
ENTREPRENEURSHIP AN ESSENTIAL TOOL FOR EFFECTIVE VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION TRAINING IN NIGERIA

By

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Abstract

This paper stresses the importance of entrepreneurship education towards effective vocational and technical education training in Nigeria. The major problems facing the country include the high rate of poverty and youths/graduates unemployment among others. So many graduates roam the streets jobless, sometimes going into criminal activities such as; drug abuse, child trafficking, kidnapping, political thuggery, cultism, etc. This paper therefore argues that entrepreneurship education will equip the students with the skills with which to be self-reliant. The objectives and strategies for re-designing entrepreneurship education are also discussed. The paper recommended among other things that entrepreneurship education should be made compulsory at all levels of our educational system so that students at all levels will be encouraged to cultivate the entrepreneurial culture from earlier stage of their life. It is also recommended that the government should give adequate attention to entrepreneurial development in the country through the provision of adequate and relevant materials and equipment for effective implementation of entrepreneurship education curriculum.

Introduction

Entrepreneurship is a term broadly used to connote the innovative modern business leadership. The entrepreneur is a risk taker who conceptualizes business opportunities and puts scarce resources to best advantage to materialize them. As a visionary leader, he is able to utilize home based technology to the optimum. He is optimistic, full of aspiration and initiative, energetic, decisive, persevering and industrious.

Entrepreneurship therefore, involves the ability to set up a business enterprise as different from being employed (Usman, Mahmood, Usman and Aminu, 2006). This ability should be “acquired” and should differ in some aspects from the abilities acquired to enable a person obtain a paid employment. It involves the acquisition of skills, ideas and management abilities necessary for personal self-reliance on an “individual” level, this view relates to Odozi (1991) in Nwankolo (1997) which opined that it is the right and ability to set one’s own goals and realizing them as much as possible through one’s efforts, using one’s factor.

This package is intended to provide in concise form the theoretical aspect of the entrepreneurship values for successful vocational and technical education training. Definition of the basic concepts is attempted intermittently as the work progresses.

Concept of Entrepreneur, Entrepreneurship and Entrepreneurship education

According to Mc Shane and Vongilnow (2000), the word “entrepreneurship” is derived from a French word “entreprendre” means a person who undertook the risk of new enterprises. Stokes (2007), viewed entrepreneurship as the process of creating something different with value by devoting the necessary time and effort, assuming the accompanying financial, psychic, and social risks and receiving the resultant reward of monetary and personal satisfaction.

An entrepreneur is a person who assumes the major risks of creating incremental wealth by making an equity time and /or career commitment of providing value to a product or service (Dennis, 2007). The product or service may or may not be new or distinct, but value is added by an entrepreneur. Nwachukwu (2005), defines entrepreneur as a person who has the ability to evaluate business opportunities, gather the necessary resources to take advantage of them and initiate appropriate action to ensure success.

The entrepreneurship centre at Miami University of Ohio as cited by Usman et al (2006), defined the entrepreneurship as:

“the process of identifying, developing, and bringing a vision to life. The vision may be an innovative idea, an opportunity, or simply a better way to do something. The end result of this process is the creation of a new venture,

formed under conditions of risk and considerable uncertainty”.

Shane and Venkataraman (2000), define entrepreneurship as “a process through which opportunities to create future goods and services are discovered, evaluated and exploited”. They argue that the field of entrepreneurship involves the study of sources of opportunities; the process of discovery, evaluation, and exploitation of opportunities. In this context, the entrepreneurship can be seen as the process of generating ideas and venturing into business risks created by dynamic environment and making the best of opportunities for profit purpose. Entrepreneurship connotes action rather than static events. It involves taking action necessary to analyze business opportunities to launch and/or grow a business, to finance the venture and possibly to harvest it.

According to Usman et al (2006), entrepreneurship is defined as “the willingness and ability of an individual or group of persons to search for investment opportunities, establish and run a business unit successfully.” Entrepreneurship as a concept has a lot to do with how several activities are carried out in an organization for effective operations, for example:-

- a. To identify business opportunities
- b. To make choice of business opportunities
- c. To decide on the form of business organization
- d. Selection and blending of the enterprise resources for maximum utilization
- e. Good leadership, motivation of employees, coordination and monitoring.
- f. Assumes risk of different dimensions, etc.

Entrepreneurship, according to Omolayo (2006) is the act of starting a company, arranging business deals and taking risks in order to make a profit through the education skills acquired. To him, entrepreneurship can be described as “the process of bringing together creative and innovative ideas and coupling these with management and organizational skills in order to combine people, money and resources to meet an identified need and create wealth. In the same vein, Nwangwu (2007) opined that entrepreneurship is a process of bringing together the factors of production, which include land, labour and capital so as to provide a product or service for public consumption. However, the operational definition of entrepreneurship is the willingness and ability of a person or persons to acquire educational skills to explore and exploit investment opportunities, establish and manage a successful business enterprise.

Alberti, Sciascia and Poli (2004), define entrepreneurship education as “the structured formal conveyance of entrepreneurial competencies, which in turn refer to the concepts, skills and mental

awareness used by individuals during the process of starting and developing their growth-oriented ventures”. The reference to growth-oriented ventures made in this definition is noteworthy for education and training purposes as it allows for the differentiation of self-employment from entrepreneurship. Referring to Garavan and O’Cinneide (1994), “enterprise education has the objective to develop enterprising people and inculcate an attitude of self-reliance using appropriate learning while entrepreneurship education aims directly at stimulating entrepreneurship which may be defined as independent small business ownership or the development of opportunity seeking-managers within companies”.

Nwankolo (1997), defines entrepreneurship education as an aspect of education that is geared at developing in students, skills, ideas and managerial abilities necessary for personal reliance. It is a programme of personal reliance. It is a programme of human capital development. Entrepreneurship education is necessary tool for economic and social development of the citizenry of any country; hence the need for the integration of entrepreneurship education into our vocational technical education system.

Objectives of Entrepreneurship Education

The objectives of entrepreneurship education as highlighted by Ayeduso (2004), are:

1. To provides meaningful education for youths which could make them self-reliant and subsequently encourage them to derive profit and be independent.
2. To provides 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 provides graduates with the training and support necessary to help establish a carrier in small and medium sized businesses.
4. To provides graduates with training in skills that will make them meet the manpower needs of the society.
5. To provides 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 provides graduates with enough training that will make them creative and innovative in identifying new business opportunities.

Entrepreneurship education according to Paul (2005) is structured 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 young 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 risk management, to make certain bearing feasible.
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.

Entrepreneurship values for Vocational and Technical Education Training

One of the major elements contributing to business success or failure in the words of Usman et al, (2006), is the lack of entrepreneurial qualities. Timmons (1994), identified six key qualities of an entrepreneur viz:

1. Leadership
2. Commitment and determination
3. Opportunity obsession
4. Tolerance of risk, ambiguity and uncertainty
5. Creativity, self-reliance and ability to adapt, and
6. Motivation to excel.

According to Timmons (1999), successful entrepreneurs shared common attitudes and behaviours which are:

1. Work hard, driven by intense commitment and determined perseverance
2. Optimistic outlook
3. Strive for integrity
4. Burn with the competitive desire to excel and win
5. Dissatisfied with the status quo and seek opportunities to improve almost any situation
6. Use failure as a tool for learning
7. Eschew perfection in favour of effectiveness
8. Believe that they personally can make a difference.

Entrepreneurial functions according to Usman et al, (2006), rest squarely on innovating and creating a new venture, manage its growth through opportunity

recognition and exploitation. They went ahead to expand the characteristics values of an entrepreneur as follows:

- a. Initiative to combine factors of production to produce goods or services in what is hoped will be a profitable venture;
- b. Making basics business policy decisions that set the course of the business enterprise;
- c. Attempts to introduce on a commercial basis new goods, new production techniques or even new forms of business organization; and
- d. Takes risk and bear it.

Why the Needs for Entrepreneurship Values for Vocational and Technical Education Training

At one time or the other during the lifetime of an average person he/she thinks of going into business with the view of owning an enterprise as an entrepreneur. Many people develop interest but only few actually start an enterprise.

However, some of the entrepreneurship values that make people wish to own businesses as outlined by Nwachukwu (2005); are as follows:

1. Entrepreneurs see business ownership as a means of generating profits and thus becoming wealthy;
2. Entrepreneurship seems to be the best way of getting away from paid employment constraints, politics or career impasse;
3. Entrepreneurship value seems to emulate successful businessmen who have acquire leadership in business, with the attendant of power such as leadership earns;
4. Entrepreneurs genuinely believe that they have something special to offer, either a product or service. To these, life cannot be fulfilled unless the desire is realized.
5. Entrepreneurship serves as an alternative when steady paid employment couldn't be secured.
6. Entrepreneurship serves as an opportunity for people to do what they love doing, playing their life the way they like, feel free, feed well at all times, serve the public, and still have a comfortable life;
7. Entrepreneurship prepares people for retirement; a place to spend the rest of one's life productive day, away from a life that is unsatisfying, sterile and dull.

Strategies for implementation of Entrepreneurship values for effective vocational and technical Education training

In order to achieve viable entrepreneurship values that will enhance effective training in vocational and technical education programme in Nigeria, the following strategies according to Ayodele (2006) will help to alleviate the problem of entrepreneurship education in the country:

1. There should be some form of genuine school work based learning incorporated in some studies as part of the national economic development strategies. The development of apprenticeship scheme would give new graduates some work skills and experience.
2. Pool local public and private funds to create a small venture capital fund.
3. Provide school-based enterprises where students identify potential business, plan, create and operate small business using the school as mini-incubators.
4. Provide small business schools where interested students and community members can participate.
5. Develop entrepreneur internship programmes matching students with locally successful entrepreneurs with clearly established education programmes.
6. Establishing an enterprise college aimed at fostering the specific skill sets required for entrepreneurship to serve as skill acquisition centers for the youths.
7. Creating an economic friendly political environment.
8. Improving on the government taxation on small scale businesses

Conclusion

Vocational and technical education is a body of knowledge, skills, and procedures for doing things and using things. It incorporates the total learning experience offered in our educational ideas, abilities to make matured judgments and be in a position to

create goods and services in the areas of business education, industrial/technical education, home economics education, agricultural education and fine and applied arts education. One needs entrepreneurial values. That is, training for entrepreneurship must be in addition to the usual skills training in any of the vocational and technical areas.

Recommendations:

In view of the above, the following recommendations are made.

1. Entrepreneurship education should be made compulsory at all levels of our educational system so that students at all levels will be encouraged to cultivate the entrepreneurial culture from earlier stage of their life.
2. Institutions should be encouraged to establish entrepreneurship centres so as to enhance the necessary practical skills needed in the new entrepreneurship curriculum.
3. Institutions should organize refresher courses or train the trainer programmes on entrepreneurship education from time to time to keep the teachers abreast with the rapid and dynamic developments in ever changing business environment.
4. Adequate funds should be made available for entrepreneurship education training so that relevant materials and equipment can be supplied for effective training in our institutions.
5. Governments at Federal and State levels should establish revolving loan scheme for all graduates who has potentiality and willingness to become an entrepreneur upon graduation.

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