

FOSTERING ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION ON VOCATIONAL TECHNICAL EDUCATION TO CURB YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL MENACE: IMPLICATION FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION OPERATORS

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Abstract

Entrepreneurship education has attracted the attention of governmental and non-governmental organization than any other subject in recent times. This is as a result of the perceived role entrepreneurship education stands to play in equipping the youth for greater productivity, self reliance as well as curbing the social menace prevalent in our society. Unemployment in Nigeria has been attributed to a number of factors, one of which is the outdated school curricular and lack of employable skills among our educational system graduates. It is even argued that as far as the formal sector is concerned, the average Nigerian graduate is not employable because he does not possess the skills needed by the employers of labour for formal employment. This is attributed to the Nigeria's education with its "liberal bias" which makes the course contents of most tertiary education in Nigeria lack entrepreneurial content that would have enabled graduates become job creators rather than job seekers. This scenario has left many Nigerian graduates with no option than indulging in various social vices. This paper calls for the "vocalization" of our educational system by restructuring the curriculum content and fostering

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entrepreneurship education in our school system especially in vocational technical education which is essential for a strong economic base and the much touted about self-reliance which vocational education should foster. Recommendations are also proffered.

From available records, at no time in the economic history of modern nation states, has the issues of entrepreneurship education attracted the attention of governmental and non-governmental organizations than from the last millennium to date. The array of international, regional and national conferences on this issue across America, Europe, Asia, and to some extent Africa, is a case in point. Some of the notable conferences included those organized by the European commission in 2003 and 2006 respectively, to clarify issues relating to entrepreneurship education. The UNESCO Asian Pacific innovation in Entrepreneurship education among others were assembled to clarify issues and draw important conclusions on some of the best practices that could be applied by different educational settings (Kafka and Stephenson, 2006). In the USA and many European countries such as Portugal and Holland, activities meant to foster entrepreneurship education at the higher and other levels of educational system have become more of a national passion.

In Nigeria, although not much can be said about the policies and practices on entrepreneurship education in higher education, pockets of activities in terms of conferences, seminars and workshops have been reported (Ekpeyong 2010). Ekpeyong further observed that the 2002 National Summit on Higher education made the following statement: “higher education in Nigeria is to provide access to quality post secondary education which will lead to production of graduates that are technologically capable and socially well-rounded to create jobs and fit well into existing job positions”.

Entrepreneurship can be described as the process of using available capital in any form for business endeavours in an open and free market economy for the sole purpose of making a profit. Nwaokolo (1997) defined entrepreneurship as the ability to set up a business enterprise as different from being employed. This ability should be acquired and should differ in some respects from the abilities required to enable a person obtain an employment. It involves the acquisition of skills, ideas and managerial abilities necessary for self reliance. In his own effort to define entrepreneurship, Ekpeyong (2010), sees entrepreneurship as the process of using creative and innovative ideas to create value by an individual, group or organization based on the opportunities and risks in the use of resources to start a venture; to modify or change the venture, concept and strategy in the expectation of profit. Osuala (2009), quoting the United States Colorado educators, defined entrepreneurial education as a programme or part of programme that prepares individuals to undertake the formulation and or operation of small business enterprises which also include franchise operation for the purpose of performing all

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business functions relating to a product or service with emphasis given to the social responsibilities, legal requirements and risks for the sake of the product involved in the conduct of a private enterprise. Entrepreneurship is known as the capacity and attitude of a person or group of persons to undertake ventures with the probability of success or failure. It demands that the individual should be prepared to assume a reasonable degree of risks, be a good leader in addition to being highly innovative, Onwubiko (2001).

Objective of Entrepreneurship Education

Dana in Osuala (2009) presented seven objectives of entrepreneurship education as follows:

1. To provide meaningful education for the youths which could make them self-reliant and subsequently encourage them to derive profit and be self-independent.
2. To provide small and medium sized companies with the opportunity to recruit qualified graduates who will receive training and tutoring in the skills relevant to the management of the small business centre.
3. To provide graduates with enough training in risk management to make uncertainty bearing possible and easy.
4. To provide graduates with the training in skills that will make them meet the manpower need in the society.
5. To provide graduates with enough training in risk management to make uncertainty bearing possible and easy.
6. To stimulate industrial and economic growth of rural and less developed areas.
7. To provide graduates with enough training that will make them creative and innovative in identifying new business opportunities.

As a corollary to the above, Ekpeyong (2006) contended that entrepreneurship education can be and does have the potential for driving the economy of any nation as has been witnessed in the USA, Europe and Asia in recent times. Henry, Hill & Letch, (2005), are of the view that entrepreneurship education should be used to achieve the following set goals:

1. Establishment of entrepreneurship mindset among students and graduates of tertiary institutions in Nigeria.
2. Production of responsible and enterprising individuals who will become entrepreneurs, and/or entrepreneurial thinkers who could contribute to the economic

development and poverty alleviation within our nation and the West African Economic community.

3. Provision of opportunity for the graduates to acquire relevant occupational competencies that are central to core entrepreneurial knowledge and skills needed for: recognizing opportunities, generating ideas and gathering resources to pursue opportunities while recognizing the risks, making all final decisions on matters of their business ventures, handling diverse activities at the same time; and being able to establish effective customer relationship.

In pursuit of these set goals, the students should be made aware that some attributes such as provision of opportunities for the graduates to acquire relevant occupational competencies that are central to core entrepreneurial knowledge and skill are embedded and determined by their level of creativity, critical and relativistic thinking ability, all of which could be improved through effective entrepreneurship education.

To achieve the above stated goals and objectives, Osuala, (2009) outlines the curriculum contents in entrepreneurship programme as they pertain to the course contents at the secondary schools, colleges of education, polytechnics and universities as follows:-

1. **Starting a new business:** Meaning of an entrepreneur; characteristics of an entrepreneurship, the benefits and opportunities of small scale business ownership.
2. **Basic knowledge about small scale business in Nigeria:** History and development of small scale business in Nigeria; small scale business opportunity, contribution of small scale business to the development of the Nigerian economy, and causes of small scale business failures.
3. **Starting your own Business:** Formalities for registering a business; advantages and disadvantages of starting a small-business, buying an existing business, advantages and disadvantages, factors to consider in buying an existing business, and determining the value of the business.
4. **Sources of Finance to start a small scale business:** Personal savings, micro finance loans, contribution from family members.
5. **Some basic managerial skills**
Skills that are essential for the day to day running of small scale business.

6. **Knowledge of business environment**
Social, political, legal, technological, moral, ethical, physical
7. **Location of small scale business**
Factors to consider.
8. **Organization of small scale business**
Principles of organization.
Action guides for small scale business managers.
9. **Innovations in information processing and small scale business**
Relevance of the internet, networking/teleconferencing, close circuit T. V. Set, electronic organizers, voice messaging systems/voice mail, the electronic mail (e-mail), the computer, communication satellites etc in the operation of small scale business.
10. **Risk management**
Meaning; types of risks and their management, institutions involved in risk management, how to choose an insurance broker.
11. **Principles of marketing**
Promotion mix, price mix, product mix, distribution strategies, consumer behaviour.
12. **Human and Public Relation**
Principles and essentials for human relation. human resource management, functions of the human relation/human resources department.
13. **Principles of management**
Management styles, organization of small scale business, controlling of small scale business, directing and motivating employees, evaluation or organization success and failure.
14. **Record keeping, book-keeping/Accounting.**
Record keeping: principles and management, keeping of simple accounting records, issues relating to taxation and auditing.
15. **Legal aspect of running a business in Nigeria**
Registration of business. legal control of business in Nigeria, law and its administration and enforcement in small business.

16. **Business Pilot and feasibility study**

Preparation of reports

Given the above contents as enunciated by Osuala, Kurotko (2009), noted that in the midst of this huge expansion of courses remains the challenges of teaching entrepreneurship more effectively. Kurotko asserts that entrepreneurial programme should be designed so that potential entrepreneurs are aware of barriers to initiating their entrepreneurial careers and can devise ways to overcome those barriers. He contended that an effective programme must show students how to behave entrepreneurially and should also introduce students and beneficiaries to people who might be able to facilitate their success. When this is done, the issue of unemployment in the society will be tackled headlong.

Unemployment: The Nigerian Situation

Unemployment has been identified as the condition of one who is capable of working, actively seeking work, but unable to find any work. Encyclopedia Britannica (2010) posits that “the term unemployment is used to designate the situation of those who are able to find employment only for shorter than normal periods – part time workers, seasonal workers, or day or casual workers. Statistics on unemployment are collected and analyzed by government labour office in most countries and have come to be considered a chief indicator of economic health. Trends in unemployment and statistical differences among groups in the population are studied for what they may reveal of general economic trends and as bases for possible governmental action”. The International Labour Organization (ILO) (2007) defines unemployed as numbers of economically active population who are without work, but are available for and seeking work, including people who have lost their jobs and those who have voluntarily left work. In the opinion of Adebayo (1999), these exist when members of the labour force wish to work but cannot get jobs.

Youth unemployment therefore, could be described as the conglomerate of youths with diverse background, willing and able to work, but cannot find any. When the supply of labour outstrips the demand for labour, it causes joblessness and unemployment. Given the lack of sufficient employment opportunity in the formal sector, young people may be compelled to engage in casual work and other unorthodox livelihood sources, thus leading to underemployment. (Echebiri 2005; Gibb and George, 1990; Onah, 2001).

In Nigeria, accurate unemployment rates are difficult to access. However, according to Oyebade (2003), Nigeria’s unemployment can be grouped into two categories. First, the older unemployed who lost their jobs through retrenchment, redundancy, or bankruptcy and second; the younger unemployed, most of whom have

never been employed. According to Awogbenle and Iwuamadi (2010), the statistics from the Manpower Board and the Federal Bureau of Statistics showed that Nigeria has a youth population of 80 million, representing 60% of the total population of the country. Also, 64 million of them are unemployed, while 1.6 million are under-employed. The 1990 – 2000 data on youth unemployment showed that the largest group of the unemployed is the secondary school graduates. Also, 40% of the unemployment rate is among urban youth aged 20 – 24 and 31% of the rate is among those aged 15 – 19. Also, two thirds of the urban unemployed are ranged from 15 – 24 years old. Moreover, the educated unemployed tended to be young males with few dependents. There are relatively few secondary school graduates and the lowered job expectation of primary-school graduates. Awogbenle and Iwuamadi, however, admitted that there is no consistent trend of unemployment rates in Nigeria. An increase in one or two years is sometimes followed by a decline in the subsequent years.

According to National Bureau of Statistics (2009:238; 2010:2), the national unemployment rates for Nigeria between 2000 and 2009 showed that the number of unemployed persons constituted 31.1% in 2000; 13.6 in 2001; 12.6% in 2002; 14.8% in 2003; 13.4% in 2004; 11.9% in 2005; 13.7% in 2006; 14.6% in 2007; 14.9% in 2008; and 19.7% in 2009. Specifically, as regards the age group, educational group and sex, data provided by the National Bureau of Statistics (2010:3) further showed that as at March, 2009 in Nigeria, for persons between ages 15 and 24 years, 41.6% were unemployed. For persons between 25 and 44 years, 17% were unemployed. Also, those with primary education, 14.8%, were unemployed and for those with only secondary education, 23.8% were unemployed. Furthermore, for those with post secondary education, 21.3% were unemployed. For those who never attended school and those with below primary education, 21.0% and 22.3% were unemployed respectively. As regards sex, data showed that males constituted 17.0%, while females constituted 23.3%.

It is important to note that the figures above may not have captured in totality the youth unemployment situation in Nigeria, however, they are pointing to the fact that the phenomenon is a very critical issue with far-reaching implications for societal stability and security.

Causes of Unemployment in Nigeria

Unemployment in Nigeria has been attributed to a number of causes. For instance, Adebayo (1999), Alanana (2003), Awogbenle and Iwuamadi (2010), among others identified the main causes of youth unemployment in Nigeria. The first is the rapidly growing of urban labour force arising from rural urban migration. Rural-urban migration is usually explained in terms of push-pull factors. The push factors include the pressure resulting from man-land ratio in the rural areas and the existence of serious underemployment arising from the seasonal cycle of climate. The factors are further

exacerbated in Nigeria by the lack of infrastructural facilities, which makes the rural life unattractive. Youths move to urban areas with the probability of securing lucrative employment in the industries. In addition to this, there is the concentration of social amenities in the urban centers. This meant that the rural areas are neglected in the allocation of social and economic opportunities. According to Sarr (2000), youth migrants in Africa are three times more in number than other migrants. The author argued that the urbanization rate of the youth was 32 percent in 1990, compared to less than 25 percent for the non-youth population.

Sarr had predicted that by the end 2010, over 50 percent of the youths in Africa would be residing in urban areas where job opportunities are limited to a few modern sectors and establishments.

The second is the rapid population growth. Going by the recently announced world population of 7 billion, with Nigeria estimated to be million occupying the 6th most populous nation of the world, it can be argued that the high population growth rate has resulted in the rapid growth of the labour force, which is far outstripping the supply of jobs. The accelerated growth of population on Nigeria's unemployment problem is multifaceted. It affects the supply side through a high and rapid increase in the labour force relative to the absorptive capacity of the economy.

The third is the outdated school curricula and lack of employable skills. Some scholars and commentators (Iloputaife, 2012; Obioma 2012; & Okofor 2002), have argued that “ as far as the formal sector is concerned, the average Nigerian graduate is not employable and, therefore, does not possess the skills needed by the employers of labor for the formal employment. Often, this is attributed to the Nigeria's education system, with its liberal bias. The course contents of most tertiary education in Nigeria lack entrepreneurial contents that would have enabled graduates to become job creators rather than job seekers” the authors enthused.

The fourth is the rapid expansion of the educational system which directly leads to increase in the supply of educated manpower in Nigeria. For instance, Manning and Junankar (1998) stated that the total number of graduates turned out by the higher institutions in Nigeria, which were 73,339 in 1986/1987 which rose to 131,016 in 1996/1997. Presently, with over 103 universities in Nigeria (both federal, state, and private), (Wikipedia 2012) and the increasing demand for higher education, there has been the problem of suitable employment for the varieties of graduates that are turned out by these higher institutions every year. Ordinarily, this should not have been a problem, but the reality is that the Nigerian economy is too weak to absorb this large number of graduates (Utomi, 2011). And so the consequences are the social menace Nigerian societies are facing today.

Unemployment in Nigeria and its Social Menace

The youth unemployment in Nigeria has reached crises level. Sanusi (2011) stated that the rate of unemployment in Nigeria has hit 41.6 percent; a thing to worry about. Sanusi further stated that of this figure, 23.3 percent were males; while 17 percent were females, all within the age bracket of 15 to 24. This segment of the population is the real agent of economic transformation. The truth remains that Nigeria is yet to adequately utilize the potentials from its active youth population. Though political statements that the economy is growing abound, however, the above data reveals that it is a jobless growth. A growth that does not result in the creation of jobs is questionable. Such a high rate of unemployment among youths shows that unemployment in Nigeria has reached unmanageable height.

Unemployment is the major cause of the social menace and grinding poverty the country is currently facing. It also accounts for why Nigeria is not growing. Unemployment is one of a major concern to many analysts and economists as the figures increasingly suggest dwindling potentials, which may result in negative social, economic, political and security outcomes than are being currently experienced. It could lead to increased social tension because the youth are disgusted, disenchanting, disillusioned and at the slightest provocation unleash their frustration on the communities. Disaffected youth will quickly turn to crime and violence in order to survive. They join rebel groups or armed militant gangs. Examples abound of how this feeling of discontent has become a destabilizing factor. The Niger Delta, Odua Peoples' Congress; the Lagos "Alayis", and the more dastardly Boko Haram menace characterized by bombing, killing and maiming are but a few of such examples. Apart from being willing tools in the hands of politicians and other aggrieved members of the society seeking for revenge, unemployed youths have given themselves to so many evils that have infused fears into the spines of the people. The day is as the night in terms of uncertainties, as one could be kidnapped or abducted as they go about their daily business. A criminal act which first attracted national attention on 26th February, 2006 when Niger Delta militants kidnapped foreign oil workers to press home their demand, kidnapping has since become ubiquitous and commercialized. It has spread from the Niger Delta to virtually all nooks and crannies of the country, with some states of course being hotspots. Similarly, victims have changed from being predominantly foreign workers to Nigerians, including parents, grandparents, and toddlers and about anyone who has a relative that could be blackmailed into coughing out a ransom. Those behind the recent wave of the despicable act have also changed from being exclusively Niger Delta militants to dodgy elements from different walks of life; most certainly unemployed youths who now see kidnapping as a lucrative venture. It is even being speculated that 25 percent of prostitutes in Italy are Nigerians from a particular state who knowingly or unknowingly were ferried there for want of any future hope in their

father land. This scenario has made the vocalization of our educational system an imperative reality.

The Concept of Vocational /Technical Education

The confusion surrounding the meaning of the term “Vocational Education” or Vocational Technical Education (VTE) can easily be traceable to the different interpretations attached to them. Ekpeyong (2008) noted that it is common to find the term used compositely when they should be used in a restricted sense and vice versa. The author further observed that sometimes, where the terms are used conjointly, some individuals (including intellectuals) interpret ‘vocational’ to mean business subjects or studies, and ‘technical’ to mean technical subjects or studies or that which has to do with engine or metal. When used in relation to school, “vocational school is taken to mean where only business are taught; while technical stands for that which has do with technical studies.

However, in order to clarify some of the ambiguities, a few definitions will be considered here. The United Nation Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO 1978) defined Vocational Education as: “education designed to prepare skilled personnel at lower level of qualification for one or a group of occupations, trades or jobs, vocational education usually provided at upper (senior) secondary, technical school (or technical college) includes general education, practical skills, and related theories required by the chosen occupation. The proportions of these may vary considerably, but their emphasis is usually on practical training”. On his own effort to define vocational education, Osuala (2004) quoting public law 94 – 482; Education Amendment of 1976 of United States of America, defines vocational education as “organized educational programmes which are directly related to the preparation of individuals for paid or unpaid employment or for additional preparation for a career requiring other than a baccalaureate or advanced degree. The agencies of the public sector engaged in vocational education are also defined in the Education Amendments of 1976 and consist of the following:

1. Specialized high school: used exclusively or principally for providing vocational education to persons who are available for study in preparation for entering the labour market.
2. The department of a high school: used exclusively or principally for providing vocational education in no less than five different occupational fields to persons who are available for study in preparation for entering the labour market.
3. Technical or vocational school: used exclusively or principally for providing vocational education to persons who have completed or left high school and who are available for study in preparation for entering the labour market.

All of these agencies include at least five areas of vocational education instruction. The most popular programmes emphasizes agriculture, distributive occupation, health occupation, home economies related occupation, office occupation, technical education, and trade and industrial instruction. There are also programmes in consumer and homemaking skills but the relationship between training and industry is not as direct as with the above-mentioned areas. Complete curricula are designed to prepare workers within these specific occupational areas.

Functions and Objectives of Vocational/Technical Education

In a report issued by the Comparative Technical Education Seminar Abroad (1966), as reported in Osuala (2004), the following objectives were recommended for a National plan of Vocational and Technical Education in the Federal Republic of Nigeria: to provide technological literacy to all pupils, i.e. to prepare every pupil for life in a technological age; to help the right attitude towards work and the habits of mind conducive to the proper use of technology; to provide adequate technological orientation and preparation for advanced professional education and training in technology; to equip school leavers with skills to earn a living; to stimulate and encourage creativity; o provide the awareness that technology does not only solve problems, but create some as well.

To achieve the above objectives, the report emphasized that: vocational and technical education should form a part of general education for every secondary school pupil irrespective of his or her future career; vocational and technical education should provide an orientation and preparation for those who have the aptitude and desire to pursue advanced technological education in the polytechnic and universities; vocational and technical education should provide orientation and basic skills with which to start a life of work for the vast majority of pupils who do not fall under '2' above. How much the above objectives of vocational education have been realized left much to be desired.

Youth and Vocational/Technical Education

The vocational needs of Nigeria require not only that unskilled labour be reduced to a minimum, but also that adequate engineering and science technicians be produced who can provide leadership in their respective occupational fields. It is the duty of schools to provide youth in primary and secondary schools with the educational experiences relevant to their future vocational plan. It is also the responsibility of technical and vocational schools to give them the requisite training for competences in specific occupations. Entrepreneurial activity is essential to a strong economic base and the much touted about self-reliance which vocational education should foster. The large number of unemployed youths in our society is an indication that presently, our educational system have failed to solve our socio-economic problems. The only solution

Nigeria has to turn things around is to “vocationalise” all levels of our educational system; primary, secondary, and tertiary.

Implication for Vocational/Technical Education Operators: This refers to Education policy makers, curriculum planners and developers, institutions that offer Vocational/Technical Educational programmes. They should know that the downsizing trend among large companies has created a more significant philosophical change. It has ushered in an age in which “small is beautiful”. There is therefore, a clarion call from many quarters for the total over-haul of our school system, restructuring the existing curricula and doing away with all the obsolete knowledge and redesigning a more practical and result oriented programmes that will actually equip the recipients and create the spirit of entrepreneurship in them which will help face the challenges of the present day.

Summary/Conclusion

This study discovered that the human capacity levels and competencies amongst the youths are also a nagging headache which needs to be resolved. It was also discovered that many of the graduates from the Nigerian education system have received education with limited skills and are finding it difficult to secure gainful employment. This skills-mismatch is further exacerbated both by rapidly changing skill-needs, and by the reluctance or inability to update university courses. It was also discovered that the weak vocational training sector should not be discontinued but rather strengthened especially its vocational skill capacities.

Recommendation

The paper therefore recommends that:

1. The entire school system be restructured giving more emphasis on skill acquisition than the theoretical aspect of learning as has been the case.
2. The present 9 – 3 – 4 system of education will be a waste of academic exercise if emphases are not laid on skill acquisition and enabling environment created.
3. The school curricula from primary, post primary and tertiary institutions should be restructured and made vocational in nature.
4. Relevant courses such as solar technology, web design and programming skills in ICT which should equip recipients with skills for self sustenance and job creation should be introduced.
5. And lastly, the government (local, state and federal) should provide enabling environment that will encourage entrepreneurship by fixing infrastructures such

motorable roads in both rural and urban areas, providing portable drinking water and particularly energy to encourage investments.

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