
ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION: A PANACEA FOR NATIONAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

It is a truism that in order to sustain the progress and improve a country's economic development, the people of the said country have to be encouraged and trained to think out-of-box and constantly develop innovative goods and services. The paper therefore, aimed at discussing Entrepreneurship Education as a Panacea for national sustainable development in Nigeria. It outlined the achievable benefits of entrepreneurship to national sustainable development in Nigeria. It saw Entrepreneurship Education as an integral tool for developing the economy by creating upcoming jobs and wealth that would drive the process of cultural development. Some challenges to Entrepreneurship Education were emphasized, recommendations were made and conclusions drawn to enhance Entrepreneurship Education in the country.

Entrepreneurship Education plays an important role in the prosperity of individuals in any country. Countries whose economies are reckoned to be well developed are actually those that are distinguished by the excellence of the kind of entrepreneurship education operated in those spheres which are geared towards national economic development.

The challenge of national sustainable development in Nigeria cuts across all areas of life. That is why it is impossible to identify an academic field that is not adequately represented in the ever expanding league of unemployed youths/graduates. The youth unemployment problem has generated several other national economic problems. The issue of the Niger Delta militancy, political thuggery, among youths, increased rate of armed robbery, kidnapping, and sectarian crisis (Boko Haram) in the North are all traceable to youth unemployment. The situation of unemployment in Nigeria is indeed alarming (Ogunsola, 2009). Several thousands of employable youths are roaming the streets. This is so because, while the universities and other tertiary institutions keep producing graduates on yearly bases, there are no new jobs or vacancies to absorb these new job seekers. In another vein, these new graduates may not have been adequately trained by their institutions to become employable or self-reliant in terms of starting their own small or medium scale businesses.

According to Orim, Olayi and Ewa (2009), training in school is at variance with what the labour market requires. This has been supported by the fact that there is a mismatch between school training and the realities in productive life in the job seeking world. Mass unemployment in the country could be the result of students learning what is particularly not relevant to stage of national development (Uddin and Uwaifo, 2005). In spite of the efforts made by the UNESCO and Nigerian government to enhance the skills of the youths, later reports showed that all these did not pay sufficient attention to skill training for youths and adults (Babalola, 2010). According to Akpomi (2009), the current educational system does not prepare students adequately to harness their potentials and become self-employed. This also goes to say that the current education system is not helping issues.

The world of employment is fast changing. Permanence and longevity are no longer significant features of career paths; those traditional paths have disappeared (Fallows and Stevenson, 2010). The widely held view is the speculation that there will be continuing growth in self-employment as a career option for individuals at different stages in their lives.

However, there is now widespread recognition that entrepreneurship is the panacea that drives the economy of most nations of the world. This is why in Nigeria; the need for entrepreneurship education has been emphasized due to the high level of unemployment. The labour market prospect of tertiary institution graduates in Nigeria was studied and it was found that the unemployment rate for graduates is around 25% while their prospects for employment have worsened over time (Dabalén, Oni and Adekola, 2000).

Educational programmes in entrepreneurship have a positive effect in developing individual's entrepreneurial attributes, raising awareness of career options

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and inculcating a positive attitude towards entrepreneurship (Anderson and Jack, 2008). This is why the introduction of entrepreneurship education by the federal government as a compulsory course in Nigeria tertiary institutions would be aimed at equipping students with entrepreneurial skills, attitudes and competencies in order to be job providers and not job seekers.

Entrepreneurship Education

Entrepreneurship Education is one that provides learners with the knowledge, skills and motivation to undertake entrepreneurial ventures in a variety of settings or outfits. Variations of entrepreneurship education are offered at all levels of schooling from primary or secondary schools to university level. This aspect/area of education focuses on the realization of opportunity. Entrepreneurship education offers solutions as it seeks to prepare people particularly youths, to be responsible, enterprising individuals who become entrepreneurs or entrepreneurial thinkers by exposing them to real life learning experiences where they can take risks, manage the results, and learn from the outcomes.

According to Consortium for Entrepreneurship Training (2004), entrepreneurship education is a purposeful intervention by an educator in the life of the learner to impact entrepreneurial qualities and skills to enable the learner to survive in the world of business. It is also the structured formal conveyance of entrepreneurial competencies, which in turn refer to the concepts, skills and mental awareness used by individuals during the process of starting and developing their growth oriented ventures (Albert, Sciascia, and Poli, 2004). In their view, Garavan and O'cinneide (1994), entrepreneurship education is that discipline that seeks to prepare people especially youths to be responsible, enterprising individuals who become entrepreneurs or entrepreneurial thinkers and who contribute to economic development and sustained communities. Entrepreneurship education is made up of all kinds of experiences that give students the ability and vision of how to access and transform opportunities of different kinds (UNESCO, 2008). It goes beyond business creation, it is about increasing students' ability to anticipate and respond to societal changes.

Entrepreneurship Education is also the process of impacting knowledge and teaching skills to potential entrepreneurs on how to venture into business that is relatively small in nature for future advancement of the business (Aminu, 2009). Entrepreneurship Education is also an education that embraces skill building programme, creative thinking, product development and marketing negotiation, leadership training and wealth generation (Kurato, 2003).

The goal of Entrepreneurship Education is therefore, to teach young people to see business opportunities, ideas and act on them promptly in order to take advantage over others. By this, Entrepreneurship education does not stop at imparting knowledge

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alone, but extends to teaching entrepreneurial skills in various disciplines that a potential entrepreneur might need, such as managerial skills, accounting skills, financial competencies, secretarial skills, computing skills, important marketing and several business competencies. Therefore, the entrepreneurship educator are vested with the tasks of producing people who have imbibed those characteristics as enduring dispositions which always regulate their choices of action. Entrepreneurship Education is an aspect of education that is geared towards developing in students skills, ideas and managerial abilities necessary for personal reliance (Nwokolo, 1997). It is also the type of education given to a set of people to instill in them the principles, skills and practices required to see and evaluate business opportunities, gather necessary resources and take advantage of them as well as initiate appropriate action to ensure success in any chosen profession or occupation (Adebeye, 2002). The knowledge of entrepreneurship education enables the youths to understand how the economic decisions they make will influence their present and future lives.

It therefore prepares the youth to be responsible, enterprising individuals who become entrepreneurs or entrepreneurial thinkers and contribute to economic growth. It goes as far as equipping them through instructions, with the self-reliant skills so that if jobs are not readily available, they will be able to set up their own business ventures.

Entrepreneurship Development

Entrepreneurship is asserted to deal with starting and running of business by individuals or professionals. Therefore, Entrepreneurship success or failure depends to a great extent on how well the entrepreneur/manager and his team are able to come to terms with the strategy, purpose and the way they affect the entrepreneurs as individuals.

The potential entrepreneur should formulate, implement and control his strategies as an attempt to ensure the success of the business, to ensure growth and development. Therefore, it is no longer the level of education in the name of the course of study that determines achievement and success in the job market, but the kind of education.

In the age of development, there are modern entrepreneurship programmes that teach people things that are useful to them as wage earners, entrepreneurs of value to the nation's economy. Entrepreneurship training provides specific job skills that can enhance a student's employability. It has the ability to motivate students/the youths towards being employers of labour.

Entrepreneurship therefore, serves as the glue that holds the students' total education together, while making academic work meaningful and goal-oriented. There is the need to pursue the goal of excellence in Entrepreneurship Education. Greater collaboration is required among schools, business and labour force to strengthen

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entrepreneurship programmes. There could be cooperative agreement between two or more schools to share the use of Entrepreneurship resources such as equipment, facilities and instructional personnel. This will increase educational opportunities, expand programmes and save resources.

Empowering the youths with job skills is considered important in view of the negative consequences associated with joblessness as well as the increase in social ills among young people. In many cases, the graduates of secondary schools and tertiary institutions are disillusioned when there is no paid employment and they cannot see link between the knowledge acquired in school and what is required to secure jobs in the labour market. Despite the opportunities of skills training in entrepreneurship, the negative stigma attached to the training to be a technician and that of the attitudes of the public towards certain occupations prevent many youths and adults from benefiting from learning the trade. The negative attitude therefore, can be attributed to lack of esteem given to skills in doing, making, designing and manufacturing when compared with the high esteem given to pure academic studies.

The term development suggests the process of becoming more advanced or better than the previous state. It is forward-looking. It has to project tomorrow; the future of the earth and mankind. Therefore, development must be sustainable for it to be acceptable as development. However, Sustainable Development (SD) is a pattern of resource use that is aimed at meeting human needs, while preserving the environment so that these needs can be met not only in the present, but also for generations to come. It meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Sustainable development ties together concern for the changing capacity of natural systems with the social challenges facing humanity (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/sustainable-development>).

Sustainable development therefore, entails maintaining a delicate balance between the human need to improve lifestyles and feeling of wellbeing on one hand and preserving natural resources and ecosystems for future generation. Development is a process of political and social transformation through which the rise in the populations standard of living becomes automatic and autonomous (Perira, 1983). This definition posits a holistic advancement in the society. It is also a process of increased skill and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and material wellbeing (Rodney, 1972). To Ayres (1995), development means the conditions for the realization of human personality.

Sustainable development depends mainly on people who have entrepreneurship training because, whether they are employed by the government or not, they will be gainfully employed by having their businesses.

According to Esien (2004), sustainable development has to do with meeting the needs of the present generation without denying future generation access to the same natural resources for their own needs. Development here, is appraised in terms of both redistribution of wealth and meeting the basic needs of the masses at sustainable level. It means that it must be sustained to be able to impact and change life and living of the masses.

Achievable Benefits of Entrepreneurship Education

Entrepreneurship Education is aimed at creating awareness in the youths and motivating them towards self-employment through the development of personal skills, competencies, effectiveness and aptitude using project based work in an economic setting to set up and manage small and medium enterprises successfully (NBTE, 2004). Any country that introduces entrepreneurship education in its curriculum is said to benefit in the following ways:

1. Entrepreneurship Education stands to foster entrepreneurial mindset, skills and behaviour among the recipients of the training thereby, making them to be useful citizens of the country.
2. Entrepreneurship Education also empowers the students/ youths with the competencies and skills necessary to prepare them to respond to their life needs, including running their own business so that they can be productive citizens of their respective countries.
3. It develops in the youths innovative culture and develops their skills to identify, create initiate and successfully manage personal, community, business and work opportunities.
4. To identify and stimulate entrepreneurial drive, talent and skills to undo the risk-averse bias of several analytical techniques and, to devise attitudes towards change (Garavana and Ocinneide, 1994).
5. To increase the awareness and understanding of the process involved in initiating and managing new ventures as well as to enhance learners of small business ownership as serious career option.
6. It focuses on developing understanding and capacity for pursuit of entrepreneurship behaviour, skills and attributes in widely different contexts (Akpomi, 2009). Thus, the graduates of various disciplines can be taught entrepreneurship to foster their interest in enterprise development as a way of reducing graduate unemployment and increasing future graduate entrepreneurs.
7. Entrepreneurship Education is seen as a strategy/instrument in channeling of university graduates away from paid employment into self-employment (Daudu, 2007). Entrepreneurial skills and attitudes acquired through Entrepreneurship Education provide benefits to the society even beyond their application to business activities.

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8. Personal qualities such as creativity and spirit of initiative can be useful to everyone in their working responsibilities and in their daily existence, (Akpomi, 2009).
9. It is seen as an important tool for developing a pool of future entrepreneurs that will create future jobs and wealth that will improve the process of national sustainable development.
10. Babalola (2009), quoting the words of the former President Olusegun Obasanjo, stressed that for Nigeria to be one of the world's top 20 economics by the year 2020, entrepreneurship is the key and it is mandated that all university students in Nigeria, regardless of their major, be exposed to entrepreneurship development study.

Challenges of Entrepreneurship Education

Entrepreneurship Education as far as it is concerned is faced by several challenges which include the following:

Programme Design: According to Akpomi (2009), a considerable challenge facing educators and trainers is in designing programmes which are appropriate for preparing graduates for the outside world and that the current education system is not helping issues. The system does not prepare students adequately to harness their potential and become self-employed. The use of lecture method which is too mechanistic does not promote or encourage entrepreneurial behaviour (Akpomi, 2009).

Lack of Harmonized Entrepreneurship Curriculum: The inability of the government to introduce a harmonized curriculum has also bedeviled the system of training youths for self-reliance.

Harsh Business Environment: The business environment is so complex that it makes it difficult for people to operate. The legal, political, social, economic and technological factors among others have made it practically impossible or difficult to operate.

Poor Funding and Infrastructure: The desire and drive to go into entrepreneurship has been hampered by the poor state of funding and infrastructural decay. Going into these types of venture will mean providing huge fund and making available infrastructural facilities.

Theoretical Graduates as Against Practicality: The main concern of entrepreneurship is the production of graduates who are capable of being innovative and who can create opportunities, take risks, make decisions and solve problems and communicate clearly and effectively (Fleming, 1999). However, the reverse is the case where most graduates cannot put to practice what they have learnt in school.

Orientation of Students: Entrepreneurship is not yet a popular vocational choice among young people in Nigeria. The dominant culture at the moment is a wage –earner culture. Therefore, the socio cultural environment does not favour entrepreneurship due to the collectivists’ value of the society. However, there is no guarantee, that the students will act entrepreneurially unless their mindsets, willingness to take risks, confidence, attitude and behaviour have been influenced as well. This will go a long way in repositioning the economy.

Instructional Resource: There is dearth of instructional materials that are recommended for entrepreneurship education delivery, such as textbooks, journals, videos, films, etc. Study materials suitable for teaching entrepreneurial studies are rare in our institutions (Inebenebor, 2005).

Teachers/Educators: Entrepreneurship teachers /educators are very few for successful entrepreneurship education. Most Nigerian tertiary institutions cannot boast of having strong teachers in terms of quantity and quality, more so, the entrepreneurship programme is a new course in the curricula of most institutions, special teacher’s team cannot be achievable in the short run, therefore teachers who start entrepreneurship education and engage in entrepreneurship require special training and experience (Inebenebor, 2005).

Assessment of Entrepreneurship Courses: There is no standard method for assessing the result of the entrepreneurship programme towards individuals and society as a whole (Falkang and Albeti, 2000). To Gift (2002), effective evaluation and assessment of entrepreneurship education appears to occur via projects and also relies on classroom assessment. However, Falkang and Albeti (2000) have declared that some of the reasons for the lack of generally accepted measures are:

- i. The variety of target groups.
- ii. The University/school philosophy that is contrary to entrepreneurship education.
- iii. The multiplicity of entrepreneurship education objectives.
- iv. Level of analysis (i.e. society level and individual level).
- v. Time dimension (i.e. Short term output and long term output).

Teaching Method: How to teach entrepreneurship addresses the issues of how best to transfer information, skills and attitudes relevant for successful venture creation and sustenance. Therefore, the growing number of universities, polytechnics and colleges of education in Nigeria incorporating entrepreneurship in to their curriculum is an acknowledgement of entrepreneurship as a course that can be taught. In Nigeria, as in many other countries in the world, the lecture method is the most used teaching method in entrepreneurship delivery.

Content of the Courses: Entrepreneurship education should be viewed in terms of the skills that can be taught and characteristics that can be engaged in the students in order to help them develop new and innovative plans (Brown, 2000). However, Alberti, Sciascia, and Poli (2004) cited four types of knowledge useful for entrepreneurship which should form the content areas to be:

- i. Business knowledge
- ii. Venture general knowledge
- iii. Opportunity specific knowledge
- iv. Venture specific knowledge

However, opportunity and venture specific knowledge are the most important for entrepreneurial success. Most entrepreneurs have failed because they have only married the Business knowledge and venture general knowledge to run their business.

Ways Forward for Entrepreneurship Education

It is important to note that a culture of entrepreneurship needs to be built at an early age throughout the education system in the country. Therefore, tertiary institutions can contribute in creating entrepreneurial skills among students by providing the following:

1. **Developing Effective Educators:** Growing the base of experienced educators not only means providing the necessary training and education but also requires expanding the definition of educators beyond professors to include entrepreneurs, alumni, business professionals and even students (Shepherd, 2003). Therefore, the current pool of entrepreneurship teachers should be expanded by allowing entrepreneurs and others with entrepreneurial experience to be encouraged and trained to teach entrepreneurship to the students.
2. **Building Effective Entrepreneurial Education:** It is important to take the local context into account as well as the level and background of the students. Opportunities should be available to students at all levels and from all disciplines especially the technology and science departments.
3. **Integrating Entrepreneurship/Professionals in Curricula Design and Delivery:** Engaging entrepreneurs and other professionals in both design and delivery should be allowed and encouraged to ensure balance between theory and practice.
4. **Development of Research:** Priority attention should be given to the promotion of research and innovation. This can be achieved through provision of critical elements such as central research facility, standard library, funding, consultancy, workshops, etc.

5. **Career Counselling:** There is need to counsel undergraduates and the youths for possible attitudinal re-orientation towards self-employment and self-reliance. The counselling should be incorporated along with entrepreneurship education.
6. **Funding of Entrepreneurship Activities:** There should be a special fund arrangement such as risk fund or venture capital (Adejimola and Olufumilola, 2009). This will be to provide funds at concessionary rates for entrepreneurship development centers of higher institutions for them to be able to fund research and innovations.
7. **Reshaping the Institutional Paradigm:** Institutional leaders such as the Vice Chancellors, the Rectors, and the Provosts must prepare students to work in a dynamic, rapidly changing and global environment. This however requires a complete paradigm shift for the entire institution, including changing the fundamentals of how the institutions operate and shaped.

Conclusion

Entrepreneurship Education comes with lots of accruable benefits. Therefore, a well-structured entrepreneurship education programme can fast-track the reduction of unemployment, create new jobs and wealth and hence, contribute significantly to the national economic development and transformation.

However, the current education method is too mechanistic, using lecture method, which does not promote or encourage entrepreneurial attitude and self reliance.

Moreso, entrepreneurship education programme in Nigerian tertiary institutions is yet to be properly harnessed and it is also bedeviled by several challenges including dearth of teachers, funding, unstable social/political climate, teaching method, orientation, etc.

Finally, for the country to fully reap the benefits of entrepreneurship education, which includes developing a pool of future entrepreneurs, a lot still needs to be done by both the federal government and tertiary institutions.

Recommendations

The following have been recommended to strengthen and foster entrepreneurship education in Nigeria:

- i. Government should provide support for mobility and exchange of educators across tertiary institutions within and outside the country.
- ii. Government should assist in training entrepreneurship educators.

- iii. The funding base of tertiary institutions in the country should be improved through establishment of robust funding mechanism.
- iv. There should be continuous application and refinement of effective teaching methods.
- v. All tertiary institutions should broaden the entrepreneurship base of educators through training, workshops, seminars, symposium, etc.
- vi. All fields of study should develop opportunities for students at every level to experience entrepreneurship education.
- vii. Graduates on completion of their programmes should be provided with soft loans to develop and practice entrepreneurship.

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