

Entrepreneurial Skills in Technical Vocational Education and Training as A strategic Approach for Achieving Youth Empowerment in Nigeria

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Abstract

Entrepreneurial studies are inter-disiplinary training that focuses on the tools needed to start a new business or vocation. Because Nigeria is fast becoming a predominantly youthful society with high rate of unemployment requires training the youth in entrepreneurial skills in Technical Vocational Education and Training to tackle the unemployment which has reached alarming proportions. This is because the youth represents a tremendous potentials development of human capital which the society cannot afford to neglect. Young people's situation and future prospects are of vital concern to all. Many youth face high unemployment, joblessness and difficulties in getting a firm foothold into the labour market. These have led to problem of unemployment especially among youth leaving various educational institutions. The youth graduate from school without the needed skills or competencies that would enable them function in today's emerging society. Therefore, this paper examined how entrepreneurial skills in Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) can be used as a strategic approach for achieving youth empowerment in Nigeria.

Introduction

Nigeria is the most populous black nation in Africa where one out of every five Africans lives. However, poverty situation in Nigeria is alarming, especially among the youth. Though, Poverty and unemployment, especially among youth is a global phenomenon. For instance, findings released by the office of the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 2004 shows that youth (18-30) make up nearly half (47 per cent) of the world unemployed. Accordingly, Lam, Leibbranat and Mlatsheni's findings in 2008 shows that of the world's 550 million working poor who cannot lift themselves above US \$1 per day poverty are youth. The estimation of poverty in 2004 halving the youth globally indicates that unemployment among youth would increase if adequate measures are not put in place to tackle the menace. Which World Bank (2008) opined would lower poverty level and adds to Growth Domestic Product (GDP).

Nigeria is an important case study of the youth unemployment. The country has had a pervasive unemployment for over a decade. Though Nigeria is the most populated black nation in Africa and eight in the world with a population of over 160 million people, she has a nominal Growth Domestic Product of £207.11 billion. However, as impressive as these statistics might be, the Human Development Index in 2002 ranked Nigeria as 148th out of 173 poorest. The situation as observed by Segun (2010) has reached alarming stage as more than 45 per cent of the Nigeria population leaves below poverty line, while 67 per cent of the poor are extremely poor. The reality on ground which helps to give a better explanation to poverty in Nigeria is that which is seen every day on the streets of both urban and rural areas.

Similarly, the Federal Office of Statistics (FOS) report for the period 1980-1998 indicates that about 68million Nigerians are living below the poverty line of below \$1 a day, hence the needs to empower the Nigerian youth to avoid unforeseen dangers (Segun, 2010).

The only way to empower the youth is to provide them with adequate and qualitative education in order to make them job creators and eradicate poverty (Sekenu, 2004). Many countries of the world including Nigeria have considered Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) as relevant in equipping young people with technical skills that would enable them engage in productive livelihoods. However, the United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) section for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in 2006 observed that TVET programmes have not led to increased employment, despite the obvious need for technical and vocational services. This might be due to dearth of wage employment opportunities for technically trained manpower. Another reason advanced by Tiong (2002) on the lack of increase in employment by TVET is the impact of globalization which demands concrete response in the best direction and practice. These responses include among others strengthening the social fabric, restructuring the local economy and training human resources to meet the demands of the global world.

The new world economy requires innovation, training, reinventing in vocational education and entrepreneurship training that will significantly favour the youth. Entrepreneurship skills could help the youth acquire the mind set and know-how necessary to make self-employment or viable career option.

Overview of Entrepreneurial Education

The terms entrepreneurship and entrepreneur are being used interchangeably to mean the same. Though they may be closely related, the terms are not in any way the same. A sharp distinction exists between them. For instance, entrepreneur refers to a person. That is, who is he and what does he do that differentiate him from a non-entrepreneur? While, entrepreneurship refers to a process which seeks answers to what he does, how does he (an entrepreneur) do what he does? Entrepreneur can be defined as one who brings resources, labour, material among other into combinations that make their value greater than in the past, as well as been able to introduce changes, innovation and new ideas for the growth of a business. Similarly, Kitner (2007) viewed an entrepreneur as a special type of labour that requires the assembling of all factors of production namely capital, land and labour, and tries to ensure optimum utilization of them to ensure maximum profit. From the management angle, entrepreneurs are pictured as managers of small business. They organise, manage, and assume the risk of a business or an enterprise. In entrepreneur management, an entrepreneur does not only organise resources to create wealth but manages such resources efficiently in order to sustain his/her innovation and minimize possible risks that might lie ahead. The success of an entrepreneur depends on the willingness to accept responsibility for one's own work

As a process, Allawadi (2007) defined entrepreneurship as that which involves evaluating business opportunities, development of a business plan, and determination of the required resources as well as management of resulting enterprise. It is the practice of consistently converting goods and ideas into profitable commercial ventures. It is a continually pursuit of opportunities through innovations leverage of resource that are for the most part not controlled internally. Entrepreneurship refers to an individual's ability to turn ideas into action. According to the European Commission (2009), entrepreneurial programmes and modules offer the beneficiaries the ability to think creatively and become an effective problem solver. Modern school of thought claims that the role of the entrepreneur is that of an innovator, even though the definition of innovation is still widely debatable.

However, Kitner (2007) posits that the process of innovation is actually of spontaneous "un deliberate learning". Meaning that the necessary characteristic of entrepreneur is alertness, and no intrinsic skills are involved. Through the idea that entrepreneurs are innovators is largely acceptable, it is difficult to apply this theory of entrepreneurship to Less Developed Countries (LDCs). According to Allawadi (2007) entrepreneurs in LDCs rarely produce brand new products; rather they imitate the products and production processes that have been innovated in developed countries. Allawadi refers to this practice as "creative imitator". Creative imitation takes place when the imitators better understand how an innovation can be applied, used, or sold in their local market. Thus, the innovation process in LDCs is often that of imitating and adapting, instead of the traditional notion of the new product or process discovery and development. Some individual apply the concept of entrepreneur and entrepreneurship to the creation of any new business, while others may focus on intentions.

Still, other tends to confuse managing a small business such as roadside Auto mechanic or furniture maker as entrepreneurs. But, Kitner (2007) argued that not all business managers are entrepreneurs because they do not innovate. On the other hand, parker (2009) noted that the function that is specific to entrepreneurs is the ability to take factors of production- land, labour and capital and use them to produce new goods and services. parker argued that entrepreneurs perceive opportunities that other business executives do not see or care about. Allawadi (2010) tied entrepreneurship to the creation of five basic “new contributions” of introducing a new product, a new method of production, opening a new market, conquest of new source of supply and creating a new organization. Creativity and entrepreneurship promote the birth of new firms which is critical to economic development efforts.

A definition which seems to fully capture the true meaning of entrepreneurship is one provided by Kitner (2007). Kitner conceived entrepreneurship as a process in which individuals pursue opportunities, fulfilling needs and wants through innovations, together with the attendant risks. Based on the above definitions, it can be concluded that entrepreneurship is the process of carefully determining and analyzing unmet needs through creatively and satisfying those needs by bearing the related risks. By combining the above thoughts, it can be generalized that entrepreneurs are risk bearers, coordinators, organizers, gap-fillers, leaders, and innovators or creative imitators who are focused and determined to make life meaningful. More so that education for entrepreneurship can be particularly effective in initial Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET), where risk taking is supported by relevant skills in a specific occupation.

Entrepreneurial skills in Technical Vocational Education and Training

It is no news that the world has become private sector driven, and economic prosperity in the 21st century requires the possession of entrepreneurial skills to function. The youth needs exposure in practical entrepreneurial work experience in order to be proficient in their chosen career and be useful to themselves and the society. Entrepreneurship which is a planned effort undertaken by an individual or individuals, institutions or agencies to develop the required competencies in people can easily be addressed through vocational options. Competencies of individual’s entrepreneurial skill in TVET are designed to lead the beneficiaries’ to self-employment, economic self-sufficiency, and employment generation through short or long-term training. This has lead African countries including Nigeria to realise that training in TVET is necessary to alleviate poverty through skill acquisition. TVET can be described as any form of education whose primary purpose is to prepare beneficiaries for gainful employment in an occupation or group of occupations.

Olaitan (1998) defined TVET as a form of education that primarily concern the development of occupational skills needed in an individual as a preparation for work. It is a form of education which promotes the dignity of labour by entrenching work as the goal of education. TVET is training or retraining programme given in schools or classes under supervision and control. The learning experiences according to Abubakar (2010) may occur in variety of learning context, including educational institutions and workplace. In Nigeria, the teaching of skills in the formal sector exists in two types of institutions (Oziegbe, 2009). These institutions are Technical Colleges and Trade Centres. In these institutions, individuals are provided with needed skills that will enable them become proficient in both the public workplace and private employment. TVET is a continue process of adaptation of the worker’s training towards acquiring the minimum knowledge required.

Technical Vocational Education and Training is result oriented. It brings about technological advancement and aims to fit new manpower for employment and provide continuing training for those already qualified, so that they can keep pace with modern and emerging work environment. TVET are by design intended to develop skills that can be used in specific occupation or job (Olaitan 1998). The objectives and content of the curricula of TVET according to the World Bank are derived from occupational standards or more directly from analysis of the task that are to be carried out on the job. The effectiveness of these curricula can thus be measured by the extent to which trained beneficiaries can use their skills in employment. The National Policy on Education (2004) explained the purpose of TVET as:

- (i) To enable individuals acquire vocational and technical skills.
- (ii) To expose the individuals to career awareness by exposing useable options in the world of work.
- (iii) To enable youth acquire an intelligent understanding of the increasing complexity of technology, and
- (iv) To stimulate creativity.

The NPE highlight the Nigeria's desired to achieve national goal through quality education, hence the need for acquisition of appropriate skills and competence both mental and physical as equipment for the individual to life and to also contribute to growth of the society. Thus, no society can develop to appreciable level without relevant functional and technological based TVET programme.

In Nigeria, the need for TVET cannot be overstressed. Hence, Olaitan (1998) opined that Technical Vocational Education and Training should be included in the curriculum programme of all school beginning from the time a child enters the primary school till his/her graduation from the university. This would help develop sufficient skills in their chosen occupational skills so as to help them obtain and hold employment on graduation. It important for Post-secondary Vocational Education in Colleges of Technology, Polytechnics and Universities to make provisions that would ensure that students who offer vocational courses in secondary schools are given the opportunity to increase their level of skill through further training. TVET provides various opportunities for discovering and developing the individual's potentials for work. Accordingly, Oziengbe (2009) opined that TVET has a broadening effect, which motivates learners to be more exploratory, realise their capability and develop their potentials for success in the workplace. In TVET, the youth undoubtedly would have the opportunity of being productive and become useful to themselves and the society.

Unemployment Rate in Nigeria and Government Responses to Achieving Youths Empowerment

Unemployment is one of the macroeconomic problems facing the Nigeria society today. Unemployment can be defined as the difference between the amount of labour employed at a given wage and working lends and working conditions as well as the amount of labour not hired at these levels. Ogwumike, (2001) conceived unemployment as a situation whereby people who are willing to work at a prevailing rate are unable to find job. This implies that not everybody should be counted as part of the employed in order not to overestimate the official rate of unemployment. The definition given by the International Labour Organisation [(ILO), 2004] seem more embracing. The ILO explained that an unemployed is a member of the economically active population who is without work but is available for and seeking for work, including people who lost their jobs and those who have voluntarily resigned as a result of underpay. This definition according to Odusola, (2001) is faulted especially for the purpose of comparison and policy formulation. This Odusola, explained is simply because every country has its characteristic in their commitment to unemployment problems; hence a universal definition stands debatable.

According to the Central Bank of Nigeria [(CBN), (2003)], the national unemployment rate, raised from 4.3 per cent in 1970 to 6.4 per cent in 1980. The high rate of unemployment observed in 1980 was attributed largely to depression in the Nigeria economy during the late 1970s. Specifically, the economic downturn led to the implementation of stabilization measures which included restriction on exports, which caused import dependency of most Nigerian manufacturing enterprises, this in turn resulted in Operation of many companies below their installed capacity. The development led to the closure of many industries, while the survived few were forced to retrench a large proportion of their workforce. Furthermore, the Nigerian Government also placed an embargo on employment. Specifically total disengagement from the Federal Civil Service rose from 2,724 in 1980 to 6,294 in 1984 (Odusola, 2001). Owing to this, the national unemployment rate fluctuated around 6.0 per cent until 1987 when it raised to 7.1 per cent. It is important to the state here that the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) adopted in 1986, had serious implications on employment rate in Nigeria. Records shows that unemployment rate decline from 7.1 per cent in 1987, to as low as 1.8 per cent in 1995, after which it raised to 3.4 per cent in 1996, and between 3.4 and 4.7 per cent between 1996 and 2000 (Odusola, 2001). Similarly, Eroke (2012) disclosed that 78.8 million youth aged between 15-24 were unemployed in 2011, an increase of more than since 2007. Eroke added that globally, young people are nearly three times as likely as adults to be unemployed, nothing that the global youth unemployment rate at 12.7 per cent remains a full percentage point above the pre-crisis level

The analysis by educational status also suggests that people who have been majorly affected by unemployment are those without basic education. For instance, person with and without primary school education accounted for 76.8 / 80.6 per cent of the unemployment in 1974 and 1978 respectively. In recent times however, the situation has been compounded by the increasing unemployment of professionals such as accountants, engineers, among others.

According to a 1974 survey, reported by Odusola, (2001) graduate unemployment accounted for less than 1 per cent of the unemployed, in 1974, by 1984, the proportion rose to 4 per cent for urban area and 2.2 per cent in the rural areas. Graduate unemployment, accounted about 32 per cent of the unemployed labour force between 1992 and 1997.

The loss in GDP attributed to youth unemployment combined with the cost of mitigating the impact of criminality associated with unemployment reinforces the need to address the issue. Consequently, the identification of effective interventions as well as adequate resource allocation is crucial. Resource constraint should not deter the Nigerian policy makers from refocusing public expenditure towards young people. Increased funding to raise the educational and health status of young people should be seen as a way of prioritizing allocation within the social sector.

As nations advance into the 21st century, governments are shrinking as many countries are shedding the responsibilities of major employer of labour. However, the rates of cutback vary from country to country but dictated by what is perceived by Salami (2011) as political and social consequences. This partly explains why government is the major employer of labour in developing countries like Nigeria. Ogwumike, (2001) explained that human development will definitely be grossly undermined and impaired without employment. Vanguard, (2010) argued that addressing the problems of mass unemployment, low productivity, high inflation and poverty, will depend on how speedily it is able to develop the capacity of millions of its labour force into knowledgeable and skilled individuals needed for the required changes in the workplace. Skill acquisition, a veritable vehicle to promote employment generation has become a part of the policy thrust of the Nigerian Government. Beginning with the Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DEFRI), National Directorate of Employment (NDE), the Family Support Programmes (FSP), the People's Bank of Nigeria were established by the government of General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida, and now the National Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), established by president Olusegun Obasanjo are some of the intervention Programmes that were intended to promote employment and reduce poverty to generation of Nigerians.

At the local level, some states like Niger state between 1999 and 2007 established Project YES (Youth Empowerment Scheme). While, the governor Emmanuel Uduaghan of Delta State introduced Micro-Credit Schemes, aimed at tackling unemployment rate in the state. Most of the past intervention were implemented as ad-hoc programmes, characterised by poor coordination and marred by corruption and inefficiently, Salami (2011). Consequently, rather than reducing unemployment, the reverse seems to be the case. The Nigerian Living Standard Survey estimated the poverty level at 54 per cent, implying that approximately 75 million Nigerians may be unemployed. It was estimated that about 40 million unemployed youths between 18 and 25 years. This figure is not captured by unemployment index because they are not looking for jobs as the jobs are simply not there (Vanguard, 2010). This figure is expected to be higher when lay-offs and outright closures occasioned by the global economic meltdown since 2008 are considered.

It could be argued that one of major reason why many past intervention programmes have failed to yield the desired result is what Salami (2011) described as a disconnection between skill acquisition and skill management. In other word, it is not enough to acquire a skill without capacity to manage one's self due to the lack of education. For any person to compete effectively in an emerging economy that is knowledge-driven, he or she must possess relevant job competencies, including technical, business, cultural, interpersonal and intellectual competencies which could be obtained through functional Technical Vocational Education and Training. This assertion was supported by Dike (2009) who argued that Technical Vocational Education and Training holds the key to Nigeria's development. Because the modern society has conditioned the youth into believing that the only route to success is university education. This has compiled many youth to prefer university as the best place to acquire education. This is followed by Polytechnics and then Colleges of Education. Policy makers at the Ministry of Education (FME) reflect this belief in the manner of allocation of fund for tertiary education with a bias towards university education in ratio of 3:1

Achieving Youth Empowerment through Entrepreneurial skills in Technical Vocational Education and Training

Youth empowerment is an attitudinal, structural and cultural process whereby the youth gain the ability to make decisions and employment changes in his or her hues and other people including adults.

It is usually addressed as a gateway to intergenerational equity, civic engagement and democracy building. The language all over Africa including Nigeria is the creation of specific jobs to take the millions of youth out of the shackle of poverty and underemployment thereby empowering the youth. The need to link entrepreneurial training with TVET would provide gainful employment (paid or self-employment) to the recipient which is the base for industrialization and technological development. The UNESCO, (2003)., while addressing the need for fostering entrepreneurship mind sets and promoting entrepreneurship education among the youth recommends TVET as a sure way out of poverty facing the youth worldwide today.

It is a fact that the society needs men and women that are capable of establishing businesses that would help cushion the adverse effects of mass unemployment and poverty which entrepreneurial skills in TVET affords. Entrepreneurial studies allows the beneficiaries to consider various occupational possibilities the work required, available rewards, necessary training and relative advantages and disadvantages of each (Nwoye, 2011). The scope of entrepreneurship education according to the UNESCO, (2003) includes creativity, innovations, risk taking and the ability to plan and manage projects in order to achieve objectives. In line with the scope of entrepreneurship education, and by its definition as the ability to turn ideas into action, the International Labour Organisation in its recent appraisal of the world job situation urged member nations to create specific programme to engage the youth in vocational areas of automobile mechanic, metal work, electrical electronics, carpentry, tailoring among others. Such intervention, the ILO opined was the solution to the ever-widening challenges of joblessness worldwide. TVET prepares its graduates for employment in the workplace. It is in this spirit that the federal government of Nigeria in 1976 introduced the 6-3-3-4 system of education: 3-years primary, 3-years junior secondary, 3- years' senior secondary and a minimum of 4 years tertiary education.

The deepening youth unemployment and need to empower the youth requires training them in entrepreneurial education through TVET. Introducing entrepreneurial studies as an explicit goal in the curriculum will be a clear signal that it is important for every student. Moreover, it will make it easier for teachers to spend teaching hours on the subject. A general trend should be on how to shift national curriculum from content to competences. This process would strengthen competency-based teaching and learning to make it easier for entrepreneurship to be included in the school programmes. It is important that schools extend entrepreneurial training to all fields of study in TVET. This Dike (2009) opined would enable graduates of TVET to make intelligent use of the product of technology and develop better entrepreneurial skills to become more innovative workers. Persons who have passed through TVET programme become more dutiful and conscientious in their duties. TVET reduces unemployment in the society (Oranu, 1991; Olaitan, 1992).

In a country like Nigeria where high rate of unemployment is being experienced as evidence in this paper, likely brought by the system failure, coupled with inability of government to create job for the teeming youth (Muhammed, 2010) means that entrepreneurship in TVET could be employed to develop saleable skills in the youth so that they become easily self-employed or employable after graduation. The promotion of entrepreneurial studies would create opportunities for employment with subsequent income multiplier effects for the surrounding community. If job creation and entrepreneurial activities are carefully co-ordinated, then it would not be argued that increased entrepreneurship would no doubt help the most disadvantaged in the labour market This become more important because there seem no indication that unemployment will be eradicated completely in the 21st century. The situation according to Maigida (2012) become worse due to the change in the competencies required of job seekers in the labour market brought about by innovations in technology which makes it necessary for youth to acquire specialized skills to enable them cope with the current trends in technology and the labour market. Entrepreneurship in TVET may serve as a tool for achieving youth empowerment. This is possible in the light of TVETs' immense contributions to social and economic development to individuals. Therefore, promotion of entrepreneurial skills in TVET should form an array of developmental programmes and policies in technical and vocational institutions.

Conclusion

There is nothing that says the youth must be consigned to lives without work. Youth unemployment can be tackled. Every young person could be given the chance that previous generations took for granted. Together, we can help the young people get the jobs on which their future-and those yet unborn depends. This can be achieved through informal sector in which all stake holders are involved by way of lending their support to informal sector to ensure that it is not downtrodden.

This can be achieved through entrepreneurship training in Technical Vocational Education and Training. Entrepreneurial traits are characteristics that give individuals the potential or propensity to run a successful business. These traits which includes: creativity, need to achieve, need for autonomy, intuition among others are the ingredients of good leadership and requirements for effectiveness in any vocational area. This could be adopted by technical educators and trainees for optimal performance in their chosen vocations,

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made on how to achieve entrepreneurial skills education through Technical Vocational Education and Training.

- i. Entrepreneurial skills and workshop on how to find business ideas should be integrated in school curriculum to encourage young people to start their own business. Policy actions in this regard would include:
 - Giving priority to mathematics and science education at all levels of education and offering incentives to science teachers.
 - Providing adequate financing for vocational/technical training.
 - Linking vocational and entrepreneurial training with job centres to ensure that the skills profiles supplied match demand.
 - Encouraging out-of-school young people to be involved in vocational training to promote social inclusion as well as enhance employability.
- ii. The education system should provide the skills profiles required by the labour market to enhance employability of young people after graduation.
- iii. Government should encourage private sector's participation in the delivery of Technical Vocational Education and Training.
- iv. Due to the socio-cultural diversity inherent in developing countries like Nigeria, entrepreneurial policies that are unique and indigenous to the respective states should be vigorously pursued.
- v. Given the likelihood of challenges, government should offer incentives such as "tax holiday", and adequate protection from foreign competitors, as well as patent rights to spur more desire for innovation.

These recommendations if pursuit vigorously would no doubt remove the youth and adult alike from the shackle of poverty holding the universe to ransom.

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