

# REPOSITIONING TECHNICAL EDUCATION FOR ECONOMIC IMPROVEMENT THROUGH ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION

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## **Abstract**

*The central goal of technical education is to prepare one for productive employment. Such employment can be a paid one or sole proprietorship. This paper examines the problem militating against technical education, its implications for economic development and its products in terms of suitability for the changing environment. The world is changing as a result of technological and economic advancement, and this creates peculiar problems and challenges which most technical education graduates cannot cope with and consequently make them not suitable for employment. This paper emphasizes the need to get technical education graduates trained on entrepreneurship skills and knowledge through well planned and executed entrepreneurship education by re-positioning technical education. Once this is done, technical education graduates can then find happiness and fulfillment as they become more productive and committed as employees or employers of labour and transit to a meaningful life in the world.*

Technical Education is seen world over as tool for empowering people, especially the youth, for sustainable livelihood and social-economic development. In the word of Adamu (2015), education is described as the tool that facilitates economic, social, political and technological advancement and diversification in all human societies. Adegbesan, (2011) stated that people and nations are what they are because of the nature and type of education they are exposed to. Education today must have the effect of making it possible for a country to have a steady supply of highly creative citizens who help to keep improving the living conditions of the general citizenry and to solve economy problems that are thrown up from time to time.

Technical education has continually been one of the most vibrant and spirited aspects of economic development of any nation reflected by its quality and creativity in the area of job creation and poverty reduction. It is a kind of education if fully implemented will solve the problem of poverty and unemployment among the youths of any nation, and it is one of the most valuable treasures any nation can invest in. Daso (2012) noted that under critical examination technical education have been an integral part of national development strategies in many societies because of the impact on human resources development, productivity and economic growth. Ejeka (2016) also stated that, any nation that believes in education as an instrument par excellent for national development has to recognize the significance of technical education and accord it the desired attention and support that it deserves. One of the objectives of technical education in Nigeria as enshrined in National Policy on Education, revised (2014), is to give training and impart the skills leading to the production of craftsman, technicians and other skilled personnel who will be enterprising and self-reliant. However, in most cases actual performance of technical graduates who have certificates raise doubts about the

authenticity and workability of this objective. Nigerians who are products of technical education are issued with beautiful certificates after passing prescribed courses but they are poorly prepared for world of work. In order to achieve the above objective, it is the right time to teach undergraduates in technical education the concept of entrepreneurship education in order to help them learn wealth creation. The question then is what is entrepreneurship education?

“Entrepreneurship education has been defined as a collection of formalized teachings that inform, train, and educates anyone interested in participating in socioeconomic development through a project, to promote entrepreneurship awareness, business creation, or small business development (UNESCO, 2006)”. Salami (2011) sees entrepreneurship as a process by which individuals pursue opportunities. The entrepreneur is seen as an actor, innovator or a developer of technology. He is also a person who owns or controls a business through which income is gained. An entrepreneur is a person who in a bid to survive makes profit from his/her own business. Entrepreneurship education has been embraced by almost all the developed countries so it is important to develop the spirit and culture of entrepreneurship education in this Nigeria. Entrepreneurship education is the type of education that shape people’s mindset and also provides the skills and knowledge that one requires to develop an entrepreneurial culture. Entrepreneurship education should be available to all technical education students regardless of their institution types. In order to enhance competitive advantage, it is important to introduce entrepreneurial education into existing education since education is internationally accepted as an index of development. The relationships between technical education and development have since been established and are mutual.

### **Problems Facing Technical Education and its Products**

In this era where covid-19 is ravaging the world, Nigeria is passing through a lot of changes in virtually every field of her citizens’ endeavors. These changes are no doubt, more on economic development. We are in a period of business and industrial changes using new methods and techniques. There is an increased search for training that will impact the skills leading to the production of craftsman, technicians and other skilled personnel who will be enterprising and self-reliant. Technical education therefore has a role to play in this regard.

There is a declining job market for technical education graduate that lack skills or ability to utilize the knowledge acquired from it. The same fate is faced by those with requisite skills but is unable to secure white collar jobs and often fail in their endeavor to be self-reliance. It is common for a holder of B.Sc. (ED). Degree, (automobile technology education) to tow his broken down vehicle to an illiterate road side mechanic for repairs and B.Sc. (ED) Degree in electrical/electronic technology education graduates are known not to be able to repair their faulty electronics. These occurrences are real and mind boggling.

No nation will achieve its highest development without developing vocational and technical education, but Nigeria has neglected this aspect of education, it is not receiving much priority as it supposed to and that is why we are still lagging behind in terms of economic development and youth empowerment. We are still dependent on other nations, and the issue of youth unemployment has become a major threat to the country. Every aspect of Nigerian economy has been affected by lack of skilled and trained technicians that will move the country forward. In the area of textile, we need not only the raw materials but we need the skilled technicians too that will transform the raw materials

into finished product. The Ajaokuta steel company needs not only to be a place where irons are melted, but a place where cars and other valuable products are made. But unfortunately we lack the skilled technicians to manage our resources and the economy. Generally, many despised and neglected, if not totally ignored jobs relating to technical education training were labeled as menial while others are glorified as white-collar jobs. Technical education is seen as inferior to liberal education. Technical education is seen as education for the less privileged, less intellectual, physically challenged persons and so on. People avoid getting their hands dirty or soiled. It is more civilized to sit around, do nothing but be clean.

Due to these facts poverty and unemployment have reached embarrassing levels and the lack of employment opportunities for young Nigerian graduates leading to frustration, insecurity and uncertainty about the future. The lack of employment opportunities for graduates is a great loss to the society in view of the amount of resources that had been invested by parents and government and the consumption demands which the unemployed graduates make on the economy. Therefore, the question now is to what extent will technical education in Nigeria help in improving economic development of graduates and citizenry through entrepreneurship education?

### **The Rationale for Entrepreneurship in Technical Education**

Nigerian education policy during the colonial period was aimed at producing Nigerians who read and write to enable them hold certain positions such as clerks and interpreters. These Nigerians had no professional skills to enable them stand on their own or even establish and manage their own ventures (Adamu 2015). The Nigeria industrial policy that came after independence placed emphasis on and paid attention to the establishment of big industries neglecting small scale sectors (Aladekomo 2004). This neglect affected entrepreneurship at the beginning and negatively influenced its importance for economic growth and development.

However, technical Education is at a cross road as far as producing graduates, who will work and bring creativity into their work place, is concerned. Given the growing numbers of graduates coming out from the various technical education institutions into labour market and the increasing unemployment rate, government is worried about the situation and need to take measures to rectify the situation. Policy makers and government are pondering what the right education for Nigerian should be and what kind of education will be suitable in propelling economic development in the country. In order to reduce the persistent socio-economic problems especially unemployment among technical education graduates and high incidence of poverty in the country, the need for entrepreneurship education arose. Calls for reorientation among students and their teachers who believe in being employed rather than seeking self-employment after graduation have been made.

Government is expected to play a greater role in providing the necessary atmosphere and policy frame work for success in this direction. While students are in the school they should acquire the necessary skills and training to identify an exploitable opportunity for economic development. Developing entrepreneurship is a means of providing employment and a powerful weapon of fighting poverty in the country. In order for Nigeria to be transformed economically it should create appropriate human resource space through education. This human resource space is to have ideal educational environment for producing individuals with the mindset of self-reliance, creativity and high productivity in order to cope with the century world of work (Alu, 2007). So it is necessary to

reposition technical education with a view to creating and enhancing the supply of entrepreneurship initiatives and activities. By this, it is expected that technical education will become centers for inculcating the spirit of entrepreneurship rather than the spirit of passing exams to get white collar jobs.

### **Problems Associated with Introducing Entrepreneurship Education in Technical Education**

To address the problem of graduate unemployment and strategically position the economy for leadership, entrepreneurship education was introduced as a course in technical education. Despite entrepreneurship Education in the technical education, many graduates are still unemployed after graduation. This is due to the facts that the content and management of the course is still porous and the objective of introducing it seems to be defeated. There is need to find out the challenges facing its introduction and how to manage them. In order to fulfill the objectives, the following challenges were identified by Nwosu. and Chukwudi (2018):

1. Low Competence level of Entrepreneurship Education Lecturers/Instructors
2. Absence of Curricular Capacity to Support the Training
3. Due to the ignorance of administration, it may not give the level of support for the programme which is necessary.
4. Poor availability of infrastructure for entrepreneurship education to deliver quality and practical oriented entrepreneurship education
5. Lack of teaching materials.
6. Government and policy makers have not started to address the problems at university level.

### **Suggestions for the Way Forward**

In order to achieve viable entrepreneurship that will enhance sustainable economic development in Nigeria, the following strategies may help in solving the problem of employability in technical education

1. Repositioning of the teaching methods used during entrepreneurship education by lecturers, which could be achieved by consciously laying more emphasis on practical work and real life situations than on theory.
2. Adequate provision of an enabling teaching and learning environment, especially in the areas of well-equipped and modern laboratories, libraries, lecture rooms and lecture theatres, hostel facilities, staff offices and other basic infrastructure, is germane to the enhancement of graduate employability. But, for this to be a reality, the Nigerian government has to commit more financial resources (which should be in the form of capital expenditure, rather than recurrent expenses) to schools
3. Upgrading of teaching quality through employment of professional and qualified teachers and provision of in-service training and re-training.
4. Promotion of exhibitions and marketing of commercialized researches in technical education
5. There should be School-based enterprises where students identify potential business, plan, create and operate small business by using the school as mini-incubators.

6. Government should establish small business schools where interested students and community members can participate. This will make students to be self-reliant.
7. Government should develop entrepreneur internship program by matching students with locally successful entrepreneurs with clearly established education programs.
8. The Government should establish an enterprise college aimed at fostering the specific skills required for entrepreneurship. This will serve as skill-acquisition centre for the youths.
9. Government should create an economic friendly environment through tax reduction for small scale businesses.

### **Conclusion**

Today's concern with technical education is between two scenarios, the process of globalization of technological development and the backdrop of poverty characteristics of the Nigerian society. Both have important socio-economic implications which will determine new challenges for technical education and in turn will lead to rethinking of its philosophy and practice.

This paper has shown that technical education products are most affected in the world of work. The situation is not hopeless. To keep pace with transformation, it calls for re-positioning of technical education and reorientation of technical education products to develop knowledge, skills and behaviours through entrepreneurship education that are on demand by different employers and can lead to self-reliance. Business organizations should not continue to operate in a disjointed manner. They should cooperate to make technical education products successful in the world of work that is becoming highly disseminative and sophisticated. Again some of the measures being recommended in this presentation may appear too revolutionary but we are talking about a new dispensation in the Nigerian technical education and we must therefore introduce measures which will help in stabilizing the system for the benefit of the Nigerian graduates.

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