
Creativity: A Tool for Enhancing Social Entrepreneurship Education in Secondary Schools

By

CHIBUEZE U. MGBORO, Ph.D
*Department of Educational Foundations,
Ebonyi State University,
Abakaliki.*

And

NICHOLAS A. EKE
*Department of Educational Foundations,
Ebonyi State University,
Abakaliki.*

Abstract

The paper focused on creativity as a tool for enhancing social entrepreneurship. Social entrepreneurship is the recognition that a social problem exist which needs a social change. Social entrepreneurs apply creative skills to the solution of problems facing the society-healthy, finance education, or environment. The paper posited that creativity is not the exclusive reserve of the few but something that is nurtured and developed environment for developing creative social entrepreneurship skills and how creativity serves as a tool for social entrepreneurship. It recommended among other things, the de-emphasizing of grades which now appear to be the focus of learning and the re-training of teachers to tackle the current challenges of how to help students acquire creative skills.

Social entrepreneurship is innovation/resourcefulness and opportunity to address critical social and environmental challenges. (Drayton, 1996). The implementation of entrepreneurial approaches in service of social good is now attracting growing amount of talent, money and attention (Thompson, 2002).

The emergence of Western Education and introduction of Industrial Revolution with their attendant consequences (white collar jobs, machines taking over what men used to do, concentration of power for resource allocation and distribution on few individuals) have created some challenges which might not be solved through the conventional process of providing for the welfare of the citizens. The process of sharing the national resources for the public by few individuals in power further led to the emergence of elitist class who appear selfish and careless about the welfare of the entire citizenry. Moreover, the realization that government cannot single handedly provide all the needed welfare for the citizenry has made those in power to look for alternative means of solving the challenge facing the society. The desire now is the provision of enabling environment for individuals to help provide those services which might not be provided by constituted government authorities.

The Nigerian society recently rose to the above challenges and introduced entrepreneurship education in the school curriculum. The focus is on helping individual acquires economic and social skills that will enable them live and contribute meaningfully in the society. It is a way of encouraging people to give back to the society part of what they received from the society. It is a self satisfying, self rewarding and self reliant life. It challenges the latent spirit of creativity and innovation in man through diversification of ideas and brainstorming in order to solve problems (Amabile, 1996).

Diversification and brainstorming are ingredients of creativity (Mgboro, 2002). Creativity helps to make better those services and processes that are created to meet some demands in the society. Creativity helps one to be relevant in the present fast changing world. It enables you to keep a step ahead of your competitors and provides the consumers with fresh ideas that go beyond mere problem solving (Thompson, 2002). Creative/social entrepreneurs focus on recognizing when part of the society is stuck, what is not working, and seeks to solve the problem by changing the system, spreading the solution and persuading the entire society to embrace the solution (Drayton. 1996). It means there is a close relationship between creativity and social entrepreneurship. What classroom environment helps to inculcate those creative skills for enhancing social entrepreneurship? Besides the above question the paper examines the concept of social entrepreneurship, creativity, and how creativity serves as a tool for social entrepreneurship. Recommendations were also made.

Concept of Creativity

Creativity is a mental and social process that entails generating new ideas and concepts, it is fueled by either conscious or unconscious insight. (Amabile, 1996); an act of turning new and imaginative ideas into reality (Ward, 2003). Scientifically, an act would only be creative when there is originality and appropriateness (Amabile, 1996);

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intuitively, the complexity spans across behavioural, and social psychology, cognitive science, psychometrics, philosophy, history, economics and management among others (Albert & Runce, 1999). In effect the literatures on creativity reveal there is no specific, standardized measurement technique for defining creativity. Notwithstanding, creativity is fostered by organizational culture where independence, freedom, risk taking, determination, commitment, vision and collaboration exist and encouraged (Mgboro, 2002). What it means is that creativity is a natural skill that is not the exclusive reserve of the few but it is stifled and unlearned by the process of learning in the course of growing up. Creative skills are nurtured, developed and managed more by the socio-cultural interactive processes within which the individual operates (Mgboro, 2004). The strategies among others include training, practice, brainstorming and collaboration with others (Khandwalla, 1997). The strategies can serve as tools for enhancing social entrepreneurship.

Concept of Social Entrepreneurship

The growing amount of attention, talent and money in social entrepreneurship has led to inclusion of all sorts of activities and disciplines (social activist, environmentalists, philanthropists) as social entrepreneurship (Drayton, 1996). It means less certainty exist about what exactly is social entrepreneurship and what social entrepreneurs do.

Social entrepreneurship is the practice of combining innovation/ resourcefulness and opportunity to address critical social and environmental challenges, a process of turning a passion into a successful non-profit (Munoz, 2010). It is the recognition that a social problem exists which needs a social change (Thompson, 2002). Thompson further observed that such a change can come through organizing, creating and managing a social programme towards providing positive returns to the society. Social entrepreneurship bridges the gap created by professional business and public sectors with the focus of serving the society instead of merely generating profits as it is in the business sector (Drayton, 1996).

Social entrepreneurs are therefore individuals with creative solutions to the social problems facing the society. Such social problems might include poverty, environmental educational, financial and health challenges. The scope available to social entrepreneurs are wide and varied in line with the society of the participants (Howkins, 2001 and Florida, 2002).

They are agents of social change, visionaries and realists, mission driven, passionate to achieve results in the society by addressing root causes of the needs of their beneficiaries (Drayton, 1996 and Munoz, 2010). Succinctly the philosophy of social entrepreneurship/entrepreneurs appears to be that the greatest change might

happen when sets of multiple skills are working together. Such multiple skills entail creativity of the entrepreneurs.

How Creativity Serves as a Tool for Social Entrepreneurship

Creative skills (independence, passion, commitment, flexibility of ideas, self confidence) are the same skills adopted by social entrepreneurs as they pursue their self fulfilling dream. Social entrepreneurs have a project, a defined goal but the process of achieving the project demands the use of creativity skills.

Social entrepreneurs appear possessed by their ideas, they are committed in their field; visionaries and sometimes realist focused on achieving their vision (Caves, 2001 and Howkins, 2001). Such group include musicians, actors, dress makers, cobblers, community based organizations and non-governmental organizations. They collaborate with others and brainstorm on issues to evolve best practices using diverse people from diverse communities/cultures hence they strive for better practices and techniques to pursue their dream (Amabile, 1996, and Khandwalla, 1997). The pursuit of a dream takes the individuals out of their comfort zone, elevates their thinking, gives them confidence and confirms their sense of purpose. Such pursuit and personal growth are so intertwined that social entrepreneurs might ask, did we make the dream or did the dream make us? Under such stretch the mind would take a new shape and might never go back to its original form. There is therefore fulfillment which in turn might encourage the individuals to pursue further dream.

Social entrepreneurship thrives in a democratic society where everyone can be involved in advancing social change (Howkins, 2001) hence they appear to value their independence notwithstanding their unpredictable working environment and irregularity of income (Florida, 2002). In the process of achieving the above social entrepreneurs employ creative skills-freedom, independence, unrestricted-productive desire. They accept that current methods for effecting social change appear not effective, therefore new ideas, opportunities, and technologies ought to be evolved to help solve long standing social problems in health, education, and employment.

Social entrepreneurs have passion, they are fearless, not shy or embarrassed about whom they are, what their thoughts are; they believe in themselves (Florida, 2002) with a flair that unlocks the wild, uncontrolled and untamed natural thoughts and ideas which some might refuse to grasp. The above behaviours are creativity skills (Mgboro, 2002) adopted and/or adapted by social entrepreneurs to achieve their dreams.

Supportive Classroom Environment for Creative Social Entrepreneurship

Supportive classroom environment for creative social entrepreneurship is a diffuse type involving all aspects of relationship between the students and teachers (Mgboro, 2002). However, some identified roles of the teacher which might help students to develop creative social entrepreneurship skills are discussed below.

1. De-emphasizing normative grading: Normative grading arises from one shot, end of term or year examination. It assumes that there is an equal standard (norm) every student must achieve (Smith, 1991). Using a longitudinal grading, for instance continuous assessment, might lead to growth and improvement. However mere adopting continuous assessment as it is the practice now might not bring about any growth or improvement. The information that led to the assigned grades should be made available to students for their personal growth. This is the gap missing which when provided supports creative social entrepreneurship skills in students. Such information would help students not to pursue grades but acquire skills as they learn.

2. Giving assignment/homework: They encourage students to practice and discover what works, how it works and/or why it does not work (Bartel, 2010). It shifts focus from the present teacher-dominated to student-dominated learning environment. (Amabile, 1996). Such assignment should however be open-ended questions which give room for divergent thinking, originality and 'aha' moment when personal insight is brought to bear on the task at hand. The self confidence acquired in the above process might enable the individual to pursue other tasks.

3. Closely related to the above are the freedom and independence which enhance students' discovery of their personal style of creativity. It does not mean allowing students to do anything they want to do, a situation that helps some students to avoid risks by doing something they already learnt (Bartel, 2010). Limits might be set by students or teacher to encourage new creative problem solving. Freedom/independence encourage students to diversify their search for solutions and focus on pursuing learning how to solve the task because no one right answer is expected of them (Mgboro, 2002). Flexibility and self directed focus, ingredients of creativity and social entrepreneurship (Khandwalla, 1997) are thereby introduced in the lesson.

4. Teacher's perception of and expectations from students. They influence teachers' attitude and behaviours while relating with students (Delucia, 1994) irrespective of whether the perceptions are real or distorted (Mgboro, 2004). When students understand and the teacher accepts them, they feel being cared for and willingness to co-operate with and be interested to obey teachers' instructions might be better enhanced.

5. Organizational support. Teachers can form small groups to work on specific areas of a particular project/assignment. Moreover parents would be encouraged to provide the ideal environment for their wards to earn- out their assignments at home.

Conclusion

Social entrepreneurship is currently opening new pathways for the marginalized and disadvantaged in the society. It unlocks society's full potential to effect social change. It is vision and mission driven with a focus on generating social value rather than mere profits. Creativity is the foundation for the success of such entrepreneurial venture. The school should therefore provide the supportive environment for developing creative social entrepreneurship skills. Where this is done Nigeria would be better positioned to join the list of world leading economist by the year 2020.

Recommendations

Enhancing creativity in the classroom for the development of social entrepreneurship skills in students demands

1. Encouraging teachers to change their wrong perception of students. Wrong perceptions lead to outright criticism of students efforts/answers to questions.
2. De-emphasizing grades as the focus of learning because it encourages students to copy from others and adopt shot-cuts to learning. The process of learning should be emphasized
3. Giving students freedom to diversify their search for solutions instead of showing them regimented examples which encourage lock-up-step matching in solving problems.
4. Providing students with information that led to the grades assigned to them. In the course of this the process of learning should be emphasized and encouraged more than the end result (grades) of learning.
5. Retraining of teachers to handle the current challenges of learning should be of paramount interest. The challenge lies more on how to help students acquire creative skills.

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