

SKILL DEVELOPMENT FOR ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE: ENTREPRENEURSHIP STRATEGIES AMONG TECHNOLOGY AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION STUDENTS IN EBONYI AND ENUGU STATES

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Abstract

Entrepreneurship plays a pivotal role in determining the economic trajectory of societies, distinguishing between development and underdevelopment. This study delves into the essence of entrepreneurship, emphasizing its role as a process to identify and harness market opportunities while managing associated risks for sustained gains. The creative and innovative nature of entrepreneurship enables its adaptation to address immediate community needs, as highlighted by Onoh (2013). Siaka's (2004) perspective further underscores entrepreneurship as the creation of novel, valuable entities through the dedication of time, effort, finances, and willingness to undertake risks, ultimately reaping both monetary rewards and personal gratification. Anugwom (2007) enriches this discourse by defining entrepreneurship as a dynamic engagement with business risks, driven by a fluid environment and pursued with a profit-oriented mindset. Recognizing the significance of education in comprehending the multifaceted dimensions of entrepreneurship, this study advocates for its essential role in shaping entrepreneurial understanding. Through the identification of business prospects, proactive actions, and the realization of rewards, entrepreneurship emerges as a mechanism to navigate the evolving economic landscape. By exploring these definitions and perspectives, this study highlights the integral relationship between entrepreneurship and education in fostering economic growth and societal progress.

Introduction

The presence and absence of entrepreneurs in any society marks the difference between economic development or under development. Entrepreneurship according to Onoh (2013) is the process of exploring the opportunities in the market place and arranging resources required in exploiting these opportunities for a long term gain. It is also a process of planning, organizing and managing opportunities and assuming the risks to make profits.

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Entrepreneurship is regarded as a creative and innovative skill adapted in response to environmental needs of the immediate community.

Further, Siaka (2004) defined entrepreneurship as the process of creating something new with value by devoting the necessary time, efforts, accompanying finance, psychic and social risks and receiving the resulting rewards of monetary and personal satisfaction and independence. Entrepreneurship involves identification of business opportunities through the process of identification of needs and steps required to make such needs available taking action and receiving rewards. Anugwom (2007) defined entrepreneurship as the process of generating ideas and venturing into business risks created by dynamic environment and making the best of opportunities for profit purpose. Based on the above definition of entrepreneurship, education is highly needed to grip the full meaning of entrepreneurship.

Entrepreneurship education according to Williams (2003) is a specialized training given to people in order to acquire the skills, ideas and managerial abilities and capabilities for self-employment rather than being employed. It is an aspect of education that is geared towards developing in the students/youths the skills, ideas and managerial abilities necessary for self-reliance or self-employment. Ojeaga and Owolabi (2011) are of the view that entrepreneurship education is the process of providing individuals with concept and ability to recognize communal opportunities that others have overlooked and have the insight, self-esteem, knowledge and skills to act on the opportunities. Adah (2008) and Onoh (2013) outlined the objectives of entrepreneurship education as follows:

1. To provide meaningful education to the youths to be self-employed and self-reliant
2. To provide graduates with enough skills that will make them to be creative and innovative in identifying new business opportunities.
3. To provide graduates with enough training in risk management to make uncertainty bearing more possible and easy.
4. To give young graduates training in skills that enable them meet the society manpower needs which will help to stimulate industrial and economic growth.

If the above objectives are to be fully achieved maintained and sustained, there are strategies that will promote the entrepreneurial skills of the students.

Strategy according to Nickols (2012) is perspective, position, play and pattern. It is a bridge between policy or high order goals on the one hand. Lawrence (2013) equally saw it as is a high level plan to achieve one or more goals under conditions of uncertainty. Strategy generally involves setting goals, determining actions to achieve the goals, and mobilizing resources to executive the actions. Drucker (2022) saw it as a pattern of activities that seek to achieve the objectives of the organization and adapt its scope, resources and operations to environments changes in the long term.

According to Obi and Omeje (2010), entrepreneurship skills can be promoted through institutional and government strategies. Institutional strategies include creating an enabling environment for entrepreneurial activities, engaging every student in particular entrepreneurial skill among others. Government strategies include formulating policies that will enhance entrepreneurship development, providing low interest rate among others.

One of the programmes where entrepreneurship education is included in Ebonyi and Enugu State Universities to enhance the acquisition of its culture is in Technology and vocational education. Technical and vocational education is used as a comprehensive term referring to those aspects 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 relating to occupations.

It can then be deduced that TVE is an educational programme that equips an individual with functional and suitable skills, knowledge, attitude and values that will enable the individual become self-employed. Self-employment is the state of working for oneself rather than an employer. The person owns and operates a business by themselves or as a partner and derives income by conducting profitable operations of that business, rather than receiving a salary as an employee (www.law.cornell.edu/wex/self-employ...2022)

Ogalanya (1997) identified some of the entrepreneurial skills needed for self-employment, to include: human relation skills, innovation/enterprising skill, competitive skill, communication skill, innovation/planning skill, supervisory/guidance skill and investigative problems solving skills, all these are paramount for successful entrepreneurship. Nwokolo (2003) opined that training for entrepreneurship must be in addition to usual skills training in any of the technological areas.

Despite the inclusion of entrepreneurship in these programme unemployment has continued to rise, especially, among graduates of TVE education from Ebonyi and Enugu State Universities. Due to unemployment graduates of TVE now earn their living through minial jobs, Okereocha (2012). The rate of unemployment is getting increasingly higher, even though there is entrepreneurship programme in TVE. Most students of TVE on completion of their programmes in the universities roam around the streets in search of white collar jobs, this is as a result of inadequate entrepreneurship skills.

It is worrisome to observe a lot of TVE graduates in the street doing nothing. Most of them passed through accredited programmes of learning in which knowledge and skills are expected to have been imparted on them. But on a contrary, some of them have no skill and are dependent on the society. In TVE, graduates are expected to acquire skills and become entrepreneurs but reverse is the case as most TVE graduates still remain unemployed after graduation from school.

It is believed that government needs to promote and increase the provision of teaching and learning facilities especially in entrepreneurship education. It is also necessary that institutions and government should enhance entrepreneurship education through TVE education programme since it is the only programme that equip learners with skills and knowledge for gainful self-employment.

Statement of Problem

This gives reason for one to wonder if entrepreneurship programmes have achieved its primary purpose of providing employment. It is on this background that this research has become imperative to study strategies for promoting entrepreneurship skills acquisition among TVE students for self-employment in Ebonyi and Enugu State.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to ascertain the strategies for promoting entrepreneurship skills acquisition among TVE students for self-employment in Enugu and Ebonyi States Universities. Specifically the study sought to:

1. Determine the institutional strategies for promoting entrepreneurial education among TVE students for self-employment in Enugu and Ebonyi State Universities.
2. Determine the governmental strategies for promoting entrepreneurial skills acquisition among TVE students for self-employment in Enugu and Ebonyi State Universities.

Research Question

1. What are the institutional strategies for promoting entrepreneurial education among TVE education students for self-employment in Enugu and Ebonyi State Universities?
2. What are the governmental strategies for promoting entrepreneurial skills acquisition among TVE education students for self-employment in Enugu and Ebonyi State Universities?

Research Method

A survey research design was adopted for this study. A survey research design according to Nworgu (2015), is one in which a group of people or items are studied by collecting and analysing data from only a few people or items considered to be representative of the entire group. The area of the study was Ebonyi and Enugu States of Nigeria. Enugu and Ebonyi States are States in South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The population for the study was 55 TVE lecturers in public tertiary institutions offering business education in Ebonyi and Enugu State Universities. Owing to the manageable size of the population, the entire populations were studied.

The instrument used for collecting data was a structured questionnaire developed by the researchers. The questionnaire has 19 items based on the two research questions. The questionnaire was structured in four point responses category of Highly Needed (HN), Needed (N), Slightly Needed (SN) and Not Needed (NN) with numerical values of 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. The instrument was validated by three experts, two from the Department of Technology and Vocational Education, one from Department of Science and Computer Education, all from Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT).

Cronbach Alpha Co-efficient was used to determine the reliability of the instrument. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions. The mean was determined by adding up the value of the response options and dividing by the number of columns, which yielded 2.50. Any item with mean value of 2.50 and above was regarded as needed while any item with a mean value less than 2.50 was regarded as not needed.

Result

Research question 1: What are the institutional strategies for promoting entrepreneurial education among TVE students for self-employment in Enugu and Ebonyi State Universities?

Table 1:

Mean and standard deviation of responses of the respondents on the institutional strategies for promoting entrepreneurial education among TVE students for self-employment in Enugu and Ebonyi State Universities.

S/N	ITEMS	\bar{x}	SD	Remark
1.	Creating an enabling environment for entrepreneurial activities	3.51	0.95	Highly Needed
2.	Engaging every student in a particular entrepreneurial skill	3.47	0.91	Highly Needed
3.	Provision of entrepreneurship equipment	3.58	0.99	Highly Needed
4.	Providing fund for the maintenance of available equipment.	3.55	0.97	Highly Needed
5.	Monitoring entrepreneurship programmes/activities in business education courses.	3.33	0.01	Highly Needed
6.	Employment of qualify supporting staff for entrepreneurial development	3.58	0.97	Highly Needed
7.	Retraining of existing human resources on the needed entrepreneurial skills for teaching	3.65	0.82	Highly Needed
8.	Ensuring that lecturers are utilizing relevant instructional materials in entrepreneurship practicum	3.51	0.92	Highly Needed
9.	Engaging the students on practical entrepreneurial work.	3.37	1.04	Highly Needed
	Grand Mean	3.50	0.84	Highly Needed

Note: \bar{x} = means, SD = Standard deviation

The data in table one, showed that all the items in research question 1 had a mean value more than 2.50. It shows that majority of the respondents accepted the items as the institutional strategies for acquisition among TVE students for self-employment in Ebonyi and Enugu State Universities.

Research Question 2: What are the governmental strategies for promoting entrepreneurial skills acquisition among TVE students for self-employment in Enugu and Ebonyi State Universities?

Table 2:

Mean and standard deviation of responses of the respondents on the governmental strategies for promoting entrepreneurial skills acquisition among TVE students for self-employment in Enugu and Ebonyi State Universities?

S/N	ITEMS	\bar{x}	SD	Remark
10.	Formulating policies that will enhance entrepreneurship development.	3.44	0.98	Highly Needed
11.	Creating an enabling environment for entrepreneurship/business for students after graduation.	3.17	0.93	Highly Needed
12.	Encouraging private developments in enhancing entrepreneurship development of students	3.25	1.01	Highly Needed
13.	Providing low interest loan for entrepreneurs	3.05	0.91	Highly Needed
14.	Providing adequate infrastructural facilities for entrepreneurship	3.05	1.01	Highly Needed
15.	Establishing entrepreneurship development centers in schools	3.19	0.95	Highly Needed
16.	Provision of fund for entrepreneurship developments in schools	3.00	0.98	Highly Needed
17.	Employing qualified staffs for entrepreneurship training.	3.25	0.94	Highly Needed
18.	Providing supportive services for small scale Highly Needed activities	3.32	1.01	Highly Needed
19.	Giving tax incentives to new entrepreneurs	3.14	0.91	Highly Needed
Grand means		3.19	0.96	Highly Needed

Note: \bar{x} = mean, SD = Standard Division

The data in table two showed that all items in research question two had a mean value of 2.50 and above. This means that most of the respondents accepted the items as the governmental strategies for promoting entrepreneurship skills acquisition among TVE students in Ebonyi and Enugu State Universities.

Discussion of the Findings

Regarding the findings in question one, table 1, shows that the itemized are institutional strategies for promoting entrepreneurship skills among TVE students in Ebonyi and Enugu State Universities. Some of the identified strategies includes: creating an enabling environment for entrepreneurial activities, institution should engage every student in a particular entrepreneurial skills. Provision of entrepreneurship equipment, providing fund for the maintenance of available equipment. Monitoring entrepreneurship programmes/activities in business education course, ensuring that lecturers are utilizing relevant instructional materials in entrepreneurship practicum, and engaging the students on practical entrepreneurial work. Employment of qualified supporting staff for entrepreneurial development is in agreement with Eze (2015) that, entrepreneurship education could be enhanced through provision of equipment, money, staff and support by the host institution. This implies that entrepreneurship education could help to promote entrepreneurship skills among TVE students through the itemized institutional strategies.

The findings of the study in respect to the research question 2, showed that, the listed items are the government strategies for promoting entrepreneurship education among TVE students in Ebonyi and Enugu State Universities. Among the listed items were that government should formulate policies that will promote entrepreneurship education among TVE students. Creating an enabling environment for entrepreneurship/business for students after graduation, encouraging private developments in enhancing entrepreneurship development of students, providing low interest loan for entrepreneurs, etc. the findings of the study were in agreement with the findings of Eze (2005) that entrepreneurship education should be supported by the government to achieve its objective. Obi and Omeje (2010) opined that increase in government funding and favourable policies could be used to promote entrepreneurship education in Nigeria universities.

Conclusion

Entrepreneurship education is a vital tool for repositioning TVE programme in order to train people with the mindset of becoming self-employed. Government and institutions needs to ensure that this type of education is implemented without any challenges from the either sides. This is necessary as the identified strategies could be used by government and institutions to promote a suitable entrepreneurship projects in tertiary institutions and beyond.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. Government should make policies that would promote entrepreneurial education.
2. Facilities needed for entrepreneurial education should be made available by the institutions.
3. Students should be encouraged to acquire or participate in a particular entrepreneurial skill development.
4. Qualified staff should be employed for the teaching of entrepreneurial programme.

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