

LANGUAGE SKILLS NEEDED FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP SKILLS ACQUISITION IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Education the world over is recognized as the agent of change. Educationists and economists also agree that human beings are very important sources of the wealth of nations. That is to say that human capital has the capacity of creating more wealth if properly developed. In Nigeria, the education system turns out graduates who are unemployed, underemployed or unemployable. This means that the education system should embark on innovative curricular ways of tackling this ugly monster. One of such moves is the introduction of Entrepreneurship Skill Acquisition Programme (ESAP) in the curricula of our tertiary institutions. This paper agrees that a viable education system should entrench entrepreneurship education as one way of developing the potentials of the prospective graduates towards self-employment and wealth creation. The main purpose of this paper is to establish that any entrepreneurship acquisition programme will also include language skills to equip the entrepreneur for managing the business enterprise. It was recommended that language and communication skills should be entrenched into the entrepreneurship programs because this is essential for the successful management of any business enterprise.

Entrepreneurship is the act of being an entrepreneur. Webster (1981) described the entrepreneur as the person who organizes, manages, and assumes the risks of a business. Okpukpara (2011) traces the origin of entrepreneurship to the 18th century when the French economist Richard Cantillon associated the 'risk bearing activity' in the economy with the entrepreneur. By the turn of the 19th century, precisely in 1821, Says as cited

in Odigbo & Owoseye (2005), described the entrepreneur as one who moves economic resources from areas of low productivity to areas of high productivity. Over the years, economists agree that entrepreneurship is a necessary ingredient for stimulating economic growth and employment opportunities in all societies. (Okpukpara 2011). Continuing, she reiterated that in the developing world, successful small businesses are the

primary engines of job creation, income growth and poverty reduction.

Since then, other scholars have suggested ideas about entrepreneurs. Some scholars see entrepreneurs as a special class of people endowed with special traits to be innovative. As time went on, however, this view was contested. Drucker (1985) stated 'I have seen people of the most diverse personalities perform well as entrepreneurs.' This means that it is possible to develop entrepreneurial skills through training. That training which is the process of developing and guiding trainees or learners to become entrepreneurs is the Entrepreneurship Skill Acquisition Programme (ESAP).

Education and Entrepreneurship Skill Acquisition

Throughout the world, education is regarded as a strong tool for the development of nations. This is the basis for education for all. The development of any nation is related to the development of human beings. Odimegwu, (2005) posits that governments all over the world are aware of the place of education and so invest seriously in the education industry as a way of laying a strong foundation for national growth. It is believed that high quality education will serve as a catalyst for human and national development. Successful human development should be seen in terms of the ability of the school graduates to fit

in well into the society, to find a way to develop gainful employment and not to walk the streets for non-existent jobs. This scenario raises a number of issues. Despite the huge investments in education, despite the population explosion in our tertiary institutions, despite the constant review of entry requirements for admission purposes and review of mode of entry, the products of our education system seem to be falling short of expectation resulting in unemployment, underdevelopment and poverty.

All these issues have far reaching consequences. There is urgent need to review our educational programmes for more effective outputs so as to avert the imminent danger posed by frustrated, ill-prepared, poorly-equipped graduates who are not able to fit properly into the society. There is grave danger when our graduates cannot compete favorably in today's global economy driven by Information and Communication Technology (ICT).

One way to tackle this monster is for institutions of higher learning to train their students in entrepreneurial skills so that on graduation, they could become 'job creators' and not 'job seekers'. Successful world economies have a long history of academic entrepreneurship education. According to Klandt & Volkmann (2006: 65), record shows that:

Universities in the USA are generally regarded as the pioneers of academic entrepreneurship education. As early as 1947, foundations for entrepreneurship education at the university level were laid with Masters in Business Administration (MBA) courses like Management of New Enterprise. In 1953, Peter Drucker introduced 'Entrepreneurship and Innovation' at the University of New York. In the US, a dynamic development process in entrepreneurship training started in the early 1970 and continues till today. By the end of 2002, (Vesper and Canor) more than 700 entrepreneurship programs were included in the curriculum of business schools and universities in the USA.

A well designed and well implemented entrepreneurship skill acquisition programme for our schools will position the students to be positively disposed towards employment and wealth creation. Okpukpara (2002) maintains that:

Entrepreneurship education programmes are successful in encouraging entrepreneurs to start a business, or improve the performance of a business. Enterprise education programmes provide social experiences such as opportunities to exercise significant responsibilities, to start one's own business, and to observe relevant role models.

It follows that the right type of education can develop latent resources

inherent in man. The resources include knowledge, skills, talents, experiences and attitudes. It is through education that the right type of training, skills and attitude are cultivated and imparted to the citizenry. This goal is clearly stated in the National Policy on Education. According to the policy of the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN 4th Edition 2004), the goals of tertiary education shall be to:

1. Contribute to human development through high level relevant manpower development and training;
2. Develop and inculcate proper values for the survival of the individuals and the society;
3. Develop the intellectual capability of individuals to understand and appreciate their local and external environment;
4. Acquire both physical and intellectual skills which would enable individuals to be self-reliant and useful members of the society;
5. To promote and encourage scholarship and community service;
6. To forge and cement national unity; and
7. Promote national and international understanding and interaction.

Items 1 to 4 of the above listed goals of tertiary education stress that the learners must develop their physical and

intellectual capabilities to be able to become self reliant and useful members of the society. This means that the curriculum must be mindful of such provisions which might lead to curricula adjustments and innovation. This underscores the need for entrepreneurship skill acquisition as part of tertiary school curricula.

Basic Features of Entrepreneurship Skill Acquisition Programme (ESAP)

ESAP according to Odigbo & Owaseye (2005) is a time-tested programme for stimulating and harnessing the creative potentials of human beings to establish new business organizations to produce goods and services thus providing employment and creating wealth. ESAP is a way of responding to the challenges of the new millennium like unemployment, poverty, disease that are wrecking the underdeveloped world. Ogunkunle (2009) defined wealth creation as a system that teaches people inside knowledge and develops avenues of income for themselves and their families. It is having financial freedom, whereby citizens can get rid of the vicious circle of poverty. People have to be made aware of how to accumulate wealth for investment, create jobs and increase productivity. This will lead to development and ensure education for all. Development is a process that begins with the mind. The challenge is to develop the academic curriculum in such a way that education integrates knowledge with practice. Entrepreneurship courses should be

included among General Study Courses. Students should not just dwell on theories of business but could also take courses that are directly related to successful business management and apply these in their various disciplines. According to NOUN handbook (2008, 62-67), such courses may include:

1. Use of English I & II
2. Principles and practice of management
3. Introduction to Business Management
4. Business Communications
5. Micro Credit Policy and Institutions
6. Management Information Systems
7. Consumer Behavior
8. Business Ethics
9. Small Business Finance
10. Business Policy
11. Investment Analysis
12. Distribution and Sales Management
13. Risk Management
14. Human Resource Management Principles.
15. Principles and Practice of International Trade
16. Analysis of Financial Management
17. Etc.

The above listed courses and others are expected to lead students to practical ways to establish a business, how to grow a successful business, managing the finances of a business, how to write business proposals and letters and many more. Students could be assigned to understudy existing businesses to have a firsthand view of the successes and pitfalls. It will be a more practical thing

similar to but more effective than the Student Industrial Work Experience (SIWES), or the Industrial Training scheme (IT). The difference is that these courses would be built into the school programmes to be part of the curricular provisions for every programme of study. From time to time the students would be engaged in seminar classes to discuss and review their experiences. This is the secret behind the emergence of the new world economies of China, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia and other countries where students produce, even for export, electrical and technological toys such as handsets and accessories, earphones, watches and clocks, hair driers, electrical bells, home theatres, musical equipment and many home appliances. Nigerian students in their JETS (Junior Engineers, Technicians and Scientists) Club have produced startling things like toy cars and airplanes. Such enterprise spirits should be cultivated and sustained throughout school days. Graduates of a well planned entrepreneurship acquisition programme will create wealth and generate faster economic growth.

Skills Needed for Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship skill acquisition implies that individuals after acquiring certain skills will change their outlook and their ideas can be converted into action. It is also possible that a systematic, well organized training program can attract young graduates to take up business ventures that can cause a lot of economic change and reduce

unemployment and the attendant frustration. According to Okpukpara (2011), there are certain recurring attributes such as innovation, creativity, risk-bearing, value addition and profit orientation common with successful entrepreneurs. Conscious effort should be made to inculcate those into the learners. In addition, Ajagu (2005) lists some terms associated with successful entrepreneurs and they include: initiative, attitude, leadership, organization, decisiveness, responsibility, perseverance, energy, industry, self discipline, self confidence, feedback, conscientiousness, fearlessness and boldness and non-procrastination. Highlighting the extreme importance of these skills, Ajagu (2005: 96) had this to say on perseverance which is one of the salient qualities of successful entrepreneurs;

It is the ability to be continuously focused towards one's goal despite all odds and failures. In fact one's ability to surmount obstacles, hardships, opposition and failures and still succeed makes him a successful entrepreneur. Successful entrepreneurs do not give up. Success, most of the time is attained by those who refused to take defeat as final. In fact, no success story is complete without some level of woeful experience. A teabag will not release its flavor until it goes through hot water. Winners are ex-losers who refused to quit.

Ogunkunle (2009) also noted that the curriculum for wealth creation should be integrated into the existing school

curriculum with specific emphasis on equipping learners with skills such as:

- a). Thinking skills.
- b). Problem Solving Skills
- c). Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Skills.
- d). Language Skills.
- e). Basic Skills.

These are part of the entrepreneurial skills that students ought to imbibe in order to become successfully self-reliant. Language is an essential skill which an entrepreneur must acquire because of its use for communication and interaction.

Language Skills Needed for Entrepreneurship Skill Acquisition

An entrepreneur needs language and communication skills to grow his business to be able to operate locally and internationally. Some language skills needed for entrepreneurial development include listening skills, speaking skills, reading and writing skills. The appropriate use of these skills will enhance communication and social interaction and increase the chances of success of an enterprise. This is necessary for the success of human relationships and business ventures.

Listening and speaking skills: Listening and speaking skills are some of the oral skills a prospective entrepreneur ought to cultivate. An entrepreneur needs to listen to and understand what others are saying before he/she can respond to it. A good listening habit is necessary to determine

main ideas in a discussion, appreciate the true situation of things, use pitch, stress and intonation to gain meanings as well as attitude of a speaker, follow directions or instructions and to carefully assess any information. Speaking is equally an oral, productive skill which involves interactive process of giving out and receiving information. An entrepreneur needs to be able to communicate intelligibly whether in the local or foreign language. A good speaking skill is necessary to be able to fit into different occasions. There are skills needed for interaction, for giving instructions, for organizing things, for persuading clients, for explanations and clarifications. Above all the proper way to demonstrate knowledge of your business is through proper use of language.

Reading skills: Reading is also very important as a language skill. An entrepreneur must read up materials that are related to his business directly or indirectly. He/she must read up letters, notices, instructions, reports, contracts and agreements, manuals of instructions and other related matters. He/she must read newspapers and magazines to pick and analyze socio-cultural or socio-political information that can affect the enterprise positively or negatively to be able to adjust appropriately. There is the need to access information in books, internet or other social media that may help the business to grow. In addition, reading is useful not only while at school but also out of school and even

throughout life. Ability to read enhances education for all. Since learning goes on for life, reading skill ensures that people remain active participants in the world of business throughout life.

Writing skill: Writing involves using words to form sentence in paragraphs on a particular topic. It is a formal skill which the entrepreneur must devote time to learn because of its importance to the success of his business. Apart from learning, writing and composition generally, the entrepreneur must learn how to tackle business write ups such as proposals or business ideas, formal/official and informal letters, duty rosters, advertisements, records, reports, notices, memos, progress charts, maps, directions etc. Writing will help to streamline his business and reduce mistakes, confusions, fraud and inaccuracies. A well developed writing skill will help the entrepreneur to communicate promptly via the modern ICT facilities available today.

Conclusion

The main reason for entrepreneurship skill acquisition for potential graduates is to prevent the frustrating and debasing experience of unemployment. It is calculated to make students to look inward for self-employment. There are basic skills which learners need to be able to manage a business successfully. Entrepreneurship should be enhanced by the acquisition of certain skills including language skills. (Ogunkunle 2009).

The development of entrepreneurship skills will optimize the use of certain unexploited resources in the learners, to generate self-employment and a self sufficient economy. In addition entrepreneurship skills acquisition will, according to Ogunkunle (2009):

- a). Foster positive attitude to employment;
- b). develop entrepreneurial skills;
- c). educate current and future generations;
- d). develop inter- personal skills.
- e). Promote national and international understanding and interaction.

Recommendations

There is urgent need to diversify the curricula of tertiary institutions in Nigeria as a response to the many emerging and disturbing issues such as unemployment and the inability of graduates to fit into the society after graduation. Entrepreneurship education is a move in the right direction. Based on this, the following recommendations are made:

1. Entrepreneurship appears to be a positive approach towards finding the solution to unemployment. Government should show adequate commitment.
2. Curriculum planners should emphasize appropriate methodologies to train students in entrepreneurial skill acquisition.

3. Language and communication skills must be part of the entrepreneurial skills for purposes of managing the business and maintaining interactions and interrelationships.
4. The program should be such that students should be made to perceive the need early enough in their school life, to embrace it whole heartedly.
5. Nigeria should emulate other leading world economies like America and some Asian countries where entrepreneurship skill acquisition has been part of the curriculum of universities for a very long time now.

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