

HARNESSING ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION FOR BETTER SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS AND LIVELIHOOD

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Abstract

Vocational Technical Education is the kind of education which is aimed at preparing one for employment in recognized occupation. The foundation of vocational technical education is based on philosophy which was mainly established for self-employment and self-reliance of the individual(s) who partake in it. It is an education that equips individuals with enterprising skills for satisfactory living. Entrepreneurial skills are essential source of socio economic development and better livelihood of every Nigeria citizen. This paper examines the entrepreneurial skills in vocational education and ways to harness them for better socio economic status. The paper highlights the entrepreneurship skills sets, the need for entrepreneurship development in vocational education, the challenges of inculcating entrepreneurial skills in students, the role of entrepreneurial skills in socio economic status and livelihood of individuals, and recommends among others that schools should encourage their students to be creative, perseverant and to take initiative. That is to say that schools should teach the students how to think outside the box and stand up for their belief.

Key Words: Entrepreneurial Skills, Vocational Education, Socio economic status and Livelihood.

Introduction

It takes great skills to succeed in business, and it is not a small feat to be a successful entrepreneur. Maigida, et al (2013) define an entrepreneur as one who brings resources, labour, material among others into combinations that make their value greater than in the past, as well as been able to introduce changes, innovation and new ideas for the growth of a business.

No entrepreneurs would go far without proper talents, skills, knowledge, attitudes, and practical dispositions to drive their visions and help them achieve their set objectives. Almost everyone has one form of talent or skill, but these could be better directed and honed with the proper education and use to which they are put. People have the natural talents of dancing, painting, sportsmanship, speaking, repairing, and others; but these talents could become a skill when they are honed through formal school education and practical job experiences. The more efforts are made towards mastering any talent, the more it translates into a skill that could sustain one financially for better economic livelihood.

Meaning of Vocational Education

Vocational education is education that prepares students for work in a specific trade, a craft, as a technician, or in professional vocations such as engineering, accountancy, nursing, medicine, architecture, or law (Finamore, 2018). Craft vocations – such as jewelery making, or metalwork such as those training to become silversmiths – are usually based on manual or practical

activities and are traditionally non-academic, but related to a specific trade or occupation. Vocational education is sometimes referred to as career education or technical education. Vocational education can take place at the secondary, post-secondary, further education / FE, and higher education level; and often is part of apprenticeship programmes. At the post-secondary level, vocational education is often provided by highly specialised trade, technical schools, community colleges, colleges of further education, universities, Institutes of technology / polytechnic institutes.

Vocational education is education that incorporates, matches, and teaches people to have working habits to be able to join and expand the world of work (industry) so that they can be used to better their lives. Vocational education is associated with grooming an individual for employment and enhancing the development of a future workforce. This involves different forms of schooling, training, or further development to prepare someone to join or continue working in a legal role. Vocational education is certainly part of the national education program, which intends to train workers who have skills and expertise following the requirements of job requirements and who are able to strengthen their capacity by embracing and adapting to technological developments (Sunyoyo and Andri 2020). It is an educational training that provides practical experience in a particular occupational field, as agriculture, home economics, or industry.

Entrepreneurial Skills in Vocational Education

Entrepreneurial skills are a set of skills that help a person to get, perform, and perfect a job. These skills are high in demand and training for these skills are often inexpensive. Vocational skills, Jake explains, are practical or firsthand skills that help a person master a trade or a job. Often, vocational skills can be obtained through hands-on experience on the job. However, these skills may also be obtained at a vocational school. A vocational school, also called a trade school, provides technical education to prepare people for work in a trade, craft, or profession. It also takes less time to complete the training. They equip an individual with the precise skills required to perform a job to satisfaction and in one's best ability.

There are institutes and colleges dedicated to imparting vocational education. Often, governments around the world encourage people to enroll and get certified in a vocational area of their choice in order to make themselves ready for the job market. Once, equipped with this know-how, people can easily land a white-collar or a blue-collar job in the job market. A white-collar job entails sitting in an office space while working on the computer and conducting or participating in meetings, among others. A blue-collar job often entails being on the 'floor'. This might involve a lot of moving around, using tools and equipment, handling customers, taking and processing orders, processing bills, among others.

Socio-Economic Status and Livelihood

Socioeconomic status is the position of an individual or group on the socioeconomic scale, which is determined by a combination of social and economic factors such as income, amount and kind of education, type and prestige of occupation, place of residence, and—in some societies or parts of society—ethnic origin or religious background.

Examinations of socioeconomic status often reveal inequities in access to resources, as well as issues related to privilege, power, and control. Crossman (2019) sees socioeconomic status (SES) is a term used by sociologists, economists, and other social scientists to describe the class standing of an individual or group. It is measured by a number of factors, including income, occupation, and education, and it can have either a positive or negative impact on a person's life.

APA (2017) describes socioeconomic status (SES) as encompassing not just income but also educational attainment, financial security, and subjective perceptions of social status and social class. Socioeconomic status can encompass quality of life attributes as well as the opportunities and privileges afforded to people within society. Poverty, specifically, is not a single factor but rather is characterized by multiple physical and psychosocial stressors.

The SES of an individual or group can have a profound influence on people's lives. Researchers have pinpointed several factors that can be affected, including: **Physical health-** Communities with low socioeconomic status in the have higher rates of infant mortality, obesity, and cardiovascular health issues; **Mental health-** Along with poor physical health, communities with low SES report more cases of depression, suicide, drug abuse, behavioral and developmental issues; **General health and welfare-** Along with the impact on an individual's well being, socioeconomic status can also have an impact on communities, including rates of crime and poverty.

Ways To Harness Entrepreneurial Skills For Better Socioeconomic Status and Livelihood

For a successful career in engineering, computing, construction, agriculture, and carpentry among others, there is need for practical technical skills. These skills will often be acquired after diligent study and years of practical experience with the requirements of the chosen careers. Entrepreneurial skills are to be inculcated from various dimensions and one way is to build it as part of the education system. Entrepreneurship skills should be developed as life skills rather than an economic activity. Motivating the child to grow with an enterprising spirit, accepting new challenges and finding new opportunities, developing management capability through live projects, motivating and teaching students to overcome the external and internal barriers of entrepreneurship and maximizing the opportunity for experiential learning are some of the ways these skills can be harnessed.

Knowing that entrepreneurship skills are to be inculcated in students, for the betterment of the individual and the society, the next question that rises is, "What are the entrepreneurship skills that needs to be built in students?" There are four categories of entrepreneurship skills sets as stated by Jatham (2017);

1. Entrepreneurship skills: Entrepreneurship skills help us to recognize the economic opportunities and act upon them. This includes inner discipline, ability to take risk, being innovative, change-oriented and persistence.
2. Technical skills: Technical skills help in producing a successful business product or service. The technical skills that are to be backed up for a **successful entrepreneur** includes, operations specific to industry, communications, design, research and development, environmental observation.
3. Management skills: Management skills are the ones that help in administering the company and helps in day-to-day management of the company. The management skills that are required are planning, decision making, motivation, marketing, finance and selling.
4. Personal maturity skills: These include self-awareness, accountability, creativity and emotional skills.

Need for Entrepreneurial Skills Development in Vocational Education

It has been seen that entrepreneurial skills development is a veritable tool for socio-economic self-reliance in Nigeria (Ibhaze, n.d). The following justifies the need to inculcate entrepreneurial skills in students.

1. It will enable students to possess entrepreneurial skills that will galvanize them to launch themselves to become future entrepreneurs.
2. It will promote, in a large-scale, graduate contribution to the economic and social reconstruction of the country.
3. It will arouse students' interest towards self-reliance or self-employment which is much needed today in Nigeria.
4. It will create in graduates the zeal to establish their own businesses and even employ other supporting staff, after graduation.
5. Entrepreneurship skills form the basics like reading and writing, when it comes to succeeding in the complex world.
6. Entrepreneurship thinking skills enhances the value of knowledge obtained from the Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math (STEAM) disciplines. It brings out solutions to complex problems by integrating the knowledge gained in the STEAM disciplines. It transforms knowledge into value.
7. Entrepreneurship thinking skills is acquirable, and doing this at the earlier stage will help in mastering it. The more frequently we expose the students to these skills, the more entrepreneurial they become. Kyari (2020) stated that entrepreneurship education inculcates entrepreneurship spirit on students.

Challenges of Entrepreneurial Skills Development in Nigeria

The following problems have been identified as obstacles to entrepreneurial skills development in Nigeria.

1. **Shortage of Qualified Entrepreneurship Trainers:** The shortage of qualified entrepreneurship trainers is a big set-back to the programme at least, to be able to intimate the students with the desired courses in our tertiary institutions.
2. **Weak Linkage:** There is a weak linkage between educational institutions, successful entrepreneurs and support agencies that are involved in the promotion and development of entrepreneurship.
3. **Inadequate Electric Power Supply:** This is still a serious problem in Nigeria. Industries, small-scale business, tertiary institutions, artisans, technicians, and others, require electric power to operate. Many industries, artisans and technicians are under-performing as a result incessant power failures. Okey et al (2012) stated that the issue of lack of reliable electricity supply should be seriously looked into if entrepreneurship education will achieve its aim and objectives.
4. **Consumption of Foreign Goods in Preference to Nigeria-Made Ones:** Many Nigerians still have a great propensity to consume foreign goods more than the home-made ones. This trend is inevitably killing our local industries, entrepreneurial zeal, agricultural production, etc, by making such industries to close down, while their workers become unemployed. This is the reason why the foreign labour-force is constantly being employed while brain-drain is always the order to the day in Nigeria. The slogan is "we consume what we don't produce and export what we produce", and what we export are primarily products like: petroleum, solid minerals, cocoa, rubber, coal, groundnuts, palm kernel, among others.

5. **Poor Funding:** This has become a major factor militating the teaching and learning of vocational and technical education in Nigeria, and has become a permanent set-back in the training of graduates. Corruption and insincerity of Nigerian leaders have been found to contribute to this set-back.

Entrepreneurial Skills and Socio Economic Status and livelihood

Entrepreneurship involves designing, launching, and running new business enterprises to earn a profit by ensuring the best possible use of resources. Good entrepreneurship skills in an area have a positive impact on improving the socio-economic status of local communities in various ways namely:

Entrepreneurs can change the way we live and work. If successful, their innovations may improve standards of living and help in wealth creation alongside the creation of job opportunities, and contributes to the economic growth of a country, county, or area.

Entrepreneurship helps to drive change with innovation, where new and improved products enable new markets to be developed hence creating a variety of quality products in the market for the customers to choose from, thus bringing healthy competition in the market. This is done by offering unique goods and services into the market by doing away with the old traditions and reduce dependence on obsolete systems and technologies. This results in improved quality of life, improved good morale and greater economic freedom.

Economically, entrepreneurship helps in boosting the national income and tax revenue of a country when they earn high incomes from their operations. The socioeconomic status of a community can be improved when the entrepreneurs contribute to activities such as investing in community projects and supporting local charities. This enables further development beyond their ventures.

Entrepreneurs play big role in driving a nation's economic growth and societal development. They inspire people to dream big and to push the boundary of advancement. They initiate change in the way we work and live for the better. And most importantly, they create jobs and fortune for a nation. They pull the process of economic development through efficient use of resources, manpower, and finance. Their role is significant in all types of economies—undeveloped, developing, and developed.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, it is clear that entrepreneurial skills in vocational education are practical and wholistic source for better socio economic status of every Nigerian citizen. It is a bedrock for improved standard of living which culminates to national development. When the vocational training institutions are improved to equip the students with the entrepreneurial skills sets, the students will graduate rugged enough to cater for their needs and that of others, become job creators and nation builders.

Recommendations

1. Schools should encourage their students to be creative, perseverant, and to take the initiative. That is the school should teach the students how to think outside the box and stand up for their beliefs.
2. Government should take the lead and initiative in fighting unemployment by providing loans to graduates of vocational education in order to enable them set up their own business centres because of its equipment-capital nature. This should be done by setting up a loan scheme to finance it.
3. All tertiary institutions should be massively equipped with the relevant tools, equipment or machines in order to facilitate competencies of graduates.

4. Technical teachers cum artisans should be employed by the government to teach technical students on practical skills.

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