

## ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION: ITS ROLE IN JOB CREATION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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### **Introduction**

No matter how defined and from whatever perspective it is viewed, education is the most important energizer of the individual and the society. As one of the major catalyst of development there is a strong positive correlation between the level of education measured by the degree of human resources development and the level of wealth and economic growth of nations. Harbison and Mayers (1964) in their seminal publication in the early 1960s concluded that the best means of developing human capital is through education. It is therefore through education that the critical values and skills in a human being are discovered and developed. It is therefore safe to conclude that these human resources so developed constitute the ultimate basis for the wealth of nations. Natural resources may abound in a nation but they are passive or neutral stuff until they are given a drive by the educated human (Okafor, 2005). According to Zimmermann (1958), "resources are not they become." In other words, it is the educated human that will make dormant and latent resources active and bring some utilitarian values to an otherwise neglected instrument of development. It is against this necessity for functional education that this paper wishes

to address entrepreneurship education from the perspective of its utilitarianism in job creation. In doing this, the paper will be organized in sections that will include a brief discussion on the trend of development of education in Nigeria over the years, the emergence and dimensions of entrepreneurship education and its role in job creation and sustainable development.

### **The Focus of Early Western Education in Nigeria**

One will definitely agree with Fafunwa's (1974) assertion that education in its broad sense is not conterminous with the Westernized system of education. He recognized that there is traditional education which emphasizes social responsibility, job orientation, political participation and spiritual and moral values. This type of education is all embracing in the sense that each social or traditional institution makes the necessary provision to educate its citizens to take their rightful place in the community. This form of traditional education was able to cope with the demands of the time because it found expression in the age-group associations and the success rested solidly on honesty, perseverance and sincerity.

This of course, could not cope with the changing demands.

The Western education came with its agenda and motives. Since it was pioneered by the missionaries, the major effort were concentrated on evangelization and proselytization. This is encapsulated by Boyd (1932) in the following piece:

“It must be kept in mind that the church undertook the business of education not because it regarded education as good in itself, (emphasis mine) but because it found that it could not do its own paper work without giving its adherents and especially its clergy, as much of the formal learning, as was required for the study of the sacred writings and for the performance of their religious duties”

From the foregoing, it is obvious that the type of education pursued by the early missionaries was heavily religion biased, intensely denominational and of course shallow in content. The colonialists who followed the missionaries did not deviate much in their agenda. They concentrated on training interpreters and a few clerks that would help them in their plundering mission (see Rodney, 1966). There was a proliferation of the so-called Grammar Schools and no Technical Schools which could impart some skills. For example, the Yaba Higher College established in 1932 experienced difficulty in getting adequate number of students with sufficient background in science and technical subjects, when also the University College Ibadan was founded in 1948 the foundation students were preponderantly in the areas of history, classics, religion and related disciplines.

Opinions have been expressed about the inadequacy of the missionary and colonial education practiced in Nigeria. Generally there were anti-colonial feelings by Nigerians to protest against certain colonial and missionary practices that bordered on the denial of their rights to quality education. The ills of the colonial period were carried over to the post-colonial era to the extent that the quality of the education offered to the subscribers at all levels has been viewed as suspect. Many of our products from our educational system lack the basic skills and competence expected from them. In fact, our educational system regrettably, has gone comatose and is in dire need of an emergency surgical operation. Only on 2<sup>nd</sup> July, 2000, the National Universities Commission (NUC) published a list of 50 illegal Universities operating in Nigeria (see *the Guardian July, 2, 2010*) NUC stated *inter alia* that: “The National Universities Commission in pursuit of its mandate, relating to the orderly development, sustaining and upholding quality assurance of the Nigerian University System (NUS) has stepped up enforcement actions on the activities of *degree mills* in Nigeria.”

Your guess is good as mine as to the quality of graduates being churned out by these illegal universities, colleges of education and polytechnics. It is estimated that over 150,000 graduates from universities, polytechnics and colleges of education are yearly injected into the labour market with most of them preferring white collar jobs probably because they

lack entrepreneurial acumen or business intelligence.

This proliferation of graduates without skills has made entrepreneurship education a mandatory option in our educational institutions.

### **The Emergence of Entrepreneurship Education**

As already mooted, one of the fundamental problems of the educational system inherited by Nigeria is that despite the quantum of growth, the country has been deficient in running an educational programme that adequately prepares its citizens for self-reliance and job creation.

Science and Technical Education (STE) was designed to fill this gap but it has gone the same road of underfunding, lack of relevant human resources and growing anti-science and anti-technology culture in the Nigerian society. Therefore, the rescue mission undertaken by Technical colleges has been short circuited. College products with technical knowledge are sidelined and their technical abilities are hardly recognized and appreciated. Since proper exploitation of available resources and catching in on the opportunities in an environment are not the exclusive preserve of those who are science and technology biased, entrepreneurship education is a master key that could open doors to self-employment and self-reliance (see Okafor, et al, 2008).

Entrepreneurship is not a new concept but its resurgent popularity, at least in Nigeria, is a result of the glaring reality that government and other employers of labour have failed to meet

the employment requirements of the country's teeming graduates. Most graduating students are consequently left in a quagmire of being unemployed and sometimes unemployable: they are merely job seekers instead of job creators.

Entrepreneurship simply defined "is a process of planning, operating and assuming the risk of a business venture" (Inegbenebor and Igbinmwanhia, 2008 p.3). if this definition is to be further elaborated, entrepreneurship involves having a vision, supporting it by a mission of pulling resources together and adding value to those resources. By implication, four critical steps are involved viz; (a) the conception: (b) the gestation phase: (c) the infancy phase: and (d) the adolescence phase. In Nigeria there is the temptation to quote entrepreneurship with small-scale enterprises. This conception has persisted because of the number of small business dotting the economic landscape of Nigeria. Strictly speaking an entrepreneur is any person who creates or starts a new project opportunity or venture whether it is big or small.

In summary, the entrepreneur is the one who starts an enterprise; the one who puts new forms of industry on their feet; the one who shoulders the risks and uncertainty of using economic resources in a new way; and the one with the right motivation, energy, and ability to build something by his or her own efforts. The critical ingredient in entrepreneurship is the ability to establish a new entity to offer a new or existing product or service into a new or existing market, whether for a profit or not for profit venture (McOliver,

2006; Naude, 2008). In the process of production, of the four economic factors of land, labour, capital and entrepreneurship, the entrepreneur seems the least tangible but it is obviously the most critical factor required to add value to the other factors of production. Where entrepreneurship is weak the full potentials of the other factors will not be realized.

The need to include entrepreneurship education in the curriculum of our tertiary institutions has come up and is spreading irresistibly. For example, the University of Benin has since recognized that one of the ways of equipping her students for challenges of the world of work is to introduce a mandatory entrepreneurship course broad enough to equip the graduating students with some skills and business acumen that will form the basis for sustaining themselves outside the fields of paid employment. This University of Benin experiment has worked and any other institutions have taken a cue.

Entrepreneurship is undeniably essential for the growth and development of the Nigerian economy which regrettably has been dominated by government and large corporations. We can briefly discuss the roles entrepreneurship posits to play in a developing economy such as ours. These include:

- (i) **Job Creation:** The incidences of stark unemployment, under employment and disguised unemployment are rife in our society. Entrepreneurship remains the most important tool for fighting these ills. Entrepreneurs apart from

providing employment for themselves also provide jobs for others.

- (ii) **Increased Productivity via Innovation:** The resourcefulness of an entrepreneur results in innovation which in turn releases the potentials of latent resources. Also through innovation existing business can be expanded and new goods and services provided.
- (iii) **Transfer and or Adaptation of Technology:** Although the debate about transfer of technology is not rested, entrepreneurs can nevertheless adapt an existing or imported technology to suit the vicissitudes of their environment. The dexterity of an average Chinese entrepreneur has made China the fastest growing economy. The small and medium scale enterprises (SMEs) in China, Taiwan, and Malaysia are the loci for the entrepreneurial magic of these Asian Tigers. The Nigerian economy needs this indigenous technical innovation and adaptation of technology if it cannot be transferred to us from developed economies. It is only a focused entrepreneurship that can perform this feat.
- (iv) **Reinvigoration of Ailing Large Scale Enterprises:** Many big industries in Nigeria are dependent on small-scale enterprises for the

supply of raw materials and supplementary components. Some of these industries are ailing or dead because the entrepreneurial capacity of these small industries to supply the needed materials is lacking. Some of the industries resort to importing of what could comfortably be supplied locally. The imported items are creating jobs in the countries of export

The overall impact of these contributions is the increase in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and this will in the long run break the vicious circle of poverty which is the bane of our lagging development. Nigeria's per capita income which is abysmally low (about US \$400) cannot improve on the basis of government's annual budget increase which is just inching but by the collective contribution of individual entrepreneurs most of whom are in the informal sector of the Nigerian economy. This informal sector, though hardly and correctly captured in our statistics because of its various characteristics, is the main apparatus for sustainable development. The concluding part of this paper will therefore briefly dwell on the concept of sustainable development and the place of entrepreneurship education.

### **Entrepreneurship and Sustainable Development**

If entrepreneurship is the dynamic process of creating incremented wealth, then the wealth so created would fit into the building blocks of sustainable development. Sustainable development is a concept of current usage coined to capture the orientation of current and future efforts at promoting development. For a classical definition of the concept we may rely on the statement by the Brundtland Commission (World Commission on the Environment) which states that "sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Brundtland Commission, 1987). This definition contains within it two vital concepts, namely: the needs of the present generation to which an overriding priority should be given and the needs of the upcoming generation which should be prepared for. In order to achieve these two interrelated objectives, it requires bringing together the skills and concerns of different disciplines and stakeholders to address the multifaceted reality of the development challenge. Entrepreneurship education has a role to play in this direction. The objective should be to prepare the entrepreneur to meet the challenges of the world of work and survival. A fresh graduate is exposed to the world of

uncertainties. The question that readily comes to his mind is: Where do I go from here? The ultimate challenge is to bring together the bits and pieces of his exposure to entrepreneurship and create a niche for self survival. The foundation so laid is the building block for sustainable survival. This is because successful entrepreneurship fights poverty, guarantees steady income and provides psychological fulfillment and self-actualization. The self-actualization of an employee rests very strongly on his employer but a successful entrepreneur is his own boss and has every opportunity to plan for a sustained growth.

All said, the challenges for breaking the circle of poverty lie in entrepreneurship because it is where the bottom rung of the nation's population could be captured and positively affected. Sustainable development presupposes a situation where social equity will reign supreme and the reduction of the world income gap will not remain a mirage in pursuit of the so-called globalization. We submit in this paper that developing countries should vigorously embrace entrepreneurship to promote self-sustained development because foreign aids are imported woes.

### **Conclusion**

In concluding this paper, the writer wishes to state that the Association of Nigerian Teachers has chosen deliberation

a very important topic – Job Creation – which touches on the very existence of this country. The theme is very topical and quite apt. If the number of unemployed is not worrisome to anyone in authority then the person is not in tune with the realities of the movement. Job creation was initially seen as the exclusive preserve of government and a few big corporations. The stratagem has failed. This thinking has misdirected the orientation of our educational system where we train job seekers and not job creators. We have argued in this paper that although some mistakes were made in the past in crafting the curriculum for our secondary and tertiary institutions, it is not too late to stage a comeback. Entrepreneurship should take a centre stage in our school curriculum. It should be built in all the school subjects so that the products of such institutions will graduate into the world of self-reliance and self-sustenance which form the foundation of sustainable growth and development. Research and development should receive due attention from all stakeholders in order to bring out the latent and dormant entrepreneurial talent in our students. Some higher institutions have established centres for entrepreneurship education. This is in the right direction because this scourge of unemployment with all its ramifications requires a multifaceted fight and action.

The participants in this conference are urged to go home with a message on capacity building to train the trainers who will create wealth and give value to our resources for sustainable development.

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