

SCHOOLING AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION: THE NIGERIAN EXPERIENCE

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Abstract

This paper is sensitive to the problems involved in relationship between the school, educational system and the product of our school system. It sees the school and social realities as the crux of the matter. It discussed the concept of entrepreneur, entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship education and identifies the real obstacle to effective implementation of our educational programme. Finally, it exposes the goals of entrepreneurship education: in all of these; implications are drawn.

This paper is motivated by the 6:3:3;4 system of school experiences in Nigeria from 1983 till date. It is concerned about the relationship between education and employment or occupational capacity of the products of the school in Nigerian. This relationship is sometimes influenced by social reality or can there be ways of integrating school with society? Are there not so much in the society that could not be connected with the school? Karier and Hogan (1956) referring to Dewey, observed that if the school were to fulfill its educative function within the larger society, it must do more than reflect society perse; he believed it must introduce the young to those experiences which would culminate in a larger society which is worthy, lovely and harmonious.

From Dewey's view as shown by Karier and Hogan, there must be a mutual relationship between the school and the prevailing realities of life. The school in one

hand, should relate to the immediate realities of life and in the other hand, it should be made to propel economic, religious, political, social cultural and correct social ills in the existence. Thus, any educational system that depends on private profit motive and conflict will only lead the society to a state of perpetual socio-economic conflict, and destruction. At the end, the summary to all is the answer to the question: After schooling, what next?

Unemployment is one of the dominant social problems in Nigeria Current researchers such as Nwadiani (2000) and Obayi (1996), agreed that this high unemployment rate in Nigeria results from two interrelated but different phenomena of high illiteracy rate and skewed implementation of our educational policies. It is an established fact that the nation cannot make use of all (lie products of school system, hence, more emphasis is laid on education for self- reliance (Idih, 1997). One way of rectifying the problem of imbalance between education and employment is to direct educational principles and efforts towards the development of skills and attitudes conducive for self-employment, and this calls for entrepreneurship education; National Directorate of Employment (NDE 1989) stated that, Nigeria needs a core dynamic private entrepreneur and owner-managers with necessary skills and commitment that can galvanize them and join forces to put the derailed economy back to track. This paper considers the myths of our schooling system, discusses the concepts of entrepreneur,

entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship education, identifies the real obstacle by raising one critical question. It presents the ideal curriculum for our present social reality alongside with the function of entrepreneurship education. Finally, implications are drawn from these issues.

Schooling and Social Reality

Prior to 1982, Nigerian secondary schools were similar to British Grammar Secondary education type. They were one-tier five-year secondary education that emphasized literacy and innumeracy mainly through rote-learning. This prepares its products for white-collar jobs for both the private and the public sectors.

According to Gallaway (1973), opportunities for the white-collar jobs have become increasingly scarce from the 1970s. Thus, the accumulation of unemployed products of secondary education started from them. To those that could not secure employment opportunities or get admitted into school of higher learning, schooling is both illusive and a myth-good for nothing. To the government, two options were available. They are: setting up of specialized vocational and technical secondary schools different from the existing secondary education (i.e maintaining two educational systems) and diversification and vocationalisation of the existing curriculum (Iyamu, 2003). The choice of the later depended on the more cost effectiveness and on the facts that prospective graduates with vocational skills would secure better paying and immediate employment or be self-employed. (NPE, 1981,1998). This restructuring greatly affected Junior Secondary School (JSS).

The Junior Secondary School Education (JSSE) prepares recipient for effective and useful living in the society and for

higher education. The JSS programme was structurally designed to be functional and practical. It covers practical subjects such as Electronics, Home Economics, Introductory Technology, Local Crafts, Auto Mechanics, Carpentry, Brick-laying etc. The students' ability would determine who should be channeled into vocational programmes (career opportunity) and who proceeds to the higher level of education (SSS level) (NPE, 1982). Thus, in order to make the absorption of the JSS terminates (graduates) possible, the Federal Government of Nigeria opened nine additional technical colleges in the nation. These colleges include: Yaba, Lagos State, Shiroro, Niger State, Federal Capital Territory, Orurkpo, Benue State etc. (Mbanefo, 1997).

The Real Obstacle

There have been a lot of implementation constraints. Many observers noted that it soon became apparent that implementation strategies set up by the various state ministries and school authorities are in complete deviation from the expected policy direction. The apparent inconsistency in policy pronouncements and practices are perhaps due to a number of factors. According to Mbancibli (1997) the new education system was packaged at a time when the nation was economically buoyant while the implementation of the secondary education component fell in at a period when the economy had taken a downward trend. The much expected oil-boom did not last to sufficiently sustain the new system. Earlier, on, Washington (1968) contended that comprehensive secondary school system is not possible except for a rich nation.

In fact, implementation constraints of the 6.3.3.4 education system are numerous including insufficient planning, inadequate resources and staff. Lack of educated and knowledgeable personnel amongst others. According to Iwovi (1987), Fafimwa (1992) and Sofolahan(1991) insufficient funds, lack of policy direction, and

capital intensity of vocational curriculum are identified as the real obstacle to effective implementation.

An Ideal Curriculum as a Solution to Social Problems

Dewey (1956) and Tiles (1992) maintained that a problematic situation needs an intentionally structured kind of curriculum that would create the kind of social reality which might best resolve the social problems of the present while at the same time, help move society towards future ideal community. However, the significance of work in structuring the curriculum and human consciousness should not be underrated. The ideal educational curriculum gradually socializes the young into the vision of a developing political economy. To this, Dewey (1917) noted that the natural counterpart of free and universal public system of universal industry in which there are no idlers or shirkers or parasites and where the ruling motive is in good workmanship for public ends, not exploitation of others for private ends should form the bedrock for ideal curriculum for societal reform. This is the reason that industrial democracy and industrial education should fit each other like hand and glove. Similarly, on the place of school on societal development, Boydston and Dewey (1976) opined that the school more than any one other social institution, stands between the past and the future; it is the living present as reflection of the past and as prophecy of the future.

The curriculum must be one that can initiate the child into a trade (occupation) to create a desired objective of social reality. This normally goes on unconsciously and it is usually different from work which educates primarily for a trade. Perhaps, this is what the nation requires when it decides to vocationalize

curriculum, especially the Junior Secondary School curriculum.

The Concepts of Entrepreneur, Entrepreneurship and Entrepreneurship Education

The simple dictionary meaning of the word entrepreneur is a risk-taking organizer of production (Mallier and Shafto, 1989). For Carter (1986), the entrepreneur is a 'promoter' who takes care of the business by being involved in the risk of procuring raw materials, transporting them to the production centers and collecting and selling finished goods. Thus, the entrepreneur promotes the division of labour and coordination of the various specialist workers for efficient production. He further organizes the production system by investing his capital to initiate the business.

Entrepreneurship on the other hand is a clear manifestation of effective manipulation of human intelligence as demonstrated in creative performance. It seeks to find out how best the graduates can convert their education to intellectually productive ventures. It rather brings the best in individuals. Most scientific, technological and socio-economic development of any nation are dependent on the entrepreneurship ventures. These characteristics of entrepreneurship are the essential foundation of socio-economic and industrial development in any country (Esomonu, 1998).

Entrepreneurship education as it were, is the type of education geared towards producing a self-employed or self-reliant person. It is directed towards instilling such traits as innovativeness, ingenuity, resourcefulness and endurance'; Consequently, entrepreneurship education will be aiming at producing people who have imbibed those characteristics as enduring dispositions, which concisely regulate their choices of action. In other words, the test of

possession of entrepreneurship will be in the quality of decisions made by the recipient of entrepreneurship education when faced with the challenging situations of business. Such objectives therefore, rise above the possession of mere cognitive knowledge or manipulative skills, although intellectual and motor skills may be pre-requisites. Nevertheless, altitude learning is clearly part of the education in curriculum. (Anowor, 2001). For this reason the curriculum is said to include an effective domain, and this term emphasizes intellectual capacity of the person. What remains a task for curriculum builders, therefore, is to determine the specific nature of the set attitudes required for producing a particular kind of person, (Anowor, 2001) concluded.

Goals of Entrepreneurship Education

It has been stated earlier on in this paper, that the primary aim of the entrepreneurship education is to provide learners with skills and ideas for self-employment and self-reliance. The National Policy of Education (1998) states that one of that goals of education is to "give training, and impact the necessary skills to individuals who shall be self-reliant". Proposing the development of corporate entrepreneurship as a goal of entrepreneurship education. Harper in Marehigiano-Monraoy (1991) posited that such an educational endeavour should prepare students for:

1. Lead rather than follow
2. Operate within a global rather than a provincial perspective
3. Exhibit and uphold basic values rather than look for the fast buck
4. To add value to the market place
5. Invest in innovative technology and human resources that offer long-term situations rather than be seduced by quick fixes and initiative practice

Is Skill Acquisition or Entrepreneurship Education New to Nigeria?

Skill acquisition or entrepreneurship is not new to this nation. This is reflected in the National Policy on Education (2004) where our philosophy of education is geared towards educating the citizens for self-reliance. However, coupled with the implementation pitfalls which is occasioned by the government inability to provide the necessary and basic infrastructure, materials, personnel and environments necessary for effective implementation of the NPE is the school/society based angle to the problem of skill acquisition education. Virtually every disciplinary at all levels of academic pursuit or educational process has one form of entrepreneurship embedded in it but sadly, the actors- teachers and students; are more interested in what is in the process for them, such that, while the students are more interested in their certificate(s) and levels of passes, the teachers on the other hand are more interested in what they gain from either sales of books or handouts.

From the societal point of view, the elitist nature of the Nigerians has not helped matters rather, it sets a dangerous pace and precedence for the country's new educational system. Nigerian parents until now prefer the white to blue collar jobs, and therefore, remain obliged to influence the channeling of their children to higher schools irrespective of their performance and talent for a specific career. Nigerians believe that higher certificates are better and prestigious and so must be craved for. They believe that certificates are ticket for greener jobs, appointment and socially are highly regarded (even if one cannot practically defend such higher certificates). Therefore the idea of developing a career orientation for a child of 14 or 15 years to many parents became absolutely irrelevant to a better future life. All of these point to the fact that the policy has been confronted

with many constraints which actually make the achievement of the objectives viz- self employment or self reliance impossible. Be that as it may, with the present trend of events, tertiary institutions are busy pushing out their products to joined the wagon of unemployed, making the unemployment rate to sour higher and higher. Something has to be done, something more drastic needs to be done and that thing is skills acquisition in Nigerian education system. It is the education for self-reliance, an entrepreneurship education.

Conclusion

This paper has addressed an important issue that borders on the relationship between the school and the prevalent reality of the society. The education system should pursue and maintain realistic policies. For this reason, it must not blindly copy or adopt social activities going on in the society, rather, it should endeavors to positively influence the society. This Nigeria has tried to do from 1982 till date (about 27 years) but failed woefully due to many societal influence and general approach to implementation process. The attempt to salvage education and her product from social economics ills failed and gave room to the worse case of social, economic and educational outcomes. There is the urgent need to inculcate entrepreneurship education in all aspects of our educational process. This is because, such an education, as has been amply demonstrated in other countries, holds the key to the improvement of the productive base of society. It is the education that is relevant for the socio-economic and industrial development of Nigeria. That is to say, skill acquisition education or entrepreneurship education, whatever its content and process, should be able to orient young Nigerians to be self-reliant.

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