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# Functional Education for Values, Knowledge, Skills and National Development

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## **Abstract**

*Education has often been described as the bedrock for national development of every nation. Unemployment is one of the indices for measuring national development and in recent times the unemployment rate in Nigeria has been high. In a bid to reduce unemployment, most major economies of the world have embraced on entrepreneurial education. This paper is of the view that functional education especially in the area of entrepreneurship will go a long way in reducing unemployment, creating wealth as well as producing individuals who are creative and have acquired the necessary competency to be economically independent, and self reliant. By functional education the paper means education for a specific purpose, task or activity based on the immediate needs of the recipient in order to improve productivity. That is, education acquired to promote self reliance, entrepreneurship, economic independence as well as helping the beneficiary to maximize the potentials in his/her environment. The paper concluded that entrepreneurship education should be functional in nature; and recommended that it should be introduced early, preferably at the secondary school level; methodology of teaching entrepreneurship education should be changed so as to make it practical and have more*

*bearing on real-life problems. The paper sees functional education or functionality in entrepreneurial education as the key to realizing the economic vision 20-20-20 of Nigeria.*

Education has often been described as the bedrock for national development of every nation. Eke, Igwesi & Orji (2011) affirmed this assertion by saying that education is a crucial tool for national development. However, it is important to state that education in Nigeria when compared to other developed nations shows that there is a lot of marked differences. Similarly Okorochoa (2013), stated that the essence of education is to bring about the best in the individual. He further opined that while other developed nations tailor their education to suit their developmental needs, Nigerians acquire education for the sake of education. He pointed that “in Nigeria, we do theoretical education which does not have a bearing on practical realities”. It is no secret then that while other nations are developing in quantum; Nigeria is grappling with basic problems of society.

The key to rapid development lies in the integration of functionality into the education system as well as encouraging functional education. Functional education has enabled countries like France, Japan, USA to become technological giants, manufacturing havens and investors’ paradise, while Nigeria has become a dump for both substandard and pricey irrelevant goods. The norm in Nigeria is for a child to go to school up to the university level and master all the theoretical concepts without a corresponding mastery of real life situations in which these concepts could be applied. After this, a graduate embarks on a search for any job just to ensure that he/she is economically relevant. This is done without any link to being self sustaining and independent, hence, it could be deduced that the product of the Nigerian system of education is trained to be economically dependent and entrepreneurially shallow or even empty. For this trend to be revised there must be functionality in the education system and a shift to entrepreneurial education. For as Rochas Okorochoa puts it, “if tomorrow must be bright, then the education must be right. This paper thus seeks to lucidly bring to limelight the interplay between functional education, entrepreneurial education and national development.

### **Functional Education: Concept and Principle**

Functional education was described by Zeilberger (1961) as education that comes spontaneously from the influence of the environment. Similarly it has been described as education that comes from the child’s needs that uses the child’s interest as a mechanism for activating him towards his desirable activities, its purpose is to develop the life of the mind, which acts from the wholeness of organic life, with relation to practical life in the present and in the future. Obanya (2003) alluding to the description

of functional education, stated that “the situation in which the child is growing and the one he is going to live, should determine the way education is carried out, including what is taught and how it is to be taught and learned. Abraham (2011) summarised the definitions given thus far as “that type of education which will equip youths with adequate scientific, vocational and cognate knowledge and competencies to compete effectively for job placements within their environments”.

From the foregoing, it could be deduced that functional education refers to education given to someone to promote self reliance, entrepreneurship and economic independence as well as help the beneficiary to overcome any form of restrictions or inhibitions placed by the environment. It is a form of education that incorporates academic excellence with real life situations. Alluding to this, the National Policy of Education (FGN 2004) stated the need for functional education - to be relevant, practical and lead to the acquisition of appropriate skills and the development of competencies as the equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of his society. Arising from these, the features of functional education therefore include:

- (a) Relevance
- (b) Practicality
- (c) Must lead to the acquisition of the right skill
- (d) Development of competencies
- (e) It must be for immediate use.

Obanya (2003) corroborated this by saying that the purpose of functional education is to acquire the skills of understanding life situations, adapting to it and acting to influence it by contributing to its development

Thus, it can be seen that functional education simply aims at educating an individual to function and develop the capacity to adapt theoretical teaching/concepts to real life problems with the sole aim of achieving success. It is education for immediate use or pay off. It is usually given for the effective performance of a task or job as well as adapting to the intricacies of a particular environment and making the best out the situation presented by the environment. Based on the foregoing and for the purpose of this paper, functional education could be defined as an attempt to provide education for a specific purpose, task or activity based on the immediate needs of the recipient in order to improve productivity.

### **Entrepreneurial Education: Purpose and Challenges**

Entrepreneurial education has been defined as the “inculcation of an attitude of self reliance using appropriate learning processes”. Garavan and O’Cinneide (2013). . Eke, Igwesi & Orji (2011) defined it as a pragmatic education that inculcates creative, innovative, productive and managerial skills needed in business enterprises for self

reliance and national development. It is pertinent to state that in the world of business today, entrepreneurship is the preferred destination and it has swept through the globe like a revolution and the success of most developed nations could be attributed to entrepreneurship. However, it must be stated that entrepreneurship is not just mere creation of business. Kuratko (2005) stated that entrepreneurship is more than the mere creation of business. Entrepreneurship is a dynamic process of vision, change and creation. It requires an application of energy and passion towards the creation and implementation of new ideas and creative solutions. Essential ingredients include willingness to take calculated risks – in terms of time, equity or career, the ability to formulate an effective venture team, the creative skill to marshal needed resources and skills of building solid business plans and finally, the vision to recognize opportunity where others see chaos contradiction and confusion. (Kurako & Hodgetts, 2004:30).

Eke, Igwesi & Orji (2011), further stated that entrepreneurial education sought to provide students with the knowledge, skills and motivation to encourage entrepreneurial success in a variety of settings. It focuses on the realisation of opportunity. Entrepreneurial education therefore, is an education tailor made to provide students with requisite skills and competencies to survive in any business environment. This is to re-orient and shift focus from theories currently being taught in schools to practical solutions to real life problems. Entrepreneurial education was the aim of the 6-3-3-4 system of education in Nigeria as it sought to develop the child to pick up a vocation that will help him/her become economically viable, self sustaining and self reliant in the event that the person could not further his/her education to the university level. However, poor implementation occasioned by so many other factors contributed to the failure of the system. In a bid to reduce the rate of unemployment among graduates, the presidency in 2006 directed all Nigerian higher institutions to include Entrepreneurial Education (EEEd) as a compulsory course for students with effect from 2007/2008 academic session. Aliu and Ibe (2008:15) outlined the goals of EEEd thus, to:

- a. Identify and solve problems using critical and creative thinking
- b. Work effectively with others as a proactive team member and cultivate the ability to resolve conflict.
- c. Organise and manage one self and one's activities
- d. Collect, analyse, organise and critically evaluate information (to make decisions that must be carried through)
- e. Communicate and negotiate effectively
- f. Reflect on experiences and explore various strategies for effective teaming
- g. Become curious leading to readiness to experiment and innovate
- h. Consider self employment as a viable option upon graduation from their institution.

The above goals will impact hugely on national development as it will greatly reduce the rate of unemployment in the country. Garavan and O'cinneide (1996) reported that future prosperity hinges on the creation of vibrant indigenous businesses that are deeply rooted in the local economy. For this to happen there, is need to expand the pool of local entrepreneurial talent to develop and manage new business ventures. This implies that a nation desirous of growth in the economy as well as development in all spheres of economy must of essence train and raise entrepreneurs and this can only be done through qualitative entrepreneurial education.

Most Nigerian graduates are filled with notion that after school, one should get a job with various companies and multi- nationals; however, this has not been the case as there are few vacancies to adequately cater for the huge number of graduates turned out from Nigerian universities yearly. The implication of this is that the rate of unemployment is on the rise.

The trend can be reversed by integrating functionality into entrepreneurial education as well as prioritizing entrepreneurship in various levels of education. This will inculcate entrepreneurial drive and innovation into the minds of the students at a very early age to develop a culture of self reliance, economic independence- this is in addition to creating a more literate population and productive workforce.

### **Entrepreneurial Education and National Development**

The productive capacity of a nation lies in the quality of its workforce as well as the diversification of her economy. Montoya (2010) is of the view that entrepreneurial education can be a key component to helping communities build economic strength. Essenjor (1992) stated that "real development involves the creative capacity of a people to transform effectively natural resources of the environment into goods and services through the imaginative and creative talents and productive labour force". This implies that entrepreneurship is the key to nation development. It is no secret then that America and Europe have continued to prosper and develop at an astronomical rate while Nigeria is still plagued by unemployment, poverty and corruption. Ewuzie (2011) noted that prioritizing entrepreneurship education in schools and even outside the school setting would spur innovation and creative productive skills which will in turn translate to more job creators instead of job seekers, hence reducing unemployment and poverty in the country.

Aladekomo (2004), stated that the education bequeathed to us by Britain our colonial masters was shallow and aimed at supplying manpower for the administration of the colony for the colonial masters and in recent times not much has changed because the goal of every student in various Nigerian universities is to graduate and get a white collar job. Essenjor (1992) observed that technological and entrepreneurship education

is the road map for the attainment of vision 2020 in Nigeria. However, there is a need to restructure the education system and put in place a skill based educational system for self reliance capacity building and to make students more employable. Nigeria aims to be among the world's 20 biggest economy in the year 2020. This dream is achievable if and only if the country pays more attention to small business entrepreneur instead of the current attraction to the oil sector. Entrepreneurs in various areas: agriculture, solid minerals and other sectors of the economy can be encouraged and by so doing build an economy that is not necessarily based on crude oil. It is only when small businesses are well regulated that the economy can reap bountifully from entrepreneurship. The aggregation of individual efforts and emergent large number of business will promote the economic growth and development in the country.

It is important to state that entrepreneurial education plays two (2) major roles in national development: Wealth creation and redistribution and Job Creation. When people are taught how to identify opportunities and build competencies in various careers, it builds self reliance and creates a source of income while at the same time creating employment for others. In essence, entrepreneurial education creates creative thinkers who create something out of nothing and attract others to identify spheres of opportunities and tap into them hence developing themselves and the nation at large.

### **The Place of Functional Education in Engendering Entrepreneurship for National Development**

Entrepreneurial education is faced with many challenges, these include:

1. Teaching Method: Most entrepreneurship training are streamlined to solve a particular problem but are generalized. These makes the recipients not properly grounded in their chosen fields or career path. Functional education plays an important role as it would ensure that each recipient of entrepreneurship education is given the required education suitable to his/her area of specialization. Thus with functionality in the teaching of entrepreneurship, the programme would achieve its desired objectives hence raising people who are highly competent, self reliant and economically viable who will contribute more to productivity and national development.
2. Entrepreneurship education programmes often have short duration compared to other educational programmes concerned with helping people embrace major careers. The length of such programmes makes it very difficult to master the complexities and acquire the competence required to be a successful entrepreneur. However, functional education in the form of more practical classes and exposure to real – life business situations will go a long way to mask the effects of the short duration. Thus functionality that is placing more value content in the entrepreneurship programme will boost the economy because of

the high turnover of qualified and competent entrepreneurs produced within a short period of time.

Formal education as is being practiced currently in Nigeria especially with the curriculum being operated is inadequate for entrepreneurship education. This assertion is based on the fact that the current formal education is only aimed at making people to be the same, in spite of their obvious differences (Johnson, 2012). It is further noted that formal education as currently been practiced will only serve to fill social roles and produce professionals but will fail to produce individuals who can transform society itself. The transformation of a society which represents one of the aims of entrepreneurial education can only be attained through functional education, that is, training individuals to fulfil social and work roles as well as developing competences that will help in creating wealth and jobs and by extension developing the nation. Thus, the curriculum of the education system should be all encompassing in developing the spirit and culture of entrepreneurship. Institutions should be made to become centres for inculcating entrepreneurial ideas, instead of centres for passing examinations and getting white collar jobs.

### **Conclusion**

Every nation desirous of growth must of essence embrace the new culture of entrepreneurship. The new generation of students at various levels must be given the right education that will build competencies across diverse disciplines. The applicability of skills and knowledge acquired through entrepreneurial education is dependent to a large extent on the functionality of the knowledge gained, hence entrepreneurial education plus functionality will go a long way in achieving as well as producing top notch entrepreneurs who in turn will improve the economy of the nation.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the foregoing it is recommended that:

1. Entrepreneurial education should be introduced early in life preferably at the secondary school level.
2. Higher education should be tailored towards producing graduates relevant to the economic and technological development of the nation.
3. Entrepreneurial education programmes should be built into schools' curriculum.
4. Entrepreneurial education should be made functional through practical application of theories and solution to practical problems.
5. Methodology of teaching entrepreneurial education should be changed or modified to reflect modern practical realities.

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