

ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT: A VERITABLE VEHICLE FOR SUSTAINABLE VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION IN NATION BUILDING

Ibhaze, O. F. (Mrs.)

Abstract

The National Policy on Educational (2004), lays emphasis on the need for beneficiaries of vocational and technical education to be entrepreneurs so as to achieve self-employment after graduation. This has become possible as a result of the soaring problem of unemployment. Therefore, it is the view of this paper that there should be a responsible way of inculcating in our youths and adults the dream for self-employment as a very good alternative to wage employment. The paper also adds that the present-day educational system in our institutions of higher learning must emphasize entrepreneurial skills development in order to arrest the soaring unemployment rate in Nigeria.

Introduction

Ayeduso (1999), asserted that the entrepreneur is very important because of its influence on the economic and political life of the country. This is why the combined decisions of entrepreneurs and big corporations are the ones that shape unemployment, prices, prosperity, nature of work and occupational structures in any country.

In this vein, there is the need to teach and encourage entrepreneurial skills development in the students trained at the secondary and tertiary institutions. This will bring out the hidden entrepreneurship potentialities in students, at least, to be discovered, nurtured and cultivated early enough. This is the reason why vocational and technical education has a big role to play in training potential entrepreneurs. It is very vital because entrepreneurship enhances self-reliance which eventually culminates in operating a business successfully in any discipline in vocational and technical education to be exposed to the acquisition of entrepreneurship knowledge and skills in order to make them competent for self-employment.

Omenkeukwu (2000), added that graduates of vocational technical education, though they possess the basic necessity for a better chance of success in self-employment, may have some tough times succeeding in business because they have not been exposed to the entrepreneurial skills culture. As it cannot be cultivated overnight, it requires a lot of exposures in practical ways.

In this vein, when entrepreneurship skills are vigorously pursued alongside with the acquisition of vocational and technical education in our institutions, nation building in the right direction would emerge. Ngada (2001), said that nation building is the effort made by teachers to move the nation steadily and permanently in the direction of self-reliance and development through dedication to excellence in leadership, discipline, orderliness, honesty, mutual respect and tolerance in national affairs. It is also, a concerted effort by the leaders to bring people of a diverse society together to form an economically viable, political strong and culturally stable nation.

From the foregoing, therefore, entrepreneurial skills development is the only veritable vehicle to encourage sustainable vocational and technical education in Nigeria where poverty and unemployment are the order of the day. Hornby (2001), said that a veritable "vehicle" is something that can be used to express ones ideas or feelings in order to achieve it. Aina (2002), stressed that when something is being sustained, it means that it is the ability to stabilize or perpetrate the gains of nation building. In this case, an individual, a community, a nation or an ecosystem needs to sustain maintain the improved condition it has attained without regressing into its erstwhile undesirable state. This is what vocational and technical education programmes ought to do by solving unemployment and poverty through the utilization of entrepreneurial skill to harness the available resources to produce the desired good and services demanded by the citizens.

It is against this background, that vocational and technical education skills acquisition become very relevant to contemporary Nigeria where unemployment is increasing by leaps and bounds. This is why unemployment and poverty, according to Aina (2002), go hand in hand. He noted, that there has been a widespread unemployment, poverty, and socio-economic crises since 1980, in Nigeria.

Soaring Unemployment and Economic Turmoil

As a result population explosion in Nigeria, there is a corresponding increase in rate of enrolment in schools, colleges of education, polytechnics and universities. This is why there is a high graduate unemployment today because all the one hundred and eighty one (181) tertiary institutions graduate thousands of students yearly. Moreover, the unemployment situation in the country has aggravated hunger, poverty, insecurity, etc, so much that the future of the country cannot be easily , predicted as a developing one.

Worse still, the sins of Nigerians, which have culminated into all forms of corruption, have further aggravated the soaring unemployment situation. Akpochiafo (2002), added that Nigeria's prolonged economic and political turmoil could be attributed to the seven deadly sins as spelt out by Mahatma Ghandi of India as: wealth without work, politics without principles, commerce without morality, knowledge without character, religion without sacrifice, science without humanity, and pleasure without conscience. He further said, that these sins would continue to plague Nigeria unless there is bold and responsible step to eliminate them from our national life. The author, also, opined that Nigerians want wealth without work and so some people indulge in ritual murders, advanced free fraud (419), armed robbery and international/local prostitution, practice commerce without morality as we have the abundant cases of expired drugs, fake drugs and adulterated kerosene, pleasure without conscience and this is why kids can be raped and citizens gunned down through hired assassins or armed robbery.

In this case, it is through moral reconstruction that can bail Nigeria from the economic doldrums because it is self-inflicted.

Entrepreneurship Skills Development Education

Omenkeukwu (2000), explained that it is through the training of students in entrepreneurship skills right from their schools days that can make the desired impact by reducing unemployment situation in Nigeria. Therefore, entrepreneurship education is "an aspect of education that is at developing students' skills, ideas and managerial abilities that are necessary for personal reliance. In this case, entrepreneurship is a programme of human or manpower capital resource development.

In this vein, Nzeribe (1996) and Omenkeukwu (2000), identified the following factors as very imperative in constituting skills for entrepreneurship education:

1. Identifying the potentials and selection of career preference for self-employment.
2. Development of entrepreneurial qualities, e.g. innovative ability, risk-taking, desire to achieve and goal-oriented leadership.
3. Managerial understanding. This concerns office and marketing management.
4. Budget and forecasting.
5. Business financing and organization.
6. Individual entrepreneur: The entrepreneurial traits of the individual are motivated and reinforced through psychological training inputs.
7. Enterprise establishment - It has to do with setting up new business ventures, which would require business opportunity guidance and project planning as the educational inputs.
8. Entire (overall management) - This involves teaching managerial technique and counseling for successful and profitable operation of business enterprise.

Osagie (2002) also added that some qualities that should be acquired by individuals as follows

1. Business morality - this implies the inculcation of honesty towards owners, consumers, workers, suppliers, and the government, consciousness towards social obligations, belief in business ethics, etc.
2. Personal qualities like: self-discipline, tact, honesty, presence of good mind, patience, sense of justice, honour and dignity, moral character, etc.
3. Initiative and decision making power in the face of business completion.

However, the following agencies have also involved in promoting entrepreneurship programmes in Nigeria:

- a. *The National Youth Service Corps (NYSC)*: Conducts entrepreneurship training

programmes especially at the orientation period or some cases, towards the end of the NYSC year.

- b. **Higher Institutions:** The National Universities Commission (NUC) and National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) and National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) have expanded their vocational and technical education curriculum to include entrepreneurship development of small-scale business.
- c. **The Federal Government:** The Federal Government, especially through the Federal Ministry of Employment, Labour and Productivity, have been involved in formulating proposals for entrepreneurship development programme (EDP) of the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) for implementation. Also, the Industrial Training Fund (ITF) has been involved in training students through SIWES during school programmes and this is a way of bridging the gap between theory and practical work of students, and it will go a long way in assisting them to be future entrepreneurs.

The Need for Entrepreneurial Skills Development in Vocational Technical Education

It has been seen that entrepreneurial skills development is a veritable tool for socio-economic self-reliance in Nigeria, and this is the reason why there should be a responsible integration of the programme into Nigeria's vocational and technical education system. This is why Nwaokolo (1997) and Omenkeukwu (2000), agreed that when entrepreneurial skills development is well integrated into vocational and technical education, the following would be effected.

- a. It will enable students to possess entrepreneurial skills that will galvanize them to launch themselves to become future entrepreneurs.
- b. It will promote, in a large-scale, graduate contribution to the economic and social reconstruction of the country.
- c. It will arouse students' interest towards self-reliance or self-employment which is much needed today in Nigeria.
- d. It will create in graduates the zeal to establish their own businesses and even employ other supporting staff, after graduation.

Problems of Entrepreneurial Skills Development in Nigeria

The following problems **have** been identified as obstacles to entrepreneurial skills development in sustainable vocational and technical education in Nigeria.

1. **Shortage of Qualified Entrepreneurship Trainers:** The shortage of qualified entrepreneurship trainers is a big set-back to the programme at least, to be able to intimate the students with the desired courses in our tertiary institutions, Omenkeukwu (2002).
2. **Corruption in Low and High Places:** Egbochuku (2003), opined that corruption has been institutionalized in Nigeria, and it is massively taking place in low and high places. Aina (2002), added, that Nigeria is the most corrupt oil-rich nation in the world. This situation has made youths, adults and elders to recycle themselves in the art of governance in national polity in order to perpetually control the economy to the detriment of the larger society. This situation, therefore, cannot aid true development of entrepreneurial skills as it negates hard work.
3. **Weak Leakage:** There is a weak linkage between educational institutions, successful entrepreneurs and support agencies that are involved in the promotion and development of entrepreneurship (Ngada, 2000).
4. **Inadequate Electric Power Supply:** This is still a serious problem in Nigeria. Industries, small-scale business, tertiary institutions, artisans, technicians, etc, require electric power to operate. Many industries are out of business while some others are not operating as a result incessant power failures. The artisans and technicians have been thrown out of jobs, thereby, adding to the long unending list of unemployment. Even in tertiary institutions and the simple use of electric power for comfort at home is not just available as a result of epileptic or permanent failure of it in most parts of Nigeria.

5. **Consumption of Foreign Goods in Preference to Nigeria-Made Ones:** Many Nigerians still have a great propensity to consume foreign goods more than the home-made ones. This trend is inevitably killing our local industries, entrepreneurial zeal, agricultural production, etc, by making such industries to close down, while their workers become unemployed. This is the reason why the foreign labour-force is constantly being employed while brain-drain is always the order to the day in Nigeria. The slogan is "we consume what we don't produce and export what we produce", and what we export are primarily products like: petroleum, solid minerals, cocoa, rubber, coal, groundnuts, palm kernel, etc. Our local entrepreneurs are therefore weakened.
6. **Poor Funding:** This has become a major factor militating the teaching and learning of vocational and technical education in Nigeria, and has become a permanent set-back in the training of graduates. Corruption and insincerity of Nigerian leaders have been found to contribute to this set-back (Aina, 2002).

Recommendations and Conclusion

In order to beef up the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills education in sustainable vocational and technical education, the following recommendations are hereby made:

1. Entrepreneurial skills development should be studied from the secondary school level. The skills should be studied alongside with vocational and technical education schemes. In this vein, the skills will gear up the youths and adults to imbibe the culture of hard work, dedication to duty including the technical "know-how" so that unemployment will gradually be eliminated from the economy through self-employment.
2. All stakeholders in education should evolve a responsible regular funding of vocational and technical education right from the secondary school education to the tertiary institutions, because it is capital-equipment-based. Funding should also include research and production of learning materials in order to encourage mastery and competence in entrepreneurial skills in vocational and technical education.
3. The attainment of balance between theory and practical work will be achieved as a result of adequate funding of vocational and technical education programmes in the respective institutions of learning. The much-talked about entrepreneurial skills in vocational and technical education schemes will naturally be achieved by the respective graduates (Ugaigbe and Umunna, 2002).
4. Government should take the lead and initiative in fighting unemployment by providing loans to graduates of vocational and technical education in order to enable them set up their own business centres because of its equipment-capital nature. This should be done by setting up a loan scheme to finance it.
5. All tertiary institutions should be massively equipped with the relevant tools, equipment or machines in order to facilitate competencies of graduates.
6. There should be a linkage between institutions offering vocational and technical educational and industries in order to enforce a smooth transition from school to the industry.

References

- Aina, O. (2002). Business Education, Technology and National Development. (A Keynote Address). *Business Education Journal*. III (5), pp. 1 - 8.
- Akpochiafo, W. P. (2002). *Refocusing Education in Nigeria*. (A Book of Readings) (eds. Oiaifo, S. O.; Nwaokolo, P. O. E. and Igborgbor, G. C.) Benin City: Da-Sylva Influence, pp. 38 - 42.
- Ayeduso, A. O. (1999). Perception of Entrepreneurship by Vocational Education Students of Federal College of Education, Kontagora, *Nigeria Journal of Research in Education* (Published by Federal College of Education, Kontagora), Kontagora, Amaka Enterprises, pp. 143 - 150.
- Egbochuku, S. (2003). The Fight Against Corruption. *Business Day*. 13th June, p. 16.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004). *National Policy on Education*, Yaba-Lagos, NERDC Press.

- Hornby, A. S. (2001). *Oxford Advanced Dictionary of Current English* (6th Edition), Oxford; Oxford University Press.
- Ngada, A. J. (2001). Universal Basic Education: The Pancea to Nation Building, *Nigerian Journal of Curriculum and Instruction*, 10 (1), pp. 158 - 163.
- Nwaokolo, P. O. E. (1997). A Pancea to Youth Unemployment. *Journal of Technical Teacher Education*, 2 (1), pp. 57.
- Omenkeukwu, B. O. C. (2000). Entrepreneurship Education -A Necessary Part if Vocational/Technical Education. 77;e *Imperatives of Vocational and Technical Education for a Developing Nation* (ed), Onitsha: Cape Publishers International Ltd, pp. 107 - 113.
- Osagie, N. (2002). *Entrepreneurship Development: A Functional Approach*, Benin City: AVA Publishers.
- Ugaigbe, F. E. S. and Umunna, P. L. (2002). *Entrepreneurship: A Necessary Tool for Self-Reliance in Vocational and Technical Education in Nigeria. Refocusing Education in Nigeria* (A Book of Reading) (eds. Oriafio, S. O.; Nwaokolo, P. O. E. and Igborgbor, G. C.) Benin City: Da-Sylva Influence, pp. 114-119.
- Utomi, P. (2001). *The Guardian*, (November), p. 18.