

Towards Improving the Teaching and Learning of Fine and Applied Arts in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions: An Emphasis on SIWES

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Abstract

Fine and Applied Arts are important cultural elements when considering economic empowerment. In fact, graduates of Technical and Vocational institutions are expected to competently fit into industrial productions as well as display entrepreneurial abilities. Unfortunately, the teaching and learning on these areas have become too theoretical and less practical that graduates skills and capabilities to competently meet the demands of the industry or becoming self-reliant are not emphasized. However this problem could be checked by emphasizing students' industrial training as part of their curriculum. The study employs a qualitative research approach with sources of data from both primary and secondary sources. The Repetitive Training Theory was relied on for Proper grounding of the work. The study observes that emphasis are no longer placed on industrial training as part of the curriculum and where it is done there are no proper feedback/follow up services after students industrial training. Efforts should be made by government and other stakeholders such that training and practice of Fine and Applied Arts remains a sure road to economic empowerment.

Key words: Teaching, Learning, Technical, Vocational, Industrial Training, Entrepreneurial Ability.

Introduction

Nigeria has suffered lots of economic hardship over the years despite her abundant human and material resources. The incidence of global economic meltdown and increasing unemployment among the Nigerian youth especially graduates from tertiary institutions have dealt a devastating blow on Nigeria economy. The reason for this is not far-fetched. Nigeria is a country that is not self-reliant with oil as her sole/major source of revenue. In view of this problem, there is need to develop skill-oriented programmes that will ensure self-reliance among Nigerian Youths. Thinking along this line, Fine and Applied Arts comes to mind as part of the Panacea. Fine and Applied Arts is one of the programmes offered in Nigerian Universities Polytechnics and Colleges of Education as part of technical and vocational education programme. The Fine Art programme has a broader curriculum context to meet the development needs of the rural community in Nigeria. As a Technical and Vocational Education programme, it is designed to produce graduates that will be able to organize and exploit rural resources for the improvement of the industrial potentials and welfare of the family and rural community at large (NBTE, 2004). For effective home and rural economic programme, there is need for adequate students' industrial work experience.

Fine and Applied Arts is a programme designed to meet the change in the world of work and to serve as a motivating factor in making education both meaningful and real to students (Fine Art) Again, it aims at exposing and preparing the students for industrial working situation that they are likely to meet after graduation. But regrettably, Ndinbechi and Asoegwu (2008) note that technical and vocational education in Nigeria, Fine and Applied Arts inclusive are becoming more theoretical than

practical. As a result, most graduates lack the skills and capabilities to competently meet the demands of the industries or become self-employed. Thus, employment and effective utilization of human resources will continue to be delayed, unless, an avenue is created to checkmate Technical and Vocational Education. On this, Amasa (2002) observes that majority of the labour force of the industries are obviously the Technical and Vocational personnel. If these cadres of personnel are neglected, the industries may not stand. He further opined that a nation with plans or aspirations for economic growth cannot afford to neglect the preparation of the human agents of production.

Therefore, in this era of unemployment, Fine and Applied Arts programme caved sufficiently face the challenges of our economic growth and development when her students are able to acquire the necessary skills for entrepreneurship and industrial demands. This paper therefore focuses on the role on textile in promoting entrepreneurship/Spirit among the Nigerian polytechnic youths.

Fine and Applied Arts and Entrepreneurship

Fine and Applied Art is an aspect of Technical and Vocational Education (TVE) designed to equip individuals with knowledge, skills and capabilities that will enable them live a useful and satisfying self-reliant life. As a polytechnic programme, its programme or its primary focus is to produce higher and lower technical manpower for the national economy with reference to Fine Art Development (NBTE, 2004). By this, government desires that graduates should prove themselves as worthy men and women who are capable of using use their brains as adeptly as they can apply their hands towards building a dynamic and prosperous nation (Akhuemankhan, 2003). The content of Fine and Applied Arts encompasses the physical, biological, and social sciences, arts and humanities. According to NBTE Curriculum Guidelines (2004) the areas of FAA includes: Textile, Ceramics, Sculpture, Graphics, Weaving, Printing, Graphic Design, Fashion Design, and Wood Construction. Each of these areas provide knowledge, skills, attitudes and capabilities to graduates of Fine and Applied Arts for entrepreneurship. As noted earlier, unemployment and underutilization of human resources are major challenges facing Nigerian educational system. This has in recent times brought prospects to the concept of entrepreneurship education.

Entrepreneurship is the act of being an entrepreneur, that is, one who undertakes an endeavour or business. According to Akhuemonhan (2003), entrepreneurship means “personal quality that enables people to start a new business or innovatively expand an existing one, thereby maintaining and vitalizing the growth of an economy”. Onwuchekwa (1993) as cited by Uzoezie (2006) notes that “entrepreneurship is a factor of production. It involves creating a business through innovative and risk assuming management. It is a way of initiating an economic activity in a free business system”. An entrepreneur is a person of very high aptitude who pioneers change, possessing characteristics found in only a very small fraction of the population. He is someone who wants to work for himself or herself in a profit oriented business.

From the above, it would appear that Fine and Applied Arts and entrepreneurship are complementary to economic development, whether in an existing business or a new venture established by an individual or a group. However, Fine and Applied Arts programme like other areas in Technical and Vocational education programme is not efficiently meeting the radical changes in workforce requirement and qualifications in industries due to inadequacy of Students’ Industrial Work Experience Scheme (Ndinechi and Asoegwu, 2008).

Fine and Applied Arts Entrepreneurship

Students’ Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) also known as Industrial Attachment is a programme introduced by the Federal government in 1973 to augment school classroom and workshop/ laboratory experiences. The main focus is to help students learn the practical aspects of most theories learnt in school. Furthermore, the programme helps the student to acquire relevant and up-to date knowledge, skills, attitude and capabilities for entry-level requirement for most jobs. In the

same view, Okorie (2001) opines that the programme helps in preparing young Nigerians for employment, which ultimately may lead to rapid development of the country. Thus, Fine and Applied Arts entrepreneurship are two inseparable phenomenon. Put simply, both areas hinge effectively on SIWES for proper training of the students. The importance of SIWES to Fine and Applied Arts entrepreneurship cannot be overstated.

Objectives and Importance of SIWES

Okoh (2000) in emphasizing the importance of Industrial Training (IT) to Technical and opines Vocational Education that training in TVE must be on actual jobs and not an exercise on pseudo or false jobs. SIWES (2002) outlined the objectives / importance of SIWES as;

- i. To prepare students for the working environment they are to meet after graduation.
- ii. To expose students to work methods and techniques in handling equipment and machinery that may not be available in their institutions.
- iii. To provide avenue for students in institutions of higher learning to acquire industrial skills and experiences in their course of study, especially in engineering and applied sciences.
- iv. To enlist and strengthen employers* involvement in the entire educational process of preparing students for employment in industry.
- v. To make transition from school to -world of work easier and enhance students contact for later job placement.

Unfortunately the SIWES programme currently organized, coordinated and supervised is fast degenerating into mere formality due to some inherent problems (Olatian, *et al* 1991).

Challenges of SIWES in Promoting Fine and Applied Arts Entrepreneurship.

Students' Industrial Work Experience Scheme was designed for on the job training in practical experience for students undergoing all courses that demand exposure in industrial activities during their college programmes. For SIWES to meet the challenges of helping students acquire relevant and up-to-date knowledge, skills, attitudes and capabilities for entry into relevant occupations, the programme must continually find effective ways for enhancing its organization, implementation and evaluation. One of the challenges SIWES programme must face if students must acquire the necessary entrepreneurial skills and industrial demands is that of proper placement. This is because the placement of a learner is a joint activity-of the employer, institution authority and the 'learner. This helps to ensure that the work experience is relevant to the student's field of specialization. But contrary to expectation, most students seek for placements in industries or establishments of their choice. This method tends to compromise quality in the sense that students choose places where they may not acquire the relevant skills needed for job entry. Some students at times choose fictitious employers because they know quite well that some lecturers or I.T.F officials do not visit them for supervision.

Another challenge which SIWES programme face in order to promote Fine and Applied Arts Entrepreneurship is adequate supervision. There are guidelines for supervising students. At least each student should have a minimum of two visits (the first visit at the beginning and the second visits at the end of the program) although three visits is much more ideal. Muhammed and Abdulrahman (2002) observe that "some lecturers and I.T.F officials do not visit the students. Even when they do, they don't meet the minimum requirements of two visitations. Unrecognized establishments are engaged by students to see the SIWES period as mere "rituals". This could lead to forgery on the part of the students, as they forge entries into their logbooks and possibly, endorse confidential reports and even give scores that is meant for industry based supervisors they added. This calls for urgent interventions in order to ensure the programme's credibility. Duration of SIWES programme is another factor militating against SIWES in promoting Fine and Applied Arts entrepreneurship. Fine and Applied Arts as a skill oriented course needs adequate time for workshop /laboratory training. Thus, Okoh (2000) in explaining Repetitive Training Theory as it relates to TVE Programmes, asserts that "vocational training

will be effective in proportion to the specific training experiences for forming right habits of thinking and doings are repeated, to the extent that these habits become fixed to the degree necessary for gainful employment". This implies repeated operations in carrying out activities for better achievements. This also involves time for accomplishment. Because of time duration of four months, students do not have enough time to acquire adequate experiences covering the vast course content.

Thus, the coordinators of SIWES Programme must find ways of restructuring the programme so as to provide adequate time for training. Again there is the problem of proper Feedback/Follow-up Services. An effective SIWES Programme should be reviewed based on feedback information collected during the evaluation exercise. On this, Olaitan, (1999) emphasized that students' experiences in getting feedback from their teachers on the adequacy of their training efforts are in most cases quicker and therefore useful in guiding students learning experiences. However, Muhammed and Abdulrahman (2002) observe that after the programme schools do not organize any forum to have feedback from the students about their experiences and skills acquired during attachment. They rely mostly on logbook information, which may be manipulated by the students. The need for constant review is necessary so as to ensure its effectiveness thereby promoting functionality and productivity of the programme.

Conclusion

In this study, it was identified that SIWES/students industrial training is directed towards preparation and thorough training of the needed human resources for commercial, industrial and self-employment ventures, therefore, for training in technical and vocational education to be functional, the need for well-structured, implemented and evaluated SIWES Programme becomes very crucial,

Recommendations

In other to achieve success especially in Fine and Applied Arts entrepreneurship through SIWES Programme, the following recommendations are made:

1. Renewed effort should be placed on supervision to ensure that the minimum supervision of two visitations is enforced
2. Provision of sufficient time to enable students attain real mastery of relevant skills through substantial practice,
3. Provision of adequate fund to enable the Programme meet up with its various tasks.
4. Proper placement of student in relevant industries and establishments to help the students acquire relevant skills related to their fields of study.

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