

ENTREPRENEURSHIP TRAINING AS INSTRUMENT FOR ACHIEVING THE SEVEN POINT AGENDA IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Education in human development is the driving force of any nation that desires to succeed. The approach to entrepreneurial skills is quite discouraging in the Nigerian context. However, this paper examined the concepts of entrepreneur, entrepreneurship, its objectives, genesis of seven (7) point agenda, the roles of Government in national development, relationship between entrepreneur and government agencies, need for seven (7) point agenda, constraints and implications.

Introduction

The high incidence of unemployment in Nigeria today is a fall-out of government over-dependence on oil which dates back to the early 1980's. It was an aftermath of the global economic recession coupled with the collapse of oil market. Before this time, agriculture had become the main source of livelihood for many Nigerians prior to the advent of oil in the 1980's.

The educational systems had been blamed for over-dependence of its citizens on the so-called white collar jobs at the expense of being self employed. The school curricula at all levels are comprehensive and clear but it has been bedeviling with poor implementation process. In support of this, the Federal Republic of Nigeria (revised, 2004) was welcomed with enthusiasm because it advocated functional education and self reliance.

Within the context of this paper, self reliance will inter-changeably be used with entrepreneur. The "entrepreneur" as a term was used in the past to mean different things to different scholars. Its first usage was in the 17th century during the military era to refer to the persons who undertook to lead military expedition (Gana, 1995). In the 18th century an Irishman (Richard Cantillion) was credited with being the first to use the term in business context to refer to someone who buys goods and services at certain prices with the view of selling them at uncertain prices in the future, in other words bearing an unmeasured risk. Decades later, the term was more celebrated, studied and desirable than ever in the world over. Equally in Nigeria, the Federal Government in 1987 directed all institutions (Universities and Polytechnics) to institutionalize the teaching of entrepreneurship in their curricula. A few agencies were also established to provide practical- knowledge to support the tertiary institutions given the mandate to teach entrepreneurship. National Directorate on Employment (NDE), Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) and National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) are inclusive of these agencies among others.

Who then is an Entrepreneur?

Different scholars have at various times defined the term "entrepreneur" according to their individual perceptions. At one time, entrepreneurs were perceived as a special class of people endowed with specific traits to be innovative. Entrepreneur is viewed as the organizer of economic ventures especially one who organizes, owns, manages and assumes the risk of a business (Konemann, 1964).

Through entrepreneur, teaching-learning process would emphasize the development of the favourable skills and competencies in specific disciplines that could be utilized in real-life situation. However, the opinion of the writer is that "entrepreneur" is someone who has combines other factors of production to a profitable venture in view of the risk involved. Such situation is focused on the need to convert every challenge into action-packed and highly motivated opportunities.

Concept of Entrepreneurship

According to Ajayi (2000) entrepreneurship is creating new enterprises to meet new challenges and opportunities presented in the situation. It should be a time-tested programme for stimulating and harnessing the creative potentials of human beings in setting up its own business outfit thus, providing self-employment on a small-scale level and opening up for future expansion.

From another perspective, Konemann (1964) defined entrepreneurship as the role or function of an entrepreneur or the condition of being an entrepreneur. In a research by Patal (1985) modeled after McClelland (1969) it was stated that it is possible to develop entrepreneurial orientation among prospects through training. The processes of training and guiding prospects to become entrepreneurs are called Entrepreneurship Development Programme (EDP).

Objectives of Entrepreneurship Development Programme (EDP)

The following are the objectives of entrepreneurship development programme:

1. To include related courses in curriculum of educational institutions intended to develop competence that will lead to self-employment (Adapted from Rao, Cream and Henne, 1990).
2. The development of technical and professional competence needed for productive work and employment.
3. The development of enterprise building capabilities to start and manage small and medium scale businesses successfully.

Genesis of Seven (7) Point Agenda in Nigeria

A remarkable landmark achievement was made in the political history of Nigeria on the 29th day of May, 2009 when a peaceful transition of government took place in Abuja from one civilian administration to another. It was the inauguration of President Umaru Yar' Adua as the third civilian head of state by the then Chief justice of Nigeria, Justice Lawal Uwais. The inception of his administration met a nation where infrastructural facilities were in a sorry state and therefore unveiled a seven point agenda which he hoped would put back the economy on track. They are:

1. Power and Energy;
2. Food security and Agriculture;
3. Wealth creation and Employment;
4. Education;
5. Land Reforms;
6. Mass transportation and;
7. Security (Kingsley, 2008). At the occasion. President Yar' Adua in his speech said:
"Our goal now is to build on the greatest accomplishments of the past few years. Relying on the seven point agenda that formed the basis of our contract with voter's during the recent campaigns, we will concentrate on rebuilding our physical infrastructure and human capital in order to take our country forward".

Why should the Seven (7) Point Agenda be Achieved?

A simple answer to this is that the idea behind the seven (7) point agenda was conceived as a veritable tool to put the nation back on track amidst the comity of nations. However, failed attempt by previous policies of Presidents Shehu Shagari (Green Revolution), Buhari/ Idiagbon (War against indiscipline), IBB (Structural Adjustment Programme commonly referred to as SAP), Abacha (Exchange rate) and Obasanjo (privatization, commercialization, monetization, consolidation etc) had necessitated the new policy which cuts across the three tiers of governments.

In the power and energy sector, the government persistent efforts at increasing electricity generation from the current 3,000 mega watts to the needed 100,000 mega watts had raised highbrow in the camp of entrepreneurs, industrialists and government offices as it renders productivity to be cost effective and redundancy in work. Though not realized up till date, it has resulted to high standard of living causing discouragement to diverse individuals. Everywhere is now powered using generators while education acquired had not produced commiserate results. Billions of naira is wasted yearly on this sector of the economy.

Food security and agriculture was considered primarily to be agrarian one. Education in human capital was the main focus aimed at making a massive domestic and commercial outputs and technological knowledge transfer to farmers. This will further help to develop modern technology, research and injecting finance into the system to increase production by five (5) to ten (10) percent.

Wealth creation and employment: According to Erukora (2001) the nation is at risk as a result of “producing more unemployables and job seekers than job creators”. The condition being the true reflection of unemployment in Nigeria today propels the government to encourage individuals and groups to be entrepreneurs as a way of reducing unemployment and creating wealth. Its citizens are fond of seeking white collar jobs rather than using entrepreneurial skills which is not available to help themselves and the nation.

In the area of education, overtime was it mentioned in print and non-print media that the standard is falling. Industrial actions, non-payment of salaries, admission quota, privatization of schools, shortage of personnel, examination malpractices, supremacy of certificates, and destruction of academic programmes are few among others that contribute to this. The concerned authorities are looking for an avenue to use education for all (EFA) and vision 20: 20 in achieving government programmes. As a result, new policies were formulated while those considered not favourable were reversed.

Land reforms: It was discovered that a lot of revenues were lost on yearly basis as a result of unused government- owned landed assets and in settling up land reform committees to probe into different cases of land related issues. These unaccountable losses of revenue could have well been used in the provision of social amenities, granting of soft loans to rural farmers, tax holiday for infant industries to grow and alleviating the standard of living of its people. Every part of the country has featured abandoned housing estates and land theft which has refused to help in the socio-economic development of the nation.

Mass transportation: This sector needed urgent government attention due to the bad state of road network across all paths of Nigeria. It is essential that people and goods move freely from one destination to another but where such is hampered, realizing an industrialized nation becomes impossible. Also, this reduces risk of accidents and armed robbery on the high ways. The Peoples’ Democratic Party (PDP) led- government had already started this process by way of undergoing rehabilitation and modernization of railway in some states.

Lastly, security of lives and properties is on the core programme of the government. For any investment to take place, adequate security of funds must be guaranteed especially with the past activities of militants in the Niger Delta region. This has resulted into youth restiveness, underdevelopment, kidnapping, rape and fear of existence. In order to ensure adequate security of its citizenry, security agencies in the country were trained and retrained, provided with weapons, given increased salaries amongst others to bring development into place.

How can Entrepreneurship Training be used to Achieve Seven (7) Point Agenda?

In the opinion of the writer, entrepreneurial training can be used to achieve this feat in the following ways:

1. It will help the recipient to be self employed and thus, providing gainfully employed jobs to others via apprenticeship, indoctrination or other ways;
2. It will reduce over-dependence on the working class and encourage oneself to be self-driven;
3. It assists individuals in increasing one’s income and to manage his expenses judiciously and;
4. It will help to orientate the beneficiary on how to participate in government programmes and policies touching on the economy and indirectly on individuals.

Relationship between Entrepreneurs and Government Agencies in Nigeria

The establishments of National Directorate on Employment (NDE) and National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) are few government agencies which this paper examined in brief towards fulfilling the seven (7) point agenda of government. NDE was established in November 1986 by the military regime of General Badamosi Babangida. As a result of global economic recession coupled with the collapse of world oil market in the early 1980’s forcing many Nigerians out of their businesses and increasing the unemployment rate in the country. In this regards, the agency was mandated to among others be responsible for:

1. Designing and implementing programmes to combat mass unemployment;

2. Articulating policies aimed at developing work programmes with labour intensive potentials. To achieve the above, the agency outlined four cardinal programmes as follows:
 - i. Agricultural sector employment;
 - ii. Small scale enterprises programme;
 - iii. Special public work programme and;
 - iv. Vocational skills development programme (NAPEP, 2010).

NAPEP being a sister organization was established in 2001 to coordinate and monitor all poverty eradication activities at the three tiers of government. Specifically, poverty was emphasized as a resultant effect of unemployment. Poverty is therefore seen as a state where the primary needs of an individual cannot be provided due to lack of job or income. The agency is to:

1. help generate mass participation in the economic reform process through catalytic partnerships and intervention;
2. help state and local governments develop direct anti- poverty programmes;
3. build strategic public and private sector partnerships that provide information to the disadvantaged and;
4. cause political action against poverty to centre on providing confidence and stable markets for the goods and services of poor people. In achieving its mandate, NAPEP has designed the following programmes.
 - i. Village economic development solutions (Village solutions);
 - ii. In care of the people (COPE);
 - iii. Community economic sensitization scheme;
 - iv. Multi-partners matching funds and;
 - v. Score on poverty (NAPEP, 2010).

The focus is basically to empower, educate and increase the gross national product of a nation. It will transform the nation from the present state of dependency to a self-sustenance, self-employed and self-reliant one.

The Roles of Government in National Development. Coming from the Seven Point Agenda Perspectives

A well educated nation is prone to development if the government uses education and re-orientation in building an independent and industrialized society. Nigerian government has overtime, employed education as a veritable instrument for national development. In doing so, policies were formulated; funding provided, trainings were organized for graduates and school drop-outs as well as settling up of establishment such as National Directorate on Employment (NDE), National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) and a host of others (inclusion of entrepreneurship in school curriculum).

Constraints of Entrepreneurship Training to National Development

Five constraints were identified as obstacles that hinder entrepreneurial endeavors from contributing to national development. These include:

1. Lack of management skills including organization, finance, control, planning and marketing;
2. Shortage of capital (investment and working capital);
3. Technical problems and lack of expertise (production, procurement and maintenance);
4. Government policies are another constraints identified and;
5. Students' industrial working experience scheme (SIWES) and other training programmes.

Implications of Entrepreneurship Training in Nigeria for National Development

It is likely entrepreneurship training degenerate into mass employment and economic stability if properly managed by all stakeholders for national development. Some of the implications include:

1. It enables the government to address area of needs of the people particularly in alleviating poverty that might be a setback to realizing the seven point agenda. Such as providing the training at no cost to the people.
2. Societies will be rid of crimes due to unemployment of youths and school drop-outs at any level of education. Same corresponds with the objectives of Universal Basic Education programme (UBE).

3. It helps to diversify the income of the economy and hence, in socio-economical development of the nation.
4. It will enhance national development through a qualitative and sustainable education which promotes the seven point agenda of government.

Conclusion

Entrepreneurship training is a vital instrument which can be used to promote the seven point agenda of the government at all levels- Federal, states or local. It should be viewed that the most needed education for development, technological dependence and industrial expansion is to have entrepreneurship training. In addition to this, education directs and guides one in the choice of career, job placement and to be self-employed in the dangling economic crisis. Entrepreneurship training is incomplete without the support of all stakeholders beyond what is presently available.

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