

RE-ENGINEERING ENTREPRENEURIAL EDUCATION FOR EMPLOYMENT AND SELF PRODUCTIVITY IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Entrepreneurial development concerns the development of people's potentials as a country's most valuable resource. It is argued that the domain of entrepreneurial education is creation, that is, how opportunities to bring into existence future goods are discovered, created and exploited. The paper therefore, discusses the current issues in re-engineering entrepreneurial education and training at tertiary institutions in Nigeria for employment and self productivity in Nigeria. The paper aims at identifying the benefit of Entrepreneurial education as an instrument for creating employment for future graduate entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurial education in the country's higher institution is relatively lagging behind, and this paper clearly showed that various problems in higher institutions hinder the effective implementation of entrepreneurial education. Some of the problems are poorly trained educators, lack of adequate resources and enabling environment. Re-engineering entrepreneurial education could help foster adequate skills, attitudes and values among the youth while still in school to think of owning or working in successful business enterprise thereby making a significant contributions to job creation and ultimately to economic growth of the nation. The study also identified some challenges to entrepreneurial education in Nigeria, and ended with some recommendations that will facilitate entrepreneurial education in Nigeria.

The issue of graduate unemployment in Nigeria cuts across all disciplines. It is impossible to identify an academic discipline that is not adequately represented in the ever expanding community of unemployed graduates. The graduate unemployment problem has generated several other socio-economic problems in the country. For instance, the issue of the Niger Delta militancy, political thuggery among youths, increased rate of armed robbery and kidnapping can all be traced to graduate unemployment even the Boko Haram saga.

As observed by Ogunsola (2009), the situation of unemployment in Nigeria is indeed alarming. Several thousands of employable youths are roaming the street. This is so because, while the higher institutions of learning keep producing graduates on yearly bases, there are no new jobs or vacancies to absorb these new job seekers. Similarly, these new graduates may not have been adequately trained by their institutions to become employable or self productive in terms of starting their own small or medium scale businesses. This is supported by the fact that there is a mis-match between school training and the realities in productive life in the job seeking world. Training in school is at variance with what labour market requires (Olayi, Orim and Ewa, 2009).

Moreover, mass unemployment in this country could be the result of students learning what is particularly not relevant to our stage of development (Uddin and Uwaifo 2005).

The problem therefore is to find out how to re-engineer entrepreneurial education to help reduce graduate unemployment and increase graduate self-productivity in the country. Several attempts have been made by the Nigerian government to find solution to the problem of graduate unemployment without significant success. As observed by Babalola (2010), in spite of all the efforts made by the UNESCO and Nigerian government to enhance the skills of youths, later reports showed that all these did not pay sufficient attention to skill training for youths and adults. It has also been reported that the current education system is not helping issues. Akpotu (2007) states that the current education system does not prepare students adequately to harness their potentials and become self-employed.

Given the inadequacies of the current education system, there is the need to incorporate Entrepreneurial Education as an instrument for Re-Engineering Education for employment and self productivity in Nigeria.

The introduction of entrepreneurial education by the Federal Government as a compulsory course in Nigerian tertiary institutions is aimed at equipping students with entrepreneurial skills, attitudes, and competencies in order to be job providers and not job seekers. Strong evidence exists that educational programme in entrepreneurial have a positive effect in developing individual's entrepreneurial attributes, raising awareness of career options and inculcating a positive attitude towards entrepreneurial (Anderson and Jack, 2008). Fostering entrepreneurial education and training is a big challenge to be tackled by all stakeholders to enable the tertiary institution in Nigeria turn out graduates with entrepreneurial mindset that will not only be self reliant but make significant contributions to job creation in order to improve the economic, technological and individual development of the nation and reduce poverty.

Entrepreneurial Education

Entrepreneurial Education is the process of imparting 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).

Entrepreneurial education as defined by Consortium for entrepreneurship training (2004), is a purposeful intervention by an educator in the life of the learner to impart entrepreneurial qualities and skills to enable the learner to survive in the world of business. On the other hand, Alberti, Sciascia & Poli (2004) defined entrepreneurial education as “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-orientated ventures”. Entrepreneurial education seeks to prepare people, especially youth, to be responsible, enterprising individuals who become entrepreneurs or entrepreneurial thinkers and who contribute to economic development and sustainable communities. UNESCO (2008) in its report explained that entrepreneurship education is made up of all kinds of experiences that give students that ability and vision of how to access and transform opportunities of different kinds. It goes beyond business creation, it is about increasing student's ability to anticipate and respond to societal changes.

Goals of Entrepreneurial Education in Tertiary Institutions

To teach young people to see business opportunities, ideas and act on them promptly in order to take advantage over others. Entrepreneurial Education did not stop at imparting knowledge alone but ability to teach entrepreneurial skills acquisition in various disciplines of study that a potential entrepreneur might need, such as managerial skills, accounting and financial competencies, important marketing and general business competencies. Kurato (2003) saw Entrepreneurial Education as education that embraces skill building programme, creative thinking, product development and marketing negotiation, leadership training and wealth generation.

To foster entrepreneurial mindset, skills and behaviours among the recipients.

To increase the awareness and understanding of the process involved in initiating and managing a new venture as well as to enhance learners of small business ownership as serious career option.

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 (Garavan and O'Conneide, 1994: 4).

Entrepreneurship course is intended to create awareness in a student and motivate him towards self-employment through the development of personal skills, competencies, effectiveness and aptitudes using project based work in an economic setting to set up and manage a small and medium enterprises successfully (National Board for Technical Education, 2004).

Entrepreneurial Education in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions

Some efforts have been made to introduce Entrepreneurial Education into the curriculum of Nigerian tertiary institutions. It is noticeable that entrepreneurial education has gained national recognition as a field in the academic world. The big challenge higher education institutions face in Nigeria as in other parts of the world is the appropriateness of curricula and training programmes in relation to entrepreneurship education. Fleming (1999) added that the main concern 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.

Contents of Entrepreneurial Courses

According to Brown (2000), entrepreneurial education should be viewed in terms of the skills that can be taught and characteristics that can be engendered in students in order to help them develop new and innovate plans. In this respect Brown mention that the curriculum has to focus on the features needed to conceive of and start a new business. Alberti F, Sciascia, S,Poli (2004) cited four types of knowledge useful for Re-engineering Entrepreneurial Education which should form the content areas:

Business General Knowledge This is a good general knowledge of the main functional areas of re-engineering entrepreneurial education which involves all the materials or tools (sales, marketing finance, operate and manage) the entrepreneurial education with a reasonable degree of competence.

Venture General Knowledge Deals with having the full knowledge of how entrepreneurs raise fund and understanding the sheer amount of experimentation and hard work that is needed to find the materials that suitable for teaching entrepreneurial education in our tertiary institutions.

Venture Specific Knowledge This involves understanding the policy in re-engineering entrepreneurial education in a more successful way, and to understand the specifics of re-engineering entrepreneurial education for greater productivity.

Opportunity-Specific Knowledge It embraces the impacts, qualities and skills create in re-engineering entrepreneurial education and what is needed to adequately trained the new graduates to become employable or self productive in the business world.

However, they claim that opportunity-specific knowledge and venture specific knowledge are the most successful key for Re-Engineering Entrepreneurial Education.

Teaching Method Issue

The rapid growth of tertiary institutions in Nigeria incorporating entrepreneurial education into their curriculum is an acknowledgement of entrepreneurial development as a course that can be taught. However, Solomon, Duffy and Trabishy (2002) pointed out that the dilemma is not that the demand is high, but whether the methods of teaching selected meet the new innovative and creative mindsets of students. How to teach entrepreneurial education addresses the issues of how best to transfer information, skills and attitudes relevant for successful venture creation and sustenance. If Nigeria will adopt the method of other countries of the world lecture method as the most used teaching method in entrepreneurial delivery. This is advantageous where information, explanation of concepts and theories are needed to be imparted to the learner. This mainstream pedagogy needs to be changed. This is as a result of unlikely manner of other business courses, entrepreneurial education is reflective action and no amount of book based learning on its own will allow the students progress in this field. Curriculum for successful entrepreneurial programme should have many activities with clear learning objectives tied to textbook. Researchers however, widely recommended the use of project based and experiential learning for entrepreneurial education (Solomon, 2002). Experiential learning according to Inegbenebor (2005) is an effort to integrate real world experiences with conceptual learning. This involve techniques as “live” case analysis, business plans, consulting with practicing entrepreneurs as guest speakers, internship in entrepreneurially-run business, students’

involvement in product development teams, simulation, field trips, use of video and films, etc. This experiential learning makes students to be actively involved in the learning process.

Teachers/Educators Issues

Successful entrepreneurial education demands entrepreneurial teachers. Nigeria tertiary institutions cannot boast of having strong teacher in terms of quantity and quality, more so as the entrepreneurship programmes is a new course in the curricula of most institutions, special teacher's team cannot be stronger in the short term. Teachers who start entrepreneurial education and engage in entrepreneurship require special training and experience (Inegbenebor, 2005). Currently, entrepreneurial education mode is dominated by classroom teaching. Shi Hui (2008) reiterated these teachers cannot explain entrepreneurial activity from the height of the theory; explore the emergence and development of entrepreneurship; or sketch out the general significance of successful experience. Students' practice guide should be restructured in the study process; the mind is limited to "imagination" and future limitation. Many higher education teachers who have solid theoretical foundation but lack practical experience need re-engineered in either or both the experiential pedagogy and the business content. Rasheed (2002) concluded that teacher training and teacher experience influence psychographic traits, indicating that the teacher is an important variable in teaching entrepreneurial education. In view of that, students with teachers having some entrepreneurial training were more innovative and have more personal control than students whose teachers have no entrepreneurial training.

Assessment of Entrepreneurial Courses Challenge

Alberti, et al (2004) asserts that the main problem related to the assessment of entrepreneurial education may lie in measuring output from the entrepreneurial education process. They further claim that there is no standard method of assessing the result of the programmes towards individuals and towards society, Falkang and Alberti (2000) declared that some of the reasons for the lack of generally accepted measures are:

- The University/school philosophy that is contrary to entrepreneurial education/training focus;
- Level of analysis (society level and individual level);
- Time dimension (short term output and long term output)

Howbeit, Hynes (1996) and Fleming (1999) emphasized that outputs of entrepreneurial education can be assessed on a tangible and intangible basis. Tangible outputs are viewed under assignments, presentations, reports, drawings, prototypes, products, and exhibitions. An intangible effect is viewed in terms of goal, achievements, skills/knowledge, confidence, decision-making, problem solving, and communication. Gift (2002) submitted that effective evaluation and assessment of entrepreneurial education appears to occur through projects and also relying classroom assessment.

Orientation of Students

It is important to note that entrepreneurial skill is not yet a popular vocational choice among young people in Nigeria. The dominant culture at the moment is a wage-earner culture. In many ways the socio cultural environment does not favour entrepreneurial skills due to the collectivists' values of the society. The question then is "why educate young people to become entrepreneurs if the system sends them the message that the ultimate goal is to work for the state and that job security is what majority of young people and particularly graduates in Nigeria aspire for". Pretorius et al (2005) argued that although the learning programmes include the best knowledge and skills (content) about starting a business as its output, there is no guarantee that the students will act entrepreneurial unless their mindsets, willingness to take risks, confidence, attitude and behavior have been influenced as well.

Instructional Resource Issue

There is massive dearth of instructional resource materials that are recommended for entrepreneurial education delivery, such as textbooks, journals, video films etc. Inegbenebor (2005) observes that case materials suitable for teaching entrepreneurial education are rare in our institutions.

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He suggested that entrepreneurial education teachers in the various institutions should embark on producing real cases, projects of entrepreneurs and exercises that are suitable for experiential learning among students.

Ways Forward for Re-Engineering Entrepreneurial Education in Nigeria

Building an entrepreneurial economy is not a quick process. A culture of entrepreneurial skills needs to be re-engineered at an early age throughout the education system. Entrepreneurial education can be a societal change agent, a greater enabler in all sectors. Even though not everyone needs to become an entrepreneur to benefit from entrepreneurial education, but all members of the society need to be more entrepreneurial. This requires continuous effort and the collaboration of multiple stakeholders in education sector, policy makers at all levels, public and private sectors in facilitating the development of effective ecosystem that encourage and support the creation of innovative new ventures.

Tertiary institutions can contribute in creating entrepreneurial skills among students by providing the following;

- **Developing Effective Educators:** Despite the rapid growth of interest in entrepreneurial education, entrepreneurial educators still lack critical mass in school. The current pool of entrepreneurial teachers should be expanded.
- **Building Effective Entrepreneurship Education:** In terms of the content of curricula, it is important to take the local context into account as well as the level and background of students.
- **Integrating Entrepreneurs/Professionals in Curricula Design and Delivery:** Active and learning by doing methods integrate elements of practice into the learning process.
- **Funding of Entrepreneurship Activities:** Entrepreneurial education is highly demanding, and if Nigeria tertiary institutions are to perform optimally, their intervention role in salvaging our ailing economy through entrepreneurial activities.
- **Reshaping the Institutional Paradigm:** Institutional culture, practice and policies often get in the way of developing an entrepreneurial spirit and environment with higher education institution leaders (Vice Chancellors, Provosts, and Rectors) who champion entrepreneurial skills within their institutions.
- **Career Counseling:** There is need to re-engineer undergraduates for possible attitudinal re-orientation towards self employment and self-productivity.

Conclusion

The tide of unemployment is rife in Nigeria. Crucial examinations through various works reveal that entrepreneurial education is the surest bet that can suppress the raging storm of unemployment in Nigeria. The benefits accruable from Entrepreneurial Education are numerous. A well structured Entrepreneurial Education programme can fast track the reduction of graduate employment, create new jobs and wealth and hence contribute significantly to the national economic development process. However, current education method is too mechanistic, using lecture method, which does not promotes or encourage entrepreneurial behavior. Similarly, entrepreneurial education programme in Nigerian tertiary institutions need to be properly coordinated and also faced by several challenges including funding. For Nigerians to fully reap the benefits of Entrepreneurial education, which includes developing a pool of future entrepreneurs, a lot still needs to be done by both the Federal government and the school leaders.

Recommendations

- Government should support training programmes of educators.
- All disciplines should develop opportunities for students at every level to experience entrepreneurial education.
- Institutions should engage exchange with the business community
- Government should provide support for mobility and exchange of educators across tertiary institutions within and outside the country.

- Institution should broaden the entrepreneurship base of educators through training, workshops, seminars etc.
- Funding base of tertiary institutions in the country should be improved through establishment of robust funding mechanisms.

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