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# Technical and Vocational Education for Self-Reliance in a Depressed Economy: An Entrepreneurial Initiative

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By

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## **Abstract**

*This paper examined the concept of Technical and Vocational Education (TVE) and entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship education makes for emergence of small business venture. The paper discussed the issue of entrepreneurship education in TVE, and how TVE graduates could become entrepreneurs instead of job seekers. It also x-rayed entrepreneurship education in a depressed economy, constraints to effective TVE in Nigeria, and strategies for enhancing entrepreneurship education in TVE.*

## **Introduction**

Nigeria as a one of the developing nations of the world is saddled with series of problems ranging from unemployment, poverty, youth restiveness, population explosion, and environmental degradation. The economic and social life of the nation has been sliding down as result of the economic recession. There are closure of industries, premature retirement and retrenchment of workers, inflation in the prices of goods and services, unemployment, scarcity of petroleum products, irregular payment of salaries, among others (Ogbene, 1998). There is increase demand for better condition of living. Technical and Vocational Education (TVE) strives to solve these pressing problems of today and tomorrow. TVE is a skill-oriented programme that prepares individuals for purposeful living.

TVE improves the quality of life of people if appropriate skills are gained. TVE deals with knowledge, skills, competencies and aptitude that fit an individual wholly and entirely for work or business. For the poor and needy in the world, TVE provides the medium to secure an accessible, affordable and secured living. Unfortunately, developmental strategies in TVE practices in many countries (including Nigeria) quite often ignore the needs of the poor in their own country (Relief Network Ministries, Inc., 2008). TVE prepares individuals for jobs that are based on manual and practical activities in relation to specific trades, occupations or vocations. The learner directly develops expertise in a particular group of techniques or technology. As a result, TVE is related to the age-old apprenticeship system of learning.

In time past, anyone who went to school and acquired some form of education was sure to get one form of paid employment or the other immediately after

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graduation. The present state of the depressed economy and the resultant measure of unemployment has resulted in the need for every Nigerian to become self-reliant through self-employment. This calls for entrepreneurship education as its major aim is to encourage and train university, polytechnics and secondary school graduates to take up self-employment. This is why motivation is central to entrepreneurship. The characteristics that are common to entrepreneurship include: (i) the desire to create a new business; (ii) the freedom to determine one's destiny; (iii) the need for independence and the willingness to meet challenges; (iv) the need for motivation, great determination and perseverance (Shaperso, 1975).

This implies that TVE curriculum should be diversified so as to cater for differences in talents and to anticipate variety of opportunities open to the students after completing their programme. The curriculum should be designed to equip the students to live effectively in the present modern age of science and technology.

Interestingly, TVE has diversified over the 20<sup>th</sup> century and now exists in industries. Labour markets have become more specialized and economies demand higher levels of skills. University and other post-secondary institutions are now offering TVE. Government and businesses are increasingly investing in TVE through publicly funded training organizations (Wikipedia, 2007).

TVE is skill based and necessary for persons who are preparing to enter the labour force or who need training in the technology of their occupation. The impact of technology on occupations, the tendency of employers to set higher educational requirements and the need for employees with specialized training have made vocational preparation imperative. TVE programmes range from short to long term programmes and include numerous occupational areas such as office skills, agriculture, various trades, health services and technical training. The scope of TVE is broad, ranging from occupations requiring little skills to those requiring a high degree of skills and scientific knowledge. Jobs requiring minimum training are not generally included in formal programmes because the necessary skills can be readily learned on the job.

In Nigeria, where untold hardship has become a major concern for both government and its citizenry, the acquisition of technical and vocational skills would be a step in the right direction. Government policy statement in its declaration of her vision 2020 is indeed a welcome development. Vision 2020 in Nigeria means that by the year 2020, Nigeria will be among the 20 largest economies in the world. Vision 2020 has the mission to reform and restructure the educational sector to empower and develop the citizenry to acquire skills and knowledge that would prepare them for the world of work (Sadiq, 2005). This paper therefore attempts to examine concept of entrepreneurship education, TVE in a depressed economy, how TVE and entrepreneurship education can help to solve the problem of unemployment in Nigeria and strategies for enhancing entrepreneurship education in TVE.

### **Entrepreneurship Education**

Entrepreneurship is the ability to set up a business enterprise as different from being employed. This ability is acquired and is different in some respects from the abilities acquired to enable an individual obtain paid employment. It involves the acquisition of skills, ideas and managerial abilities necessary for personal self-reliance. Entrepreneurship is a main pivot of industrialization, development and wealth creation. Iromaka (2005) posited that this is so because the entrepreneur is that person who undertakes the risk of investing in creation, funding, establishment, management and operation of business enterprises for the purpose of profit, growth and development. Iromaka added that the value to what otherwise would have remained latent in its original form or identification state.

Entrepreneurial ability found in an entrepreneur usually has the following characteristics: (i) the entrepreneur takes the initiative in combining the resources of land, capital and labour in the production of goods or services; (ii) the entrepreneur has the choice of making basic business policy decisions, that is, those routine decisions which set the course for a business enterprise (iii) the entrepreneur is an innovator, one who attempts to introduce on a commercial basis new products, new productive techniques, or even new forms of business organization; and (iv) the entrepreneur is a risk bearer. The reward of his/her time, efforts and abilities may be attractive profits or loss and eventually bankruptcy. The entrepreneur risk not only time, efforts and business reputation but his/her invested funds and those of his/her associates or stockbrokers (Ekwue, 2004).

This individual self-reliance effort when put together transforms into national self-reliance because when the individual is gainfully productive through self-employment, the Gross National Product (GNP) is enhanced and the income per capital is also enhanced.

### **Entrepreneurship Education in Technical and Vocational Education**

TVE is aimed at helping people to develop desirable attitudes and skills necessary for the world of work, resourcefulness and ability to adapt to life's changing situation. According to Ogbene (1998), TVE is self-reliance oriented. It is a dynamic field of study whose primary purpose is based on the improvement of the lives of its recipients and the society.

There is scarcity of human basic needs, hunger, inadequate shelter, etc which is as a result poverty and unemployment. Poverty is the inability to attain a minimum standard of living. The poverty level of the people in Nigeria is very high. The income level of the people is very low. There is gross instability in employment. Many people have little or no assets. They are uneducated and live in unhealthy conditions. The poor are illiterate, poor in health and have short life span (Ravallion, 1992). They are not self-reliant. They are handicapped or ill equipped to help themselves. As a result

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of these limitations, skill acquisition for self-reliance is indispensable. TVE encourages the expansion of knowledge and development of skills by every citizenry.

The philosophy of TVE is centred on the acquisition of knowledge and skills that can be applied for purposeful living.

TVE as a skill-oriented programme characteristically has a lot of opportunities for small-scale businesses wherein graduates can be self-employed (Buedette-Williamson, 1996; Iloeje, 1999; Igbo, 2001). This is because TVE is a broad and diversified field made up of many sub-areas including: Industrial and technical education (Building Technology, Electrical technology, Mechanical technology), business education (secretarial studies education, accounting education), home economics education, agricultural education, among others. A good TVE programme should aim at the following:

1. Training students for proficiency in specific occupations in the area of TVE.
2. Making students to acquire specific skills that can make them to be self-reliant.
3. Training students to acquire skills on how to float and succeed in a business venture (Ogbene, 1998).

Unemployment can be greatly reduced by increasing opportunities for more jobs through TVE occupations. All the areas of TVE have their career options which can also keep the graduates gainfully employed in the absence of paid employment. TVE related Business Opportunities include:

- **Agriculture and Agro-allied Industry:** Processing of garri and yam flour; Poultry farming; Processing of cattle and poultry feeds; and Production of industrial starch.
- **Metal and Engineering:** Production of rakes, cutlasses, hoes and shovel; Making of beds, iron chairs and tables; Workshops for repair and servicing of automobiles; and Workshops for repair and servicing of kitchen equipment, refrigerators, blenders, etc.
- **Chemical and Allied Groups:** Production of candles; Manufacturing of all classes of soap, laundry detergent; and Production of chalk, paint and plastics.
- **Wood and Woodwork:** Furniture making; Wood machinist, and Treatment of timber.
- **Blocklaying and Concreting:** Block/brick moulding; Building drawing/drafting; Building construction/ block laying; House painting; Tiles laying; and Production of interlocking tiles.
- **Traditional craft and cultural heritage:** Basket making; raffia-making; Carving; blacksmithing; and pottery.
- **Paper products:** Production of cardboards; Book-binding; Manufacture of paper egg-tray, toilet rolls, napkins, file jackets; and Production of stickers and labels, paper bags and cartons.
- **Service Enterprise:** Distributorship; Consultancy; Employment Agency; Travel Agency; Computer Business Centre; Rental service; GSM call centres; Supply

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Business; Internet Centre (cyber café); and Setting up a school – Day Care Centres/baby sitting/nursery/primary, coaching centres, etc.

- **Home Economics:** Catering Services and Restaurant Management; Bakery – Bread making, snacks, cake making and decoration; Fast food business; Out door catering services; Ice cream and yogurt business; Preparation of Beverages – Soya beans milk, zobo, yogurt and other fruit drinks; Jam making; Fashion and designing including ‘batik’, ‘tie and dye’, Adire’, etc; Embroidery ; Tatting and Crocheting and Knitting; Weaving; Hair dressing; Fabric store; Fashion school operation; Toy making; Soap and body cream production; Laundry and dry cleaning services; House keeping; Rug cleaning services; and Interior decorator.

### **Technical and Vocational Education in a Depressed Economy**

Abdullahi (2007) opined that with roughly over 140 million Nigerians, 36 states (and a Federal Capital Territory), a weak political and economic system and persistent ethnic and religious conflicts in Nigeria, education provides the best alternative for national stability, security, unity and prosperity. Abdullahi further stated that John Dewey, a foremost American philosopher had in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century written to the American audience that democracy was important not only because it stood for freedom and equality but because of its educational consequences.

Fortunately, in any modern society, education remains the core of national security, stability and an instrument for economic and political growth and development. The challenges to education and democracy are obvious. The history of economic stagnation, declining welfare and social instability has undermined development for most of the past 30 years (FRN, 2008). Nigerian educational system has been remarkably interrupted by change in government since independence from Britain in 1960. There have been eight military and six civilian governments. Budgetary commitment to education has not been stable with varying degrees against the United Nations recommendation that African nations should allocate about 21 per cent of their national budget to education.

In addition, with the continuous fluctuation in the world oil market and Nigerian’s over dependence on the petrodollars, it is doubtful whether the General National Domestic Product (GNP) will be able to support and sustain a comprehensive educational plan. Similarly, increasing corruption records and human rights violations and abuses, lack of human respect and dignity combined with weak governance/lack of demonstrable commitment to the democratic principles, economic goals, skills development and values needed to secure our educational aspirations continue to undermine our potential as a Nation (Abdullahi, 2007).

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#### **Constraints to Effective TVE in Nigeria**

Some of the constraints of TVE in playing its role include:

1. One of the major constraints to TVE playing the above role is the lack of infrastructures, such as roads, electricity, communication system, water and good transportation. Nigeria lacks good roads for movement of human, of goods and services. Electricity and energy are a major component for the operation of equipments and machineries.
2. Inaccessibility of information and statistical data coupled with unavailability of good communication systems hinder information dissemination as well as TVE development.
3. TVE is further constrained in Nigeria by the lack of funds and a federally unified structure in TVE administration and control. To a large extent, the sector is dominated by privately owned establishments. Notwithstanding the role of co-ordination and other activities of the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) in Nigerian Polytechnics, the National University Commission (NUC) and National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE), has failed to attract a large percentage of the federal education budget to TVE.
4. Negative societal perception and attitude towards TVE. TVE is perceived as education meant for only the “good for nothing”, educationally weak or drop outs are constraints to TVE especially for persons who are talented for skilled jobs requiring human physical effort. Happily though, this is gradually changing in the positive direction.
5. Inadequate trainers or experts in TVE continue to be a major constraint. Although TVE is rather not too new in Nigeria, there are still a few universities offering TVE programme. Obeng (2008) had opined that teacher education in Sub-Sahara Africa is of current concern to all African governments because of our collective commitments to global agreements especially, the Education for All (EFA) goals, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development. In other to achieve the Nigeria vision 2020, the role of teacher education especially in TVE has become critical for achieving these goals since a well trained teacher is a key to effective educations and to the achievement of these global accords.
6. Poor enrollment of students in primary and secondary schools (inclusive of technical colleges) for TVE oriented courses which are feeders to post secondary TVE programmes is another constraint to TVE development in Nigeria and the attainment of national growth and economic prosperity. UNESCO (2007) reported that the sub-Sahara Africa has many more people who are illiterates than in other regions of the world. The EFA report indicates that the region has the lowest adult literacy rate of 69 per cent in 2005.

The constraints to education and TVE in Nigeria are obvious. There are about 250 ethnic groups speaking approximately 400 languages and practice basically three religions which are: Christianity, Islam and African traditional religion. In all these, three major ethnic groups, that is, the Yoruba’s, Ibos and the Hausa-Fulani continue

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to strongly dominate and influence social and political events. There are also traditional rulers/leaders, hereditary chiefs; local chief and local Emirs exercising great influence on the culture and traditional political system. All these have various constraints over TVE and the attainment of Nigeria's vision (Abdullahi, 2007).

### **Strategies for Enhancing Entrepreneurship Education in Technical and Vocational Education in a Depressed Economy**

1. Entrepreneurship education should be introduced at all levels of educational system. Students should be given opportunities for educating and training for self employment. Nelson and Leach (1981) opined that the concept of owning and operating a small business should be introduced in career education programmes at the primary school level.
2. The emphasis should be that government should provide the needed legal framework and the enabling environment for TVE to continue to strive. In addition, social amenities and infrastructures should be provided.
3. The need for adequate funding of the educational system should continuously be the priority of government, private organizations and the totality of the Nigerian citizenry. Central to these issues of enhancing entrepreneurship education in TVE programmes is adequate funding. Since TVE is capital intensive, a deliberate intervention policy must be made towards the funding of TVE Programmes. Government should as a matter of policy allocate some reasonable sum of money for TVE programmes and facilities.
4. Competent teaching staff should be employed. If TVE programmes are to emphasize entrepreneurship education, then the teachers should be given adequate training in entrepreneurial knowledge, skills and attitudes. These have to be reflected in both pre-service and in-service training programme of the teachers. Since people cannot teach what they do not know, these teachers require in-service training in entrepreneurial knowledge, skills and attitudes to make their teaching more efficient and effective.
5. Educational facilities should be provided and utilized to support human capital development which would encourage enrollment into TVE programme. It has become quite clear that the government is not ready to build and equip laboratories in all secondary schools. But the effective implementation of entrepreneurship education programmes calls for development and effective utilization of necessary instructional materials, including textbooks. It is therefore left for the institution to of learning to acquire relevant textbooks and instructional materials for effective instruction in entrepreneurship education. This should be done by soliciting for financial assistance from non-governmental organizations and oil producing companies.

Nwaokolo (1999) suggested the establishment of vocational centres in Nigeria as a way of solving the problem of lack of vocational workshops and machines. This implies that in every geographical area, a properly equipped vocational centre should be established to serve all the secondary schools. Whenever

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and wherever this idea is implemented, there may be transport implications. Local government authorities may acquire a bus or two for the purpose of moving the students and even their teachers.

6. TVE experts and successful small business entrepreneurs should be involved in the development and implementation stages of our nation's education plans. Various pedagogic strengths of the teachers must be developed. It is also necessary to develop ways of working with other agencies, institutions and organizations which provide training and assistance to small businesses, such as the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) (Iheonunekwu, 2003).
7. The need for peace, security of life and property in any development efforts cannot be over-emphasized as nothing good could be achieved in an environment of hostility, crisis or insecurity of lives.

### **Conclusion**

TVE can play several roles in Nigeria's attainment of its lofty educational, socio-economic and political objectives. Although TVE have had its own fair share of constraints in the country's various stages of developmental processes, TVE and entrepreneurship provides the needed skills, knowledge, attitudes and competencies required for sustainable growth and development through gainful and self employment in the world of work.

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