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## **Entrepreneurship Skill Acquisition Education in Nigeria's Senior Secondary School. A Source of Youths Empowerment**

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By

**SALIU A. DANLADI, Ph.D**

*Department of Curriculum Studies and Educational Technology,  
University of Port Harcourt.*

And

**C.O. OKORO, Ph.D**

*Department Of Curriculum Studies and Educational Technology,  
University of Port Harcourt.*

### **Abstract**

*Entrepreneurship skill acquisition education, has long been considered a significant factor for socio economic growth and development because it provides millions of job opportunities, offers a variety of consumer goods and services and generally increases national prosperity and competitiveness. This paper titled Entrepreneurship Skill Acquisition Education in Nigerian Senior Secondary school. A source of youths empowerment tries to highlight the concept of curriculum, strategies for implementing entrepreneurship skill acquisition education curriculum, the role of entrepreneurship in national development, constraints of entrepreneurship skill acquisition in Nigeria, strategies for tackling these problems and recommendations.*

Nigeria presently has major problems which pose as threats to stability of the nation. Prominent among these problems are unemployment and poverty which are key prevalence in the nation. Although there is abundant evidence of our tremendous effort and achievement, particularly in growth rate. It is sad to note that we are still far from running an educational programme that optimally prepares its citizens for self reliance, creative empowerment and nation building (Atanda in Adegoke, 2004). The National Policy on Education (NPE) also lends authenticity to the proposition stated later in the course of this paper. For example, one of the five national goals is for a united and self reliant nation (NPE, 2004). The document states on its page 8 that "the quality of education at all levels has to be oriented towards inculcating six 'values'. We can see

that the fourth of the four national educational goals is the acquisition of appropriate skills and the development of mental, physical and social abilities and competences as equipment (tools) for the individuals to live and contribute meaningfully to the development of the society. Also, on page 9 of the same document “lifelong education”, “self fulfillment” and “self learning” are indicated as some of the bases of the nation’s educational policy.

The high level of unemployment which is the heaviest burden which falls on young people, especially secondary school leavers is a serious problem requiring combating efforts. The growing army of unemployment among mostly the secondary school leavers has enormous social and economic consequences and it poses serious threat to the cohesion and the stability of a democratic society. The government and stakeholders will increasingly expect education and training to provide young people with alternatives to unemployment (Adegoke, 2004). This preposition and ideas are the central theme of the paper.

The national policy on Education (N.P.E) (2004) clearly specifies that Secondary Education shall offer diversified curriculum to cater for the differences in talents, opportunities and future roles and shall provide technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, industrial, commercial and Economic Development. Regrettably, current practices in our secondary schools are not geared towards equipping learners with life coping skills. The emphasis has been on passing examination for certification. This is why the rate of unemployment is on the increase as secondary school graduates turned out from our secondary school increases yearly. Expressing his reservations about the Nigeria Educational System, Akinboye (2007) noted that education appears to have been reduced to a pattern of repeated practice, where children go to nursery, primary, secondary and tertiary schools to acquire certificates and start looking for jobs that are usually not available. This implies that learners are merely trained to be job seekers and not job creators.

In the same vein, skills acquired by graduates from different institutions sometimes do not seem to tally with labour market demand. This is referred to as skill mismatch. The skill mismatch problem as identified in the Education sector report (FME, 2003) manifests mostly in areas of petroleum, gas, agriculture, manufacturing, solid mineral, tourism, and information and communication technology.

The seeming skills mismatch between teaching in our secondary schools and the needs of the labour market has culminated in the high rate of youth unemployment. Although, unemployment cuts across different levels of Education and age groups but youth unemployment in Nigeria is disturbing and very high. The unemployment rate in Nigeria between 1996-2005 cuts across different educational levels as quoted by the National bureau of statistics (2006) is as shown in table 1:

***Entrepreneurship Skill Acquisition Education in Nigeria's Senior Secondary School. A Source of Youths Empowerment***

<b>Educational levels</b>	<b>1996</b>	<b>1997</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>
No schooling (illiterates)	20.0	21.10	28.20	20.70	11.40	14.00	16.60	11.00	14.9	15.20
Primary	11.50	11.80	15.80	12.90	26.20	21.00	16.10	18.30	15.80	19.30
Secondary	51.30	46.20	49.50	59.40	52.80	55.20	57.40	59.70	52.80	61.20
Post-Secondary	17.2	20.90	6.50	7.00	9.10	9.70	9.90	11.0	16.50	24.50

**Source:** FRN (2006) National Bureau of Statistics, Abuja.

The above table shows percentage rate of unemployment across educational levels with secondary school graduates being mostly affected. The post secondary school level which is expected to have offered its graduates required skills based on the needs of the labour market has its graduate's unemployment problems.

**Concept of Curriculum**

The conceptualization of curriculum and its developmental process, implementation and evaluation are as varied from one philosopher to another, from one educator and/or educationist to another and from one generation to another in time and space. However, there is a common understanding that curriculum is a set of a planned and organized materials designed for intended learning outcome, considered as adequate for any functional expectations of a people in time and place, (Okobiah,2010).

With reference to the theme of the conference, Onwuka (1996:120) sees the curriculum as a total experience with which the school deals in educating young people. It is deliberate, systematic and planned attempts made by the school to change the behaviour of members of the society in which it situates. The curriculum is the life and programme of the school. It is an enterprise in guiding the living, the stream of dynamic activities that constitute the life of young people and their elders. Clearly, this definition implies continuity between school studies and real life. It emphasizes that what the designs carry out are neither within the school nor during school life. But, it is expected to provide the learner with knowledge, skills and attitude that will prepare them for better living in the society. Therefore, the curriculum should be planned in such a way to include entrepreneurial skill acquisition programme.

This is also supported by Adegoke (2004) who advocated for competency-based curriculum which is seen as ability to cope with certain class of problems encountered on the job or in a work place, or any desired activity. It pertains to how well the educational system prepares the students to become responsible citizens and instill in them attitudes and moral values relevant to a modern society. A fully competent individual is one who can cope successfully with any problem or task

requiring the application of knowledge, attitudes and skills already acquired. The capability to harness specialized knowledge to the solution of the practical problem of life, the emphasis is on productive work, empowerment and sustainability thereby giving adequate coverage to capability, coping, creativity and cooperative action.

### **Entrepreneurship Skills Acquisition**

The term entrepreneurship is derived from the French word entrepreneur meaning “the one who undertakes”. Holt (2006) defines entrepreneurship as the process of bringing together creative and innovative ideas and exploring management and organizational skills to combine people, money and resources to meet an identified need and thereby create wealth. It could also be seen as a process through which individuals and/or government either on their own jointly exploit available economic opportunities without being scared of associated risks or inadequate resources. (Shepherd & Douglas, 2005). According to Schonekan (2003), entrepreneurship is a process that involves a team of people who combine their skills and resources in productive ventures. The Webster’s Dictionary (2005) defines entrepreneurship as a process by which one undertakes to start an enterprise or business and assuming full control and risk.

Building on these definitions, entrepreneurship skill acquisition is conceptualized as a training programme that is geared towards equipping learners or recipient with creative ideas that will enhance self-employment and job creation. Such training programmes also equip individuals or recipients with skills, knowledge, values, attitudes, orientation and insights to analyze their environment in a more organized pattern.

According to UNESCO (2002:2), the purpose of entrepreneurship education includes:

- i) Educating individuals for, and about business.
- ii) Providing a continuous programme of planned learning experiences designed to equip individuals to fulfill effectively three roles:
  - a) Providing and distributing goods and services as workers.
  - b) Using the products as consumers, and
  - c) Making wise socio-economic decision as citizens
- iii) Providing educational opportunities for students who are preparing for careers in professional field or discipline other than business, to acquire business knowledge and skills needed to function effectively in the world of work and
- iv) Providing career information that helps individual students relates their interests, needs and abilities to occupation opportunities in business.

These objectives, though robust and laudable, can only be meaningfully achieved if the implementation process of entrepreneurship education is adequate and effective.

**Strategies for Implementing Entrepreneurship Education Curriculum for Sustainable Development.**

To bridge the widening gap between the expected and the observed in the present secondary school education, and to also guarantee sustainable development in Nigeria, the following strategies are suggested for adoption.

1) **Teaching for Co-operative Learning:** According to Okolodile (2009), Co-operative learning is student-centered approach where students learn in small groups of five with the teachers as a guide. The students co-operate with one another to perform or complete a particular task. This kind of instructional strategy offers the students opportunity for effective interaction with one another, to make decisions and choices in their learning process, and to learn through greater knowledge of one another's needs.

2) **Relating Classroom Activities to Learners' Life Experience:** There are a number of home activities that have scientific and technological relevance. Teachers need to explore the students' environment to the advantage of teaching for entrepreneurship skills acquisition. The philosophy underlying the strategy is predicated on the need to carry along scientific and technological myths prevalent in our traditional culture. Norman (2003) believes that learning is enhanced when knowledge input is linked with prior knowledge and that as learners receive information, they organize it around their previously developed cognitive structures (schema). Each learner has unique schema depending on the type of experience he or she has been subjected to, and such experiences tend to influence his/her response to prevalent situations.

3) **Teaching for Transfer of Learning:** Transfer to new tasks is better achieved, if in learning, learners discover relationships for themselves. According to Reader and Simon (1998), all new learning involves transfer based on previous learning. Therefore teaching of concepts should be such that it encourages transfer of learning. The similarity between learning experiences and familiar day-to-day experiences encourages transfer of learning.

4) **Training for the appropriate Skills:** It is often common that people are trained for some skills which they later cannot utilize because of the lack of relevance. Teaching should be such that learning activities have direct relevance and applicability to the learners' daily life. Students are generally not interested in acquiring knowledge just for the sake of it. They would like to see a relationship between what they study in school and the life they would live after formal school.

5) **Using Field Trips as Resources for Teaching:** Although the school is the central location for learning, this does not mean that it is the only source or place for learning. It is true that students need a place where they can organize and articulate their educational thoughts and ideas and even practice them, the outdoor equally holds its own as a source that if well utilized, can develop and stimulate students in their learning process. The use of outdoor as instructional resources offers the possibilities for exposing students to real-life variety of experiences that is taught in school.

6) **Internship:** Sending students on internship will give them opportunity to practice with a small business organization, with a view to exhibiting the skill they have learned in the school. Students may also be encouraged to apply for a paid holiday internship with local entrepreneurs. Through these programmes, entrepreneurial awareness among youths is promoted and a stronger bridge between the school system and the business world is further strengthened and enhanced.

7) **School Seminars and Workshops:** Seminars and workshops on entrepreneurship skills and attributes which are needed by entrepreneurs to succeed in business should periodically be organized for students. Here successful entrepreneurs and financial experts could be invited to deliver lectures on entrepreneurship practices. This would help to broaden students' minds, knowledge and horizon. Lukman and Oviawe (2010) listed some business skills which can be taught in school to include business planning, opportunity recognition and selection, business ideas generation, resource management, time management, people management, customer relation and marketing of goods and services. When one acquires these business skills and management competencies necessary for setting up a business enterprise, such a person is said to have acquired entrepreneurial skills.

8) **Recognizing Individual Differences:** Each learner has a pattern and rhythm of growth peculiar to the individual. Notable difference exists between individual in the rate of learning, energy output depth of feelings and emotions, physical and social development. Teachers need to have a good knowledge of his/her students' abilities and interest. The activities and experiences to be provided in the class must be sequenced in such a way that a reasonable uniformity for each level or stage is built into the lesson plan.

### **The Role of Entrepreneurship in National Development**

Entrepreneurship is not just skill acquisition for acquisition sake. It is an acquisition of skills and ideas for the sake of creating employment for one's-self and also for others. It also includes the development based on creativity. Entrepreneurship leads to the development of small, medium and sometimes large scale business based on creativity and innovation. The success of these businesses in turn helps in developing the nation. It also reduces poverty rate with visible increment of employment rate among the youths. According to Essien (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". The development here is appraised in terms of both redistribution of wealth and meeting the basic needs of the masses at a sustainable level. This means that it must be sustained to be able to impact and change the life and living of the masses (Kazaure and Danmallam, 2006). While acknowledging the necessity and important role of school in shaping our culture, we have equally understood the fact that a serious departure is

needed from hitherto traditional ways of doing things especially the matter of training and method of teaching in all our schools.

**Constraint of Entrepreneurship Skills Acquisition in Nigeria.**

There are several factors that hinder entrepreneurship skills acquisition in Nigeria. They include:

- 1 Poor knowledge-based economy and low spirit of competition
- 2 Poor enterprising culture
- 3 Lack of entrepreneurship teachers, materials and equipment.
- 4 Unavailability of fund
- 5 Non-inclusion of entrepreneurship programme in the school curricula
- 6 Poor societal attitude to Technical and Vocational Education Development
- 7 Inadequate facilities and equipment for teaching and learning
- 8 Insensitivity of government to enterprise creation and expansion strategy
- 9 Poor plan and execution of processes of action
- 10 Isolated pockets of ineffective programmes and management in competencies (Oviawe and Ekhoobiye, 2008).

**Strategies for Tackling these Constraints.**

The world of business is fast moving and perfectionist-oriented. The masses are sharp and quick to judge, hence an entrepreneur must be calculating and deliberate. The market where the entrepreneur operates has little tolerance for miscalculations, lack of commitment or incompetence. The for-going make the education of the youth who is a would-be entrepreneur an essential ingredient for success. Entrepreneurship education is a carefully planned process that eventuates into the acquisition of entrepreneurial competencies. The education is a set of very valuable skills needed by the entrepreneur to avoid future trial and errors (Osuala, 2004). By implications, the stage of learning is the stage to make most of the mistakes and learn from them. Entrepreneurship education equips the learner with skills on decision making, acquisition of new ideas, methods of raising and maintaining conversations and establishing business relationships. Through entrepreneurship education, qualitative ability that facilitates computation and record keeping are further learnt. It starts with developing programmes in entrepreneurship centres where people are trained to develop and acquire skills. The youths should equally be given opportunities to gain experiences as they are linked with mentors, get access to information and be given opportunity for growth in order to actualize the strategic role which education is expected to play in the attainment of Vision 20-2020 and in the prosecution of the development of human capital component of the 7-point agenda of the Federal Government of Nigeria.

### **Conclusion**

If the present students in the secondary schools are taught how to survive very hard times and ameliorate the unemployment situation, there is need to include in the curriculum of the secondary schools skill acquisition and entrepreneurial education. This will go a long way in addressing the fundamental issues of unemployment bedeviling the nation.

### **Recommendations**

After a careful analysis on the need for skills acquisition in the curricula of the secondary school system, the following recommendations are made:

- i) Entrepreneurship education should be included in the curriculum of the senior secondary school; this will create wealth through increased production activities, and create job opportunities for the school leavers.
- ii) The inclusion of entrepreneurship skill acquisition in the senior secondary school curriculum will bring about sustainable development.
- iii) The curriculum should be adjusted to bring about entrepreneurial programmes in senior secondary schools.
- iv) Courses that encourage economic independence should be introduced in the school
- v) Vocational and entrepreneurial skill should be included in the curriculum.

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*Entrepreneurship Skill Acquisition Education in Nigeria's Senior Secondary School. A Source of Youths Empowerment*

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