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RELEVANCE OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION TO SMALL SCALE ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

This paper investigated the relevance of vocational education to the small scale entrepreneurship development. Specifically, the paper examined how vocational education assists in nation building and explored the need for introduction and teaching of entrepreneurship education in secondary schools. It also discussed globalization and entrepreneurship development through vocational education and the future of vocational education in entrepreneurship development. Vocational education plays a crucial role in the development of entrepreneurship and in improving quality of life. It was recommended that vocational education curriculum should be restructured and that the National Policy of Education should be reframed to address the present technological and socio-economic needs of the country. Nigerian government should set aside some amount of money for vocational education graduands who want to establish their own business.

Keywords: *vocational education, small scale, entrepreneurship, National policy on Education*

Word Count: 126

Introduction

Vocational education plays a very important role in the small scale entrepreneurship development. It is a subject for everyday living. Entrepreneurship development involves the formation, growth and expansion of the enterprises in a given economy (Zahraddeen and Kurya, 2006). Entrepreneurship is defined as interest and ability to start and operate a business venture with initiative and energy (Obijole, 2006).

In the pre-colonial era, business transaction was carried out on the basis of trade by barter. During the said period, exchange depended on the double coincidence of what a person wants and what he has for the exchange (Longe, 2001). According to Longe, there were no well organized marketing institutions such as manufacturer, wholesaler, retailer, consumer and aids to trade. Businesses were carried out in a half-hazard manner. The Nigerian economy had no structure. Ojukwu (2000), in his submission, stated that those who would have ventured into entrepreneurship had little or no

clear vision or direction with which to determine the business structure, operational methods, procedures and policies.

The emergence of vocational education in the past few decades brought about increased awareness into the practice of entrepreneurship. However, this awareness did not reflect much on new emerging economic and social changes of the twenty-first century. There were still some lapses and difficulties which needed to be addressed. The continuous strive to make relevant the development of vocational education to enhance the demands for the present entrepreneurship development is ongoing.

The strength of an economy depends on the strength of its small scale businesses. It is the function of vocational education to train and prepare individuals to conceive, start and manage enterprise in an effective manner (Esomonu, 1999). Vocational education prepares students for paid and unpaid employment and teaches them skills that enable them enter into any career of their choice. Esomonu further stressed, its relevance in the development of small scale entrepreneurship cannot be overemphasized. There is no doubt that vocational education is one of the pillars of economic enterprise of nations (Alhassan, 2006). According to Alhassan, vocational education addresses current realities as they affect entrepreneurship development and empowers people to become self-reliant and contribute to national development.

Entrepreneurship and National Development

Countries of the world attain their sustainable growth by involving in and establishing business enterprises. The wealth of a nation is determined not only by the development of science and technology but through the availability of viable business outfits (Danko, 2006). Any country that develops and improves in entrepreneurial skills and practice is bound to stand tall amongst the committee of nations. Zahraddeen and Kurya (2006) stated that enterprises generate a lot of employment

for thousands of people. These businesses provide the basic products needed by the populace. They generate savings on the foreign exchange; the monies which could have been expensed on payment for importing some basic needs can be used in developing the businesses. To them, this contributes towards the country being self-reliant. There is no doubt that industrial growth and entrepreneurship development depends on other factors. Such factors include availability of capital and natural endowment of raw materials, abundant human labour, stability of political systems and others. Zadradeen and Kurya believed that these are the foundations for entrepreneurial development.

A number of researches have recorded that most developed countries of the world attained their prominence as a result of establishment of businesses (Jhingan, 2000 and Adekola, 2007). According to Jhingan and Adekola, the third world countries' economy thrived in the past with agriculture as their nerve centre, but today with the springing up of small and medium scale businesses, the trend has been reversed. They added that entrepreneurial development has remained one single developmental mechanism in existence that can sustain the growth of a nation. In Nigeria, for instance, small scale business accounts for about 50 percent of the employed workforce outside the public service. The more developed countries like United States of America (USA), Japan, United Arabs Emirates (UAE), Germany, and others achieved their economic buoyance because of their large investment in entrepreneurship development.

Osuala (1993) and Danko (2006) expressed their views that entrepreneurship transforms traditional or indigenous industry, stimulates indigenous technology, redistributes wealth and income, diversifies economic activities and creates jobs. Osuala further stressed that entrepreneurship promotes self-employment which invariably expands the country economic growth. The public sector alone cannot provide sufficient jobs for all the citizens. By providing employment to the masses, that helps to cut down the rate of social problems within the society. As Osuala rightly put, the development of any nation is strongly determined by her economy and the social systems.

Ikeanyionwu (2006) noted that entrepreneurship is the primary source of new ideas, new economic growth and new jobs. Ikeanyionwu said that entrepreneurship empowers people and so produces a self-reliant nation with dynamic economy. Through entrepreneurship,

business opportunities are opened for a country and this culminates into its dealing with the outside world. Adekola (2007) agreed that the availability of small and medium scale enterprises has contributed to her growth.

Globalization and its implication to Vocational Education

Different scholars have defined globalization in varied ways. Scholte (2000) established five distinct definitions of globalization that are in common usage. Though the definitions overlap and are related, the elements they highlight are significantly different. In the first instance, globalization is used to describe cross-border relations between countries. It describes the growth in international exchange and interdependence. The second set of definitions refers to globalization as a process of moving government imposed restrictions on movements between countries in order to create an open, borderless world economy. In the third set of definitions, globalization is seen as the process of spreading various objects and experiences to people at all corners of the earth. The fourth definition depicts globalization as modernization. In this regard, globalization is understood as a dynamic culture, whereby the social structures of modernity are spread the world over, normally destroying pre-existent cultures and local self-determination in the process. Scholte's fifth set of definitions equates globalization with de-territorialization. In this direction globalization entails a re-configuration of geographical locations so that social space is no longer wholly mapped in terms of territorial places, territorial distances and territorial borders.

From the foregoing a general concept of globalization can be stated as the intensification of worldwide relations linking one part of the globe with other parts so that what happens in one place is shaped by events in other distant places (Okrah, 2004). In this sense globalization is seen as the complex inter-linkage of people present and future, a phenomenon which is becoming the dominant characteristic of the world political, cultural, economic and natural environment. Globalization in this perspective is a process in which any nation can be inter-connected and be equipped with relevant information and development programmes.

There is a need for a good vocational education programme to impart necessary skills leading to the production of skilled personnel who will be enterprising and self-reliant in the emerging global economy. The implications of globalization to

vocational education programme as stated by Oni (2007) are that:

1. It will foster manpower and technological development of Nigeria and other nations, particularly as regards the transfer and exchange of middle level manpower training and developments;
2. It will improve the socio-cultural development of Nigeria and other inter-connected nations;
3. It will foster the political advancement of Nigeria and other nations; and
4. allow for exchange of adequately trained vocational teachers between Nigeria and other inter-connected nations. That is, competent vocational teachers can travel from Nigeria to other nations and from other nations to Nigeria to participate and contribute to each other's manpower and technological training programmes.

If information on job and vocational education programmes of a particular nation become globalized, other nations will have the privilege to borrow from it and possibly use the relevant portions borrowed to build on their own programmes. Certainly, globalization process as regards vocational education programmes will provide substantial opportunities for the economic, manpower and technological advancement of Nigeria as well as other developing nations.

Need for Entrepreneurship Education in Secondary Schools

Entrepreneurship education is the type of education that inculcates knowledge, skills and attitudes that enables the students to plan, start and run their own business (Oni and Olaleye, 2004). The aim of entrepreneurship education is basically to prepare graduates for self-employment in the face of massive unemployment trailing Nigerian graduates today. Ojukwu (2000) observed that at present, vocational education programmes in secondary schools do not appear to be reflecting elements of critical success factors in starting small business enterprises. His observation is in harmony with Virtanen's (2001) finding which stated that entrepreneurship appears to be totally absent in the vocational education curriculum in Nigeria, yet the programme is expected to emphasize self-reliance for its graduands. There is no doubt that the deficiencies in entrepreneurship skills are to be expected. For as Amewhule (1993) pointed out, training for entrepreneurship development is not well-articulated by the Nigerian schools. Considering the changing nature of the work place,

there is need for the introduction of entrepreneurship education at the secondary school level. This is because the modern technological innovations were not there when the curriculum was planned in 1989 (N.B.T.E., 1989). There is need to revise the curriculum of vocational education in the secondary school so as to accommodate entrepreneurship skills and today's technological innovations. The present day social system has changed. Amewhule felt that what is taught to secondary school students must be in line with the society values, beliefs, ideas and purposes. As societal needs change, curriculum should be modified to respond to the emerging needs.

Similarly, the philosophy of vocational education is derived from the philosophy of education in Nigeria as stipulated in the National Policy on Education. Since vocational education is a subset of total education, the philosophy of education itself is linked with the main national objectives of Nigeria as stated in the millennium development plan. Vocational Education as a subset of total education shares in significant proportions from the national education objectives, which refers to the acquisition of skills, abilities and competencies to enable individual contribute to the development of his society. The focus of this discourse is the need for entrepreneurship education in the secondary school. According to National Policy of Education (FRN, 2004) the broad goals of secondary education are:

- i) To prepare the individual for useful living within the society.
- ii) To prepare individual for higher education.

Besides the broad aims of secondary education stated in the National Policy of Education, the introduction of entrepreneurship education would make the school leavers immediately employable. In the National Policy of Education, vocational education in general is conceived as a tool for making a nation economically, technologically and scientifically buoyant also for making individual achieve self-realization. The inclusion of entrepreneurship education in the secondary school curriculum would enable the students learn skills, knowledge and attitude necessary in the present day socio-economic systems. Vocational education which emphasizes the development entrepreneurship skills would permeate all the life of all the people. This type of education would make people relevant and functional in the world of business in particular and in the society in general.

Entrepreneurship Development Through Vocational Education

A well planned vocational education offering is strong instrument for a country's entrepreneurship development. The bulk of the vocational education curriculum is centered on skills, knowledge and attitude that makes one self-employed and self-sustaining. As pointed out in the National Policy on Education, vocational education prepares the ground for people to acquire skills needed for establishing and expanding entrepreneurship. This is in line with Osuala's (1996) assertion that vocational education is a programme which provides students with information and competencies needed by all in managing personal business affairs. This assertion buttresses the fact that entrepreneurship development can be made possible through vocational education. Osuala further gave insight of the usefulness of vocational education in entrepreneurship development. To him, it is the education that exposes individuals to office occupations, distribution and marketing occupations, business teaching, business administration and understanding of economic trends. It educates individuals for and about business. Okwuanaso and Isineyi (1990) and Osuala (1996) agreed that vocational education equips individuals to fulfill effectively three roles that correspond with entrepreneurship development. Thus:

- i) To produce and distribute goods and services as workers.
- ii) Use the results of production as consumers and
- iii) To make judicious socio-economic decision as citizens

The above roles recognize and accept vocational education as a course which holds the greatest guarantee for entrepreneurship development and economic survival. The Nigerian government recognizes the importance of vocational education and the need to relate its programme to the requirements of commerce and industry (Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN), 2004). Danko (2006) considered vocational education as the only instrument that can unlock the economic potentials of the citizenry. To Danko, the economic potentials are in the area of creating market for one's resources, particularly, in job creation, poverty alleviation, and in useful living. Effective and useful living is what life is all about today: this is made possible through entrepreneurship development. In agreement with Osuala, Danko emphasized that the techniques, knowledge and skills gained from the vocational education enables individuals to initiate,

start and successfully operate a small scale business. It can be said with confidence that vocational education builds and sustains the economic capacity of individuals. This translates into the establishment of entrepreneurship (Umoren, 2002). With the passage of time and the emerging social and technological changes, vocational education is becoming very essential in the establishment of functional entrepreneurship.

Future of Vocational Education and Entrepreneurship Development

The future of vocational education and entrepreneurship development in Nigeria rests on the vision and the ability of people and the government to think and feel beyond the present moment. According to Aina (2000) the country needs to shift emphasis from the "quantity" of vocational education to "quality". Great advances should be made in methodology, development of teaching materials, curriculum, entrepreneurial skills, teacher training, utilization of information and communication technologies.

The current poor socio-economic status in Nigeria and its technological under-development leaves many questions unanswered. The decreasing industrial capacity utilization, rising level of unemployment, poverty, dilapidating infrastructure and threats to social insecurity have put Nigerian economy in a state of distress and decline for a long time now. The economy should be revived and invigorated, but the fact remains that the injection of capital alone into it for this purpose is not enough. The country needs more of human capital and entrepreneurial skills and job skills for its economy to become vibrant.

Oduyemi (2000) believed that vocational skills empower young people and adult to play active roles in a development paradigm. This will narrow economic and gender disparities while reserving the integrity of the environment. It is no exaggeration to say that in future the backbone of robust social and economic development in a nation will be the technical professionals. According to Aina, having realized the importance of vocational education in the entrepreneurship development, there is need to reform and reposition its programmes in Nigeria for optimum performance. The changing demands for the future of vocational education in entrepreneurship development pose some serious challenges. Today's rapid scientific and technological advancement have created a global information society which is changing the way people live, work or think. The future of the

economy will result in a more "supply driven" education than "demand driven" - an obvious implication for a quick reformation of vocational education, if not the entire education system.

To bail the country out of its lingering socio-economic quagmire and to encourage entrepreneurship development, expansion in the course offerings of vocational education is a necessity. There is need for appropriate legislation and monitoring strategies for encouraging entrepreneurship development. For as Richard (1999) put "the future is only open to those who prepare for it". The vision of vocational education in Nigeria implies looking ahead or dreaming the future for the country. The future of vocational education requires an economy built on knowledge, skills, expertise and entrepreneurial skills that will be able to convert knowledge and other resources into goods and services that will attract income.

Conclusion

Vocational education has been recognized and acknowledged as being very relevant in entrepreneurship development. It is the key for sustainable development and economic prosperity. Through vocational education, individuals explore their potentials that enable them establish viable business thereby becoming gainfully employed. The acquisition and application of entrepreneurship skills, knowledge and attitude through vocational education makes a nation self-reliant and productive in the socio-economic environment. The teaching of entrepreneurship education in the secondary schools becomes inevitable. This will equip students to be productive and make them live as useful citizens. Vocational education for the future should be competency-based aimed at stimulating national development, enhancing employment, reducing poverty and improving the quality of life.

Recommendations

1. Vocational education curriculum should be restructured by the government to emphasize entrepreneurship skills and activities needed for self-reliance.
2. The National Policy on Education should be reframed by the government to address the present technological needs of Nigeria.
3. Entrepreneurship education should be introduced and taught in the secondary schools.
4. There is need for the government to set aside some money each year for assisting vocational

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education graduates who wish to establish their own business.

5. For Nigeria to attain the millennium Development Goal (MDG) by the year 2020, there is urgent need for it to embark on extensive entrepreneurship development.

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