

ENTREPRENEURSHIP SKILLS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES IN NIGERIA: CHALLENGES AND IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES FOR TVET GRADUATES

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ABSTRACT

Entrepreneurship education is the type of education that equips its recipients with the necessary competencies to discover and exploit markets or ideas in order to become job creators, following the upsurge of unemployment especially of the literates. Despite the various entrepreneurship development programmes adopted by the government, graduates are faced with inadequate entrepreneurial skills in Nigeria. Hence, this paper examines entrepreneurial skills development programmes, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) graduates entrepreneurial skills acquisition and the challenges facing acquisition of entrepreneurial skills in Nigeria. The findings of the study revealed that TVET has great potentials for graduates' skills acquisition for self-reliance and employment. The study further revealed that TVET is facing the challenges of acute shortage of competent TVET educators, infrastructural deficiency, inadequate instructional materials, funding, supervision, monitoring and evaluation of TVET programs. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that the Federal, State government, tertiary institutions and NGOs should provide adequate funding, infrastructure and equipment, recruitment, training and retraining of TVET educators on emerging entrepreneurial skills and establish institution-based enterprises where students identify potential, develop entrepreneurial internship programme by matching students with successful entrepreneurs, make provision for a credit facility as take-off grant for TVET graduates at the end of the program to enhance self-reliance.

KEYWORDS: TVET, Graduates skills, Entrepreneurship programmes, Nigeria

Introduction

The transformation of Nigerian economies into globally competitive economies with abundant opportunities has hinged on investment in human capital development through the acquisition of relevant skills and knowledge. According to UNESCO (2002), all individuals must acquire the awareness, beliefs, attitudes, and skills to improve their capacities to work and engage in society. Countries now invest in education to facilitate personal and social development (World Economic Forum, 2015; Nwosu and John, 2018). In Nigeria, the National Policy on Education (FGN, 2013), specific goals of education are to ensure the development of individuals, the promotion of functional education for skill acquisition, job creation, and poverty reduction. In the same view, Uddin and Uddin (2013) stated that education in Nigeria is the process of acquiring skills, knowledge, and experience by an individual for self-reliance and employment.

The Global Youth Employment Trends (GYET, 2020) noted that the pool of graduates produced annually by various academic institutions outnumbers the number of employment opportunities created. In the same view, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2019), 137 million graduates between the ages of 24 and 34 were produced globally in 2013, with the number expected to rise to approximately 300 million by 2030. In 2019, around 429 million of the 497 million global population of working age were employed, while about 68 million were available and looking for work but unemployed (Global Youth Employment Trends, 2020). The World Bank (2019) notes that unemployment in the United States (US) stands at 8.5%, with the figures for other countries as follows: United Kingdom (UK) 11.3%; Germany 5.4%; Denmark 9.8%; China 10.3%; Japan 3.7%; Canada 10.8%; Burundi 2.7%; Kenya 7.2%; Rwanda 1.7%; Burkina Faso 8.3%; Benin 4.4%; Cameroun 5.8%; Cote d'Ivoire 5.1%; Ghana 9.2%; Guinea Bissau 3.9%; Madagascar 3.1%; Senegal 8.2%; and Nigeria 14%. These statistics show that the youth unemployment rate in Nigeria is among the highest in Africa. The recent report by the National Bureau of Statistics also confirmed that unemployment in the country is soaring upwards as the country recorded an unemployment rate of 33.3% in the first quarter of 2022 (NBS, 2022).

Cueto, Mayor, and Suarez (2015) argue that one of the ways to reduce unemployment is through self-employment, which is associated with entrepreneurship. According to Darmanto and Yuliari (2018), Kai, Rahman (2018), Salleh, Jusoh, Embong and Mamat (2018), Abiodun (2020), Jwasshaka and Fadila (2020), Adeniyi and Ganiyu (2021), the rate of unemployment in Nigeria has brought to light the need for entrepreneurial skills among graduates to improve the socio-economic well-being of the rural and urban citizens. The realization of the need for entrepreneurial skills development led to the introduction of entrepreneurship education courses at the tertiary institutions in Nigeria with the objective of providing students with the required knowledge and skills that will enable them to meet the manpower needs of the global environment (NUC, 2007; NBTE, 2019; and NCCE, 2012). In the view of Nwosu and John (2018), entrepreneurship education in Nigeria is the type of education that equips the learner with the knowledge and skills to recognize and utilize available opportunities to do something new, create wealth for themselves and also contribute effectively to society. Similarly, Ojeifo (2013) noted that entrepreneurship education in Nigeria is structured to provide the graduates with adequate skills training in risk management, reduce the high rate of poverty, create employment, reduce rural-urban migration, and create a smooth transition from a traditional to a modern industrial economy. Ojeifo (2013) further stated that the challenges facing entrepreneurship education in Nigeria are poor access to practical skills.

According to Okoye and Okwelle (2013), Maigida Saba, and Namkere (2013) and UNESCO (2002), any education that leads to the acquisition of practical skills, awareness, and comprehension of occupations for jobs is referred to as Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET). In the same vein, the Nigeria National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013) defined TVET as a compressive term referring to those aspects of the educational process involving, in addition to general education, the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding and knowledge relating to occupation in various sectors of the economy and social life. Wapmuk (2011) opined that TVET plays a significant role in providing the skilled work force required for entrepreneurship and sustainable economic development of individuals and the nation at large. Nduononwi, Surveyor, Nduaesa and Bassey (2017), maintained that TVET assist the students to

develop an insight and understanding about industry, problem-solving abilities which involves creative thinking related to materials, processes, and products of industry, proficient and safe use of tools and machines, choices regarding educational and occupational goals, exhibit safe behaviours in the workshop and relate these to situations in the school, home and community, evaluate manufactured and constructed projects on the bases of set criteria such as quality of construction, appropriateness of materials, function, utility or purpose.

Ikupolati, Adeyeye, Oni, Olatunle and Obafunmi (2017), Wordu, Igrubia and Okotubu (2018), noted that TVET skills include mastery of the methods, techniques and equipment involved in specific functions such as engineering, manufacturing or finance. Thus, TVET has emerged as one of the most effective human resource development strategies that Nigeria and other African countries need to embrace so as to train and modernize the technical workforce for entrepreneurial skills acquisition and self-reliance (FGN, 2012). In view of this, it is important to explore TVET graduates entrepreneurial skills, identify the challenges and recommend mechanism needed for improvement of TVET graduates entrepreneurial skills acquisition in Nigeria.

Entrepreneurial Skills Development Programmes in Nigeria: An Overview

Entrepreneurship Development Programmes (EDPs) have been described by Iwayemi (2013) as a purposeful intervention by a teacher in the life of a learner to impart entrepreneurial qualities and skills to enable the learner to survive in the world of business. Sule (2014), defines EDP as the process of enhancing entrepreneurial skills and knowledge through structured training and institutional building programmes. In the same vein, Agwu (2019), stated that entrepreneurship development programmes is an intervention strategy by people concerned to produce innovators who can create an invention, a new business venture or run an enterprise successfully and seek out investment opportunities, which reduces unemployment and transform economy.

According to Odia and Odia (2013), Idam (2014) and Tende (2014), several government agencies and institutions in Nigeria have been engaged in different aspects of entrepreneurship development and skills acquisition programmes which include Entrepreneurship Development Center (EDC), Centre of Management Development (CMD), National Directorate of Employment (NDE), former Nigeria Industrial Development Bank (NIDB), Nigerian Bank for Commerce and Industry (NBCI), Nigerian University Commission (NUC), Nigeria Youth Service Corps (NYSC), National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), National Open Apprenticeship Scheme (NOAS), Small and Medium Enterprise Development Association of Nigeria (SMEDAN), Small and Medium Enterprises Equity Investment Scheme (SMEEIS). Other government entrepreneurial development programmes includes, National Technology business incubation Center (NTBIC), National Poverty Eradication Center (NAPEB), Central Bank of Nigeria Entrepreneurship Development Centers, Youth Enterprise with Innovation in Nigeria (YouWIN) and many others (Taiwo, Tobias, Akeem, and Abiodun 2022).

The Small and Medium Enterprise Development Association of Nigeria (SMEDAN) was established by the small and medium industries development Act, 2003 to promote the development of the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) sector of the Nigerian economy and the access to resources required for growth training and development (Tende,

2014). In the same vein, Obert and Olawale (2010) Owolabi, Obiakor, and Okwu (2011) Tende (2014) stated that Small and Medium Enterprises Equity Investment Scheme (SMEEIS) is the banking industry's contribution to the Federal Government's efforts towards stimulating economic growth, developing local technology and generating employment through adequate entrepreneurial development policies. Additionally, Nwosu and Ugwuera (2014), Abu, (2015) Obilor and Osita-Njoku (2021) noted that Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P), the Young Entrepreneur, the Youth Enterprise with Innovation in Nigeria (YouWIN) and the Graduate Internship Scheme (GIS) programmes of the Federal Government in 2012 are meant to promote entrepreneurial skills and reduce unemployment in Nigeria. Despite the various entrepreneurship development programmes adopted by the government, TVET graduates are faced with inadequate entrepreneurial skills in Nigeria.

Challenges Facing TVET Entrepreneurial Skills Development in Nigeria

Some of the challenges facing entrepreneurship skills development in Nigeria according to Ayonmike, Okwelle and Okeke (2015), Ezenwafor (2015) and Olabiyi and Chinedu, (2018), are acute shortage of competent TVET educators; infrastructural facilities; poor quality preparation of training module by TVET trainers and instructor; social associates. Akinyele and Bolarinwa (2018), Okolie, Igwe and Elom (2019), noted the issue of poor remuneration of TVET teachers while poor supervision, monitoring and evaluation of TVET programs. Maxwell, Stephen, Hezekiah, Paul and Oyafunke-Omoniyi (2018), noted failure of the TVET curriculum content to motivate entrepreneurial actions and provide real life simulations of the process of entrepreneurship. In addition to these problems, Odukoya, Bowale and Okunlola (2018) point to the discrimination against graduates of TVET institutions and low enrolment at all levels of technical education. In the same vein, Ojeifo (2013), Nwekeaku (2013), Manabete and Umar (2018), Fagge, Abdu, Shehu, and Sule, (2020) Geda and (2021), maintained that the challenges facing TVET entrepreneurial skills acquisition in Nigeria as follows:

1. **Inadequate exposure of TVET educators to Entrepreneurship Skills:** There is a dearth of competence and adequate TVET educators with practical training in entrepreneurship education. Apart from deficient qualifications, staff lack entrepreneurial consciousness to deliver quality TVET entrepreneurial skills in Nigerian TVET institutions.
2. **Inadequate TVET Curricular Activities to Support Entrepreneurship Skills:** The absence of co-curricular activities such as entrepreneurship clubs, workshops and seminars, business plan competitions, internships, and venture incubators are key drawbacks of entrepreneurship education in Nigeria. Entrepreneurship education is taught theoretically in most institutions of learning in Nigeria.
3. **Inadequate funding:** Infrastructure and resources for entrepreneurial skill acquisition requires huge capital investment. Inadequate funding to drive quality delivery of entrepreneurship education frustrates the improvement of entrepreneurship education in most Nigerian institutions.
4. **Lack of favourable policy and government support:** There have being lapses in the policy framework to serve as motivation to the development of entrepreneurial skills. Lack of access to credit and loan, absence of tax rebates,

mass poverty, high level of inflation, technological infraction, political instability and insecurity of lives and properties are challenges facing entrepreneurship education in Nigeria.

5. Absence of Research Supports and Linkages: There is an absence of research support and most of the research endeavors are not targeted or applied to real-life situations in the Nigerian economy.

Improvement Strategies for TVET Graduates Entrepreneurship Skills.

Based on the findings of the study, the following improvement strategies for TVET graduate's entrepreneurship skills development are recommended.

1. Experienced and qualified TVET educators should be recruited, trained, and retrained on emerging entrepreneurial skills needed for graduates' self-reliance and employment.
2. Centers for entrepreneurship education should be mandatorily established in tertiary institutions to provide appropriate instructional materials, infrastructure, and support services that are relevant to the Nigerian situation.
3. There should be institution-based enterprises where graduates identify potential businesses, plan, create and operate small businesses by using the school as a mini-incubator.
4. Governments at all levels should develop an entrepreneur internship program by matching graduates with locally successful entrepreneurs with clearly established education programmes.
5. Stakeholders in TVET curriculum design should incorporate mandatory practical and field training schemes for students in tertiary institutions.
6. The government at all levels should release adequate funds and materials to enable the trainers and trainees to apply and utilize all the relevant skills needed for the acquisition of entrepreneurship skills.
7. The government at all levels should make provision for a credit facility as a take-off grant for TVET graduates at the end of the program to enhance self-reliance.
8. Nigerian banking reform programs should incorporate regulation of banks with regard to low interest charged on loans for graduates' entrepreneurial ventures.

Conclusion

By nature, humans are learning continuously for relevance in this era of technology. The current trend to promote skill acquisition, creativity, innovation, and self-employment to cushion the scorching effects of unemployment on a multitude of Nigeria's teeming graduates through entrepreneurship in TVET cannot be over-emphasized. The state of entrepreneurship education in Nigeria is marked by inadequate exposure of TVET educators, inadequate TVET curricular activities to support entrepreneurship skills, inadequate funding, lack of favourable policy and

government support, and the absence of research support and linkages cannot produce graduates who are employable or have the ability to employ others. Given the above challenges facing the country and her teeming unemployed graduates from tertiary institutions today, the remedy is not only the possession of certificates but TVET education that prepares learners for entrepreneurship skills acquisition.

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