

STRENGTHENING ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION IN VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION (VTE) AS A TOOL FOR JOB CREATION

By

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Abstract

Entrepreneurship education is an important tool for purposeful learning in Vocational and Technical Education. The paper, analyses documents, research findings, policy documents etc., so that to support argument that entrepreneurship education needs to be strengthen for Vocational and Technical Education to be more meaningful to the learners. The paper clarified Concepts of Vocational and Technical Education; Difference between Vocational and Technical Education; Entrepreneurship; Essential attributes for Strengthening Entrepreneurship and the paper concluded that personal attributes identified will develop entrepreneurial skills at the tertiary level of Education and made some recommendation.

Entrepreneurship education is an important tool for purposeful learning in vocational and technical education. It is very important today in Nigeria's trends of development, where unemployment rate is high. Elebe (2011) observed that it is an indication that the nation is facing economic problems, the manner in which youths roam the streets (skilled and unskilled) in search of employment.

Entrepreneurship education has been fully integrated in the curriculum of vocational and technical education in tertiary institutions. Entrepreneurial courses are now contained in the NCE (technical) programme, students offer the courses in levels two and three and pre-requisite for examination is that student must carry out project work, where the student is expected to conduct feasibility studies before the project is carried out.

According to Ojeifo (2013) Entrepreneurship education, therefore amongst other things seeks to provide students in tertiary institutions with the knowledge, skills and motivation to encourage entrepreneurial success in a variety of business enterprise.

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Entrepreneurship education presented at all levels of schooling in Nigeria, from primary to secondary schools up to the tertiary education programs is a life- long learning process. The concept of lifelong learning is essential to the competitiveness of the knowledge economy. It applies to all levels of education and training and concerns all stages of life as well as the different forms of apprenticeship.

Entrepreneurship education is very essential in this era when unemployment is on the increase. It will mobilize and enhance entrepreneurial activities, eventually it will benefit individuals, government, and the society at large (Utulu, 2012).

Specifically, the paper will analyses documents, research findings, policy documents etc., so that to support the argument that entrepreneurship education needs to be strengthen for vocational and technical education to be more meaningful to the learners.

Concept Clarification, Vocational and Technical Education

Vocational Education

Okala (2008) also observed that Vocational Education as part of the total experience of the individual whereby they learns successfully how to carry on a gainful occupation which involves the development of skills, knowledge and attitudes required for success in the occupation.

The concept “Technical and Vocational Education” according to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2001) is a comprehensive term referring to those aspects of the educational process involving, in addition to general education, the study of technologies and related sciences, and the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of economic and social life. According to UNESCO’s document, “Revised Recommendation concerning Technical and Vocational Education,” Technical and Vocational Education is further understood to be:

- a. an integral part of general education;
- b. a means of preparing for occupational fields and for effective participation in the world of work;
- c. an aspect of lifelong learning and a preparation for a responsive citizenship;
- d. an instrument for promoting environmentally sound sustainable development;
- e. a method of facilitating poverty alleviation.

Bahar (2015) defined vocational education as that type of education that prepares people for specific trades, crafts and careers at various levels from a trade, a

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craft, technician, or a professional position in engineering, accountancy, nursing, medicine, architecture, pharmacy, law etc. Craft vocations are usually based on manual or practical activities, traditionally non-academic, related to a specific trade, occupation, or vocation. Vocational education can be at the secondary, post-secondary level and further education level.

Difference between Vocational and Technical Education

Vocational training is frequently refers to as education and training that is centered more on practical skills and being able to perform tasks related to working in a particular industry. Technical training is similar in nature, but the focus of technical education is on technology and developments made in computers and digital information. While both types of training are less academic and more practical, vocational training often focuses on manufacturing and construction, while technical training is more computer-oriented.

Objectives of VTE in Secondary School Level in Nigeria

The National Policy on Education (2004 p. 24-25) advocated for the three years junior and three year senior secondary school system (3-3 system). The junior secondary is described as pre-vocational and academic in nature, so that those who may not continue to senior secondary will have the opportunities provided in form of vocational training while the senior secondary is made to include technical, commercial, agricultural and other vocational courses in order to make its learners immediately employable. The aim and objectives of VTE in Nigeria as enshrined in the policy are as follows;

- i. to provide trained manpower in applied science, technology, commerce particularly at sub-professional grades.
- ii. to provide technical skills necessary for agricultural, industrial, commercial and economic development.
- iii. to give an introduction to professional studies in engineering and other technologies.
- iv. to give training and improving the necessary skills leading to production of craftsmen, technical and other skilled personnel who will be enterprising and self-reliant.
- v. to enable young men and women to have intelligent understanding of the increasing complexity of technology.

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Goal and Objectives of Vocational Education

Vocational education has an overall goal of the development of working competence and it can be divided into three fields of desired outcomes (goals). These goals function as reference points for the definition of competencies, which must be developed in vocational education and training:

1. Individual vocational adjustment, denotes the ability of individuals to develop relationships with their environment and to create their educational lane and life in society in a responsible and self-directed mode. Individual vocational adjustment refers to cross-occupational competencies, such as self-management skills, problem-solving skills, communication skills, or meta cognitive skills.
2. Safeguarding of human resources, includes every aspect of educational systems that make possible individual abilities to act at work and in the labour market and provide workforce.
3. Guarantee of social participation and equal opportunities, focuses on the relationship between VTE and social structures; i.e., to reduce dependencies between social background and educational-life, and income opportunities, and to improve social integration and participation of young adults in processes of shaping the social and political community (Bahar, 2015).

Concept of Entrepreneurship, Enterprise and Entrepreneur

Entrepreneurship: Wikipedia (2015) defined entrepreneurship as the act of being an entrepreneur or one who starts innovations, finance and business insight in an effort to transform innovations into economic goods. This could result in new organizations or may be part of revitalizing grown-up organizations in response to a perceived opportunity. The most clear form of entrepreneurship is that of starting new business which is referred to as ‘start- up company’.

Enterprise: Gibb and Nelson (1996) asserted that enterprise focuses on advancement of personal enterprising attributes and attitudes that prepare the individual for self employment.

Entrepreneur: The entrepreneur as a person brings in overall change through innovation for the greatest social good. Human values remain revered and motivate him to serve the society. He has solid belief in social betterment and he carries out this responsibility with conviction. In this process, he hastens personal, economic as well as human development. The entrepreneur is a futurist and an integrated man with

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outstanding leadership qualities. He always works for the well-being of the society. More importantly, entrepreneurial activities encompass all fields/ sectors and foster a spirit of enterprise for the welfare of mankind (Okezie, Alex and Asolukan, 2013).

Objectives of Entrepreneurship Education

Entrepreneurship education is oriented towards different ways of realizing opportunities. This is what makes entrepreneurship education distinctive in its focus on realization of opportunity, whereas management education is focused on the best way to operate existing hierarchies.

Entrepreneurship education try to find to provide students with the knowledge, skills and motivation to encourage entrepreneurial success in a variety of settings. Entrepreneurship education according to Paul (2005) as in Ojeifo (2013) is arranged to achieve the following objectives:

1. to offer functional education for the youth that will enable them to be self-employed and self-reliant.
2. provide the youth graduates with adequate training that will enable them to be creative and innovative in identifying novel business opportunities.
3. to serve as a catalyst for economic growth and development.
4. offer tertiary institution graduates with adequate training in management, to certain level.
5. to reduce high rate of poverty.
6. create employment generation.
7. reduction in rural – urban migration.
8. provide the young graduates with enough training and support that will enable them to establish a career in small and medium sized businesses.
9. to inculcate the spirit of perseverance in the youths and adults which will enable them to persist in any business venture they embark on.
10. create smooth transition from traditional to a modern industrial economy.

Essential Attributes for Strengthening Entrepreneurship Education in VTE

Research have indicated that most successful entrepreneurs share certain personal attributes, including: creativity, dedication, determination, flexibility, leadership, passion, self-confidence, and smarts.

- Creativity is the spark that drives the development of new products or services or ways to do business. It is the push for innovation and improvement. It is continuous learning, questioning, and thinking outside of prescribed formulas.

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- Dedication is what motivates the entrepreneur to work hard, 12 hours a day or more, even seven days a week, especially in the beginning, to get the endeavor off the ground. Planning and ideas must be joined by hard work to succeed. Dedication makes it happen.
- Determination is the extremely strong desire to achieve success. It includes persistence and the ability to bounce back after rough times. It persuades the entrepreneur to make the 10th phone call, after nine have yielded nothing. For the true entrepreneur, money is not the motivation. Success is the motivator; money is the reward.
- Flexibility is the ability to move quickly in response to changing market needs. It is being true to a dream while also being mindful of market realities. A story is told about an entrepreneur who started a fancy shop selling only French pastries. But customers wanted to buy muffins as well. Rather than risking the loss of these customers, the entrepreneur modified her vision to accommodate these needs.
- Leadership is the ability to create rules and to set goals. It is the capacity to follow through to see that rules are followed and goals are accomplished.
- Passion is what gets entrepreneurs started and keeps them there. It gives entrepreneurs the ability to convince others to believe in their vision. It can't substitute for planning, but it will help them to stay focused and to get others to look at their plans.
- Self-confidence comes from thorough planning, which reduces uncertainty and the level of risk. It also comes from expertise. Self-confidence gives the entrepreneur the ability to listen without being easily swayed or intimidated.
- Smart consists of common sense joined with knowledge or experience in a related business or endeavor. The former gives a person good instincts, the latter, expertise. Many people have smarts they don't recognize. A person who successfully keeps a household on a budget has organizational and financial skills. Employment, education, and life experiences all contribute to smarts (Utulu, 2012).

Conclusion and Recommendations

The paper appraises the relevance of entrepreneurship education in VTE program in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Some personal attributes were identified,

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which the paper strongly believed will develop entrepreneurial skills of students at the tertiary level of education. This, make such student after graduation to become a inventor of job for himself/herself thereby reducing unemployment rate in the society. The paper recommends as follows:

- Loans should be made accessible to graduates of VTE to start up business of their own through micro-finance banks in their most immediate community.
- There should be adequate supply of materials (consumables) to carry out practice in workshops/laboratories.
- Technical educators should develop skills of carrying out feasibility studies on the part of their students, this will make them better initiators of businesses.
- Government should speed-up establishment of entrepreneurial development centers in all tertiary institutions across the country, it could be through recommendation for Presidential intervention to the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFUND).

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