

ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION: AN IMPERATIVE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper examined the importance of entrepreneurship education in Nigeria. It focused on entrepreneurship education as a means to equip the students with the skills needed for self-reliance and a means to achieve a sustainable development in the country. It discussed the strategies for re-designing entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurship opportunities for sustainable development. The paper concluded that, among other things, educational programmes at all levels should be made relevant by providing the youths with the needed entrepreneurial skills, It also recommended that the government should give adequate attention to entrepreneurial development in the country through the provision of good economic environment and that the government should give soft loans to our youths and graduates who are interested in establishing small scale business at little or no interest rate

Introduction

The high rate of unemployment among Nigerian graduates is a serious problem in the country. This situation has given rise to poverty, stress, hunger, crime and restiveness among the youths in the society. A recent research conducted by the World Bank reveals that 80 percent of Nigerian graduates lack the prerequisite skills for employment, (Obisesan, 2010). This situation shows that the type of education given to the undergraduates in Nigerian cannot meet the needs of the society. The National Policy on Education (2004) emphasises that the goals and objectives of tertiary education shall be to contribute to national development through high-level relevant manpower training; and acquisition of both physical and intellectual skills, which will enable individuals to be self-reliant and useful members of the society. The major concern here is, if this objective, as stipulated in the National Policy were realized, the issue of graduate unemployment would have not been prevalent in Nigeria. The menace caused by the unemployment in Nigeria necessitated the inclusion of entrepreneurship education at all levels of education; and it is aimed at curbing the spate of unemployment.

In view of this, the Federal Government of Nigeria during the 53rd meeting of the National Council on Education held in the year 2006 at Abuja made it compulsory for all tertiary institutions to offer entrepreneurship education. The focus of the meeting was to deliberate on how to provide graduates with the training in skills that will make them meet the manpower needs of the society and be self reliant. Arogundade (2011) asserts that sustainable development requires balancing environmental, societal, and economic considerations in the pursuit of an improved quality of life. Sustainability includes just and peaceful societies, social tolerance, environmental preservation and restoration, poverty alleviation and natural resource conservation. Arogundade (2011) further states that education for sustainable development is the focus or projection of education that seek to equip people towards creating a sustainable future. Stakeholders such as government, business

organizations, educational institution and the media play important roles in achieving sustainable development. The emphasis here is on education that will provide occupational skills that will enhance the potentials of individuals, reinforcing self-sufficiency and improving quality of life.

Entrepreneurship Education

Education has a significant role in the development of any nation. The National Policy on Education (NPE) defines education as an instrument for National Development (FRN 2004). The NPE also states that education enables a society to foster the value, behaviour and life style appropriate for a sustainable development of any nation. Education is a process of learning that has future benefits in building the capacity of the citizens for meaningful engagements and it provides forces that shape socio-economic development. Therefore, education can be described as a medium through which the society transmits skills, attitudes and behaviour to its young ones, in order to provide a better life for the society and its members.

Business education is categorized among vocational education in the school. This includes management of business, commerce, business studies, accounting, economics, etc. Vocational business education serves as the ultimate goals if it is supported with entrepreneurship education and properly nurtured and articulated. It provides initiatives, self employment, management and market skills, risk-taking, problem solving, etc. (Hynes, 1996). According to Olufunwa (2009), entrepreneurship education is a specialized training giving to students of Vocational and Technical Education to acquire the skills, ideas, and managerial abilities and capabilities for self employment, rather than being employed. In the same vein, Olurunmolu and Olufunwa (2008) opined that entrepreneurship education is the type of education that involves the acquisition of skills, ideas and management abilities necessary for self-reliant.

Ayeduso (2004), quoting the United States Colorado Education defined entrepreneurship education as a programme that prepares individual to undertake the formation and/or operation of business enterprise. Osuala (1999) sees entrepreneurship education as the process of bringing together creative and innovative ideas and combining them with management and organizational skills in order to combine people, money and resources to meet an identified need and thereby create wealth. Also, Suleiman (2006) sees entrepreneurship as the willingness and ability of an individual to seek for investment opportunities, to establish and to run an enterprise successfully. Entrepreneurship according to Omolayo (2006) is the act of starting a company, arranging business deals and taking risks in order to make a profit through the education skills acquired. Another view of entrepreneurship education considers it as a skill given to someone who has innovative ideas and the ability to transform them to profitable activities.

Nwangwu (2007) opined that entrepreneurship is a process of bringing together, the factors of production, which include land, labour and capital so as to provide a product or services for public consumption. The operational definition of entrepreneurship is the willingness and ability of a person or persons to acquire educational skills to explore and exploit investment opportunities, establish and manage successful business enterprise. Through entrepreneurship education success habits are imparted as the person, develops entrepreneurial integrity and skills that are learnt in the process. Indeed, entrepreneurship education will enable potential entrepreneurs to create avenues for people to manage innovations. Entrepreneurial process can develop youths potentials as managers of creativity in a given field.

Who is an Entrepreneur?

Entrepreneur can be defined as an innovating individual who has developed a business activity where none existed before (Adejimola & Olufumilayo, 2009). Meredith (1983) submit that an entrepreneur is a person or persons who possess the ability to recognize and evaluate business opportunities, assembles the necessary resources to take advantage of them and take appropriate action to ensure success. Entrepreneurs are people who constantly discover new markets and try to figure out how to supply those markets efficiently and make a profit (Arogundade, 2011).

An entrepreneur perceives opportunities that others do not. He is always searching for change, responding to it and exploiting available business opportunities, (Iyekekpor, 2006). Koots, Donnel and Weihrich (2000) define an entrepreneur as a person who sees business opportunity, obtain the needed capital, knows how to put together an operation successfully and has the willingness to take personal risk of success or failure. Agomuo (2001), quoting National Directorate of Employment (NDE, 1998), describes an entrepreneur as the man who perceives business opportunities, take advantage of the scarce resources and use them profitably.

Importance of Entrepreneurship Education

Entrepreneurship is a major driving force of any economy. The wealth of a nation can therefore, be attributed to job creation by small business. People who are exposed to entrepreneurship education tend to have more opportunity to possess creativity, freedom, high self esteem, and above all greater sense of control over their lives. Olorunmolu and Olufunwa (2008) state that entrepreneurship education could turn around the economic fortune of Nigerian youths and reduce the poverty level. They equally maintained that entrepreneurship education could also help an individual to identify investment opportunities and help them harness untapped national resources in Nigeria in order to produce goods and services. Paul (2005) accentuated that entrepreneurship education is structured to achieve the following objectives.

- To offer functional education for the youth that will enable them to be self-reliant and self employed.
- To provide the youth graduates with adequate training that will make them creative and innovative in identifying new business opportunities.
- To serve as a means for economic growth and development
- To offer tertiary institutions graduates with adequate training in risk management.
- To reduce high rate of poverty.
- To create employment opportunities.
- To reduce rural urban migration.
- To provide the young graduates with enough training and support that will enable them establish a career in small and medium sized business.
- To inculcate the spirit of perseverance in the youth and adults, which will make them persist in any business venture, they embark on.
- To create a smooth transition from the traditional, to a modern industrial economy.

The Role of Entrepreneurship Education in Sustainable Development

Entrepreneurship is not just about skill acquisition only but also the acquisition of skills and ideas for the purpose of creating employment for oneself and also for others. It provides development that is based on creativity. It leads to the establishment of small, medium and large-scale business, which is purely based on creativity and innovation. The success helps in developing the nation because it has a multiplier effect of generating income and reducing poverty rate with a visible increment in employment rate among the youths (Abudulkadir, 2011).

Training in entrepreneurship has been used to achieve growth in Germany, Malawi, Norway, etc. For instance, Germany set up a unique engineering and mental business programmes in the universities and colleges where potential engineers are encouraged to seek appropriate ideas necessary for commercialization. In Malawi, there are several government agencies involved in supporting entrepreneurship and self-employment generation activities. The small enterprise development organization in Malawi provides finances to motivate entrepreneurs for the development of activities and render advisory services to them. Malawian Development Polytechnics provides technical and vocational training and the Malawian Development Instrument conducts courses and seminars for beginners as well as established entrepreneurs. Norway has used entrepreneurship to inculcate innovations spirit deliberately targeted at youths development, (Oviawe, 2010).

Entrepreneurship is a key driver in any economy in the sense that, majority of jobs are created by small businesses started by entrepreneurially minded individuals who later created big businesses.

Entrepreneurship exposes people to greater opportunity to exercise creative freedom, higher esteem, and greater sense of control over their lives. Indeed, a robust entrepreneurial culture will maximize individual and collective economic and social success locally, nationally and globally. Because of the above, the National Standard for Entrepreneurship Education was developed to prepare the youths and adults to succeed in an entrepreneurial economy, (Abudukadir, 2011).

Nigerian youths are faced daily with multiple problems of poverty, unemployment, conflicts, diseases, delinquency and so on. These problems, no doubt, require the empowerment of the youths with the necessary creative, problem-solving and entrepreneurial skills. This will make them function effectively for the purpose of sound human capital, necessary for national development. The youths need to be re-positioned for the purpose of eradicating unemployment and to transforming them into confident, aggressive, managerial-oriented and purposeful individuals. Youths should acquire skills in business practices, planning, financing and accounting. They must have the ability to create new innovative marketing plans that utilize modern communication technology. Equally, there is the need for them to develop a high level of creativity and innovation, and the ability to think about the future and relate these ideas to their businesses.

The youths need to be creative, because creativity will provide them with the ability to solve problems, fashion products in a competitive global market, and define new question in a particular cultural setting. Entrepreneurial youths are implementers, generators, optimizers and conceptualisers who deliver creative and innovative outcome. This becomes imperative because the world of business today is facing an increasing pressure on a variety of ways, i.e. challenges to release new products, find market and customers, etc. Therefore, the youths need to acquire the ability to generate, evaluate, design, make decisions, create, modify, simplify, synthesize, hypothesize and learn new skills. All these are attributes of a dynamic entrepreneur. In view of the above, there is need for effective strategies for entrepreneurship education in Nigeria.

Strategies for Effective Entrepreneurship Education

Ayodele (2006) emphasises that the following strategies will help to alleviate the problems of entrepreneurship education in the country.

- There should be some form of genuine school work based learning incorporated in some studies as part of the national economic development strategies. The development of apprenticeship scheme would give new graduates some skills and experience.
- The nation should pool the local public and private funds to create a small venture capital fund.
- School-based enterprises where students will identify plan, create and operate small business using the school as mini-incubator should be encouraged.
- An economic friendly political environment should be ensured all over the nation.
- The government should give tax rebate to small scale businesses.

Entrepreneurship Opportunities for Sustainable Development in Nigeria.

Instead of waiting endlessly on the ever increasing queue for the few sedentary jobs available in our cities, Epotie (2004), in Chukwumezie (2009) advises that young graduates or any one else in search of jobs could begin a small business in any of the following areas.

- Production of educational videos for students in primary, nursery and tertiary institutions.
- Events management, organizing seminars, or workshop for institutions and clubs.
- Organising a home studies and remedial class centers or to the children in homes.
- Writing books for eminent personalities or royalty.
- Begin work on flower or learn how to decorate venues for wedding and other ceremonial events.
- Offering laundry or car wash services within your community.
- Operating a barbing saloon.
- Becoming a foreign language teacher or finding families who desire that their children speak

their dialect but have no time to teach them.

- Get a camera and launch a career in photography or buying and selling of artworks.
- Embarking on a soap making cortage or organizing seminars to teach others, how to make soap.
- Becoming a management and human resource consultant.
- Obtain a parcel of land and grow economic fruit trees, and shrubs (vegetable garden).
- Providing quality catering services. People will always eat and organise.

Conclusion.

It is the conclusion of this paper that the revival of Nigerian economy and the survival of the entire citizens in this present age of global economic downturn depends largely the acquisition of entrepreneurial education. Through proper training and development of the youths in various skills acquisition programmes, they will be become self employed, employers of labour and self reliant citizens.

Recommendation

This paper concludes further by recommending that:

1. The government and other stakeholders in the education industry should make sure that educational programme at all levels are made relevant by providing the youths and graduates with the needed entrepreneurial skills.
2. The government should give adequate attention to entrepreneurial development in the country through the provision of good economic environment and encourage individual participation in business. This will guarantee entrepreneurship culture and consequently improve economic growth.
3. The government should give soft loans to the youths and graduates who are interested in establishing small-scale industries at little or no interest rate, so that they will be motivated to embark upon such ventures.
4. The general public must be made to understand the importance of business and entrepreneurship education in economic development as well as in nation building

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