

## **Promoting Entrepreneurship skills in Vocational Technical Education towards Manpower Development for Self-Reliance in Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

This study investigated the strategies for promoting entrepreneurship in vocational technical education towards manpower development for self-reliance. Three research questions guided the study with a population of 192 vocational technical educators in the three colleges of education in the study area. The sample for the study comprised of 90 vocational educators selected using a multi-stage sampling technique for effective identification. A 40-item validated questionnaire named Promoting Entrepreneurship in Vocational Technical Education Questionnaire (PEVTEQ) was used to collect data from the respondents. Cronbach Alpha coefficient value of 0.86 was obtained for the instrument, indicating good internal consistency. The data collected was analyzed using mean and standard deviation. The findings of the study revealed that the students require basic entrepreneurial skills for manpower development which include financial management skills with mean 3.08, marketing skills (3.06) practical/technical skills (2.93), professional skills (2.85), self-motivation skill (2.82) and innovative skills (2.78) among others. Furthermore, among other things, the respondents agreed that strategies such as frequently advertising entrepreneurship through mass and social media (3.36), giving priority to funding technical and vocational education (3.17), giving students appropriate industrial work experience (3.08) and paying more attention to acquiring skills than acquiring certificates (3.02), can promote entrepreneurship in Vocational and Technical Education. Also, the associated challenges to promoting entrepreneurship as identified by the respondent included lack of qualified and experienced human resources/personnel (3.14), over-emphasis on certificates and not entrepreneurial skills (3.12), insecurity and insurgency (3.11) and lack of financial and capital resources (3.06). To achieve this there should be frequent training and retraining of VTE educators on the strategies needed in promoting entrepreneurship, and the students should be taught basic entrepreneurial skills as it would help them become self-reliant upon graduation.

**Keywords:** Entrepreneurship skills, Manpower development, Vocational education, Self-reliance and skill acquisition.

## **Introduction**

Entrepreneurship education has been receiving attention globally. Due to the high rate of unemployment, governments of the world have really embraced entrepreneurship education as a major policy statement. According to Ajufo (2013), with the rising unemployment rate, entrepreneurship education has continued to feature as one of the most popular research domains all over the globe. According to the Federal Ministry of Education (2004), entrepreneurship education is designed to help students acquire both physical and intellectual skills and capacity that will enable them to be self-reliant and useful members of the society upon graduation. It is truism to say that the Nigerian economy has been devastated due to corruption and misappropriation of funds. This Malady has resulted to death and stagnation of many public enterprises resulting to massive unemployment of students upon graduation. This scenario made Nigeria one of the poorest countries in the world with the highest rate of youth's unemployment in Sub-Saharan Africa (Anyadike et al., 2012).

According to the National Bureau of Statistics [NBS] (2024) the percentage rate of youths or persons with post-secondary education rose up to 8% in the second quarter of 2023 having been at 6.9% in the first quarter. In the words of Osibanjo (2006) the high rate of unemployment has led to a lot of social vices such as fraud, kidnapping, armed robbery, prostitution, terrorism and political thuggery. Ezeabili and Alio (2017) asserted that the school

system to some extent encourages this, due to the use of outdated curricula and teachers' refusal to frequently update themselves. This has made the average Nigerian graduate unemployable simply because he/she does not possess the skills needed by the employers of labour. This unfortunate situation has created the need to inculcate entrepreneurial courses into the school curricula. This is to enable graduates to possess some entrepreneurial skills relevant to their course of study that will help them to be self-employed and self-reliant in order to overcome the heart break of unemployment (Oko, 2017).

Entrepreneurship, which is a process through which individuals identify opportunities, allocate resources and create value aims at skill acquisition and self-reliance. In the words of Ekoh and Offia (2016) entrepreneurship is a process of equipping individuals with appropriate skills, creativity, initiative, values and attitudes that can help them develop a positive mindset towards the implementation of business plan or otherwise creation of various opportunities for living. Esene (2016) in the same vein defined entrepreneurship as the apparent willingness and ability of an individual to seek out investment opportunities, establish and run an enterprise successfully. Enhancing entrepreneurship in the teaching of vocational technical education will be of a great value as it will help to impart necessary skills, ability, vocational strategies and technical knowhow on students to help them become self-reliant.

Self-reliance refers to the state of being able to rely on oneself and one's own ability, resources, and judgment to achieve goals and overcome challenges. It involves being independent, confident, and resilient and not relying excessively on others for support or guidance. According to Aneke et al. (2017), self-reliance is the ability of an individual to be independent in taking decisions arising from acquired capability. It is the ability to think and act within help or other people's influence. Self-reliance is a valuable trait that can help individuals develop a sense of purpose, build self-esteem, and achieve their goals. It encompasses various aspects including, Autonomy, resourcefulness, resilience, self-sufficiency, confidence, personal responsibility and self-motivation.

One major dispenser of self-reliance is entrepreneurship education. This is due to its structured objectives, which according to Paul (2005) includes to offer functional education for the youth that will enable them to be self-employed/reliant; provide the graduates with adequate training that will enable them to be creative and innovative in identifying new business opportunities; serve as a catalyst for economic growth and development; offer tertiary institution graduates with adequate training in risk management; make certain risk bearing feasible; and create employment opportunities in order to reduce high rate of poverty. In order to achieve these objectives, there is a strong need for graduates of Vocational Technical Education to acquire specific entrepreneurial skills in their respective vocational scope of study.

Entrepreneurial skills are abilities and traits necessary to create, grow and succeed in a vocation or business venture. Oko (2017) defined Entrepreneurial skill as the use of personal ability to accomplish a task. Osuala (2009) sees entrepreneurial skill as the act of bringing together creative and innovative ideas in order to succeed in business. Some key entrepreneurial skills include creativity and innovation, risk-taking and adaptability, vision and goal-setting, leadership and team management, communication and negotiation, problem solving and critical thinking, time management and organization, financial management and budgeting, marketing and sales, strategic thinking and planning, resilience and perseverance and networking and building relationships (Wogboroma, 2022). All along the lane of entrepreneurship, effective entrepreneurs do possess qualities like passion, self-motivation and a willingness to learn from failure. Some skills and traits help entrepreneurs turn ideas into successful businesses and navigate the challenges of the entrepreneurial journey (Odo & Ugwu, 2018). Oko (2017) further stressed that entrepreneurial skill has the ability of restructuring the minds of graduates to think towards being self-employed rather than being unemployed and it is achieved through equipping graduates with personally used skills, channeling his mind towards the need for manpower development.

Manpower development in a simple form is the process of improving the skills, knowledge and abilities of employees or individuals in an organization or society. It involves training, education and

development programs that enhance their performance, productivity and overall contributions to the organization or society. According to Etuk (2004) manpower development is the process by which a nation develops and increases its human resources capabilities through the inculcation of the relevant general and technical knowledge skills and effectiveness to efficiently realize set goals. Toyo (2004) referred to it as a process of increasing acquisition of capacities. Manpower development is essential for organizations to stay innovative, competitive and responsive to changing market conditions and technological advancements. It is equally crucial for individuals to grow professionally, personally and socially, leading to improved overall well-being and success (Nwodoh, 2018). The aim of manpower development includes to upgrade skills and knowledge to meet changing job requirements, increase efficiency and productivity, improve job satisfaction and employee engagement, enhance leadership and management capabilities, encourage innovation and adaptability, develop a more competent and competitive workforce and support career advancement and progression (Nwodoh, 2018). The economic benefits of manpower development in Vocational Technical Education by promoting entrepreneurship education are very exhaustive. Principally, it will yield trained manpower in various field of work for economic growth that will subsequently lead the nation and her citizens to self-reliance (Omeje, 2018).

Promoting entrepreneurship skills in Vocational Technical Education is a

process of inculcating and imparting entrepreneurial innovations, concepts, ideas and skills into the school curriculum. According to Ojike-Chijioke and Chukwuemeka (2018), the purpose of this is concepts, ideas, skills and capacity of individuals upon graduation for self-reliance. In the words of Akhuenkhan and Raimi (2018) this is so because Vocational Technical Education is a potent means for fast-tracking technological progress, citizens' capacities, economic growth and national development. Nigeria is endowed with natural and human resources that can be used effectively to aim the country's self-reliance, but due to mismanagement of public funds and resources, unsteady government policies, ineffective academic curriculum, lack of infrastructural facilities and negative conception and perception of the public about entrepreneurship and vocational technical education has led to mismatch employment among Nigerian grandaunts and undermined the nations competitiveness in the labour market (Osakwe, 2013). Ozoro (2007) observed that the Vocational Technical Education (VTE) Programme Planners have not effectively planned and coordinated the sector to a considerable extent relevant to the societal needs. This has forced industrialists and employers of labour to consider the products of vocational and technical disciplines not useful without further training. According to Tiamiyi and Babalola (2013), the available facilities in our schools and tertiary institutions are not adequate to the numerous students usually admitted. The United Nations Educational, Science and Cultural

Organization [UNESCO] (2012) asserted that VTE is concerned with the acquisition of knowledge and skills for the world of work but has seemed to remain ineffective because of too many challenges such as inadequate funding, poorly equipped laboratories and workshop, poor planning and coordination of the programmes among others. The graduates equally are unhappy that they are under or unemployed and hence, insist on survival and so engage in illegal activities that threaten the nation. It is therefore necessary that entrepreneurship education be promoted and strengthened in the teaching and learning of VTE for manpower development and self-reliance. Hence the purpose of this study was to identify strategies that will promote entrepreneurship skills in Vocational Technical Education towards manpower development for self-reliance in Nigeria.

#### **Objectives of the study**

The broad objective of this study is to identify strategies for promoting entrepreneurial skills in Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to identify:

1. basic entrepreneurial skills needed in VTE for manpower development for self-reliance;
2. strategies that can promote entrepreneurship skills in VTE towards manpower development for self-reliance; and
3. the challenges of promoting entrepreneurship in vocational technical education towards manpower development for self-reliance.

#### **Methodology**

**Study design:** The study adopted a descriptive survey design. Nworgu (2006) defined a descriptive survey research design as a design in which a group of people or items is studied by collecting and analyzing data from only a few people or items considered to be representative of the entire group.

**Study area:** The study was carried out in Enugu and Ebonyi states in Southeast, Nigeria. The two were chosen because all the colleges of education in the two states offer Vocational Technical Education as a course. Three Colleges of Education offering Vocational Technical Education (VTE) were selected. These are Federal College of Education, Eha-Amufu, Enugu State, Enugu State College of Education (Technical) Enugu and Ebonyi State College of Education, Ikwo.

**Population of the study:** The population for the study was 192 VTE educators made up of 76 lecturers from federal college of education, Eha-amufu, 66 from Enugu state college of education (Technical), and 50 from Ebonyi state college of education, Ikwo (Departmental database, 2023/2024 academic session).

#### **Sample size and sampling technique:**

The sample size of the study was 96 VTE educators, which represents 50% of the total population. Sampling was done in multiple stages. **Stage one:** To determine the sample size for the study, 50% of the population was calculated. This gave a total of 96 VTE educators. **Stage two:** Proportionate sampling was used to determine the number of participants to be selected from each college of education. **Stage three:** Then simple random sampling without replacement was used

to select the sample size calculated for each school.

**Instrument for Data collection:** The instrument used for the study was a structured questionnaire named Promoting Entrepreneurship in Vocational Technical Education Questionnaire (PEVTEQ). The questionnaire was divided into three sections. Sections 1-3 were used to measure variables 1-3 respectively. The questionnaire consists of 40 items structured on a four-point rating scale with response options of Very High Extent (VHE), High Extent (HE), Low Extent (LE) and Very Low Extent (VLE) with assigned weighted values of 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively.

**Validity and reliability of the instrument:** Three experts (one from measurement and evaluation and two from TVET, Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT) face validated the instrument, and their corrections improved the structure and wordings of the questionnaire. The internal consistency of the instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha reliability co-efficient which yielded a co-efficient index of 0.86.

**Method of data collection:** The instrument was administered to the 96 respondents for three weeks through personal contacts by both the researchers and three trained research assistants. The 96 copies of the questionnaires were

administered but only 90 copies were retrieved representing a 94% return rate. The retrieved questionnaires were used for data analysis.

**Data and statistical analysis:** The data collected was statistically analyzed using mean and standard deviation. The decision rule was that any computed mean score that ranged from 2.5 and above was regarded as “very agree”, “needed” and “accepted” while means below 2.5 were regarded as “disagree”, “not needed” and “not accepted”.

### **Results**

The study in Table 1 identified 13 basic entrepreneurial skill needed by VTE students for manpower development for self-reliance. Out of the 12 mentioned items only item 8 (communication skills) had the mean of 2.38 which is below the cut-off point of 2.50. The other 12 items had mean values ranging from 2.57 to 3.08, which were greater than the cut-off points of 2.50 on a 4-point rating scale. This reveals that VTE educators are of the opinion that VTE students require basic entrepreneurial skills for manpower development for self-reliance. Some of the skills needed include financial management skills (3.08), marketing skills (3.06) and practical/ technical skills (2.93). The standard deviation within the range of 1.32-2.03 in thirteen items indicates that the opinions of the respondents were not far from each other.

**Table 1: Mean and standard deviation responses on basic entrepreneurship skills needed by VTE students**

<b>Entrepreneurship skills</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard deviation</b>	<b>Decision</b>
Interpersonal relation skills	2.69	1.81	Needed
Self-motivation skills	2.82	2.00	Needed
Practical/technical skills	2.93	2.03	Needed
Analytical and problem-solving skills	2.57	1.76	Needed
Innovative skills	2.78	1.99	Needed
Time management skills	2.67	1.88	Needed
Manipulative skills	2.81	1.90	Needed
Communication skills	2.38	1.73	Not Needed
Professional skills	2.85	1.99	Needed
Customer service skills	2.83	1.99	Needed
Strategies thinking and planning skills	2.84	2.00	Needed
Financial management skills	3.08	1.33	Needed
Marketing skills	3.06	1.32	Needed

Table 2 revealed the mean responses of the respondents on the 14 items range from 2.71 to 3.36. The values of the responses are greater than the cut-off point of 2.50 on a 4-point rating scale. This shows that vocational technical educators are of the opinion that the outlined strategies can promote entrepreneurship in vocational technical education towards manpower

development for self-reliance. Some of the strategies include giving priority to funding vocational and technical education at all levels (3.17), frequently advertising entrepreneurship in VTE through media and social networking (3.36) and always promote VTE through the products of entrepreneurship programmes (3.07).

**Table 2: Mean and standard deviation responses on strategies that can promote entrepreneurship skills in VTE students**

<b>Strategies that can promote entrepreneurship</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard deviation</b>	<b>Decision</b>
Continuous training and re-training of lecturers teaching entrepreneurship	3.00	0.98	Agree
Give priority to funding technical and vocational education at all levels	3.17	1.43	Agree
Employ well qualified and experienced entrepreneurship teachers	3.04	1.26	Agree
Providing all relevant facilities for teaching and learning of entrepreneurship in VTE	2.96	2.06	Agree
Creating a friendly environment for teaching entrepreneurship in VTE	3.03	1.22	Agree
Establishing entrepreneurship centres in VTE departments	2.71	1.79	Agree

Frequently advertise entrepreneurship in VTE through mass media and social networks	3.36	1.83	Agree
Always promote VTE through the products of entrepreneurship programmes	3.07	1.75	Agree
Adequate provision and use of relevant instructional materials in VTE for teaching and learning entrepreneurship	2.77	1.93	Agree
Lower school fees or grant scholarship to students of VTE	2.71	1.78	Agree
Develop better entrepreneurship curricular relevant to programme VTE	2.87	1.9	Agree
Provide entrepreneurial take off loans for fresh VTE graduates	2.94	1.95	Agree
Give students appropriate industrial work experience	3.08	1.00	Agree
Pay more attention to acquiring skills than acquiring certificates	3.02	1.25	Agree

Data presented in table 3 revealed that all the 12 items were accepted as challenges to promoting entrepreneurship in VTE towards manpower development for self-reliance since they had mean values ranging from 2.67 to 3.14 and standard deviation ranging from 1.27 to 2.10.

Some of the challenges to promoting entrepreneurship in VTE include lack of qualified and experienced human resources/personnel (3.14), over-emphasis on certificates and not entrepreneurial skills (3.12), insecurity and insurgency (3.11) and lack of financial and capital resources (3.06).



**Table 3: Mean and standard deviation responses on the challenges to promoting entrepreneurship in VTE students**

Challenges	Mean	Standard deviation	Decision
Lack of adequate infrastructure	2.91	2.10	Accepted
Difficult registration and licensing procedure	2.67	1.87	Accepted
Lack of effective quality assurance	2.77	1.90	Accepted
Political instability	3.07	1.40	Accepted
Corruption and exploitation of public fund	3.03	1.35	Accepted
Insufficient entrepreneurial knowledge and skills	2.89	1.98	Accepted
Poor Attitude towards entrepreneurship	2.94	2.04	Accepted
Insecurity and insurgency	3.11	1.26	Accepted
Lack of financial and capital resources	3.06	1.25	Accepted
Ineffective curriculum and teaching method	2.96	1.99	Accepted
Entrepreneurship not fully embedded in VTE programme	2.98	2.02	Accepted
Lack of qualified and experience human resources/personnel	3.14	1.31	Accepted
Over emphasis on certificates and not entrepreneurial skills	3.12	1.27	Accepted

### Discussion

This study investigated the entrepreneurship skills needed by VTE students, strategies for promoting entrepreneurship skills in the students, and challenges to promoting the skills towards manpower development for self-reliance. The basic entrepreneurship skills needed by VTE students for manpower development as identified by this study included interpersonal relation skills, self-motivation skills, practical/ technical skills, analytical and problem-solving skills, innovative skills, time management skills, manipulative skills, professional skills, customer service skills, strategic thinking and planning skills, financial management skills and marketing skills. This finding agrees with that of Osuala (2004) who noted that acquisition of basic and necessary skills will enable graduates of VTE to function competitively, confidently, profitably and successfully in the process of carrying out their daily business activities. The finding is also in tandem with that of Anaele et al. (2014) which showed that VTE and entrepreneurial education are

complimentary and that any VTE graduate that possesses these basic skills will be equipped and empowered for self-reliance. In the words of Ogbunaya and Udoudo (2015) when students are given the required entrepreneurship skills needed to fit into the world of work through VTE, they will become entrepreneurs and contribute towards the economic growth of the country.

Findings further showed that among the mentioned strategies, frequently advertising entrepreneurship in VTE through mass media and social networks, giving priority to funding, giving students appropriate industrial work experience, and always showcasing the products of VTE programmes, will help promote entrepreneurship skills in VTE towards manpower development for self-reliance. This is because proper strategies if implemented will ensure that the students are equipped with the necessary entrepreneurial knowledge and skills for self-reliance on graduation. This finding agrees with the findings of Onyemelukwe and Utoware (2017) and Anaele et al (2014)

which showed that proper strategies will without fail promote entrepreneurship in Vocational Technical Education programmes and help equip graduate students with basic entrepreneurial skills for self-employment on graduation. It is therefore certain that if the above-mentioned strategies are rightfully put in place, Vocational Technical Education will produce effective manpower for self-reliance for the nation.

Findings revealed that over emphasis on certificates, lack of qualified and experienced teachers, lack of financial and capital resources, political instability, and corruption were among the challenges associated with promoting entrepreneurship in Vocational Technical Education towards manpower development for self-reliance. The implications of the above findings are that it will lead the country to lack practical skills, hinder innovative thinking and creativity, reduce business opportunities, job creation, economic growth and encourage brain drain and stagnant economy. This finding is in agreement with that of Awoloye (2017) which showed that the technological backwardness in the country is basically due to the fact that there has not been a good synergy between entrepreneurial skills acquisition and vocational technical education by the educational and technological policy makers. Adekunle (2024) asserted that these roadblocks impede growth to entrepreneurial startups and striving vocational and technical entrepreneurs. With concerted efforts, these challenges can be stemmed to create an environment where entrepreneurship and vocational careers can thrive as vehicles or sustainable employment and national prosperity.

## **Conclusion**

Numerous resource endowments abide in Nigeria, which are yet to be identified. To tap into these resources what is urgently needed is the promotion of entrepreneurship skills in VTE programme. Employing proper strategies for the promoting of entrepreneurship skills in VTE programme will ultimately equip the graduate students with basic entrepreneurship skills for empowerment and self-reliance. The country is blessed with a large youth population ready and willing to apply their talent and energy for national development. To achieve this, students should be taught the basic entrepreneurial skills as it will help them build personal relationship with their environment bringing about manpower development for self-reliance. To effectively promote entrepreneurship skills in Vocational Technical Education, it is imperative that every challenging roadblock be cleared off. This will allow manpower development to thrive and empower the youths to pursue entrepreneurship in Vocational and Technical Education for self-reliance. This will foster economic development, strengthen the nation's demographic dividend and attract great opportunities to her VTE students after graduation.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made.

1. The education stakeholders should include the identified strategies in their programme curriculum. This will help students develop entrepreneurship skills in VTE and strengthen manpower development for self-reliance.
2. Training institutes running programmes in VTE should be strengthened by the ministry of Education and other regulating bodies by training and retraining VTE educators through

seminars, conferences, workshops and in service trainings on the current and correct ideas for proper instruction.

3. In order to stimulate manpower development for self-reliance, there is need for proper sensitization of the general public by the government, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology and the policy makers through campaigns, print and social media on the real essence of promoting entrepreneurship skills in vocational Technical Education.
4. Government should make available funds and infrastructural facilities needed for teaching entrepreneurship to institutions offering VTE.

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