

ENTERPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION AS A TOOL FOR SELF-RELIANCE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

This paper examines and stresses the role of entrepreneurship education as a significant tool for self-reliance within the context of sustainable development in Nigeria. The problems facing the country ranges from high rate of poverty, youth and graduate unemployment; overdependence on foreign goods and technology; Low economic growth and development; among others. The paper uses secondary method of data collection where conference papers, journals and textbooks were used. This paper therefore argues that entrepreneurship education will equip the students with the skills empowerment with which to be self-reliant, reduce unemployment and lead to more sustainable development in the country. The paper thus goes on to highlight the concept of entrepreneurial education, historical antecedents in the Nigerian nation, the anticipated benefits in terms of sustainable development and the challenges of effective implementation of the system, which include among others; huge financial involvement to train resource personnel and provide the equipment for sustaining the system. The paper recommended that in order to avoid heavy reliance on white collar jobs, skills acquisition center's should be established across Nigeria, and entrepreneurship education be taught at all levels of our educational institutions. It further suggested the training of facilitators through seminars, workshops, etc., to update their knowledge and methodologies as well as provision of facilities for effective implementation of the courses.

Key note: entrepreneurship education, sustainable development, self-reliance, unemployment

The aim of every society is to prepare every citizen to take his or her place functionally in the society. Babalola (2007), observed that one major human capital assumption is that after finishing formal tertiary education, graduates should be able to afterwards make a successful transition from these institutions of higher learning to become productive workers, self-reliant entrepreneurs, responsible parents, good citizens, selfless leaders and live healthy lives.

However, in recent time, there has been increasing global concern over the continuously expanded rates of unemployment around the world, particularly in most developing countries, where the youths have been identified as the most affected groups. In Nigeria for example, the problem of unemployment and poverty has become alarming. There are many graduates who are unemployed, and who cannot employ themselves. A survey conducted by the Federal Ministry of Education as reported by Chiachemen (2007) indicated that 71% of students who graduated from Nigerian Universities, Polytechnics, and Colleges of Education in the last six years are yet to find jobs. This may be partly due to the curricula of the tertiary institutions of learning, which lay emphasis on training for white-collar jobs. It is explicitly clear that no nation can survive in the face of successive job rates of unemployment because of the attendant waste of human resources. As a result, and in order to survive, various governmental and non-governmental organizations have initiated policies through support agencies such as National Directorate for Employment (NDE), the National Poverty

Eradication Programme (NAPEP), Small Medium Enterprises Development Agency (SMEDAN), National Office for Technology Acquisition and Promotion (NOTAP), Raw Materials & Development Council (RMRDC) among others to address the problems of unemployment among Nigerian citizens (Olayinka 2010, Emmanuel 2012, Akhuemonkhan I. A, Raimi. L, & Sofoluwe, A et al., 2013).

These aforementioned strategies were initiated with the hope that the development of self-employment and small enterprise initiatives would serve as a measure to unlock the economic potentials of the people, increase the capacity to empower and equip individuals in society to participate and benefit from their national economy as well as facilitate economic development which forms the basis for transformation (Unachukwu, 2009, Ekpo and Edet, 2011). The most successful and important one has been placed on entrepreneurship. It is therefore against this background that the National Universities Commission (NUC) 2004 considered the introduction of entrepreneurship education into the University Education Curriculum. The importance of this is to inculcate self-employment (entrepreneurship) culture in the students and encourage graduates to create jobs instead of searching for non-existing jobs. This paper aims at examining the concept of entrepreneurship education in tertiary education as a tool for reducing unemployment rate and enhancing self-reliance and economic sustainability in Nigeria.

Conceptual Framework

Entrepreneurship

The concept of entrepreneurship has no single universally accepted definition; it is defined differently by people. The concept was first introduced in the 1700s and the meaning has developed since then.

To an economist, an entrepreneur is one who brings resources, labor, materials and other assets into combinations that make their value greater than before and also one who introduces changes, innovations and a new order. And also creates jobs that others are glad to get. To a psychologist, such a person is typically driven by certain forces or needs to obtain or attain something, to experiment, to accomplish, or perhaps to escape authority of others.

Drucker (1983) in Kaura 2009 said that entrepreneurship is the engine of development and economic emancipation while Duniya (2008) sees an entrepreneur as an action oriented and highly motivated individual who has the ability to see and evaluate business opportunities, to gather the necessary resources, to take advantage of them, to initiate appropriate action to ensure success and to bear risk to achieve the goals. Entrepreneurship according to the authors above is the process of creating something new with value by devoting the necessary time and effort, assuming the accompanying financial, psychic and social risks and receiving the results rewards of monetary, personal satisfaction and independence. An entrepreneur therefore is somebody who creates a business venture to create and sustain wealth from raw materials of his own ideas.

Hisrich and Peters (1998) observe that in spite all difficulties faced by entrepreneurs, entrepreneurship is presently the most effective method for bridging the gap between science and market place, creating new enterprises, and bridging new products and services to the market. Entrepreneurial activities significantly affect the economy of an area by building the economic base and providing jobs.

Entrepreneurship Education

Entrepreneurship education deals with the process of undertaking a business initiative as an application of knowledge acquired competently for the purpose of self-reliance, self-sustenance and the overall individual and society's development. In a nut-shell entrepreneurship education eradicates poverty and unemployment while enhancing self-determination, capacity building/motivational skills and greater business opportunities for citizens of the State.

According to the European Union Commission (2010) as cited in Ekankumo and Kemebaradikumo (2011), entrepreneurship education seeks to provide students (especially those in tertiary schools) with the knowledge, skills and motivation to encourage entrepreneurial studies in a variety of settings. The commission emphasizes that different aspects of entrepreneurship education are offered at all levels of schooling. In a similar vein, the Consortium for Entrepreneurship Education (2004) maintained that it is a lifelong learning process starting from elementary level to other levels of education and spanning to adult education.

According to Alain (2009), Entrepreneurship education refers to all activities aimed at fostering entrepreneurial mindsets, attitudes and skills as well as covering a range of aspects such as idea generation, start-up, growth and innovation.

Importantly, a number of studies relating to entrepreneurship education and self-employment intention have reported that there is a significant relationship between entrepreneurship education and self-employment intention (Unachukwu et al., 2009; Emmanuel, 2012, Ekpo and Edet, 2013). It has further been argued that students who graduated in entrepreneurship reached higher scores in entrepreneurship intention and entrepreneurial self-efficiency than students who graduated in other disciplines (Noel, 2001). Entrepreneurship education serves a medium for increasing students' interest in entrepreneurship career. Some previous studies have reported findings on the impact of entrepreneurship education on career intentions and aspiration of tertiary students in Ghana, it was found that most people were motivated to a large or very large extent to start-up a business by virtue of their exposure to entrepreneurship trainings (Owusu-Ansah, 2004).

Another study from Sri Lanka, (kumara, 2012) has further revealed that students who have received entrepreneurial education often develop positive attitudes and beliefs towards self-employment and entrepreneurship intention to a large extent. Additionally, Hannon, (2009) have found that an estimated 78% of students surveyed in Ireland who has passed through entrepreneurship education expressed interest in starting their own business in the future.

However, about 30% of non-business post graduates surveyed reported being interested in starting their own business at some points later in their career and 39% are interested in starting their own business through their college infrastructure.

From the above, it could be observed that most existing research conceptualize entrepreneurship education as instrumental or what facilitates self-employment intention and the reduction of unemployment.

Self-Reliance

Self-Reliance is an ability to rely on one's own efforts and abilities. A self-reliant person is one who possesses great creative ability, one who is functional, one who has acquired some values and skills to improve not just himself, but people around him/her; a resourceful individual. Put succinctly by EBo & Ukpong (1993), self-reliant citizens breed self-reliant nation.

Sustainable Development

Sustainable development has been defined as a continuous and progressive increase and expansion of both political, economic and socio-cultural life of the ordinary citizens for a long period of time. Suleiman (2002) sees sustainable development as the “complex of activities that can be expected to improve the human conditions in such a manner that the improvement can be maintained”. These conditions could include Improved Gross Domestic Product (GDP), improved standard of living, reduction of poverty, employment opportunity and increased literacy level.

Goals and Objectives of Entrepreneurship Education

The major objective of Entrepreneurship education is to continuously foster entrepreneurship culture amongst students and faculty with a view to, not only educating them but to also, supporting graduates of the system towards establishing and also maintaining sustainable business ventures, including but not limited to those arising from research (<http://www.thenigerianvoice.com/nvnews/45849/1/why-we-set-up-entrepreneurship-studies-in-varsities.html>). Oborah (2006) outlined the objectives of Entrepreneurship education as:

- To provide meaningful education for the youths, which could make them self-reliant and subsequently encourage them to derive profit and be self-dependent;
 - To provide small and medium sized companies with the opportunities to receive qualified graduates who will receive training and tutoring in the skills relevant to the management of the small business centers;
 - To provide graduates with the training and support necessary to help them establish a career in small and medium size businesses;
 - To equip them with enough training in risk management, instigate creativity and innovations in identifying new business opportunities;
- Garavan and O’Cinneide (1994) as cited in Chigbuson (2011) gave the following as the goals of Entrepreneurship education:
- To foster entrepreneurial mindsets, inculcate perseverance, skills and behaviours among the recipients, empower students with the competencies and skills necessary to prepare them to respond to their life needs
 - To increase the awareness and understanding of the process involved in initiating and managing a new venture as well as to enhance the public’s perception of learners of small business ownership as serious career option.

Entrepreneurial education further sets out to create smooth transition from traditional to a modern industrial economy and reduces rural-urban migration.

Entrepreneurship Education as a Tool for Self-Reliance and Sustainable Development

The call for the introduction of Entrepreneurship education in Nigerian tertiary institutions is actually a direct response to the changing socio-economic and political conditions in the world and Nigeria in particular which had resulted into high levels of unemployment of Nigerian graduates. It is an indication of its importance in economic empowerment and job creation in particular. This education has become necessary as Nigeria continues to produce graduates that are hardly self-reliant but solely dependent on white collar jobs. Self-reliance is a vital key to self-actualization, better human relationship, and national efficiency as well as social, cultural, economic, political, scientific and technological progress.

According to Ewubare (2010), Entrepreneurship education programme can equip students with entrepreneurial skills that will enable them create and develop enterprises in various areas. The emphasis here is that the programmes have a way of shifting the focus of students from paid employment to self-employment. During the colonial era, people were trained to work for the colonial masters and as such, their education was patterned towards such. Immediately after independence the emphases of our education system was after paid employment. Another role of Entrepreneurship education is that it has the tendency of equipping and making students experts in the production of certain items. The curriculum framework of this programme has been designed such that individuals will be able to channel their creative abilities and skills to an area or areas of interest. The interest area may be barbing, arts, soap making, farming and so on (Agoha, 2011).

The knowledge of Entrepreneurship education helps the students to gain information that will help to boost teaching and learning (Agoha, 2011). Entrepreneurship education builds the spirit of being entrepreneurs in the minds of the students. Entrepreneurship education is seen as a distinct social institution that seeks the establishment and maintenance of a functioning economy through job creation with a wide range of interest put into consideration especially as regards unemployment reduction.

Entrepreneurship education can greatly help in addressing the level of poverty in the country. The issue of poverty eradication has been a top priority of many governments and institutions, especially in developing countries where extreme poverty is conspicuous and has become pandemic (Akpmi, 2009; Kalirajan, 2009). The incidence of poverty in Nigeria is on the high side, where about 70% of the total population has been classified as poor (Ewhrudjakpor, 2008). This state may be seen as a direct consequence of the absence of entrepreneurial spirit and culture which Entrepreneurship education is supposed to foster. Entrepreneurship education equally helps in checking high dependency ratios (That is, the ratio of dependent population to working population) in the country. Once the working population are adequately equipped and empowered with these entrepreneurial skills thereby leading to self-employment and self-reliance, the burden arising from dependent population will be reduced and national incomes will increase. To achieve sustainable development, nations must develop infrastructurally as well as educationally. Entrepreneurial education is therefore a panacea to guarantee amiable development.

Problems Facing Entrepreneurship Education in Nigeria

The introduction of entrepreneurship education in our tertiary institutions today is a major step in the right direction, but the sustainability of the programme is a great concern as it is still faced with certain challenges. One of the problems the successful implementation of Entrepreneurship Education in Nigeria is facing is that the institutions haven't really been able to comprehend and articulate the three tier relationship between the specific needs of our tertiary institutions and their mission as well as the characteristics of the fast changing world. Coupled with this is the complain of inadequate funds and the effective delivery of entrepreneurship education which requires the adoption of new teaching styles rooted in technology that is costlier than the conventional teaching styles used in our tertiary institutions. A good number of our tertiary institutions also lack basic infrastructures that will enhance entrepreneurship education. For instance, there are insufficient computer facilities for staff and students, ill-equipped laboratory and library books, as well as dilapidated building. The issue of lack of reliable electricity supply and gradual dearth of experienced lecturers and facilitators is a major problem in the implementation of entrepreneurial education in Nigeria.

Conclusion

Entrepreneurs are known for their role in helping an economy with the needed drive to help it thrive. As surmised in this paper, education is the hinge or pivot on which all other forms of development revolves. It is therefore of utmost necessity that the value of entrepreneurship education be not only an aggregation of theories, but a practicable culture should be in placed if the concept must yield its value maximally in the areas of self-reliance and sustainable development. Quality entrepreneurship education play a vital role in equipping, empowering and developing the capabilities of the Nigerian youth in tertiary institutions to be able to establish own functional businesses and enable them to create and generate jobs for other graduates.

Recommendations

Because of the relevance of entrepreneurship education towards self-reliance and sustainable development, the following recommendations are made;

- The adequate funding and financing of Entrepreneurial programmes in order for the objectives and goals of the programme to be realized;
- There will be need for adequate training of facilitators of these workshops and entrepreneurial training programmes.
- There is also the need to encourage people and stress the need to embrace Entrepreneurship education or training in order for them to become self-reliant and wealth creators;
- Entrepreneurship education should be taught at all levels of our educational institutions ;
- Develop entrepreneur internship programmes matching students with locally successful entrepreneurs with clearly established education programmes;
- The Government should make accessible loans available for graduates of the programme so as to start up their businesses;
- Policy summersaults, policy inconsistencies and lack of continuity should not be consistent with change of government;
- There should be uniformity in the curriculum offerings in the various institutions that are saddled with the teaching and learning of this education;

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