

Technology and Entrepreneurship Education in Woodworking for the Transformation of Developing Nations

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Abstract

Transformation has several phases and facets with contributions from every sector of the economy playing specific roles. Woodworking is one of the major contributors and play significant role in the transformation of Nigeria. Economic indicator has shown that the performance level of entrepreneurs has been very low especially in the technical trades of which woodwork is one. This has stimulated a negative trend of relegating to the background goods made in Nigeria. Poor policy implementation has contributed to the downward trend in quality of some products. Improvement in quality of products in the woodwork industry has been very slow. This will have to change if Nigeria is to attain 20-2020. This paper examines the role of woodwork entrepreneurs in fostering economic growth. Entrepreneurship is central in the transformation of any nation, especially developing nations. The paper identifies entrepreneurship education in woodworking as a factor that could stimulate the needed transformation in developing nations. The paper recommended the pursuit of aggressive investment in woodworking and entrepreneurship skills for a successful transformation in developing nations.

Keywords: Entrepreneurs, Entrepreneurship education, wood work, technical trades economic growth,

Introduction

Technology has remained the bed rock of all transformation agenda in the world today. Hornby (2010) described technology as a scientific knowledge used in practical ways in industry. This is because all transformations witnessed in the world today are the result of technology. By and large, technology is part of a system called process. A process refers to a systematic way of doing something. All developments and transformations are a product of a process.

One of the main objectives of technology education in Nigeria is to train individuals, who will be self-reliant, Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2004). Self-reliance entails individual to own and run a business. An entrepreneur is someone who invests money in a business in order to make profit. He/she uses materials, labour and processes to make products, or may be involved in buying and selling products. Whatever the nature of the business, it must have a process. An entrepreneur requires entrepreneurship education in order to succeed in business. Entrepreneurship education is the total education needed by an entrepreneur in order to succeed in a business. Such education guides the entrepreneur in making useful decisions concerning his business. Acquiring a cheap and efficient way to carry out work is a decision guided by education. Woodworking also involves the use of technology in constructing articles, and requires the worker to make several important decisions during work.

Developing nations are countries seen to be making progress in their quest for developing advance technology needed for the transformation of their environment. Nigeria is one of such developing nations that have plenty of Forrester resources that the woodworking industry required for the transformation agenda. What then shall the woodworking industry require to move developing nations into a hitch-free transformation?

Woodwork in the Transformation of Developing Nations

All the nations of the world are in the contest and race for development. Each of the countries is striving to attain the highest possible level of development. In this race towards development, transformation is prominent among other tools usually employed by nations to achieve development. Nigeria is one of such nations and has set a vision called vision 20-2020 to track the needed transformation. The vision 20-2020 document focused on transforming Nigeria into one of the top 20 global economies by 2020. The woodwork trade offers a wide range of services needed for the planned transformation. Woodwork Technology is one of the early technical trades concerned with the art of using wood and other materials in the construction of wood-based articles. In today's world people need shelter; they also need office and home furniture and many more. Look around; is there anything you can disassociate with woodwork? From your farm implements, writing materials, vehicles, homes roads, hospital appliances, class rooms, to the tissue in your toilet. Many of them are made of wood or contain part wood and other material. Even the plastic items in our homes are produced from moulds developed from wood pattern.

Remarkably, the only threat to wood is desertification and not the use. With the technology developed by man we have witnessed countries transform desert s into green forests. Undoubtedly, wood is a renewable energy. This by implication means unless through acts of negligence, man can never lack forest products especially in developing nations.

Technology and Entrepreneurship Skills: Missing Link.

Technology is part of a system called "process". A system has three components - input, process and product. A process is a way of doing something. Consequently, technology refers to the process of doing work. Entrepreneurship is the ability of an individual to seek out investment opportunities, establish and run an enterprise successfully. Hornby (2010) defined entrepreneur as someone who takes risk of investing money into a venture or business in a bid to make profit. Entrepreneurship involves three important features, namely, organization of business, production in an exchange economy and the management of risks (Ihekoronye, 2006). According to Igbo (2006) an entrepreneur is a factor on fostering economic growth. Deducing from the aforementioned definitions, an entrepreneur is someone that owns and runs a small business that he or she can call his her own.

The entrepreneur must possess some creative skills and competencies to succeed in business. Such skills include:

1. Skills for managing money, men, materials, machines and methods (5Ms)
2. Marketing and sales skills, and
3. General business competencies.

Entrepreneurship education may be described as the art of seeking and or providing information that are needed for a successful entrepreneurship. A good education in woodworking technology and relevant financial and investment skills is a sure way to financial freedom. Education sharpest focus must always be an orientation towards making future contribution in terms of solving the problems of today and transforming the world for a better tomorrow.

The woodwork occupations command respect being one of the lucrative and fast growing businesses due to high demands on well furnished homes. Despite challenges from the use of materials such as plastic, the wood trades continue to grow. In addition to other advantages it has over other materials, wood has been identified as a renewable energy.

It is not debatable that Technology and entrepreneurship education are central to self reliance needed for transformation in developing nation like Nigeria. Concerted efforts were made by successive governments in Nigeria to check unemployment by setting up various craft centers and technical institutions. Government has also inculcated entrepreneurship education in polytechnics, colleges of education and universities curricular. Schemes such as industrial training fund (ITF) and the Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES)

were introduced in 1971 and 1976 respectively. The schemes give students the much desired opportunity to work in companies. This is designed to play an important role in helping TVET students to acquire entrepreneurship skills and technical competencies while still in school in order to allow a blend of what was learnt in school with what is obtained in the work or business.

Government has made laudable initiatives such as Operation Feed the Nation (OFN), Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP), National Directorate of Employment (NDE), National Poverty Alleviation Programme (NAPEP/NAPAP). All are aimed at reducing unemployment, poverty, and promoting self-reliance. However, the training did not include appropriate entrepreneurship skills and does not address market needs. To support this, Dabesaki (2012) acknowledged that every time you enter a new building or hotel, the evidence is staring you in the face- poor finishing of tiling, plastering, plumbing furniture, and electrical fittings to external communication system.

A report by UNESCO on Africa states that technical and vocational education graduates often remain jobless despite the immense possibilities for employment in the sector. This clearly indicates the lack of entrepreneurship skills among TVET beneficiaries. Nigeria need to as a matter of urgency encourage entrepreneurial skills disposition in all ramifications to allow for a healthy economic growth of individuals and the country at large. It is imperative that entrepreneurship skills be marched with relevant technical or vocational skills common to a trade. Perhaps with this, social vices such as the "Boko-Haram" syndrome could be eliminated.

What Factors necessitate the Establishment of Small Scale Businesses?

Many factors can make the individual to establish his/her own enterprise. They can be negative or positive factors. The negative factors include Lack of job satisfaction, Lack of job challenge, Pay dissatisfaction, Unemployment, Independence and Job security. All these are features common to developing nations. The positive factors are encouragement by friends, favorable government policies, availability of venture opportunity, and desirability of new venture formation (Igbo, 2006).

Steps for Setting up a new Business in Woodwork Occupation

Setting up a new business in a trade like woodwork is the desire of majority of people world-wide. However the decision to go into a business cannot be rashly taken. Entrepreneurship is largely concerned with risk management and some people do not like taking risks. Many activities are also involved including

1. Formulation of objectives mission statement
2. Developing a business plans, i.e. the functional part of the enterprise
3. Making plans for operations, Marketing, the organizational chart, sourcing for capital, staff recruitment, financial plans etc. Always plan ahead of sourcing for capital. Because you can acquire a fund and take a rash decision to enter into a business without adequate planning. This may lead to failure before starting.
4. Decision to or not to go ahead with the business.
5. Legal requirement for setting up a business.

Factors that will lead to Businesses Failure

Many businesses are established each year and a good number of them fail (Anyakoha, 2006). Failure may result from:

1. Incompetence resulting in wrong decisions.
2. Lack of experience in management, management of men, money, material, machine and market (5Ms).

3. Lack of knowledge of operational methods, procedures and policies relating to the business.
4. Neglect: Lack of adequate supervision resulting in poor quality product and packaging
5. Fraud: Situation where employees cheat on goods and money and are not quickly detected.
6. Inadequate capital needed to establish and sustain the business.
7. Lack of sense of potential threats or weaknesses to the business.
8. Setting unreasonable and un-measurable goals and lack of objectivity in the business transactions.

Popular adage says down fall of a man may not be the end to his life. In a similar but even more positive saying, Ford (n.d) stated that “the best we can do is size up the chances, calculate the risks involved, estimate our ability to deal with them, and then make our plans with confidence”. Failure of one plan should not be allowed to degenerate into a total business failure. When implementation of business plan is properly monitored, warning signs can be detected early enough to allow a corrective mechanism to be put in place. Let’s not forget that “change” is constant, accommodate it in order to succeed.

Tips for Successful Entrepreneurship

1. **Innovation:** the central concept of entrepreneurship is the introduction of something new in the form of product or services. This however, appears to be one of the most difficult tasks for the entrepreneur. This is so because one requires the understanding of the ever changing environment in which we live. Change is the only thing constant in today’s world.
2. **Maintain principles** that world would build trust, integrity and credibility of the management from the market. Investors and clients evaluate the management of an enterprise in terms of these qualities, where these qualities are lacking; they will have no confidence in the enterprise. This may lead to the collapse of any enterprise (Anyakoha, 2006).
3. **Coping with the challenge of frustration and anxiety:** for the beginning entrepreneur, situations such as fear of sales, intense competition, lack of capital, management ability, among others, could create enthusiasm, frustration and anxiety. Injecting some innovations in your approaches could provide a break through.
4. **Investment proposal:** put down in writing the nature of the business, market target, and other facts of the enterprise including risks that are involved.
5. **Legal issues:** seek and meet all legal requirement put in place by relevant authorities to regulate such businesses.
6. **Employ qualified manpower:** consider the essential traits, qualifications, skills and knowledge needed for the job.
7. **Compete favourably in the market:** be aware of whom your competitors are, their strengths and weakness, and device strategies that will enable you to triumph. This will also require quality assurance and good packaging of product.
8. **Establish an efficient accounting system:** ensure that factors identified and costed in the business proposal are accounted for, (Onu, 2006).

Woodworking Occupations

The woodworking trade has several occupations. Among them are wood machinist, Carpenter, Joiner, Upholsterer, Finisher, pattern maker, cabinet maker, furniture maker, boat builder, vehicle body builder, interior finisher and painter.

Conclusion

Many activities are involved in the transformation of a country. One of such activities is woodworking. Poor quality delivery has been identified as an indicator of lack of entrepreneurship skills amongst entrepreneurs in the woodworking industry. Experience has shown that Nigerians prefer products made in neighboring countries to goods made in Nigeria. There's a need for improved quality delivery to put the sector on track for a successful transformation especially in Nigeria. To achieve this, entrepreneurship skills need to be matched with skills in woodwork technology.

Recommendations

It is recommended that:

1. Entrepreneurs should make the decision to invest in the woodwork trade.
2. Government should set realistic investment policies to encourage investment in woodworking for a successful transformation.
3. Government should provide information about businesses to help investors in their business decision making.
4. Entrepreneurs should acquire both woodwork and entrepreneurship skills to guide them in their tactics and objectivity in managing the 5ms.
5. Entrepreneurs should watch out for potential threats to the business and deal with them promptly. A stitch in time saves nine.
6. Entrepreneurs should develop strategies that would enable them to compete favourably in the woodwork industry.

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