

## REAPPRAISING ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION FOR FUNCTIONALITY AND SELF RELIANCE

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### Abstract

Entrepreneurship is very fundamental in the world of business. It is only when an entrepreneur establishes a business enterprise that a business manager has something to manage and marketers have products to sell to consumers. This paper examines issues in entrepreneurship, highlights challenges facing the prospective entrepreneur and makes suggestions on how entrepreneurship education can make our graduates self-reliant. It concludes that lecturers and facilitators should ensure that students take entrepreneurship education seriously so that they would be able to fully discover their entrepreneurial potentials. They should also make it mandatory for graduating students to undertake practical feasibility studies of entrepreneurial ventures they would want to engage in on completion of their studies and submit proposals which should form part of their project work for graduation.

### Introduction

The major problem facing the Nigerian graduating youths today is that of unemployment. It has become so serious that our undergraduates approach their graduating days with dread and fear. The present trend in Nigeria where graduates are seen roaming the streets because they could not get government employment inspite of the fact that entrepreneurship education has been introduced into the curriculum of all graduates of our higher institutions, calls for a re-examination of the Nigerian educational system. This is because entrepreneurship education in the curriculum of our tertiary institutions, is expected to channel the thoughts of the graduates from that of job seekers to that of job creators. The term

entrepreneurship was derived from two French words, "entre and prendre". The word 'entre' means to enter or between, while 'prendre' means to take. Arising from these, entrepreneurship entails the initiation of new ideas and assumption of risks.

Ezema (2005) view entrepreneurial education as a specialized training given to students to acquire the skills, ideas and the managerial abilities and capabilities for self-employment rather than being employed for pay. According to Onwuchekwa (1998), entrepreneurship education is the identification of the general characteristics of entrepreneurs and how potential entrepreneurs can be trained in management techniques needed for effective performance of persons for long time survival of the organization. Furthermore Coomb (1974) opined that entrepreneurship education is designed to develop particular knowledge and skills that are associated with various economic activities and useful in making a living. Also Osuala (2004) stated that entrepreneurship education is a specialized training given to students to acquire skills, ideas and management abilities necessary for self-reliance. He outlined the major objectives of entrepreneurship education to include:

- 1) To provide meaningful education for the youths which could make them self-reliant and subsequently encourage them to derive profit and self independence.
- 2) To provide small and medium sized companies with the opportunity to recruit qualified graduates who will

receive training and tutoring in the skills relevant to the management of the small business center.

- 3) To provide graduates with the training and support necessary to help them establish a career in small and medium sized business.
- 4) To provide graduates with training in skills that will make them meet the manpower needs of the society.
- 5) To provide graduates with enough training in risk management to make uncertainty bearing possible and easy.
- 6) To stimulate industrial and economic growth of rural and less developed areas.
- 7) To provide graduates with enough training that will make them creative and innovative in identifying new business opportunities.

Therefore, integrating entrepreneurship education in the curriculum of tertiary institutions with relevant skills, acute business knowledge, self-confidence and other attributes necessary for self-reliance and national survival is a welcome development. Finally, lecturers and facilitators should ensure that students take it seriously by making it mandatory for graduating students to undertake proposals for entrepreneurial ventures which should be submitted as part of the requirements for graduation.

### **The Concept of Entrepreneurship**

Entrepreneurship as a concept is as old as man but began to gain national and international interest over the past two decades as one of the most potent economic forces the world has ever experienced. The growing importance of entrepreneurship is demonstrated in the diversity of its definitions as it attempts to explain what entrepreneurship is all about. Therefore, the concept of entrepreneurship is very broad and a number of perspectives are applicable with wide range of meanings as follows:

Entrepreneurship is a process of creating and running ones own business. The act of

entrepreneur is referred to as entrepreneurship. According to Landford (2003) entrepreneurship is a process of creating something different with value by devoting the necessary time and effort: assuring the accompanying financial, psychological and social risk and receiving the resulting rewards of monetary and personal satisfaction. Also, Timmos (1987) defined entrepreneurship as creating and building something of value from practically nothing, creation and distribution of something of value and of benefits to individuals, groups, organizations and society. Furthermore Adidu and Olannye (2006) defined entrepreneurship as the ability to create and build something from practically nothing. It is initiating, doing, achieving and building an enterprise or organization, rather than just watching, analyzing or describing one.

Thus, entrepreneurship is about self-reliance in employment, in creativity and in risk-taking. Although entrepreneurship is a recent issue of emphasis in our educational instruction, yet its relevance is captured in the National Policy for Education (2004), when it emphasizes such things as “shared” responsibility for the common good of the society, and acquisition of competencies necessary for self-reliance (FRN, 2004). It is the responsibility of the entrepreneur to identify business opportunities and combine the necessary factors that will produce the desired results. Training is therefore necessary for the entrepreneur to develop the needed skills. If therefore, there are no people with entrepreneurship ability and skill in a society, such a society is not likely to develop its economy rapidly (Tadaro, 1982).

### **The Concept of Self-Reliance**

Nwogwugwu (1991) defined self-reliance as “development in the form of human resource, development which is the process of increasing the knowledge, the skills and capabilities of all people in the society”. However, self-reliance implies the use of both the hands and the brain. According to Ikoku in Odozi (1991), self-reliance in its general sense means the “right and ability to set one’s own goals and realizing them as much as possible through one’s own efforts, using one’s own factors”. Furthermore late Mao Tse-Tung of China viewed self-reliance as “a policy of regeneration through our own effort (Odozi 1991). In the same vein, Odozi (1991) affirmed that self-reliance, among other things, means “autonomy in decision-making, a situation in which we can relate our criteria for development to the basically domestic demands”. He opined that what was central in the concept of self-reliance was the capability of any nation to rely on its internal resources as a basis for foreign relations socially, economically, culturally and politically (Nwaokolo, 1992).

### **Sources of Entrepreneurship Education**

Training in entrepreneurship can be acquired in Nigeria through: the role model, non-formal education, formal education and diversification/expansion model.

### **The Role Model**

According to National Directorate of Employment Entrepreneurship Development Programme (1988), the “Role Model” is an entrepreneurship skill acquisition strategy whereby prospective entrepreneurs model themselves on another, especially on an older, experienced and more successful entrepreneur. The role model involves patterning one’s business after a successful type and having a good rapport between the two so that clarification in areas of difficulty or where entrepreneurship is lacking could be made. It also involves the invitation of a successful entrepreneur as a resource person for seminars,

workshops in order to handle certain areas of interest for students, and field visits to business of successful entrepreneurs.

### **Non-Formal Education**

This involves the acquisition of entrepreneurship education through the apprenticeship training scheme. In the apprenticeship programme, the prospective entrepreneur (apprentice) arranges privately for skill acquisition in entrepreneurship with another successful entrepreneur in the area of interest for an agreed period of time. Here, the apprentice stays with the master, participates in the day to day running of the business by understudying the techniques of the master’s business and after the agreed period for the apprenticeship education, the master will assist him in setting up a similar business.

Apart from the above arrangement, where the apprentice stays with the master, there is another form of apprenticeship where the prospective entrepreneur chooses a period of training and pays whatever fees that is charged by the successful entrepreneur. In this case, the trainer is not responsible for the upkeep of the apprentice while in training but only exposes the trainee to skills and techniques of the business. Amahua (2003) maintained that the apprenticeship system of training is still the most popular method by which entrepreneurship skills in trading occupation is acquired in the Nigerian economy. However with the establishment of vocational and technical schools, entrepreneurship education should be retained in the curriculum in order to provide the self-reliance this paper is advocating.

### **Formal Education**

There are many formal education institutions in the country where one can acquire the relevant training for successful

entrepreneurship skills for self-reliance. Before the introduction of the 6-3-3-4 system, established by the National Policy on Education (1981), technical colleges, commercial colleges and conventional grammar schools were the sources of technical and vocational education for occupational preparation as well as general education. Presently, the six years secondary school duration which provides a three year junior secondary school and three years in senior secondary school offers individuals commercial and technical education subjects. There also exist some approved colleges that run subjects for the National Business and Technical Examination Board (NABTEB) in the technical and business areas. Furthermore, the various tertiary institutions in the country namely Colleges of Education, Polytechnics and Universities are also sources of formal education for entrepreneurship education since entrepreneurship training has been included in their curriculum.

#### **Diversification/Expansion Model**

In this model, the entrepreneur with an already existing business wants or seeks to update or enrich his skills to enable him keep abreast with new production techniques and technologies that are in vogue with the business. This model enables the entrepreneur to choose which medium of training suits the purpose, as he seeks to diversify his business operation and expand. A lot of entrepreneurs have been frustrated out of business due to stagnation and unprofitable operations but the model has proved useful to entrepreneurs operating under obsolete methods, which are not cost effective.

#### **The Importance of Entrepreneurship Education**

The economic success of nations worldwide is the result of encouraging and rewarding the entrepreneurial instinct. It is the entrepreneur who serves as the spark plug in the economy's engine, activating and stimulating all

economic activities. This suggests that entrepreneurship education is a significant factor in the process of any country's economic development and occupies a central position in a market economy. There are several rewards that accrue from entrepreneurship education. These include:

1. It gives an opportunity to utilize one's potential.
2. It gives the entrepreneur an opportunity to serve one's community and impact on their lives positively.
3. It provides economic power for both the entrepreneur and the community.
4. It gives the entrepreneur a lot of independence since he is his own boss.
5. It provides a training ground for indigenous semi-skilled workers and managers.
6. It reduces rural to urban migration by engaging a large fraction of the population in gainful employment.
7. It helps to develop indigenous technology and raises the living standard of the people where such entrepreneurial organization is located.
8. It boosts foreign exchange earnings for the country as indigenous products are exported.
9. It eradicates poverty alleviation.
10. For a society that has most of its populace gainfully employed, societal ills and vices will be reduced to its barest minimum.

#### **Challenges of Entrepreneurship Education**

In spite of the rich entrepreneurship education that has been embedded in the curriculum of tertiary institutions in Nigeria, it has not achieved the expected rewards, of making our graduates self-reliant. Atakpa (2007) reports that in Nigeria, there is a discrepancy between educational goal, actual learning outcome and societal needs. It is a

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well known fact that majority of graduates of higher institutions lack the expected technical, communicative skills, conceptual and human relation skills and competencies required for self-reliance and nation building. Why is it so? There are many problems that had made entrepreneurship education non-functional, these include:

**Underfunding:** Underfunding has been the biggest problem facing the functionality of entrepreneurship education in higher institutions of learning. For example in vocational and technical education a lot of funds are needed for procurement of equipment and provision of adequate facilities for training. Over the years, the government has not provided adequate funds for the procurement of necessary equipment, machines and instructional materials as well as their maintenance. This scenario has greatly impaired their graduates performance and contribution towards sustainable economic growth.

#### **Gaps Between Theory and Practice**

When there is inadequate fund, there is much likely to be a gap between what students learn and the opportunity to put such knowledge and skills into practice. The skills the present system is providing for the graduates is theoretical and the emphasis in our country is on certification rather than acquisition of skills that is functional and will make them self-reliant.

#### **Incessant Cut in Power Supply**

Most of the equipment used for instruction are electrically powered. Where electricity supply is not available or in short supply, machine and equipment tend to waste away due to disuse. Also, frequent power cut in some cases leads to complete breakdown of such equipment.

#### **Inadequate Equipment and Instructional**

Due to inadequate funding, there is acute shortage of facilities and equipment such as lecture rooms, machines, instructional materials etc as huge sums of money are required to procure them. Where there is absence of equipment and instructional facilities, entrepreneurship education cannot be functional and hence, such graduates would not have acquired the necessary skills that will make them self-reliant. Egwuelo, (1992) emphasized that facilities in entrepreneurship education are essential for two major reasons: for effective instruction and for actual occupations or jobs for self-reliance.

#### **Enrolment Upsurge**

Due to lack of proper planning and forecast, there is large increase in student enrolment in institutions which does not correspond to increase in the facilities available in such higher institution of learning.

#### **Corruption**

Corruption which is a cankerworm, has eaten deep into our national fabric. This results in looting of treasury, shady contract work, inflation of prices of goods and contracts or total abandonment of such contract after the collection of necessary mobilization funds, supply of inferior and obsolete equipment. All these make entrepreneurship education non functional.

#### **Riot and Rancour**

Incessant ethnic and religious disturbances throughout the country resulting in loss of lives and properties take their toll. These incidents slow down the process of industrialization in the country.

### Youth Laxity

Numerous vices being perpetrated by youths especially in our higher institutions hinder the acquisition of proper entrepreneurship skills in these institutions. These vices include cultism, examination malpractice, hooliganism, armed robbery and non-challant behaviour among others.

### Recommendations

This paper recommends that:

Graduating students should be made to undertake feasibility studies of entrepreneurial ventures of their interest and submit proposals as part of the requirements for graduation. The federal government should fund entrepreneurship education properly by providing all the equipment, fund, facilities needed for its functionality in order to make our graduates self-reliant.

On completion of such entrepreneurship education the federal government should make take-off funds available to the graduates. God fatherism must be shunned in the disbursement of take-off funds for the prospective entrepreneur.

### Conclusion

The main purpose of entrepreneurship education in tertiary institutions is to produce graduates who are self-reliant. Therefore, in order to make this goal achievable, all stakeholders involved with entrepreneurship training in Nigeria should focus on skill acquisition, which certainly, would enhance self-reliance.

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