of this paper, I recommend:

The quality of the T.V.E should be improved at all levels. There should be a reform by a way of:

- i. Curriculum development of various TVE programmes by NERDC. Entrepreneurship education should be included at all levels of TVE programmes:
- ii. Specification on provision of minimum standards for infrastructures, Equipment, machines, tools, teaching materials for Technical Institutions by NUC, NBTE, NCCE, NTI, UBE etc.
- iii. Improvement of Professionalism, commitment and provision for better career prospects, special salaries, good conditions of service and incentives for TVE teachers by the Federal State and Local Governments.
- iv. Examination, assessment and certification should be used as a positive means of improving standard in Technical Institutions by NABTEB, Universities, Colleges of Education, and Polytechnics etc.
- v. The creation of Entrepreneurship Training/Initiative Centres. All institution of higher learning should establish Entrepreneurship Centres for the purpose of training and entrepreneurial initiatives.
- vi. That entrepreneurship should be accessible to all. Deliberate effort should be made to ensure that all Nigerians have access to entrepreneurship education.
- vii. That the government funding for small and medium enterprises should be more financially empowered. For effective performance.

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