
Effective Strategies for Entrepreneurial Skills Development in the Classroom Using School - Industry Links

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Abstract

The need to develop entrepreneurial skills among students in the classroom has taken a global dimension due to growing graduate unemployment and economic recession. School-industry link is one of the pedagogy practices to enhance students learning of entrepreneurial skills in the classroom. Linkages between educational institutions and industries allow students to explore the opportunities of self employment through the practical and direct involvement of local businesses. This paper looked at the concept of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship education as well as the objectives and importance of entrepreneurship education. It established the importance of school-industry links in imparting entrepreneurial skills to students in the classroom, and examined different strategies for inculcating entrepreneurship skills. It also identified some problems and prospects in adopting different strategies in imparting entrepreneurial skills in classroom. The paper concluded that the school-industry link is one of the best strategies in inculcating entrepreneurial skills among the students in the classroom and therefore recommend it for use in all Nigerian institutions of learning.

The high rate of poverty among the Nigerian populace especially those graduating from school can be due, to shortage of entrepreneurial individuals in our society. The presence or absence of entrepreneurs in any society marks the difference between economic development or otherwise. An entrepreneur is an individual or group of individuals who create a business with sole purpose of introducing new goods and services or developing new sources of materials and continue to build and innovate on it (Aminu 2008).

Globally, men and women are embracing entrepreneurship as a major tool for self reliance. Entrepreneurship is the willingness to seek out for investment opportunities in an environment and be able to establish and run business successfully based on identified opportunities. It is the willingness and ability of a person or persons to acquire educational skills to explore and exploit investment opportunities, establish and manage a successful business enterprise (Aboho and Jimin, 2011).

Skills are generally defined as the ability to perform an activity or a task expertly. It is seen as having enough ability to do something well (Onele and Nwite, 2011). The process of effective utilization of available resources in the economy for sustainable development needs special skills or ability which are to be created in the students as the future of any nation. The ability, knowledge, and experiences required to accomplish those task are known as entrepreneurial skills.

Entrepreneurial skills are all about the acquisition of skills that will culminate to an individual becoming self employed, self-reliant and then create job and wealth for himself. It involves the acquisition of skills, knowledge and competencies that will enable learners to maximize the use of existing resources for firm career commitments such as setting up businesses, marketing service or being produce employees of organizations (Ezenwenne, 2005). The goal of education is entrepreneur (Iyekekpolor, 2007). That is production of an individual who is self-reliant, and an employer of labour.

School – Industrial link is one of the strategies of developing entrepreneurial skills in the learners in the classroom. Through the school-industrial links a student is made to receive practical on the job experience either through employment on part-time basis in an industry or business establishment or using industrial personnels as resource persons to impart certain skills that will make them self employed and self reliant. Through this scheme a lot of personnel like doctors, pharmacists, engineers who can contribute to the development of the nation are produced. This paper therefore focused on the strategies for developing entrepreneurial skills among students in the classroom using school-industry link, the problem and prospect of using such strategies were also highlighted.

Conceptual Framework of Entrepreneurship and Entrepreneurship Education

The concept entrepreneurship has evolved over the years. It comes from the word entrepreneur, a French word meaning “between taker” or “go between”. Later it comes to mean one who undertakes risks.

Entrepreneurship like many other concepts has no generally acceptable definition. Many authorities have defined it in different ways.

It may be seen as the willingness and ability of a person to identify and seek out business ideas or investment opportunities, establish and run the venture successfully. Entrepreneurship occurs when an individual develops a new business or an idea or a unique way of giving the market a product or service by adopting a new way of utilizing resources under conditions of risk. It helps to create wealth, self-direction, satisfying carrier and also adds value to society’s well being.

Agreeing with this, Otaha (2010) defined entrepreneurship as “the ability of an individual or a firm or group of firms to invest and innovate, translating vision into mission. This vision Otaha argued may be innovative idea, an opportunity or a better way of doing old things.

To Richard (2000) entrepreneurship is self-employment of any sort. Such self-employment must however be in positive or legitimate enterprise but not arm robbery, smuggling and other vices.

Tyolumum and Umogbai (2008) saw entrepreneurship as basically a process of logically interrelated steps ranging from searching, identification, exploitation and development of opportunities as profitable ventures. They see entrepreneurship skills as learned inborn traits which are essential for individuals who wish to take entrepreneurial challenges. These traits include agility, business consciousness, courage, dynamism, enterprising, hard-work, initiative, judgment, knowledge of the market, leadership, risk takings, organizing ability, responsibility and so many others.

Njoku (2011) also defined entrepreneurship as a process of searching for opportunities in the market place and arranging resources so required to explore these opportunities for a long-term gain. He considered the concept very important for accelerating economic growth of the country.

Nwafor (2007) added that entrepreneurship is the willingness to seek out for investment opportunities in an environment and be able to establish and run an enterprise successfully based on the identified opportunities.

Entrepreneurship therefore is the willingness of an individual or individuals to turn business ideas into action through proper organization and management gearing towards profit making.

In all the definitions of entrepreneurship the issue of trying to organize and manage a business stands out clearly, the difference is just in the usage of words and approach.

Consequently, Entrepreneurship education is a form of training that emphasizes self employment and wealth creation of it recipient. It is the term given to the teaching and learning of innovative ideas and transforming those ideas to profitable activities. According to Agetue and Nnamdi (2011) entrepreneurship education enables beneficiaries to be employed, self-reliant, economically empowered and employer's of labour. It equips the students with skills for future self-employment in the era of globalization where jobs are becoming scarce for the unemployed graduates. Entrepreneurship education will help identifying entrepreneurial skills available and train them for utilization immediately. It is a kind of training that gives the recipient the chance to participate in personal, socio-cultural and economic development of their societies.

Corroborating this Ozoro (2003) opined that entrepreneurship education is expected to develop in the recipients the needed skills for self-reliance and easy adaptation in the world of work, thus providing not job seekers but job creators and employers of labour. It is education that provides training, experiences and skills that are suitable for entrepreneurship endeavours. The education that geared towards entrepreneurship acquisition should therefore prepare graduates with entrepreneurial knowledge, competence and skills needed to be self-reliant. Thus entrepreneurship education is education for and about business.

Osuala (2004) saw entrepreneurship education as a specialized training given to students to acquire skills, ideas, and management abilities necessary for self-reliance. He went further to outline the major objectives of entrepreneurship education to include:

- a. To provide meaningful education for the youths which could make them self reliant and subsequently encourage them to derive profit and self independence.
- b. 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 centre.
- c. To provide graduates with the training and support necessary to help them establish a career in small and medium sized business.

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- d. To provide graduates with training in skills that will make them meet the manpower needs of the society.
- e. To provide graduates with enough training in risk management to make uncertainty bearing possible and easy.
- f. To provide graduates with enough training that will make them creative and innovative in identifying new business opportunities.
- g. To stimulate industrial and economic growth of rural and less developed areas (Osuala, 2004: 23).

Thus entrepreneurship education is a programme designed to expose the recipients to the opportunity of developing their potentials, acquire knowledge skills, attitudes and value necessary to partake in any activity that will be of help to them and their society. It is necessary because of the importance attached to it in imparting entrepreneurial skills which are as follows:

1. It leads to the development of work experience for teachers and students.
2. It can prepare the students for self employment after school especially in the era of scarcity of jobs.
3. It reduces unemployment among graduates and creates in them the ability to bear risk.
4. Entrepreneurship education will assist in identifying entrepreneurial skills available and train them to be utilized.

Other importance of entrepreneurship education as highlighted by Agetue and Nnamdi (2011:478) are as follows:

- a. Equipping trainees with skills to be efficient in the application of resources that eschewing wastes and misuse of resources which negatively affect future generation.
- b. Self-employment and job creation elements inherent in entrepreneurship training frontally tackled the state of unemployment, especially among our graduates.
- c. Joblessness of youths can breed crimes such as prostitutions, stealing and so on, entrepreneurship training can provide jobs for them, and by extension reduces crimes.
- d. It enhances economic empowerment and raises the standard of living of people through generating income that will meet their basic needs and escape the plight of poverty.

Considering these advantages it becomes paramount that the inculcation of entrepreneurial skills on our students in the classroom should be highly encouraged through the school-industry links.

School – Industry Links and Entrepreneurial Skills in Nigeria

School industrial link is one of the pedagogical methods adopted in the teaching/learning situation for easy acquisition of skills. It has to do with the relationship between school and the industry. According to Elechi (2009) school industrial link is one of the best pedagogical methods or practices to enhance students learning experiences. It is one of the strategies used to promote entrepreneurial skills acquisition in the schools (Yusuf, 2011 and Onele & Nwite 2011). It is the process through which the school gains and gives assistance to the industry and the industry in turn exposes students to real and practical job experience.

The two parties play vital roles and complement each other. The school supplies man-power industries in turn shape the school curriculum as well as offer work experience to the former. According to Wright (1992) in Elechi (2009), school industry link is not just another piece of content to be added to the curriculum sandwich, it is a methodology, a different way of viewing the world, of adding richness to the curriculum by adopting a different perspective. He maintained that school-industry links provides the means by which teachers and students can have access to more accurate information about various types of work and the labour market.

Okoro (1997) stated three types of industrial work experiences programmes which are as follows:-

1. Work-study plan and works exploration plans.
2. Co-operative occupational education.
3. Internship and practicum.

In work study plan or work exploratory plan students enrolled in-vocational programmes and are also employed in related industries with the approval of their educational institution.

In co-operative vocational education there is a greater co-operation between educational institutions and employing agencies. Co-operative vocational experience programmes have as their central purpose the development of occupational competencies using employment in real jobs as sources of learning.

Internship as a term is used with reference to undergraduate programmes, which equip students with experiences for certain professions like those preparing to become medical doctors or pharmacist. These groups of people undergo a period of internship which is at the end of the training programme. The trading affords the students the opportunity of putting into practice the knowledge and skills acquired through school in a practical job setting.

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In Nigeria and all over the world school-Industry link is recognized as one of the effective pedagogical method in imparting entrepreneurial skills to students in the school.

In South Africa, the Pasadas fashion incubation centre was established in 1994 to specifically promote and develop clothing entrepreneurs from disadvantaged communities. The programme equips young entrepreneurs with practical, relevant training programmes leading to job creation and stimulation for self employment. It exposes trainees to other disciplines through multi-skilling programme offered by other institutions and employs them with soft skills and life skills. Finally, the centres encourages out-of-school youths in particular to proceed with their education utilizing a number of local resources.

This nine months course, which is being accredited by National Clothing Training Board, consists of two days orientation, six-months training and three months on-the job experience (incubation stage) involving entrepreneurial skills and production under supervision. The course covers hard skills, business skills, entrepreneurial skills and life skills.

Young Achievement Australia (YAA) is a non-profit organization which attempts to bridge the gap between business and education by teaching young people hands-on business skills while they are still in school. Supported by some six hundred companies, YAA provides business education programmes to over 14,000 students each year.

YAA runs Business Alive, a curriculum-Based enrichment programme teaching senior secondary students about Business through the experiences of a “consultant” from a sponsor organization teamed with a teacher, the consultant spends approximately one year per week with the students over a ten-week period. One of these classes usually involves an industry visit, further establishing the link between theory and the real workplace.

Back home in Nigeria, the government together with other agencies in a bid to foster School – Industry Link introduced students Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES). SIWES is organized by the Industrial Training Fund (ITF) in Nigeria for colleges of education, monotronics, polytechnics and universities. SIWES was introduced in Nigeria for the following reasons:

- a. To provide an avenue for students in institutions of higher learning to acquire industrial skills and experiences in their courses of study especially in engineering and allied fields,
- b. To expose students to work method, and techniques in the handling of equipment and machinery that may not be available in educational institutions.

- c. To prepare students for the working situation which they will encounter after graduation.
- d. To make the transition from school to the world of work easier and to enhance students contracts for later job placements.
- e. To provide students with an opportunity to apply their knowledge in real work situation thereby bridging the gap between college work and actual practices.
- f. To enlist and strengthen employer's involvement in the entire education process of preparing students for employment in industry (Industrial Training Funds, 1995:7).

The need for school – industry link in imparting entrepreneurial skills in students in the classroom need not be over emphasized. It creates an avenue for students to be exposed and explore the business opportunities for self employment through participating in local businesses. The programme through exposing students to practical activities gave them the opportunity to learn more in the field about the realities of business and explore their potential for self employment. The students of the programme through involving in business learn more knowledge and better understanding of the overall operation of business and an opportunity to meet and interact with positive role models in employment. It enables the students to be able to work on an unfamiliar environment and responds to unexpected events.

Strategies for Developing Entrepreneurial Skills in Classroom

Many scholars, writers and researchers have advanced ways of equipping students with entrepreneurial skills in the classrooms at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels.

Akani (2011:9) listed same strategies that will help in developing entrepreneurship skills in students as follows:

- a. Organizing internship programme for students.
- b. Organizing seminars, workshops for students.
- c. Practical counseling on entrepreneurship and skill acquisition for students.
- d. Accessibility of loan that is granting soft loans to graduates to enable them start of their various business.
- e. Rewarding students that perform well in entrepreneurship and skills acquisition activities.

Mohammed and Funtua (2009) also identified some methods on developing skills in the student in classroom as include:-

- 1. Activity Based method
- 2. Learner or child centered method
- 3. Problem solving method

4. Science -Technology- Society
5. Excursion method
6. Demonstration method.

If these are fully utilized according to Umanu and Adu, a combination of all or few of these can provide the necessary skill to our students/pupils. Teachers are encouraged to maximize much of, if not all the above as opined by Ivowi (2006).

In addition to the above listed method of developing the required skills, there are other essential ingredients necessary for effective skills development in students/pupils in the classroom.

These according to Umanu and Adu (2009) include:

- a. **Motivation** - The teacher needs to motivate his students/pupils during teaching and learning in the classroom to learn the necessary skills for future application in the entrepreneurial process. The motivation could be both intrinsic and extrinsic. Once interest is developed learning will follow.
- b. **Encouragement** – The teacher needs to encourage the development of entrepreneurial skills. These could be achieved through;
 1. providing child-friendly environment to the pupils/students.
 2. Displaying a role model attitude to his pupils/students.
 3. Exposing the pupils/students to challenging opportunities.
 4. Providing times for exploration through excursions and its likes.
- c. **Improvisation** – The costly nature of materials to use coupled with the problem of damages and insufficient power supply in Nigeria presently calls for improvisation, which is in form of drawing of a chart or using transparent tumbler as a break.

Other Strategies for Developing Entrepreneurship Skill include

The use of some methods such as student centred methods, team/teaching, collaborative learning and field trip during teaching in the classroom.

- 1) To encourage student to be creative and discover things by themselves under the guidance of the teacher.
- 2) Encouraging students to set up a mini-enterprise before graduating by organizing holiday workshop based which they will be rewarded of excellent performance on out-standing efforts.
- 3) Regular organizing visitation to local entrepreneurs in the community. Visiting local entrepreneurs will enable the students become familiar with entrepreneurial and management task and thus give the students opportunity to have contacts they can draw upon to pursue and realize their entrepreneurial aspiration to actualize their dreams.

Problems of Adopting Strategies to Entrepreneurial Skill Acquisition in Classroom

1. One of the obstacles that is likely to hamper the teaching and learning of entrepreneurial skills in the classroom is that teachers lack motivation and specific training. The effort that teachers put in to practice-based activities, sometimes even outside their normal working hours are not recognized as official task
2. There is a limited amount of time for real accomplishment of real practical work during teaching.
3. Private partnerships are necessary for the development of entrepreneurship skills in students/pupils in the classroom. The establishment of school business community link is a key factor for successful programmes. This process according to (Emaikwu, 2011) is not encouraged in Nigeria thereby hindering the effective development of entrepreneurship education.
4. Even when teachers are ready to inculcate skills the problem lies with some students who aren't interested in being enterprising or entrepreneurial (Odo, 2011). This is an impediment to inculcation of entrepreneurial skills to pupils/students in the classroom.
5. Entrepreneurship skill acquisition course is often housed in general studies programmes in many institutions and taught by those who do not possess basic training in entrepreneurship education and therefore lack the skills to impart the required knowledge effectively. Only the trained teaching personnel that can understand and impart entrepreneurial subject matter in an inspiring manner can develop entrepreneurial minded students who will meet the nation's economic goals (Matlay, 2005).

Prospects of Adopting Strategies for Inculcating Entrepreneurship Skill in the Classrooms

Adopting appropriate strategies in the classroom leads to the following prospects.

1. Develop research, analyses and critical thinking skills in capitalist recipient.
2. It will enable students become economically independent and contribute towards economic growths of the nation (Inakwu & Ushie 2011).
3. Work creativity and independent living (Odo 2011).
4. It will enable student to become employers of labour.
5. Aids business and financial knowledge and understanding.

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6. It will increase the students horizons of acquiring knowledge, skills and rights necessary for human survival in a capitalist society.
7. Enable students on graduation to develop self and be creative in generating ideas.

Conclusion

Entrepreneurship education is a diligently or systematic planned process leading to the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills for the purpose of living a self sustaining life (Oguche and Wilfred-Bonse 2011). For this process to be accomplished required the adoption of appropriate strategies for the inculcation of entrepreneurial skills to pupils/students in the classroom. School-industry links is one of the strategies that has been found to be effective for imparting entrepreneurial skills in the classroom. These strategies enable students to explore the opportunities of self employment through practical and direct involvement of industries and firms.

Recommendations

The writers therefore recommend that the school-industry link should be adopted in the classroom as an effective strategy for imparting skills to the pupils and students in our Nigerian institutions of learning.

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