

Vocational Education Entrepreneurship: a Pathway to Sustainable Development

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Abstract

The issue of sustainable economic growth has become a topic of debate amongst industrialists and scholars, in this era of global economic recession, and the subsequent financial crisis in Nigeria. To have a sustainable economic growth in any nation, the entrepreneurial spirit of the youths and adults alike must be developed through vocational training and education. Vocational education if properly coordinated has the capacity to build a sustainable economy through the acquisition of skills, and knowledge relating to occupation in a formal school setting, which will also be useful in various aspects of the people's social life. The objective of this paper therefore, is to examine vocational education and entrepreneurship, as a pathway to sustainable economic development. This paper attempts to examine the concepts of vocational education, entrepreneurship, and economic development, and considers also some fundamental issues that will bring about economic revolution. It was recommended among others that the teaching of right values, and attitudes, should be emphasized in vocational education, and to provide sustainable training for the trainees to enable them perceive the business opportunities in their environment and become self-employed and wealth creators.

Keywords: *Vocational, Education, Entrepreneurship, Economic, Development*

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Background to the Study

Nigeria is popularly referred to as the giant of Africa because of her vast human and material resources. In spite of these natural endowments, Nigeria is labelled among the few poor countries in the world. Unemployment rate and poverty level in the country is unimaginable. Over the years, Federal government has introduced policies aimed at combating poverty and unemployment, yet, the situation seems to be worsened on a daily basis. An important aspect in the nation's National Policy on Education is the recognition of Vocational subjects that leads to self-employment. The goal of the National Policy therefore is the acquisition of appropriate skills and development of mental, physical and social abilities and competencies as equipment for the individual to live in and contributes to the development of the society (NPE, 2004). In pursuit of its goals, Federal government recognized that vocational education as an integral part of technological development, a greater portion of education expenditure shall continue to be devoted to vocational education at Federal and State levels.

The desire of the federal government is to attain economic growths and development by 20:20:20 and become one of the most developed economies by 20:20:20. It was the late Musa Yar-Adua, the former president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria that introduced the strategic and laudable vision 20:20:20. It was a long term programme intended to launch Nigeria into a sustainable economic growth and development in 20:20. As strategic as this vision, vocational education remains a working tools through which this vision can be achieved.

The present State of the nation's economic recession calls for economic revival in all sectors. Edewor (2016) asserted that, it is quite obvious that the need for diversification of the Nigeria economy cannot be over-emphasized in the contest of today's economic actuality. He stated further that one of the ways of revamping the nation's economy in the midst of economic recession is by exploiting the vocational opportunities. Unemployment and poverty in Nigeria manifest in different forms which includes political thugery, ritual killing, human trafficking, prostitution, armed robbery, cyber fraud, car snatching, terrorism and other social ills. No nation can survive successive high rate of unemployment because of the attendant waste of human resources. It has become imperative, therefore, to call for mass development of entrepreneurial environment and vocational centres throughout Nigeria.

The Concept of Entrepreneurship

The term entrepreneurship and entrepreneur is not new in the business world, and have also generated varied definitions by authors, scholars, and writers in the fields of Arts, anthropology, sociology, and the social sciences. Hence, the various definitions are directed towards achieving the very purpose of writing. While there are several definitions of entrepreneur and entrepreneurship, the general focus of the concept remains innovation, risk-taking, and business uncertainty. In business, entrepreneur and entrepreneurship is often associated with the small and medium scale enterprises.

Koontz, O'Donnell and Weihrich (1980), sees an entrepreneur as a person who sees business opportunity, obtains the needed capital, knows how to put together an operation successfully, and has the willingness to take a personal risk of success or failure. Hornby (2015) defines an entrepreneur as a person who makes money by starting or running a business, especially when it involves taking financial risks. Inegbenebor and Igbinomwanhia (2011) also define an entrepreneur as a person that has possession of an enterprise, or venture, and assumes significant accountability for the inherent risks and the outcomes of the enterprises. From the

three definitions above, it is very clear that the role of an entrepreneur covers a wide range of activities ranging from business initiation, willingness to assume and accept risks and management of the overall enterprises.

To corroborate the above definitions of an entrepreneur, the World Bank (2004) define an entrepreneur as a person who perceived profitable opportunities, is willing to take risks in pursuing them and have the ability to organize a business. Hence, Inegbenebor and Igbinomwanhia (2011) define entrepreneurship as the process of planning, operating and assuming the risk of a business venture. Entrepreneurship is a process of creating a unique value of pulling together a unique package of resources to exploit an opportunity.

Entrepreneurship has been referred to as an essential tool for economic development because of its job creation through the formation of new business, increases productivity and enables the youth and adults alike to use their potentials to create wealth's, thereby becoming self-employed. Entrepreneurship involves generating business ideas, identifying organizational objectives, conducting market survey and organizing human and materials resources for the attainment of the objectives of the enterprise. In pursuit of the above, the Federal government through its education policy mandated Nigerian Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education to make entrepreneurship education a compulsory subject in their curriculum irrespective of their courses. This directive came as a result of mass unemployment witnessed among University graduates and the desire to provide a unique and secured future for the people.

Vocational Education and Economic Development

The present economic recessions and the consequent financial crisis are already biting hard on Nigeria citizens. In the circumstances Muiyiwa (2011) asserted that, it can be said confidently that we have now reached the point where our economic and creative managers become relevant, more than ever before, to stimulate and support the import dependent economy of the country by their tangible local investment in new self-employment and creative ventures. Kayoma (2012) opines that for Nigeria to remain viable in the present competitive and dynamic global knowledge economy, she required highly skilled and qualified manpower which can only be possible through vocational education and training. Drawing from the above statement, Inegbenebor and Igbinomwanhia (2011) defined economic development as the process of structural transformation of an economy towards a modern, technologically advanced economy based on services and manufacturing. They state further that this process involves not only qualitative changes to the nature of an economy but also accompanying quantitative changes in terms of the productivity and output in terms of the productivity and output per person. If these qualitative and quantitative changes result in unambiguous improvements in human welfare, it is generally seen as economic development in another development. David (1972) sees economic development as an unprecedented advance for most of a nation's population in food, clothing, shelter, household, furnishing, health, education and recreational services to the extent that these conditions such as malnutrition have virtually been eliminated.

Vocational education has the capacity of building a sustainable economy through skill acquisition. It is designed to provide specific training and develop creative skills of the individual. Therefore, vocational education remains a tool for growing the economy. Industrialized countries like China, Japan, and the United States of America amongst others,

own their development to vocational education and training. The relationship between vocational education and economic development for sustainability is well established in such a way that vocational education is an indisputable key for the actualization of vision 20:20:20.

Brickman (2009) asserted that vocational education is an instruction in skills necessary for person who are preparing to enter the labour force or who need training or retraining in the technology of their occupation. He stated further that the scope of vocational education is broad, ranging from occupations requiring little skill to those requiring a high degree of skill and scientific knowledge. In the same vein, vocational education programmes includes numerous occupational areas like visual arts (painting, sculpture, textiles, graphics, ceramics, photography, and craft), Home Economics (food and nutrition), home management, clothing and textile, dress making, catering, confectionery and bakery, fashion merchandising and Agriculture among others. These fields of study provide the necessary knowledge of guiding and assisting individuals towards a more self-rewarding and fulfilled life. These programmes help the individuals to become capable, self-confident, experienced and motivated to think and act entrepreneurial through learning. Promoting Vocational education programmes requires several innovative and entrepreneurial content mode of engagement with real life actors, and analysis of market opportunities in the delivery system.

Research, according to Inegbenebor and Igbinomwanhia (2011) has shown that small scale enterprises are crucial to the development of any economy, that industrialized nations such as United States of America and Japan own their development to the activities of small scale enterprises. UNESCO (2017) stated that skills are necessary for poverty reduction, economic recovery and sustainable development. The above assertion can only be possible if vocation education is given priority attention. When individual skills are developed, it brings about self-employment which in turn leads to wealth creation. In this era of economic recession, poverty can be reduced, battered economy can be recovered and the development of a nation and economic growth can be sustained. Economic development is fostered by numerous small-scale businesses which have the capacity to provide job opportunities to jobless men and women.

At the centre of the recent efforts by President Muhammadu Buhari to improve Nigeria battered economy, have been strong focuses on agriculture and the stabilization of the economy through massive foreign investment. It is believed that this effort will increase economic activity in the country and accelerate economic growth. Vocational education produces complete human resources that are well fortified to handle economic challenges in this era of economic recession. It impacts on the individuals the mental and practical apparatus to engage his/her environment economically through entrepreneurial practices. It is therefore crucial and necessary that the entrepreneurial skills resident in the individuals be activated, exploited and developed for the achievement of the functional vocational education programmes.

Economic Recession

For the purpose of this paper, an attempt shall be made to briefly look at what Economic Recession is all about. This paper will not cover the full content of the concept of economic recession. Economic recession did not start today. Nigeria as a nation is not the first to experience economic recession. In fact, it has become a global phenomenon. The origin of recession dates back to the Bible days when in Genesis 47 verse 13 reads; Now there was no

food in all the land; for the famine was very severe, so that the land of Egypt and the land of Canaan languished by reason of the famine. What then is economic recession? McKinney (2017) defined economic recession as a period of general economic decline and is typically accompanied by a drop in the stock market, an increase in unemployment, and a decline in the housing market. It can also be seen as a decline in gross domestic products (GDP) for two or more consecutive quarters.

The National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) stated that recession is a significant decline in economic activity spread across the economy, and lasting more than a few months, normally visible in a real gross domestic product, real income, employment, industrial production and wholesale-retail sales. Hornby (2015) observed that recession is a time of difficult for any nation's economy, when there is less trade, and industrial activity than usual and more people are unemployed. In the Wikipedia, the free Encyclopaedia, recession generally occur when there is a widespread drop in spending. From the above definitions, it is clear to say that recession is a general down turn in the economy of a nation. It has its own consequences on the citizens of a nation. Economic recession is usually associated with high inflation, high interest rates, reduced real wages, high taxation and policy conflict. Others include reduced consumer confidence, accumulation of debt, mass unemployment, poor economic planning etc. It is envisaged that within the next few months Nigeria will proffer solutions to this lingering economic crisis because the solutions are embedded within the causes of economic recession.

Prospects of Vocational Education

Within the framework of the challenges militating against the proper implementation of vocational education lays the prospects. Even though vocational education in Nigeria has not been given the due attention it deserves, its prospects in the sustainability of the nation's economy are numerous. It is extremely important because it helps in improving the nation work force. In the light of the above, the perceived prospects of vocational education are summarized thus.

1. Vocational education leads to the acquisition of practical and applied skills needed for the production of quality goods.
2. Vocational education provides trained manpower for content development.
3. Vocational education provides training for craftsmen and women who will be enterprising and wealth creators.
4. Vocational education provides the platform for men and women to have intellectual knowledge of the complexity of global business.
5. Vocational education helps in the provision of qualified and well equipped personnel capable of applying vocational skills and knowledge for the improvement of the society.

Conclusion

To develop a nation's economy, the entrepreneurial spirit of the youths and adults alike should be developed through vocational training and education. Vocational education if properly guided and co-ordinated remains the engine for economic growth in a depressed economy. No nation can fight war without an army. In the same way, no nation can survive completely without paying full attention to vocational education. There should be a conscious engagement of vocational education by the government and private sectors, by investing on

the programmes and skill training, so that the products of vocational education can compete favourably in the emerging global market. Preparing individuals for the world of work for sustainable economic development has been the traditional role of vocational education. Therefore, government should provide special grants and funds for those who wish to start their own vocational business.

Recommendations

The researchers recommend among others that:

1. Government, private sectors, and other stakeholders should provide enough funds to acquire modern tools, equipments, and materials, to help boost vocational education in Nigeria.
2. Skill acquisition centres should be established in all local government headquarters to cater for youths who dropped out of school, or are unable to go to school.
3. Subjects relating to trade and vocational skills should be made compulsory at all levels of basic and secondary education.
4. The provision of adequate training for the trainees to enable them perceive business opportunities in their environment and become self-employed and wealth creators.
5. The quality of instructions at all levels of education should be geared towards inculcating skill acquisition and knowledge development necessary for self-reliance.

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