Entrepreneurship Education: A Panacea for Sustainable Development in Nigeria

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Abstract

The objective of this paper was to emphasize the need and importance of entrepreneurship education which serve as a panacea to sustainable development in Nigeria. The present situation in Nigeria poses serious threats and challenges to both government and well meaning citizens. The problems facing the country centre on high rate of poverty; youth and graduate unemployment; over-dependence on foreign goods send technology; low economic growth and development; among others. This paper, therefore, argues that entrepreneurship education will equip the students with the skills with which to be self-reliant. The objectives and strategies for re-designing entrepreneurship education were also discussed. Also, the paper recommended that educational programmes at all levels of education should be made relevant to provide the youths the needed entrepreneurial skills. It is also recommended that the government should give adequate attention to entrepreneurial development in the country through the provision of good economic environment.

The need for entrepreneurship education started emerging in the mid 1980s. This is because before this period, unemployment and poverty were not national...
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concern as it is currently. However, political instability and inconsistencies in the socio-economic policies of successive governments led to the emergence of high level unemployment in Nigeria. In the mid 80s, the Nigeria’s economy collapsed while youth and graduate unemployment hit the roof. There was large scale layoff of workers and early retirements as a result of structural adjustment policies and bad economic trends in the country. In the face of this situation, entrepreneurship which would have salvaged the situation was not encouraged. It has been observed that tertiary education has not properly included philosophy of self reliance such as creating new cultural and productive environment that will promote dignity in work and self discipline, encouraging people to take part actively and freely in discussions and decisions affecting their general welfare, promoting new sets of attitudes and culture for the attainment of future goals.

Nwangwu (2007) opined that the failure of tertiary education to inculcate the above philosophy in students has led to wastages in terms of both human and natural resources. This is because the youths and graduates from tertiary institutions are not well equipped with the skill with which to exploit the natural resources that abound in Nigeria. All these factors have rendered the pursuit of self-reliance among our graduates difficult to attain. In his contribution, Ayodele (2006) identified inadequate capital to be one of the principal factors hindering entrepreneurship in the country. Another problem identified by Ayodele is irrelevant education that is Bookish, theoretic and white-collar job’s oriented. Also Nigeria’s macro-economic environment is unhealthy and unstable for a virile entrepreneurship development. Another problem is the fear of failure by the people to take risk on entrepreneurial activities, while an unstable and unconducive political environment drive away investors that are planning to embark on entrepreneurial activities. In addition, government programmes are not designed to promote entrepreneurship. Looking at the country (Nigeria), the level of infrastructural development provided by the government is still very low and this has been affecting to a very large extent the level of productivity and entrepreneurial activities in the country.

The problem of unemployment is particularly pathetic as the number of those coming out from various institutions and looking for employment opportunity is increasing day by day. The situation in Nigeria is of such concern that hundreds of unemployed university graduates mounted a demonstration in front of the presidential offices to express their concern. They demanded that government should provide them with jobs for them to cater for their essential need of life (Dabalen, Oni and Adakola, 2000).

It is pertinent to note that education can be a means to an end, it can simply be a tool for securing employment and emancipation of people through the provision and acquiring of necessary skills to make lives more flourishing. The objectives of this paper are to emphasize the need and importance of entrepreneurship education, which will serve as a panacea to some social, economic problems and sustainable development.
What is Entrepreneurship Education?

Entrepreneurship, according to Omolayo (2006) is the act of starting a company, arranging business deals and taking risks in order to make profit through the education skills acquired. In fact, entrepreneurship can be described as the process of bringing together creative and innovative ideas and coupling these with management and organizational skills in order to combine people, money and resources to meet an identified need and create wealth. 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 service for public consumption. However, the operational definition of entrepreneurship is the willingness and ability of the person or persons to acquire educational skills to explore and exploit investment opportunities, establish and manage a successful business enterprise.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Entrepreneurship has been recognized as an important aspect of an organization and economies (Dickson et al 2008). It contributes in an immeasurable ways toward creating new jobs, wealth creation, poverty reduction and income generating for both government and individuals. Schumpeter in 1984 argued that entrepreneurship is very significant to the growth and development of economies. Having understood the role of entrepreneurship in economic development, it becomes apparent that careful attention is needed to invest and promote entrepreneurship. Education is also seen as one of the precondition for entrepreneurship development particularly in a place where the spirit and culture are very minimal. It is said to be an important determinant of selection into entrepreneurship, formation of new venture and entrepreneurial success (Dickson, Solomon, and Weaver, 2008). However, it is equally assumed here that there is a positive relationship between education and individual’s choice to become an entrepreneur as well as the result and outcome of his or her entrepreneurial activity.

The move toward poverty reduction should not be considered and treated in isolation, different approaches and strategies need to be employed. For any country to foster genuine economic growth and development, its educational system must be considered in the bedrock of any meaningful development (FGM, 2004 in Akpomi, 2009).

The Nigeria policy on education made it clear on the need for functional, to be relevant, practical and acquisition of appropriate skills and development of competencies as equipment for the individuals to live in and contribute to the development of his/her society (Albadekomo, 2004). Adejimola and Olufunmilayo (2009) reported that about 80% of the graduates find it difficult to get employment every year. And at the same time much has not been done in trying to bring collaboration between the entrepreneurs and the institutions. The universities, polytechnics and any other academic institutions community stand to benefit a lot from entrepreneurs located there. Similarly, the entrepreneurs may harness and use the expertise of facilities in those institutions. This kind of interaction and interrelationship will go a long way in bridging the gap that exist between the entrepreneurs and the
institutions. Lack of this kind of synergy shows the weaknesses, inadequacies and fallacies of the educational policies in Nigerian in attainment of educational objectives (Aladekomo, 2004, Akpomi 2008, Adejimola and Olufunmilayo, 2009).

Human capital theory provides a framework for examining the impact of acquired variables such as education, learning and experience on career outcomes and it was further developed on the assumption that education can serve as a key determinant of decision choice and providing benefit to specific ventures (Dickson et al 2008). In cognizance of this fact, Adejimola and Olufunmilaya, (2009) opined that education should be designed with a view to create and enhance the supply of entrepreneurial initiative and activities. The bottom line here is to inculcate the spirit of entrepreneurship in the student through education. In fact, this calls for more serious adjustment of policies and new curriculum in line with demand of the present time.

**Objectives of Entrepreneurship Education**

Entrepreneurship education according to Paul (2005) is structured to achieve the following objectives.
- To offer functional education to the youths that will enable them to be self-employed and self-reliant.
- Provide the young graduates adequate training that will enable them to be creative and innovative in identifying novel business opportunities.
- To serve as a catalyst for economic growth and development.
- Offer tertiary institution graduates with adequate training in risk management, to make certain learning feasible.
- To reduce high rate of poverty
- Create employment opportunities
- Reduction in rural –urban migration
- Provide the young graduates with enough training and support that will enable them to establish a career in small and medium sized businesses.
- To inculcate the spirit of perseverance in the youths and adults which will enable them to persist in any business venture they embark upon.
- Create smooth transition from traditional to modern industrial economy.

**Entrepreneurship Education and Sustainable Development in Nigeria**

The Nigerian government seems to have woken up to the reality that the country needs to break away from the vicious cycle of poverty, infrastructural neglect, corruption and other problems. The reason being that, after 51 years of achieving colonial independence, it cannot be argued that Nigeria has attained her optimum level of development. According to Kolawole and Omolayo (2006), many individuals have difficulties in translating their business ideas to realities and creating new business ventures because of lack of necessary information and skills to achieve their targets. To him, the university curriculum was in the past oriented towards making graduates suitable only for white-collar jobs. This underscores why millions of our youths and a lot of University graduates roam about the streets of the major cities and towns in
search of white-collar jobs. It is necessary and possible to position Nigerian universities to stimulate economic growth through a deliberate agenda of production of entrepreneurial graduates.

In many countries, including US, high schools offer entrepreneurship education for life-long trade, and many of them offer courses that enable students to meet their general academic requirement while learning a trade. However, because of these recent challenges in world economy, many schools have shifted emphasis to training in computers, information technology, and related fields. Public schools work closely with willing industries to establish curriculum and programmes to meet their skill demand. Where is Nigeria in this history of entrepreneurship education? While career education has continued to thrive in many societies, it is unfortunately an area that is neglected in Nigeria (Vanguard, Dec. 12, 2004). No wonder why things are not working as they should in Nigeria. The neglect of entrepreneurship educations is robbing the nation of the contribution their graduates would make to the development of the economy. It is therefore socially injurious to neglect this important area or look down on its graduates. The society needs competent auto mechanics, and truck drivers, plumbers, electricians, electronics and computers, database, web and network technicians, book-keepers and clerks, medical technicians, and nursing assistants, (and other personnel in this category) to function well. These are some of the skills in short supply in Nigerian. The half-baked roadside mechanics in the society often cause more damages to vehicles when they are contracted to service them and because of poor training some of the commercial drivers on the road and nurse assistants in the hospitals have sent many people to their early death. Given these facts, it is a disservice to the society to neglect entrepreneurship education. In Nigeria, graduates of vocational and technical institutions are highly skilled entrepreneurs, but the society does not seem to encourage the youths to have value for technical education. Unfortunately, those who influence education policy in the society (legislators, educators, the media, etc) feel that graduates of technical vocational institutions are not equal to university graduates; hence there is need for effective strategies for entrepreneurship education in Nigeria.

Developing and Supporting Entrepreneurship Careers/Selection in School

There is increasing interest in the area of entrepreneurship education by institutions of learning in Nigeria. There is much effort and enthusiasm to teach entrepreneurship course using a wide range of methods such as venture creation by students, developing formal business plan, creating out feasibility study etc. (Vincent and Farlow 2008, Dickson et al 2008).

This shift from general education to specifically entrepreneurship education becomes necessary in the present realities of the need to develop and empower particularly the youths in the society. There is seeming consensus on the importance of entrepreneurship in ameliorating some socio-economic problems especially poverty, unemployment and all sorts of social vices in the society. Thus the focus of teaching and learning particularly in developing countries where these problems are predominant
call for another approach. This clearly indicates the sheer need of reorientation towards inculcating values that allow acquisition of necessary competencies to sense of self reliance, independence, and youth empowerment (Akpomi, 2009). In their own opinion, Adejimola and Olufunmilayo (2009) lamented that even in the developed countries; education system emphasizes the trial of inquiry – discovery application in teaching. It is very apparent that both challenges and opportunities are abound to tap, exploit and possibly, turn into goods and services of commercial values.

The task of universities and other institutions where entrepreneurship education need to be taught is enormous. Daodu (2007) in Akpomi (2009) make an investigation on the modalities of using entrepreneurship education as a strategy or instrument for channeling necessary energy of the Nigeria universities, faculties and students away from paid employment to self employment. They concluded that entrepreneurship education is the solution to nation building. Many economic and strategic theories have been used to provide a framework in which education can be seen as very important determinant of selection of entrepreneurship or venture formation for individuals in the course of their studies (Dickson, Solomon and Weaver, 2008). People also believe that entrepreneurial behaviour can be learned through experience and discovery (Akpom, 2009). Hence there is the need for learning task in which students can experience aspect of entrepreneurial way of life.

Serious importance has been attached to formal business plan in teaching entrepreneurship by the educators, but Gibb in Vincent and Farlow (2008) felt that there is need to have a rethink in the value of developing business plan as a process of learning and career development in entrepreneurship. This position was also supported by Johannisson (1991) in Vincent and Farlow (2008), by asserting that, “to teach individual to become not only more enterprising but businessman as well is an undertaking that is both in time and scope beyond the responsibilities of academic business schools”. Students are expected to feel and act as entrepreneurs. This effort will certainly strengthen their inspiration and would be indoctrinated towards the culture of entrepreneurship.

**Strategies for Effective Entrepreneurship Education**

In order to achieve viable entrepreneurship that will enhance sustainable development in Nigeria, the following strategies according to Ayodele (2006) will help to solve the problem of entrepreneurship education in the country.

1. There should be some form of genuine school- work based learning incorporated in some studies as part of the national economic development strategies. This implies enriching the curriculum to incorporate more vocational and technical training. The development of apprenticeship scheme would give new graduates some work skills and experiences.

2. There should be School-based enterprises where students identify potential business, plan, create and operate small business by using the school as mini-incubators.
3. Government should establish small business schools where interested students and community members can participate. This will make students to be self reliant
4. Government should develop entrepreneur internship programme by matching students with locally successful entrepreneurs with clearly established education programmes.
5. The Government should establish an enterprise college aimed at fostering the specific skills required for entrepreneurship. This will serve as skill-acquisition centre for the youths.
6. Government should create an economic friendly environment. This centres on reduction of taxes on small scale businesses.
7. There should be enough incentives for students of vocational and technical schools. This will motivate them to establish their businesses after school.

**Conclusion and Recommendations**

Evidently, Nigeria is lagging behind in preparing her workforce for the challenges of the rapidly changing global economy. The development of entrepreneurship will go a long way in providing the necessary impetus for economic growth and development. It will be crucial in boasting productivity, increasing competition and innovation, creating employment and prosperity and revitalizing economics. It is concluded that improved and sustainable global economic development depends on a strong entrepreneurship education. It is against this background that the following recommendations are proffered for effective entrepreneurship education in Nigeria.

a) Government and other education stakeholders should make sure that educational programme at all levels of education are made relevant to provide the youths and graduates with needed entrepreneurial skills.

b) The government should give adequate attention to entrepreneurship development in the country through the provision of conducive economic environment to encourage individuals to participate in business.

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