

PRACTICAL BASED SKILL ORIENTED ENTREPRENEURSHIP TRAINING IN SECONDARY AND TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS FOR REALIZATION OF MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS.

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ABSTRACT

The desires and aspirations of the government and people of Nigeria have remained a mirage in terms of meeting the goals and objectives of technical education. The situation has not changed even after the inclusion of entrepreneurship education in the curricula of tertiary institutions in Nigeria. It is in the light of these obvious problems and the imminent danger to society, compounded by the present global economic nose - dive that the paper is canvassing for practical based skill oriented entrepreneurship training in secondary and tertiary institutions in Nigeria. This crucial issue is discussed through the following sub-headings: Introduction, Entrepreneurship Education in Nigeria; TVET in Nigeria, Entrepreneurship Spirits/ Skill: the Missing Link, Strategies for Entrepreneurial Skills/Spirit Development in TVET and finally, the paper concludes with recommendations that could restore the education system to the right path for the realization of the Millennium Development Goals.

INTRODUCTION

Through policies and various programmes, the government has made deliberate efforts to check massive youth and graduate unemployment, poverty and youth restiveness. In the same vein, frantic efforts have been channeled towards encouraging job and wealth creation and self-reliance through various ancillary intervention programmes such as National Directorate of Employment (NDE),

Directorate for Food, Road and Rural Infrastructure (DRFFR), Operation Feed the Nation (OFN), School to Land, Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP), National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), National Agency for Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), Skill on Wheel, Open Apprenticeship Scheme, Small Medium Business Scheme, Skill Acquisition Programme which could have wrestled the unemployment to the ground. But the above laudable schemes have not done much and seem not attractive to the youth and the jobless ones. Hence, the unemployment situation in Nigeria has reached catastrophic proportions. The table below shows the unemployment rate in percent as released from Federal Office of Statistics in 1999.

Table 1: unemployment distribution in Nigeria in % from 1999-2006

Year	Urban	Rural
1999	10.8%	13.4%
2000	14.2%	19.8%
2001	11.4%	12.8%
2002	13.4%	13.9%
2003-2006	14.5%	15.3%

Source: federal office statistics 1999 (Okeke, 2008)

Experts have associated the youth restiveness in the country with the alarming joblessness. Even the ones that have received entrepreneurship education in tertiary institutions are among the army of the unemployed youths.

This condition is made worse now by the present global economic crises. The economies of nations which Nigeria is one are experiencing untold hardship that has resulted to shrinking industrial output, low level commercial activities, loss of employment opportunities for millions of Nigerians.

According to Dawodu (2008), about 66.7% of Nigerians are poor. The government has a big role to play in checking poverty in Nigeria. A recent report from the Federal Office of Statistics noted that "In 1980, an estimated 27% of Nigerians lived in poverty. In 1999, about 70% of the population had income less than US\$1.00 per day and the population has risen since then".

However, many people live in abject poverty and unemployment when in actual sense, they could put their hands to work and survive amidst untold hardship in the economy. Judging from the past experiences and the result of the so called laudable programmes implemented in this country which has yielded little or no result, something different from the present approach to entrepreneurship education has to be introduced. This implies that students at these levels be exposed to the real world of work to develop the practical skills and spirits that are vital to sustain a business after graduation. This component is crucial now than ever in the face of global economic depression, mass and graduate unemployment, compulsory retirement and retrenchment of workers in the public and civil service.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN NIGERIA

The term entrepreneurship is derived from the term "entrepreneur" according to encyclopedia Americana (1989). An Entrepreneur is a businessman who assumes the risk of bringing together the factors of production and receives his reward in form of profit from market value of his products. Kotler (1976), defines entrepreneurship as the ownership and management of a private business and the bedrock of small-scale business oriented towards the production of goods and services to satisfy the needs and wants of consumers. Onuoha (1991), observed that entrepreneurship enhances economic development, creates jobs, transforms traditional industries, stimulates investment and increases per capita income and output.

In the other hand, technical and vocational education seeks to relate education to employment, job creation and self-reliance. Therefore, entrepreneurship education is defined as conscious effort geared towards the education and development of entrepreneurial knowledge, skills and ability essential in the management of an economic venture (Nwokolo, 1997). Entrepreneurial education is geared towards entrepreneurial knowledge and skills for effective performance of entrepreneurial functions.

The declining economic fortunes and rising waves of unemployment through the years have greatly emphasized the need for entrepreneurship education and vocational education. The way forward in Nigeria is to shed the gap in basic education or grammar school type of education. Successive governments tried to address this issue by establishing Federal Universities of Technology and Federal Colleges of Education (Technical) respectively in some states of the federation. This vocationalization of education is a means of providing skilled manpower. By decree 4 of 1986, the Federal Government established six more Federal Colleges of Education (Technical) to train technical teachers, the colleges were located at Asaba, Bichi, Omoku and Potiskum in 1987 and Gusau and Umunze in 1988.

Besides, the provision of manpower, the Federal Government, between 1981 and 1992 provided technology grants in cash to some states to procure capital equipment in technology for equipping unity schools. In addition to this, the Federal Government also placed order for introductory technology equipment from Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Bulgaria for all the Secondary schools in the country at a substantial cost. However, it is pertinent to note that the equipment did not arrive this country until the year, 1985, (source: Federal Ministry of Education, Abuja).

Regrettably, all these wonderful ideas and efforts made by the government have not done much in checking unemployment, poverty, joblessness and youth restiveness in the country. This suggests that our educational system is ineffective and impotent. The reason is not farfetched. The potential rudimentary competences of entrepreneurship are presently lacking in vocational training and education. The entrepreneurial spirit/skills and attitude development are lacking in the entrepreneurship education as presently mounted in our tertiary institutions.

In the light of the above, it is worthy of note that the national education rolling plans from 1960 to date did not unfold or showcase enough concern on technical education. Nigeria as a nation has not shifted their attention from theoretical courses to skill entrepreneurial scheme. The half-baked system of training with obsolete infrastructure in the school system compounded the problem. Over one million people sit for JAMB every year but less than 2% of the population go for skill based courses. There should be a shift in our value orientation. Statistics has shown that over 500,000 youths graduate from NYSC, but less than 10% will acquire jobs. The remaining ones are still depending on relatives and parents even after five years of graduation. It is also clear that there is nowhere in the world the government will provide jobs for the entire population, but will provide enabling environment for job creation. The reorientation towards entrepreneurial education must be the focus of our governments. A shift must be made from the presently established entrepreneurship education in our tertiary institutions which is "theory as usual" to entrepreneurial spirit /skills development in the tertiary institutions. This demands practical skill training for job competencies in the actual work environment. This is where the desirable skills, attitudes and competencies to attract and sustain a job could be developed.

TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION TRAINING IN NIGERIA

Nigeria, no doubt, has made significant progress in providing the structural and policy framework for the development and operation of technical and vocational education as well as in providing a rightful place for it in the nation's educational system.

By the Act No 9 of 11th January, 1977, the National Board for Technical Education as a principal organ of Federal Ministry of Education was established to handle all aspects of technical and vocational education outside university education. In addition to providing standardized minimum guide curricula for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), the board supervises and regulates, through an accreditation process, the programmes offered by technical institutions at secondary and post secondary levels. This organ has the mandate to uphold the ideals of a free, united and egalitarian society and promote good quality technical and vocational education, a system that is flexible and accessible to all for the purpose of producing competent and relevant technological manpower needed for sustainable national development. The mission of Technical and Vocational Education and Training in Nigeria is to promote the production of skilled technical and professional manpower, to revitalize, and sustain the national economy, reduce unemployment rate and poverty.

Adenubi (1985), agreed that if these laudable objectives and policy pronouncements on technical and vocational education and training are fully implemented, Nigeria will have an army of skilled manpower such as technicians and technologists- the kind of manpower needed to create, operate, maintain and sustain the economy of a nation. However, technical and vocational, Education in Nigeria may not have done much in unemployment reduction and job creation. The system could be adjudged as contributing its quota to army of unemployed graduates, hence the massive youth

unemployment in the country. This suggests a missing link in curricula of this system of education. In this direction, Okeke (2008) agreed that the potential and rudimental competencies of entrepreneurship are presently lacking in vocational training and education. It is true that the strength of any economy depends very significantly on the strength of its actualization of its potentials in entrepreneurial opportunities in our skills area. These skill units have high potential for job creation. To state the obvious, technical education and training programme could be rated wonderful but without the integration of entrepreneurial skills in the programme, it will remain impotent.

ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS! SPIRITS: THE MISSING LINK

We have also seen the concerted efforts made by successive governments to check unemployment by setting up of various craft centers and technical institutes. The government has also inculcated entrepreneurship education in College of education, Polytechnics and University curricula. Similarly, schemes such as Industrial Training Fund (ITF) introduced in 1971 and the Student Industrial Works Experience Scheme (SIWES) introduced in 1976, give the students the much desired opportunity to work in companies while still in school, allowing a blend of what was learnt in school with what is obtain in the work or business environment. Further, worthy of mention is the Operation Feed *the* Nation Programme (OFNP) of the Obasanjo first leadership era, Green Revolution (GR) of former president Shehu Shagari, the Better Life Programme (BLP) of the IBB years, The Poverty Alleviation Programmme (PAP) of Obasanjo, and most recently, National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) of the present government which is intended to make the private sector the engine of economic growth, by playing the role of enabler, facilitator and regulator, create jobs and generate wealth. All these lofty schemes and programmes are aimed at reducing unemployment, poverty and to serve as a vehicle for promoting entrepreneurship and

self-reliance. These ideas are wonderful and will produce the wonderful skilled men' and women when harnessed, but will not produce the wonderful expected desired entrepreneurial skill workers.

A report of UNESCO in 1999 on Africa, states that technical and vocational education graduates often remain jobless despite the immense possibilities for employment in the sector, hence the need to promote the entrepreneurial spirit /skill and incorporate training for self employment. Against this backdrop, training in entrepreneurship must be marched with the usual skills in vocation and technology, for example, a welder without adequate skills cannot succeed even when encouraged to open a welding shop. Conversely, a welder with adequate welding skills but without the requisite entrepreneurial training may not succeed even when enough funds are pumped into opening a welding shop because of inadequate managerial capability.

What Nigeria needs now is more of production of skilled and self-reliant graduates from the secondary schools to universities/colleges of education (technical) and polytechnics. In order to achieve the objectives of technical and vocational education in the present economic realities, massive youth and graduate unemployment, youth restiveness, the country needs to go back to the drawing board to redesign our curricular from primary to secondary and tertiary institutions. Curriculum developers need to decide what kinds of skill, knowledge and attitudes are needed by the society. (Dawodu 2005:159).

STRATEGIES FOR DEVELOPING ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS/SPIRIT IN SECONDARY AND TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN NIGERIA

Okongwu (1986), asserts, "Mass unemployment which has been evident in the last two decades has reached alarming proportions and involved all categories of labour-skilled

and unskilled persons, university graduates and specialist individuals. This ugly trend demands deliberate and goal oriented approach to entrepreneurship education as different from the one presently established in tertiary institutions which is lopsided, lacks practical content, and therefore impotent. It is lopsided because it is only taught in the classroom which is devoid of real world of work experiences. The entrepreneurial spirit which can only be developed in actual work situation are therefore missing, hence "Theory as usual". The effective entrepreneurship education, the author is canvassing for is the type that is based on developing, building and sustaining entrepreneurial skills/spirit in young Nigerians. These are essential components for repositioning technical and vocational education in Nigeria for self-reliance. The adoption of this seemingly aggressive, but potent measure into the education curricula is very crucial now than ever, when the government of the day has decided to contradict its job creation policy with the recent "downsizing of its work force. The students should be exposed in an organized real work situation to develop and build entrepreneurial skills/spirit, the "missing link". Without these participatory aspects, the whole thing becomes "theory as usual" with little or no impact.

In this direction, the Abia State University model of skill acquisition for all students before graduation should be adopted in all tertiary institutions. In Abia State University every student is made to acquire entrepreneurial skills from the entrepreneurship skill training centers established by the university. The idea is to make every graduate of the institution self-reliant and a job creator, from which he or she may decide to earn a living after graduation than joining the army of unemployed youths in the country. Another model of entrepreneurial skill development among Nigerian youths in tertiary institutions suggests that various departments should run consultancy outfits or service-oriented workshops, where students in their departments will acquire, develop and build the desirable job skills before graduation. The student, on his turn will first

function as a trainee, learning the skills, and lastly functions as a manager of an enterprise relating well with the public to attract patronages, renders the agreed service, charges for the services rendered, keeps records and accounts for the services and finances at the expiration of his training. The student in charge at any period scouts for patronages. In technical areas, he moves within and outside the institution convincing people with faulty vehicles, electrical appliances, electronics sets, installation work, building jobs, wood works, machining and allied metal jobs to come to the department and get the needed services. This is where the entrepreneurial spirit is developed. Business education departments will run business centres equipped with computers, copying and scanning machines, internet facilities and the likes. Agricultural science department will run crops and livestock farms. Home Economics department will run Fashion and Designing / Boutique centre, canteen and child care centre where they can exhibit and sell their products. All the departments under Technical and Vocational Educational will float a service-oriented outfit for the purpose of developing the entrepreneurial skills and spirit in students before graduation. This model is different from the Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) programme in which students may learn and acquire relevant skills but may not know how the incomes of the establishment they are serving in are made and spent which is devoid of entrepreneurship.

This model can be extended to the secondary schools, where every school will be mandated to establish a skill acquisition centre¹ fully funded by the government in which students must acquire entrepreneurial skills and spirit of various trades before graduation. The female students will in addition to their academic certificate learn bakery, hair dressing, sewing, weaving, computer operation and how to run business centres just to mention but a few. The male students are made to learn trades involving manipulative skills before graduation. Furthermore, Departments in Technical Colleges

should be made to float consultancy units, where their graduating students already with relevant skills will be exposed for a short period of time to develop entrepreneurial spirit in various trades.

With this approach, youth and graduate unemployment, youth restiveness and especially the "Italian Job" for young Nigerian women (prostitution in Italy) will be seriously checked. Then wealth/job creation and self-reliance motive of the federal government which is in consonance with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) will be realized.

CONCLUSION

The government and people of Nigeria have made deliberate efforts to step out of the quagmire of mass poverty, unemployment and youth restiveness but with very little result to show for it. The situation the country is in today demands very aggressive but result oriented approach. This implies going out from the usual or traditional way of doing things, more especially revotionalizing the education system curricula.

The entrepreneurship education that is established in tertiary institutions of the country is a welcome development but should be enriched with practical components to make it functional and effective. The only classroom approach to entrepreneurship education. "Theory as usual" cannot take us far. Young Nigerians at various levels of academic institutions should be exposed to the real world of work to develop the entrepreneurial spirits which are very crucial to succeed in career and sustain businesses.

Entrepreneurship education as a matter of necessity should also be extended to secondary school level because it is not every family can afford tertiary education for their children. This will help make youths from secondary schools who cannot afford

tertiary education to be self-reliant after school. This approach suggests strongly that our curricula at various levels of education be reviewed to make the entrepreneurship education a functional one. This is fundamental for the realization of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of the crucial issues discussed above, the paper recommends as follow:

1. The technical and vocational education curricula in the country should be reviewed and enriched with both the theory and practical components of entrepreneurship education. This will certainly reposition our education; system to properly address the problem of graduate and youth unemployment plaguing the country.
2. Every graduating student from tertiary institutions should be encouraged to own basic hand tools appropriate to his or her area of specialization of entrepreneurial activities after graduation.
3. Vocational training institutes, agencies and research institutes should articulate ways of integrating entrepreneurial education into the NYSC Scheme, NDE scheme, Apprenticeship scheme, etc.
4. Entrepreneurial education at a diploma level should be made compulsory. This will enhance self-reliance.
5. The government should as a matter of urgency establish career/entrepreneurship center in every local government area, in every institution in Nigeria from secondary school to university level. The Abia State University entrepreneurship centre can serve as a model.

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