

## FOCUSING TERTIARY TVET PRACTICES TOWARDS ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT: A VIABLE TOOL FOR SKILL ACQUISITION AND SELF RELIANCE AMONG TRAINEES AND GRADUATES IN NIGERIA

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### Abstract

*It has been observed that tertiary education is no longer a ticket for graduates to secure employment in the labour market. The researchers observed that the graduates turned out from Nigeria technological institutions in the last five years lack the requisite entrepreneurship skills for self reliance and employment and this inhibits the graduates from being self-reliant. This requires young graduates to consider entrepreneurship development through skill acquisition for self reliance. In view of this therefore, this paper examined the role that Tertiary Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) practices plays towards entrepreneurship development through skills acquisition and self-reliance. It discusses the relationship between entrepreneurship and the entrepreneur in an enterprise. The paper unveiled the role played by skill acquisition towards enhancing self reliance among TVET graduates. The paper established the fact that skill acquisition has great importance towards entrepreneurship development through skill acquisition and self reliance among TVET graduates in Nigeria. The study made recommendations such as setting up a department of skill training and development by the federal ministry of education in every tertiary TVET institution, ensuring that more practical work is introduced to complement theory in institutions of learning so as to provide avenue for skill acquisition and self reliance to enhance entrepreneurship development among trainees and graduates in Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** Tertiary, Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Entrepreneurship Development, Skill Acquisition, Self Reliance, Trainees, Graduate.

### Introduction

In Nigeria, entrepreneurship practices began in the olden days informally through the local practice of entrepreneurship or business transaction especially through the trade by barter system. Individuals and families in an effort to have certain goods, to exchange for other needed goods had to strive and find ways of producing goods needed for exchange. According to Osuala (2004), entrepreneurship invariably started when people produce more products than they needed, as such, they had to exchange this surplus. For instance, if a blacksmith produced more hoes than he needed, he exchanges the surplus he had with what he does not have but needed. Maybe he needed some yams or goat etc. he would look for someone who need his products to exchange with. By this way, producers of a particular item came to realize that they can concentrate in their areas of production to produce more and then exchange the surplus with what they need (Nnamdi, 2012).

So through this exchange of products, entrepreneurship started. In the olden days, a Nigerian entrepreneur is a self-made man who might be said to have strong will to succeed, he might engage the services of others like; friends, mates, in-laws etc, to help him in his work or production. Early entrepreneurship is characterized with production or manufacturing activities in which the producer most often started with a small capital, most of it from his own savings. Thus, early entrepreneurship started with trade by barter even before the advent of any form of money used today by entrepreneurs.

An entrepreneur is an individual who has the zeal and ability to find and evaluate business opportunities, gather necessary resources, take sequential and systematic steps towards utilizing the advantages of such opportunities. Entrepreneurship describes the efforts of an entrepreneur in

relation to bringing new ideas or creation of new things to satisfy human wants. Singal and ingal (2012) viewed entrepreneurship as the process that involves all actions an entrepreneur undertake to establish an enterprise to give reality to his ideas. This action can be described as a creative and innovative response to the environment. The word entrepreneur and entrepreneurship are not synonymous based on the above explanation. Entrepreneurship is the art or practice of being enterprising and undertaking of business risks or difficult tasks to make profit. While an entrepreneur refers to a person who undertakes difficult task or risk to make profit.

Entrepreneurship has a lot of benefits to the individual, society and the government. Entrepreneurship enables individuals to be self-employed as well as generate income to earn a living. He/she is sure of having something to do to earn a living until he dies. When majority of people have something to do to earn a living, the fear of armed robbery, terrorism arising from idleness, hunger, poverty and economic hardship will be minimized or eliminated. When many are employed and self-reliant, they will employ others and over dependent on government for employment will be reduced. An entrepreneur also enjoys the rewards of working as he likes setting his own goals, prices, condition of service as well as enjoying the satisfaction of being the boss of the enterprise or business venture. The varieties of innovative practices utilized by entrepreneurs satisfy human wants and while ensuring successful business venture and profit is what leads to entrepreneurship development.

In many countries, entrepreneurship development activities create most of the jobs and bring out most of the new products, new processes and new markets. This has encouraged the inclusion of Entrepreneurship Development Programme (EDP) in academic curricula. Entrepreneurship development refers to the task of increasing the supply of manpower capable of undertaking business creation to make profit and improve economic conditions as well as human wellbeing or standard of living in the society (Wale-Awe, 2010). The emphasis is basically on developing new entrepreneurs for the purpose of initiating and growing small-scale enterprises. Entrepreneurship development through the promotion of micro enterprises requires a multi-disciplinary and co-ordinated approach demanding socio-economic policy inputs and entrepreneurial training and development (Okwori, 2017). Entrepreneurship development programmes are those training and technical assistance programmes directed at the creation of new businesses or the drastic transformation of existing business. Examples of EDPs include the National Directorate of Employment (NDE), You-Win programme, Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES) as well as the introduction of entrepreneurship courses into the Nigeria Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) system.

### **Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) practices towards Entrepreneurship Development**

Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) according to the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2013) in her National Policy on Education, is an aspect 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. TVET provides trained manpower in the applied sciences, technology and business particularly at craft, advanced craft and technical levels; provide the technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, commercial and economic development; and give training as well as impart the necessary skills to individuals who shall be self-reliant economically (FRN, 2013). Institutions in Nigeria running TVET programmes include Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Technology, Monotechnics, Technical Colleges, Vocational Schools and Vocational Training centres among others. Technical colleges are regarded as one of the principal TVET institutions in Nigeria for the training of craftsmen and women.

Recently, TVET is considered by the International Labour Organization (ILO) (2010) as a potent tool for sustainable economic recovery in Nigeria because research findings revealed that many developed countries of the world have recognized the great importance attached to TVET programmes and have therefore accorded it the attention it deserves. ILO (2010) has regarded TVET as the basis for industrial, technological and economic advancement. They saw TVET as a means to job creation, poverty reduction, a tool for technological and economic development. Several countries that have experienced technological and economic breakthrough in the world today are those that have placed great emphasis on TVET and have invested substantially on TVET through proper planning and

reasonable TVET implementation policy. For example, the Dutch school system provided compulsory technical education for one-third of its pupils between the ages of 14 and 16 years. According to ILO (2010) review, the Dutch provided Technical training centers in secondary or high schools offering technical training for lifelong trade together with general academic studies. India, Asia and several developed countries have invested heavily in TVET and the benefits are very glaring with a great impact on their technological and economic development.

While the United States of America in recognition of the importance of TVET, established public technical secondary schools that introduced extensive public instruction in vocational agriculture associated skill-based courses. In the past decade, the developed countries have shifted emphasis to information and communication technology driven TVET. These countries that have developed their TVET programmes have been described as being secured economically. In addition, through TVET they have also been able to produce innovative and viable entrepreneurial practices and has enhanced their entrepreneurship development. Through researches in to entrepreneurial practices, TVET has transformed underdeveloped countries into developed countries where there are varieties of successfully trained and self reliant entrepreneurs. These entrepreneurs have greatly made positive economic impact in enhancing creating jobs for millions of youth in the various regions in Nigeria.

### **Skill Acquisition and Self Reliance**

A skill can be seen as a talent or ability an individual possesses and this could be acquired through deliberate personal experiences, training, observation and practice. Skill acquisition on the other hand involves the development of a new skill, practice or a way of doing things usually gained through training or experience. Skill acquisition has been described by many as the recipe for eradicating extreme poverty and hunger by creating avenues for employment, thereby creating an avenue for jobs and wealth creation while instilling self-sufficiency and reliance (Isaac, 2011). Acquisition of skill has been conceived as an effective remedy for self-reliance. The whole idea is that, students should be given skill training in addition to their regular academic programme/ curriculum in the crucial sectors as being demanded by the industry.

It was stated by Magbagbeola (2004), that skills acquisition requires the accumulation of different skill sets that enhances task performance through the integration of both theoretical and practical forms of knowledge. The guidelines for the sustenance of skill acquisition programme according to Magbagbeola (2004), were enumerated to include the following:

- i. Provision of training that gives the trainees the opportunities to acquire skills that are appropriate for preparation in a field of trade for gainful employment;
- ii. Provision of definite skills that relate to each trade that makes one a professional in one field instead of the others;
- iii. That training has to be done by competent, experienced and qualified instructors; and
- iv. Skills acquisition requires much practice, patience, interest, ability, aptitude and personality traits.

Skill is very important in the life of every citizen. The reason why many technicians from foreign countries who posed as expatriates earn higher than our Nigeria university graduates is because the expatriate technicians acquired more skills and were more practical than the theories the graduates were fed with while they were in the universities. The absence of self-reliance among our vibrant youth is as a result of the lack of requisite skills to back up what they learnt from their institutions of learning.

Adequate skill acquisition has numerous benefits and brings about skilled personnel who will be enterprising and self-reliant; people who can understand and adapt to changes in the increasing complexity of technology; and people who can apply scientific knowledge to the improvement and as solution to environmental challenges for the use and conveniences of humanity. It enhances individuals self reliance.

Self-reliance simply means reliance on one's own efforts and abilities. According to Igweh (2008) when somebody acquires skills in any occupation, such person can establish his or her own business and even employ others; such person according to him is self-reliant. Self-reliance leads to national development. Bassey (2009), in his opinion declared, self-reliance as that which pre-supposes the

attainment and autonomy without unnecessarily resorting to begging or browning. He emphasized that, a self-reliant individual is one that achieves steady supply of his needs, one that diversifies his resources to reduce dependency on others for assistance. Thus, self-reliance emphasizes growth and development in the life of a citizen, politically, socially and economically. Therefore, a man who is potentially self-reliant will ensure an effective control of his resources over national life for proper national development.

### **The Need for Skill Acquisition and Self Reliance Among TVET Trainees and Graduates in Nigeria**

In recent times, it is generally observed that Nigeria tertiary education is no longer a ticket for graduates to secure employment in the world of work. This requires trainees and graduates to consider entrepreneurship and self-employment as a viable career option for survival in the absence of paid jobs. The graduates being churned out from Nigeria tertiary institutions in the last five years lacks the requisite entrepreneurship skill sets needed in today's business world and this inhibits the graduates from being self-reliant in a business enterprise. Education should not be seen as an avenue to fill the head with literacy and numeracy, rather it should provide an avenue for students to go on a self-discovery journey to find several alternative ways of surviving independently in the world of work. This type of education does not just focus on the theories taught, but on how those theories could be tailored toward meeting the needs of each individual thereby helping the students to discover their untapped abilities necessary for survival and self reliance.

A major fact that baffles many authorities and agencies, especially researchers in education, is the fact that the stakeholders' in-charge has not realized its vision of equipping trainees and tertiary graduates with self-employable skills given the fact that there is a rising unemployment rate among graduates of all levels in Nigeria. It has been suggested that the quality of education that is received in schools are unable to equip students with the entrepreneurship skills necessary for self-employment (Addae-Mensah 2000) and once the formal sector employment opportunities are enclosed, graduates have very little to offer in helping themselves for their own livelihoods. One reason that has been suggested to account for the mismatch between education and acquisition of enterprising skills is that educational policies usually take after western educational models that disregard the contextual differences in developing regions, especially in Nigeria. These policies are usually designed to offer skills relevant to formal sector employment, knowing that this sector is woefully inadequate to accommodate the teeming unemployed graduates of all levels in Nigeria.

The type of education needed in the Nigerian economy of today is the one that will help the students to discover their innate abilities, develop and refine them, deploy them with skills and strategies in proffering solutions to the problems of our society both locally and internationally by engaging in useful or productive entrepreneurship practices that guarantees self reliance. Usoro (2010) observed that the failure of Nigeria's tertiary institutions is centered on the lack of entrepreneurship skill required of the products' (graduates) in the labour market which has resulted in mass graduate unemployment in Nigeria. There is a high demand for skilled and enterprising workers in oil, industrial and service sectors but the supply is far below expectation, and since there are fewer job openings than the graduates. The major problem confronting the nation is to equip the graduates in particular and youths in general, with appropriate entrepreneurship skills and competencies for self-employment and self-reliance. The possession of these skills needed by the labour market will enable the youths to contribute maximally to national development and make the society safer, richer, better and prosperous and reducing over dependent on government for jobs.

Self-reliance is the autonomy of decision- making and full mobilization of a society's own resources. It also means self-confidence, reliance primarily on one's resource, human and natural, and the capacity for autonomous goal-setting. A self-reliant person is an individual who relies on oneself or on one's own powers and resources, depending less on other people in the management of human and material resources. According to Ofoye (2010), individuals will be self-reliant when they have possible cause to access and utilize the essentials of life which includes good food, clothing, shelter, medication, transportation and functional education.

For most people, education has not realized its expected ends because majority of students from pre-tertiary to tertiary institutions usually leave school lacking the basic skills for entrepreneurship. Sabbi,

Amankwah and Boateng (2009) on educational policy of "Education for self-reliance" suggested that basic education should not just be a preparation for higher education, but instead, it should be complete education in itself that provides knowledge, skills and attitudes. It should go beyond teaching school children the basic numeracy and literacy but rather produce individuals that are thoroughly integrated into local life. This is the idea of self-reliance propelled by education.

Self-reliant could be viewed as the development of knowledge, power, as well as the feeling of responsibility in the individual. It emphasizes freedom and independence of the self, it encourages creative thinking as well as practical creative transformation activity and it means self-emancipation and self-realization (Sabbi, Amankwah and Boateng, 2009). The authors also opined that quality education is one that prepares learners for occupations in agriculture, carving, blacksmithing, etc. and when education fails in any of these fields of knowledge, skills, and attitudes for change in both the individual and the society, then the society's progress falters and learners may come to find that their education has prepared them for a future which is not open to them. Self-reliant education should not be confined to manual or physical capacities only, but also to one's intellectual, social and political life. Critical thinking is a crucial attribute of a self-reliant person. He or she must be critical and independent in his thinking and action.

### **Benefit of Skill Acquisition to Trainees and Graduates of Tertiary Institutions**

Trainees and graduates from Tertiary institutions with relevant entrepreneurship skills will be fully engaged in the Nigerian society where opportunities abound, waiting for the skilled graduates and youths to take up. Such engagements will not only provide them with the basic needs of life but will in turn provide jobs for others.

Acquisition of entrepreneurship skill set will bring about societal empowerment by providing jobs, develop entrepreneurial ability which in turn will ensure financial independence and assure a better standard of living.

Acquisition of entrepreneurship skills involves different ways through which graduates and trainees can be trained to achieve self-reliance rather than waiting for jobs in the formal sector alone. It is believed that training through skill acquisition programmes will enhance their sustainability in different fields of trade. This is possible when the culture of creative ideas is instilled in them to make them productive and self-reliant members of the society.

It will help the youths to develop positive attitudes towards work and labour. A large chunk of our youths roams the streets and it is disheartening that all we do is brandishing them as street urchins. Nwanaka and Amaehule (2011) opined that possession of entrepreneurship skills is important in preventing youths from becoming social misfits; because these skilled persons become gainfully employed through vocational training and acquisition of skills. Nwanaka and Amaehule also stated that in addition to entrepreneurship skills, vocational and technical training helps to arrest some social ills such as armed robbery, stealing and youth restiveness among others.

Acquisition of entrepreneurship skills will develop individuals who are problem solvers and economically productive, individuals who do not need to wait for a white-collar job to survive but will create jobs for others. It will enable them have the spirit of adventure, exploration and discovery which will in turn help the nation to overcome the problem of unemployment which is currently bedeviling the nation.

When a skill is acquired in any discipline, it is assumed that the future gains that would result from it will be of great significance to productivity. It will prepare the individual to fit in readily to employment in all sectors of the economy, showcase his/her talents, and make intelligent use of the brain in terms of new discoveries and innovations that will upgrade the individual's status within the society.

### **Conclusion**

For Nigerians to be self-reliant and contribute their quota to the national development there has to be entrepreneurship development through skill acquisition via technical vocational education and training to people of all ages especially the youths graduating from all tertiary institutions. This paper established the place of skill acquisition and self-reliance towards entrepreneurship development. It is

deducible from the review that tertiary education in Nigeria is no longer a ticket for graduates to secure employment in the labour market. It was observed that in the last five years, the graduates turned out from Nigeria tertiary institution recently lack the requisite entrepreneurship skills for self reliance and employment and this inhibits the graduates from being self-reliant economically bringing about over dependent on government for paid jobs. This requires young graduates to consider entrepreneurship development through skill acquisition for self reliance. The paper established the fact that skill acquisition has a significant importance towards entrepreneurship development through skill acquisition and self reliance among trainees and TVET graduates in Nigeria. Strict adherence to the recommendations provided by the researchers will enhance effective implementation of TVET practices that focuses on entrepreneurship development through skill acquisition for self reliance among trainees and graduates in Nigeria.

### **Recommendations**

The researchers recommended the following:

- i. That both government and Non Government Organizations (NGOs) should pay serious attention to entrepreneurship development in TVET programmes in various institutions by putting its priorities right and releasing funds for proper development of individuals to become self-reliant and contribute to national development through entrepreneurship.
- ii. There should be a consistent policy frame work, backed by legislation that makes it mandatory for various levels of government to set aside some percentage of the annual budget for the various levels of TVET programmes in Nigerian institution.
- iii. Only qualified TVET teachers and lecturers proficient in theory and practical tasks should be employed to improve the quality of teaching and learning in TVET institutions.
- iv. As incentive to enhance entrepreneurship development, TVET teacher preparation programmes should be supported and serving teachers and lecturers adequately remunerated.
- v. The federal government of the day and well-meaning Nigerians should help unemployed graduates undertake trainings to acquire relevant skills that will take them out of the streets and make them contribute meaningfully both to their families and society at large.
- vi. Educational planners should pay careful attention to the logistic and support factors in the educational policy which are crucial to the attainment of the quality of education needed for self-reliance and entrepreneurship development
- vii. Due to the negative attitude of some parents and students towards skills acquisition, there is the urgent need for the director in charge of school services in the federal ministry of education and other stakeholders to embark on programmes that highlight the benefits of skills acquisition training so as to encourage the interest of both parents and students to the programme.
- viii. The wide gap between the classroom and the industry should be eliminated by skills acquisition policy through the adoption of a 30:70 ratio of theory to practical. Educators should administer more practical work to complement theory in our institutions of learning in order to provide skilled labour for the economy.
- ix. A department of training and entrepreneurship development should be set up by the federal ministry of education in every higher educational institution. This department will be responsible for identifying training needs of youth, designing and implementing training and development programmes which should ensure high performance level of youths on graduation.

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