

## **CREATING SELF-RELIANT OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH ENTREPRENEURIAL AND VOCATIONAL SKILLS ACQUISITION: A PANACEA FOR CURBING INSECURITY IN NIGERIA**

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### **Abstract**

*In this rapidly changing world, the quest for self-reliance opportunity through entrepreneurial and vocational skills has always been the desire of many nations especially in the present face of security challenges. This has triggers many countries of the world to re-evaluate their position and question their roles as nations and consider investing heavily in Vocational and Technical Education (VTE). Thus, Nigeria as a developing nation need a comprehensive functional VTE that will impart and impact the right knowledge, skills and attitudes as well as stir up the productive potentials of the citizenry to achieve self-reliance. Consequently, repeated call for massive reform of current educational practices has consistently been the dream of many Nigerians and has resulted in an increasing recognition of entrepreneurial and vocational skills acquisition as a panacea curbing insecurity in Nigeria. This paper examined the concepts of entrepreneurship and vocational skills acquisition, insecurity and self-reliance. It further highlighted VTE for Self-Reliance, Entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial opportunities in vocational skill acquisition and Strategies for developing entrepreneurial skills through vocational skills acquisition for curbing insecurity in Nigeria. Therefore the paper suggested the following way forward among others that: emphasis should be laid on entrepreneurial skills and functional vocational skills acquisition such as design, production and modernization of indigenous resources among students through practices and vocational skills for achieving self-reliant generation, the federal government should establish a sustainable national exhibition for entrepreneurship student to stimulate the production of high quality audio-visual materials.*

**Keywords:** *Self -reliance, entrepreneurship, vocational skills acquisition and insecurity.*

### **Introduction**

The worldwide constant innovative changes have shown that the future is unpredictable especially as it concerns education, technology, Skills and competencies which were considered the bed rock of economic, social and political mobility and growth. In line with this view, Romer, (1990) stated that countries whose populations have high levels of education are fertile soil for information based technology. Topel, (1998), Krueger and Lindahl, (1999) also stated that increase in a country's overall level of educational attainment have caused corresponding increases in their overall rate of economic growth. Nigerian systems of education at all levels have witnessed dramatic changes in terms of purpose, organization, structure and changes in nomenclature of certificates awarded. For instance, 1970's to early 1980s witnessed the 6-5-4

system of education; late 1980s to 2005 witnessed a restructuring of the education system on a 6-3-3-4 system while 2008 witnessed a new reform of 9-3-4 system of education (Gofwan, Goshi. & Dogara, 2015). Therefore, the abundance of natural resources in any nation does not in itself make it to be ranked among the developed, rather it is the specialized skills, competence and ability possessed by its populace which can be harnessed to utilize these resources (Achfusi, Ume & Okoye, 2009). Nigeria as a developing nation need a comprehensive functional VTE that will impart and impact the right knowledge, skills and attitudes as well as stir up the productive potentials of the citizenry to achieve self-reliance (Akhuemonkhan & Raimi, 2013).

Vocational and Technical Education (VTE) is defined by different authors in different ways. Okoro, (1999) defined VTE as all those experiences whereby an individual learns to carry on successfully any useful occupation. These experiences may be organized and institutionalized or unorganized and haphazard. Simply put, vocational education may be looked at as a series of controlled and organized experiences arranged to prepare a person for socially useful employment. The statement explains that all education is vocational in so that the individual may serve happily and far as it prepares for satisfactory living. In the views of Thompson, (2002) VTE aims at the development of human abilities in terms of knowledge, skills and understanding so efficiently in carrying on the activities in the vocational pursuits of his choice. Winer, (2000) in his contribution opined that vocational education is designed to develop skills, abilities, understanding attitudes, work habits and appreciation encompassing knowledge and information needed by workers to enter and make progress in employment on a useful and productive basis. It is an integral part of the total education programme and contributes towards the development of good citizens by developing their physical, social civic, cultural and economic competencies. For VTE to be self-reliant and productive, it needs not be operated in a vacuum. It has to be hooked unto factors that will help learners and all stakeholders in vocational technical education to be practical and not only theoretical in their approach to making VTE meaningful and life-long. These factors according to Ezekiel and Usoroh, (2009) are:

- Appreciation of dignity to work;
- Utility and culture in vocational education;
- Democracy in vocational education;
- Plights of school dropouts;
- Economics of vocational education;
- Needs of youths and adults;
- Needs of the society; and
- Basic rights of the citizenry

In a broad sense, Vocational and Technical Education is said to train or develop individual in the fields of vocation and technology so that the country can through the activities of such experts enjoy the good fruit of technology and at the same time contribute her own quota to the overall technological development of the world (Kehinde & Adewuyi, 2015). VTE is aimed at making

individuals that will be well armed with skills and knowledge to enable them secure employment either by establishing a small-scale outfit, or by being gainfully employed thereby utilizing their skills, abilities and competencies that are cultivated and inculcated by this type of education are of immeasurable importance in the socio-economic life of today's society (Maigida, 2014).

More so, VTE is seen as an educational training which comprehends knowledge, skills, competencies, structural activities, abilities, capabilities and all other structural experiences acquired through formal, on-the-job or off-the-job which is capable of enhancing recipients opportunity for securing jobs in various sector of the economy or even enabling the person to be self-dependent by being a job creator (Magaji, 2015).

Federal Republic of Nigeria, (2004) preached that vocational and technical 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 relative to occupations in various sectors of economic and social life. Manfred and Jennifer, (2004) advocated that vocational technical education comprises all more or less organized or structured activities that aim at providing people with the knowledge, skills and competencies necessary to perform a job or a set of jobs whether or not they lead to a formal qualification. These definitions show that the relationship between VTE and employments is undeniable. This could be achieved by meaningfully engaging the youths in acquiring vocational skills.

Skills acquisition in VTE is very paramount for the achievement of sustainable entrepreneurship opportunities of polytechnic students including those studying electrical/electronic engineering technology. This is because when students receive quality skilled training both in technical, vocational education and entrepreneurship courses, they would develop competencies necessary to start and manage their own businesses successfully. This assertion is supported by Gasper (2014) who described VTE as the type of education that provides the much needed technical activities for industrial transformation and promotion of local technologies and entrepreneurial activities across all regions. So training in VTE prepares people who could apply relevant practical skill to make positive changes within their society and afford a self-dependent life. Therefore, VTE holds the key to training the skilled and entrepreneurial workforce needed for the changing opportunities in the work environment (Afeti, 2010).

Entrepreneurship is the process of creating something new of value by devoting the necessary time and effort, assuming the accompanying financial psychic, personal satisfaction and independence Saidu & Ajuji, 2016). Tyolumun and Umogbai (2008) explained the concept of entrepreneurship as a gradual growth of creative, economic and social venture. It involves establishing an individual to explore, opportunities successfully through making a profitable or suffering loss of invested capital. The fundamental "principle" of entrepreneurship as a field of study is that it deals with the organization of knowledge in a particular subject in such a way that it

commands more of the hidden potential in the subject in the area of self-employment and job creation (Mkpa, 2014).

Entrepreneurial skills are skills and competences that enable people seek and run enterprises successfully. The skills are acquired through training that emphasizes the acquisition and development of appropriate knowledge and skills that will enable an individual maximize the resources around him within the limit of his capability. The skills consist of effective utilization of ideas, information and facts that help a learner develop competencies needed for career commitments, such as establishing a business, marketing, services or being productive employees of organization (Achufusi, Ume, & Okoye, (2009). The development of entrepreneurial skills will require that vocational skills acquisition teachers will be trained to have the where-with-all in the skills needed for entrepreneurship education. There is also need to produce adequate resources (human and capital) for actual implementation of such skills through design, production, selection, improvisation and evaluation of instructional and educational media, including those associated with the print and broadcasting (electronic) media.

Essentially, the discipline is structured to train students on cognitive, affective and psychomotor development, with the view to prepare them for the societal need in the areas of implementing vocational skills in modern schools and using new entrepreneurship as external means for serving an internal need (Lowyck, 2008). This is based on the believe that vocational and technical educators have the power to unlock the creative potential of the young thereby curbing insecurity in the society.

To understand insecurity, it is better to conceptualize 'security.' Security is one of the fundamental needs of human society. In a society where there is no security, the population is likely to be vulnerable to attacks from perceived enemies. In Ezeoba's opinion, security is the situation that exists as a result of the establishment of measures for the protection of persons, information and property against hostile persons, influences and actions (Ezeoba, 2011). It is a situation where people go about their normal business without any threat to their lives and properties (Hazen & Horner, J. 2007; Omoyibo, & Akpomera, 2013).

The concept of insecurity connotes different meanings such as: absence of safety; danger; hazard; uncertainty; lack of protection, and lack of safety. Insecurity is the state of being insecure or unsafe. The state is liable for providing security for members of the public. Wherever a state fails in this regard, the state is considered to be a weak state. Most of the weak states in the world are considered weak because they failed in their primary function in providing security for their citizens (Ali, 2013). According to Beland (2005) insecurity is a state of fear or anxiety due to absence or lack of protection. Eme and Onyishi (2011) defines insecurity from two perspectives. Firstly, insecurity is the state of being open or subject to danger or threat of danger, where danger is the condition of being susceptible to harm or injury. Secondly insecurity is the state of being exposed to risk or anxiety, where anxiety is a

vague unpleasant emotion that is experienced in anticipation of some misfortune. The above definitions of insecurity underscore a major point that those affected by insecurity are not only uncertain or unaware of what would happen but they are also vulnerable to the threats and dangers when they occur. In the context of this paper insecurity is defined as a breach of peace and security, whether historical, religious, ethno-regional, civil, social, economic, and political that contributes to recurring conflicts, and leads to wanton destruction of lives and property.

Hasan (2005), defines insecurity as a fact of life for the poor urban citizens of many countries which may arise from the lack of secure housing tenure. According to Hasan, insecurity means living with the constant fear of eviction or it may reflect high levels of personal insecurity stemming from police harassment, abuse in the hands of bureaucracies or the breakdown of public safety in the neighborhood. Insecurity therefore, implies the absence of security. It is the direct opposite of security.

It is the absence of safety of individuals, state or organization against criminal activities. In the words of Ayodele, (2006), the high rate of insecurity as exemplified in kidnapping, prostitution, and armed robbery has relationship with joblessness and redundancy. This implies that joblessness and redundancy can trigger security threat to a country. The various security challenges been faced by Nigeria have been attributed to joblessness and redundancy in many cases. According to the popular maxim, "The idle hand is the devil's workshop"; the situation whereby majority of the youths are jobless and unemployed, will, doubtlessly, engender high insecurity in the country. Thus, joblessness and redundancy has driven many Nigerians into various activities that constitute a threat to the country's security.

### **Self-Reliance**

Self-reliance simply means reliance on one's own efforts and abilities (Merriam,2006).Self-reliance is the social and economic ability of an individual, a household or a community to meet essential needs (including protection, food, water, shelter, personal safety, health and education) in a sustainable manner and with dignity (Udofia, 2009). Self-reliance, as a programme approach, refers to developing and strengthening livelihoods of persons of concern, and reducing their vulnerability and long-term reliance on humanitarian/external assistance (Ezekiel & Usoroh, 2009). 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. In Opinion of Bassey (2009), 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 especially when directed towards acquisition of vocational skills in VTE institutions.

### **VTE for Self-Reliance**

There are five types of technical and vocational training institutions, National policy on Education recognized outside the university system. Yabam in Igweh (1997) indicated that three broad classifications are recognized by the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE). They are vocational schools, technical colleges, colleges of education (technical) or polytechnics, all the above listed are training institutions meant for the production of graduates who shall be self-reliant and contribute their quota for national development through instrument of vocational technical education and training.

However, vocational technical education and training in Nigeria according to Nwogu (2009) “should emphasized entrepreneurship awareness for it to be relevant in achieving the national educational aim of inculcating the right type of values and attitudes for survival of an individual and Nigeria society”. Enahoro (2008), in his view said vocational training is utilitarianism and it is a concept of reorganizing the importance of labour. Therefore, to train someone in his appropriate field and for him to substantially contribute his quota to the overall good of the nation, he has to pass through vocational technical education and training. It is a fact that needs no further investigation to say that when and if it is good with a nation, it is also good with its inhabitants and vice versa. For this reason, any nation or country that gives proper training in one sided area of importance to her citizenry or gives improper training to people in all areas of importance has nothing to gain. People are differently gifted and therefore, should be given equal vocational technical education and training for self-reliance in the different occupational areas. Nigeria should be such that people are trained for the different opportunities or openings that abounds in the country, in compliance with the tedious task of giving suitable and proper training to individuals for optimum productivity amongst others.

### **Entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial opportunities in vocational skill acquisition**

The word entrepreneurs has been viewed differently, according to Elechi, (2009), an entrepreneur is an individual who undertakes self-directed initiatives and assumes personal risks in creating and operating a profit oriented business. An entrepreneur is characterized by hard working, self-confidence, profit-oriented in approach, have capacity to cope with failure, demonstrate initiative, set his own standard, always goal oriented, possess reliability and integrity. On the other hand, Saidu, (2011) places emphasis on vocational skills acquisition to enable the recipient become more relevant to himself and to the society at large. It is also the creation of business enterprises by individuals or small groups. Thus entrepreneurship education is a carefully planned process leading to the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills for effective living. Entrepreneurship education is an instrument that empowers the youths to be in control of their future, have more opportunities to exercise creative freedom, higher self-esteem and overall greater sense of

control over their own lives. This implies that entrepreneurship is a major source of job-creation and it is largely for this reason that it has been equated with new venture creation and small businesses development. However, the reasons for the contemporary interest in entrepreneurship according to Saidu, (2011) are probably much more profound than this. They includes:

- Job creation and economic development
- Strategic adjustment/realignment
- Deregulation and the privatization of public utilities and state-owned enterprises

Entrepreneurship educators are beginning to suggest, therefore, that the purpose should not be just to equip students with the functional management competences to start a business on graduation, but should be concerned with raising opportunities of entrepreneurship – with teaching students about entrepreneurs and, in particular, their roles and functions in the economy and society (Carter & Jones-Evans, 2000). Continuing, for others it should be developing in their students the attributes of the successful entrepreneur-where an entrepreneur can see opportunity, cope with uncertainty and ambiguity, make sense out of chaos, initiate build and achieve, in the process not just coping with change but anticipating and initiating it. Consequently, Ray (1997) outlined the major attributes of an entrepreneur and these include, amongst others:

- Communication skills, especially persuasion
- Creativity skills
- Critical thinking and assessment skills
- Leadership skills
- Negotiation skills
- Problem-solving skills
- Social networking skills
- Time management skills

### **Strategies for developing entrepreneurial skills through vocational skills acquisition for curbing insecurity in Nigeria**

Entrepreneurial skills require an application of energy and passion towards the creation and implementation of new ideas and creative solutions. According to Kiosaki, (2000) essential ingredients of entrepreneurship include the willingness to take calculated risks-in terms of time, equity, or career; the ability to formulate an effective venture team; the creative skill to marshal needed resources; and fundamental skill of building solid business plan; and finally, the vision to recognize opportunity where others see chaos, contradiction, and confusion. Kehinde, (2008) asserted that entrepreneurial skills consist of organizing all the factors of production i.e. land, labour and capital to transform a business idea into profitable reality. Continuing, Kehinde, pointed out that the skills also involved careful observation of the environment, identifying opportunities to improve the environment, gather resources and implement action to maximize those opportunities and as well as curbing insecurity in Nigeria. Thus, the Strategies for developing

entrepreneurial skills can only be achieved through functional vocational skill acquisition. These strategies include:

- Exposing students to available career opportunities in vocational skills acquisition
- Promoting an open and virtual learning
- “Learning by doing” for self-motivation and reinforcement;
- Promoting students' value reorientation, curiosity, and professional passion
- Shifting from all cognitive components to affective and psychomotor domain.
- Promoting high level skill development in the use of modern communication technologies such as; video and audio teaching aids, TV, video conferencing, internet, use of LCD projectors, digital video camera etc, and adopting new teaching methodologies- seminar, group discussion, peer group tutoring etc. Through these strategies, the youth are made to be entrepreneurial minded, self-employed and consequently self-reliant.

Skill acquisition can simply be said to be the process of releasing human energy, it means providing an opportunity for people to make the maximum contribution to their own development and to the self-development of their communities. Taie (2014) asserted that skill acquisition will help to reduce the poverty rate if people are trained in diverse areas and they in turn create wealth for themselves and their immediate environment. Everybody cannot get government job or white collar job and hence the need for skill acquisition that will shape and improve the lives of the people who have resigned to fate for lack of job. Electrical, Mechanical, Technical as well as fashion design can be acquired. These skill if well acquire can make the individual to be self-reliant and thus the issue of a burden to others will not be there. Oke (2005) therefore suggests that enabling the individual to acquire skill can make him bring about good innovation, good performance, self-respect and improvement in their quality of lives.

### **Conclusion**

The importance of self-reliance opportunity through entrepreneurship and vocational skills acquisition has been recognized as panacea for curbing insecurity in Nigeria. Nigeria's entrepreneurship capacity and the development of a creative and knowledge-intensive economy and society can be achieved through reinforcing the role and training of vocational skills acquisition graduates in the knowledge triangle and focusing course curricula on creativity, entrepreneurship. Thus the following recommendations are proffered.

### **The Way Forward**

- It therefore recommended the following as a way forward that;
- i. emphasis should be laid on entrepreneurial skills and functional vocational skills acquisition such as design, production and modernization



- of indigenous resources among students through practices and vocational skills for achieving self-reliant generation.
- ii. The federal government should establish a sustainable national exhibition for entrepreneurship student to stimulate the production of high quality audio-visual materials.
  - iii. The government both at federal and state level should encourage and support multi-disciplinary research in ed, promote regional and international cooperation and collaboration in form of conferences, seminars and symposium specifically targeted towards achieving the goals of building self-reliant generation.
  - iv. Curriculum developers should integrate entrepreneurial aspect at all levels of vocational skills acquisition curriculum and training by promoting learning by discovery method, experiential learning, participatory approach and through interactive environments, promoting attitudes receptive to self-reliance among all vocational skills students.
  - v. Enterpreneurship instructors should introduce an intensive mentoring program by building alliances and relationships with other entrepreneurs, business professionals, alumni, and investors, so that students can build professional passion, gain personal insights, develop concepts, and formulate new ideas with this form of training.

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