INTEGRATING ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS IN TVET AS A STRATEGIC APPROACH FOR IMPROVING YOUTH EMPLOYMENT IN NIGERIA: A STUDY OF KADUNA POLYTECHNIC

Hauwa'u Sani
Department of Business Administration, Kaduna Polytechnic, Kaduna State, Nigeria
sanihauwau@kadunapolytechnic.edu.ng

Abstract

Integration of entrepreneurial skills in TVET has been identified as part of the solution for unemployment among the youths in any nation. Nigeria is fast becoming a predominantly youthful society with high rate of unemployment which requires training the youth in entrepreneurial skills in Technical Vocational Education and Training to tackle the unemployment which has reached alarming proportions. In this regard, the study was conducted to assess the integration of entrepreneurial skills in vocational education as a strategic approach for improving youth employment in Nigeria using Kaduna Polytechnic as the case study. The descriptive survey method was employed in this study having a total of 70 respondents consisting of teaching and non-teaching staff sampled randomly and purposively from Kaduna Polytechnic. The data were collected through primary source using questionnaire and statistical descriptive statistics like frequencies, percentages and means were used to analyze the data using SPSS version 20. The study found that there were several practices that actually promote the entrepreneurial skill of students in the TVET institute such as competency-based training in TVET, promotion of independent and critical thinking skills of students. The study, therefore, recommends that TVET future could be enhanced through the integration of competency-based education and training (CBET) with academia at all tertiary educational institutions.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial Skills, Technical and Vocational Education, Youth Employment

Introduction

Entrepreneurship entails going beyond just starting a new venture, it is a process through which individuals identify the opportunities in their environment, utilize those opportunities by choosing and allocating the resources needed to exploit that opportunity and create value. This can be achieved by identifying unmet needs and opportunities for change and improvement through the creation of value. Vias and Rivera-Cruz (2020) provides views entrepreneurship education in higher institution as a teaching and learning activity that can ascertain business attitudes towards business which includes factors such as risk taking, innovation, creativity and business creation.
Despite the level of growth in entrepreneurship, poverty situation in Nigeria is alarming, especially among the youth. Though, poverty and unemployment, especially among youth is a global phenomenon. For instance, findings released by the office of the International Labor Organization (ILO) in 2016 shows that youth between eighteen and thirty years of age make up nearly half (47 per cent) of the world unemployed. A recent report by the World Bank (2019) notes that, youth unemployment in Nigeria is 14% which shows that the youth unemployment rate in Nigeria is among the highest in Africa. Cueto et al. (2019) argue that one of the ways to reduce unemployment is self-employment which is associated with entrepreneurship.

The only way to empower the youth is to provide them with adequate and qualitative education in order to make them job creators and eradicate poverty (Sekenu, 2004). Many countries of the world including Nigeria have considered Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) as relevant in equipping young people with technical skills that would enable them engage in productive livelihood. However, the United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) section for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in 2020 observed that TVET programmes have not led to increased employment, despite the obvious need for technical and vocational services. When the youths start to develop technologies that are combined with available resources in their environment, then, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) would be seen as a success in Nigeria and this is only possible if entrepreneurship education is integrated into the TVET curriculum especially in the higher institutions.

The major challenges for entrepreneurship programmes in TVET are teaching methods where trainers have used basic teaching tools (Arifin and Gerke, 2014). Effective teaching methods such as demonstration, group discussion, business simulation, mini-project based methods, analysis of histories of successful entrepreneurs to supplement the

entrepreneurship course should be techniques that should be embraced by TVET institutions to revolutionize its concept of entrepreneurial skills development.

Previous studies in developing countries indicate that youth unemployment is exacerbated by the limited rate of job creation or self-employment (Adesugba and Mavrotas, 2016). A study by Maigida, Saba and Namkere (2013) revealed that Nigeria is fast becoming a predominantly youthful society with high rate of unemployment which necessitates the need for training the youth in entrepreneurial skills in Technical Vocational Education and Training to tackle the unemployment which has reached alarming proportions. Similarly, Adeniyi, Derera and Gamede (2022) analyzed the entrepreneurial readiness of students in TVET in Nigeria and found that development of business start-up skills would enable graduates of TVET institutions to become self-employed, reduce youth unemployment, and contribute to the growth of the economy. It is recommended that TVET institutions integrate with the entrepreneurial ecosystem such as private industries, experienced and successful entrepreneurs, government to support student entrepreneurs in terms of skills and funds. A regional analysis in Spain by Cueto et al. (2019) concluded that self-employment is a solution to a lack of wage employment. Koros (2021) in his study found out that it is important to ensure that TVET relates to real ability and skill gaps to turn ideas into actions, as needed by the entrepreneurs to be in line with the current changing times. The study concluded that lack of explicit entrepreneurship education-training module, lack of the practical element of entrepreneurship education, ineffective teaching methods in entrepreneurship education and lack of trainers' and trainees' participation in entrepreneurial education influence an inclusive entrepreneurship education in TVET system.

Research has also shown that graduates of TVET institutions in Nigeria are not entrepreneurially ready for business creation (Edokpolor and Owenvbiugie, 2017). In this regard, the purpose of this research is to integrate the entrepreneurial skills in technical and vocational education as a strategic approach for improving youth employment in Nigeria.

Methodology

The Research Design

This research adopts the cross-sectional research design. It specifies the details of the procedures necessary for obtaining the information needed to integrate entrepreneurship in Vocational and Technical Education and also increase the employment opportunities of the youths. The descriptive survey method was employed for the collection of quantitative data which ensures the possibility of gathering of large-scale data upon which a basis for interpretation and generalizations were drawn.

Population and Sample of the Study

The target population of the study is Kaduna Polytechnic. The population considered for the study consisted of staff of the identified vocational training institution. The population of the study consist of the teaching and non-teaching staff from the identified vocational/technical institution (Kaduna Polytechnic) which is 85 staff. Present research utilized Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table for determining sample size to obtain the sample size. Hence, a total of 73 questionnaires were distributed among the staff consisting of 50 teaching staff and 20 non-teaching/administrative staff from the institution.

Sources and Methods of Data Collection

The instrument used for collecting the data for the study was questionnaire. To measure the issues regarding integrating entrepreneurial skills in vocational/technical education, it requires an accurate and appropriate selection of data collection instruments. The primary data was collected by means of self-administered questionnaires. The items from the questionnaire were adapted from the study of Abayase, Andoh-Nartey and Amponsah (2021) having 6 questions. Extensive literature review was carried out to have an insight on the overview of entrepreneurial skills, VTET and youth employment.

Validity and Reliability of Instruments

In order to establish the degree of reliability, consistency of the instrument, pilot study was conducted in order to establish the degree of reliability; consistency of the instrument, a pilot study was carried out in Kaduna Polytechnic, using fifteen staff. The result of the test was subjected to Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC)

to determine its reliability, the result revealed that the instrument is reliable (0.608). Also, based on the significant value obtained by the Sig. (2-tailed) of 0.000<0.05, so it can be concluded that it is valid.

Techniques of Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process of both collecting and evaluating data that are measurable and verifiable using analytical and logical reasoning to examine (Creswell, 2017). After the data are collected, relevant and appropriate errors are modified and coded. Coding integrates assigning symbols or numbers to each category of response so as to translate the raw data into a form that could be counted, tabulated or fed directly into a computer system. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages were used in the analysis of the data. In this study, the strongly agree and agree categories are condensed to mean agree and the strongly disagree and disagree categories to mean disagree. Based on the four-point Likert scale used, a computed mid-point mean value of 2.5 and below (≤ 2.5) signifies general agreement with the statement whilst a mean score of 2.6 and above (≥2.6) indicates that respondents generally disagreed with the statement. Based on the study by Chyung, Roberts, Swanson and Hankinson (2017), the use of a 4-point scale category implies a midpoint mean value of 2.5 while a 5-point scale and 7-point scale category has midpoint values of 3 and 4 respectively. The organized and coded data was then fed into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS Software) for analysis and interpretation. The analysis and discussions are presented under section four of this study.

Result

Table 1: Vocational training practice that promote entrepreneurial skills to improve youth employment

Variables	**SA**		**A**		**D**		**SD**		**Mean**	**Total**
	F	**%**	**F**	**%**	**F**	**%**	**F**	**%**	**(X)**	
Emphasis on practical work rather than grades in technical education enhances youth empowerment needed for entrepreneurship	25	74.3	4	5.7	10	14.3	4	5.7	1.51	70 100%
Competency based training in TVET enhances workers productivity	21	30	46	65.7	0	0	3	4.3	1.78	70 100%
Having a balanced combination of theory and practice in TVET helps students to develop innovative and creativity skills	37	52.9	22	31.4	11	15.7	0	0	1.63	70 100%
Vocational education empowers students to be employers of labour rather than employees	11	15.7	26	37.1	3	4.3	30	42.9	2.74	70 100%
Acquisition of real-world experience through field trips exposes students to knowledge and skills for job creation	50	71.4	9	12.9	7	10	4	5.7	1.50	70 100%
Promotion of independent and critical thinking skills of students enhances output effectiveness and efficiency in business	33	47.1	24	34.3	10	14.3	3	4.3	1.75	70 100%

Source: Author's Field Survey, 2022

The processed analyzed data is presented and interpreted in this section using frequencies and percentages for the analysis. The result shows that the vocational training practices promote entrepreneurial skills of the youths thereby improving employment opportunities for them.

Discussion

The table above represents the technical and vocational education practices that promotes entrepreneurial skills among students. From the data presented in table, majority of 67 (95.7%) respondents agreed that the competency-based training in TVET enhances workers productivity. This item received a mean of 1.78 which indicates that respondents rated it higher than the other factors in the study. The next vocational training practice that promotes entrepreneurial skills of students as rated by respondents was emphasis on practical work rather than grades in technical education enhances youth empowerment needed for entrepreneurship. To this statement, 37 (52.9%) of respondents strongly agreed whilst 22 (31.4%) agreed, yielding a mean value of 1.63.

In ascending order of mean values which indicates that the acceptance level has decreased with mean values of 1.75, 1.50 and 1.51, the respondents agreed vocational education practices like promotion of independent and critical thinking skills of students enhances output effectiveness and efficiency in business, having a balanced combination of theory and practice in TVET helps students to develop innovative and creativity skills and acquisition of real-world experience through field trips exposes students to knowledge and skills for job creation, promotes entrepreneurial skills among students. On the other hand, respondents generally disagreed that vocational education empowers students to be employers of labour rather than employees with a mean value of 2.74 which is above the accepted mean value of 2.5. This indicates that respondents were of the opinion that vocational education does not empower students to be employers of labour.

The above discussion indicates that respondents accepted that majority of the practices at the vocational and technical training institutions promote entrepreneurial skills among students and helped in expanding their employment opportunities but disagreed that vocational education empowers students to be employers of labour rather than employees. This is in line with Abayase, Andoh-Nartey and Amponsah (2021) and Maigida, Saba and Namkere (2013) which supports this by indicating that vocational practices enhance youth employment. The Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) curriculum is planned so that it promotes competencies and skill acquisition to enable the youths set up a small business after graduating from the higher institution.

This study attempts to identify the impact or relationship of the skills and competencies acquired through entrepreneurial skills by the students. To achieve the above, the information is collected through a 4-point Likert scale questionnaire items. The scaling values for the items as presented in Table 1 is given as follows: 1 = Strongly Agree (SA), 2 = Agree (A), 3 = Disagree (D) and 4 = Strongly Disagree (SD). In this study, the strongly agree and agree categories are condensed to mean agree and the strongly disagree and disagree categories to mean disagree. Based on the four-point Likert scale used, a computed mid-point mean value of 2.5 and below (≤ 2.5) signifies general agreement with the statement whilst a mean score of 2.6 and above (≥ 2.6) indicates that respondents generally disagreed with the statement. Based on the study by Chyung, Roberts, Swanson and Hankinson (2017), the use of a 4-point scale category implies a midpoint mean value of 2.5 while a 5-point scale and 7-point scale category has midpoint values of 3 and 4 respectively.

The study main contribution to knowledge is the integration and relevance of entrepreneurial skills toward new business start-ups in TVET for youth employment. Development of business start-up skills would enable graduates of TVET institutions to become self-employed, reduce youth unemployment, and contribute to the growth of the economy.

Conclusion

The main objective of this study is to integrate entrepreneurial skills in TVET as a strategic approach for improving youth employment in Nigeria using Kaduna Polytechnic as the case study. The study found that there are several practices that actually promote the entrepreneurial skill acquisition of students in the vocational training institutes such as competency-based training in TVET, promotion of independent and critical thinking skills of students, having a balanced combination of theory and practice in TVET, acquisition of real-world experience through field trips and emphasis on practical work rather than grades in technical education.

This study demonstrated that entrepreneurial skills are required to support vocational and technical skills for new start-ups among students in TVET institutions in Nigeria. Therefore, entrepreneurship educators, and curriculum developers should incorporate resource gathering into entrepreneurship modules to stimulate business creation among graduates of the country's TVET institutions.

Though TVET in Nigeria is affected by several challenges, it is believed that if the challenges and the strategies recommended are adequately addressed, it would create a remarkable positive impact in providing the youths with saleable skills for the technological and economic growth of the nation thus creating employment in Nigeria.

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