ACCESS AND QUALITY OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION AT THE SECONDARY SCHOOL LEVEL IN NIGERIA: A NEW HORIZON

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Abstract

The wealth of any nation depends on its ability to produce and provide goods and services which in turn improves the economy of the nation. Education is the key to any countries wealth especially when the products of the educational programme run at the various levels of education possess some skills and competencies capable of making them self-reliant and self-employed. The inclusion of entrepreneurship education in the curriculum is a very good move to achieve this objective. This paper presents a practical approach to the implementation of the entrepreneurship education curriculum thus opening a new horizon in this area of secondary education. One of such steps is to ensure a high percentage of interest, awareness and involvement of secondary school students in entrepreneurship ventures. Issues such as access and quality of secondary education in Nigeria, the need for functional entrepreneurship education and steps into a new horizon were discussed. Some suggestions were made among which is adopting a more practical approach to the implementation of the entrepreneurship education curriculum.

The rate of unemployment among school leavers in Nigeria is alarming despite the goals of education and the numerous academic institutions in the country. The efforts at solving the unemployment problems in the country culminated in the renewed interest of the government in self-reliance. Academic institutions were therefore encouraged by the government to design programmes that will equip students on graduation with skills capable of making them job creators rather than job seekers. This was the reason behind the introduction of entrepreneurship education in school curriculum (FRN, 2004).

Entrepreneurship education is made up of all kinds of experiences that give students the ability and vision of how to access and transform opportunities of different kinds (Okeke, 2009). It goes beyond business creation to include the increasing students' ability to anticipate and respond to societal changes. Nwankwo, Nwachukwu & Alia (2010) define entrepreneurship education as an integral part of general

education designed to equip students with entrepreneurial skills that will make them self-reliant, self-employed, creative and innovative. According to Ifedili & Ofoegbu (2011) Entrepreneurship Education is concerned with innovation and new ventures rather than as management of business once it was in operation. For Asiyai (2011) entrepreneurship education is the training which provides the recipient with basic skills, knowledge competencies, values and attitudes needed for effective work performance in the work place. Entrepreneurship education according to Egwunyenga, Ebele &Osakwe (2011) is a structured formal conveyance of entrepreneurship competencies which carries with it, the concept of skills and mental awareness which are needed to understand the functioning of an already existing business. Thus, entrepreneurship education enables a person to develop the willingness and ability to explore and exploit investment, opportunities, establish and manage a successful business enterprise.

The primary objective of entrepreneurship education is to provide students with the knowledge, skills and motivation to encourage entrepreneurial success in a variety of settings. Skill acquisition is therefore imperative in entrepreneurship education. The Nigerian government therefore introduced entrepreneurship education in the curriculum of secondary school level as a functional education to enable the students to be functional members of the society (Banabo & Ndiomu, 2011).

In 2000, entrepreneurship education was given the needed attention (Emetarom, 2004). It has to be accessible and functional in order to achieve its purpose. Quality and functional entrepreneurship education cannot be achieved without accessibility or availability. This is because entrepreneurial development is a panacea for increased employment opportunities in an economy (Banabo & Ndiomu 2011). Thus in an attempt to facilitate entrepreneurial development in the country, the government of Nigeria through various agencies and academic institutions is focused towards the development of models of entrepreneurial education and skill acquisition (Abubakar, 2010). This is geared towards combating youth unemployment by facilitating productivity and development of small and medium scale enterprises.

The Nigerian government, no doubt, has been making frantic efforts in bridging the gap between employment and unemployment figures and this has led to introduction of entrepreneurship education in the curriculum of schools, which secondary school level is one. The puzzle on this regard is that, although the cost of maintaining this programme has continued to increase, the demand for access and quality of this educational programme has been on the increase (Asiyai, 2011). This paper aims at looking at the access and quality of entrepreneurship education at the secondary school level in Nigeria: a new horizon with the motive of making innovative recommendations targeted at improving the programmes in secondary school.

Concept of Entrepreneurship

The word 'entrepreneurship' originated from the French word, 'entrepreneur', meaning 'to undertake'. In earlier periods, it meant the director or manager of a public musical institution or one who gets up entertainments. However, it later came to be used in what was called political economy to mean a contractor acting as intermediary between capital and labour. Thus, according to Fapohunda (2006) entrepreneur is an economic leader who possesses the ability to recognize opportunities for successful introduction of new commodities, new techniques andnew sources of supply, and to assemble the necessary plant and equipment, management and labour force and organized them into a running concern. Nwaokolo (2003) defined entrepreneurship as "making a living by working for yourself". Entrepreneurship, therefore, involves the ability to set up a business as different from being employed. This ability should be acquired. It is clear that while technical education is geared towards the acquisition of technical skills, entrepreneurship education deals with the skills of business ownership and management. Entrepreneurship is the willingness and ability of an individual to seek for investment opportunities, to establish and to run an enterprise successfully (Suleiman, 2006).

Entrepreneurship activities bring about business and production innovation with resultant growth in enterprises and industrial organizations. Anyakoha (2006) further described entrepreneurship as a dynamic process of creating incremental wealth, that is, the wealth created by individuals who assume the major risks in terms of equity, time and career commitment or provide value for some product or service in the process of creating something new with value by devoting necessary time and effort coupled with financial, psychic and social risk with resultant regards of money and personal satisfaction and independence. According to Sadiq (2008) entrepreneurship a revolved around activities including identification of enterprises, combination and allocation of resources, planning and controlling business management, mobilization and utilization of local materials, risks bearing, marketing, innovation and the creation of employment opportunities. Entrepreneurship involves risking financial and human resources in a new way in the course of creating a business-concept or opportunity within an existing life. Oduma (2008) defined entrepreneurship as whatever legal business one does for living. That is to say that entrepreneurship abounds in all spheres of human endeavour such as sports, entertainment arts, electrical engineering trades; building trades beauty culture trades, leather work, business trade and so on.

The above definitions and discussions point to the fact that entrepreneurship involves innovation, development, recognition, seizing opportunities and converting opportunities to marketable ideas, value while bearing the risk of competition.

Entrepreneurship Education

According to Clereq & Crijns (2007), there is no general agreement with regard to what constitutes entrepreneurship education. Furthermore, while some scholars

believe that entrepreneurship cannot be taught (Henry, Hill & Leitch, 2005), others argue that it can be taught (Kuratko, 2005). The challenge is for educators to design effective courses and programmes to impart the relevant skills which will help our students to cope with uncertain environment (Solomon, 2007, Neck & Green, 2011). There are various definitive labels used to explain entrepreneurship education. The term "entrepreneurship education" is commonly used in the USA and Canada but less commonly applied in Europe in the early 1980s (Gibb, 1993). The preferred term within the UK and Irish contexts was "enterprise education" but by the early 1990s, the concept of "enterprise" gradually converged to "entrepreneurship" (Gibb, 1993). Essentially, Gibb made a clear distinction between "enterprise" and "entrepreneurship" education with the former focusing on the advancement of personal enterprising attributes and attitudes that prepare the individual for self-employment, while the latter relates to the development of functional management skills and abilities that train the individual to start, manage, and develop a business (Gibb & Nelson, 1996).

In its broader terms, entrepreneurship education is not limited to business or producing entrepreneurs and self-employed people, but rather to developing positive attitudes and those skills, such as creativity and flexibility, which will enable young people to cope with uncertainties in the labour market (Pretorious, 2005). This suggests that, while entrepreneurship programmes, courses, centres and units of entrepreneurship have been established, there is less knowledge on how these courses and programmes should be taught and how interdisciplinary approaches could be built (European Commission, 2008). The expected outcome of entrepreneurship education is entrepreneurship capacities which constitute the necessary and sufficient conditions to practice entrepreneurial behaviour in response to socio-economic challenges. This implies that entrepreneurial skills may enable school leavers and graduates to have the capacity to apply the theories they learn in classrooms to the practical world of work in their specific careers.

Entrepreneurship education, according to Omolayo (2006) is the act of starting a company, arranging business deals and taking risks in order to make a profit through the education skills acquired. To him, entrepreneurship education can be described as "the process of bringing together creative and innovative ideas and coupling these with management and organizational skills in order to combine people, money and resources to meet an identified need and create wealth. In the same vein, Nwadiani (2011) opined that entrepreneurship education is an education and training process that provides learners (trainees) knowledge, skills and innovation thereby encouraging entrepreneurial success in different lifelong learning settings. Entrepreneurship education as asserted by the World Bank (2010) is the building of knowledge and skills either about or for the purpose of entrepreneurship generally, as part of recognized education programme in primary, secondary and tertiary level educational institutions. Ighalo (2011) observed that entrepreneurship education is a form of education which makes humans to be responsive to their personal, families and national needs and

aspirations. Entrepreneurship education aims at instilling such traits as innovation, ingenuity, resourcefulness and endurance to entrepreneurs. It aims at giving training and impacting necessary skills to individuals to be self-reliant.

Ability to take risk of entering into any type of business requires not only courage but also and more importantly, the necessary skills. Entrepreneurship education therefore is a specialized training given to students to enable them acquires skills, idea and managerial abilities and capabilities for self-employment rather than being employed for pay (Omirin, 2010). Entrepreneurship education is mainly concerned with making students to acquire the necessary skills, knowledge, ability, characteristics, interest and motivation to be effective and efficient entrepreneurs. Effective entrepreneurship education prepares students to be responsible and enterprising and prepares them for self-employment so that they can contribute to economic growth and development.

Objectives of Entrepreneurship Education

Generally, entrepreneurship education aims to increase the awareness of entrepreneurship as a career option, and enhance the understanding of the process involved in initiating and managing a new business enterprise (Donckels, 1991). In a broader context, the four main objectives of entrepreneurship education appear to be:

1. Prepare participants for career success.
2. Increase their capacity for future learning.
3. Realize participants' personal fulfilment and
4. Contribute to society (Sexton and Kasarda, 1992).

Entrepreneurship education according to Paul (2005) is structured to achieve the following objectives.

1. To offer functional education for the youth that will enable them to be self-employed and self-reliant.
2. Provide the youth graduates with adequate training that will enable them to be creative and innovative in identifying novel business opportunities.
3. To serve as a catalyst for economic growth and development.
4. Offer tertiary institution graduates with adequate training in risk management, to make certain bearing feasible.
5. To reduce high rule of poverty.
6. Create employment generation.
7. Reduction in rural-urban migration.
8. Provide the young graduates with enough training and support that will enable them to establish a career in small and medium sized businesses.
9. To inculcate the spirit of perseverance in the youths and adults which will enable them to persist in any business venture they embark on.
10. Create smooth transition from traditional to a modern industrial economy.

Strategies for Effective Entrepreneurship Education

In order to achieve viable entrepreneurship education that will enhance sustainable development in Nigeria, the following strategies according to Ayodele (2006) will help to alleviate the problem of entrepreneurship education in the country:

a. There should be some form of genuine school work based learning incorporated in some studies as part of the national economic development strategies. The development of apprenticeship scheme would give new graduates some work skills and experience.

b. Pool local public and private funds to create a small venture capital fund.

c. School-based enterprises where students identify potential business, plan, create and operate small business using the school as mini-incubators.

d. Provide small business schools where interested students and community members can participate.

e. Develop entrepreneur internship programmes matching students with locally successful entrepreneurs with clearly established education programmes.

f. Establishing an enterprise college aimed at fostering the specific skill sets required for entrepreneurship to serve as skill acquisition centres for the youths.

g. Creating an economic friendly political environment.

h. Improving on the government taxation on small scale businesses.

The Need for Functional Entrepreneurship Education

Educators, policymakers, employers, parents and students started to become aware of the gaps between school and work. They found that neither students nor teachers had a solid understanding of the links between school and work (Rubin & Cunniff, 1996). Students and teachers had no idea, or limited knowledge, about how the skills learned at school, like algebra skills, might be applied to the workplace; they knew little about what skills employers expected their employees to possess (Cheung and Lewis, 1998). It was also noted that the existing business education was not relevant to the business world (Cheung, 1997). In view of this situation, many countries started to develop entrepreneurship education. Entrepreneurship education is significant in many aspects:

It can provide students with an understanding of business – its purposes, its structure, its interrelationship with other segments of the economy and society. Many studies have noted that an entrepreneurship course has a positive impact on students' views of entrepreneurship(Mohan-Neill, 2001 and Cheung, 2008).Entrepreneurship education focuses on life. There is a debate as to whether entrepreneurship education should be concerned more with venture creation and business management, or with developing a set of personal attributes and skills- or, in the vocabulary of Kirby (2004), whether one should educate about entrepreneurship or educate for it.

Traditionally, it has been thought that entrepreneurship education is about teaching students how to start a business, create a business plan, etc. More recently,

however, it has been recognized that such skills are essential but not sufficient to make a successful entrepreneur (Rae, 1997). A successful entrepreneur must have knowledge of the business world, but must also possess a set of generic attributes, skills and behaviours-such as those related to communication, creativity, and problem-solving-that are important to life as well as business. Therefore, if entrepreneurship education is conducted with a view to promoting students' personal attributes, it can have a substantial impact on students' careers, whether or not they plan to become entrepreneurs.

Entrepreneurship Education in Nigerian Secondary Schools

In 1982 many reforms were introduced into the educational system of Nigeria through the introduction of the 6-3-3-4 system of education. (Ofoha, 2011).The system is a reflection a six years in primary school, 3years in Junior secondary school, 3 years in Senior secondary school and at least a minimum of 4 years a tertiary institution. Notable among these innovative reforms, is the introduction of vocational education into the secondary school curriculum.

The aim of the policy of vocational education in Nigerian secondary schools as stated in the National policy on Education (2004), to provide training and impartation of necessary skills geared towards the production of craftsmen, technicians and other skilled individuals who will be enterprising, and to enhance young individuals in Nigeria to have an intelligent understanding of the increasing dynamism of technology.

At the junior secondary level (JS1-3) pre-vocational subjects were introduced with the goal of exposing students to the world of work through exploration targeted at enhancing students as regards intelligent and informed career choice. The pre-vocational subjects include; business studies, home economics, wood work etc. particularly business studies involve components like book-keeping, office practice, type writing, shorthand, book-keeping and computer science Aluede, Idogho & Inonike, 2012).

Entrepreneurship was introduced to junior secondary 1-3 as part of business studies which is an optional subject. The primary target of the pre-vocational education was to develop manipulative skills, disposition towards invention, respect for dignity of labour and ultimately a positive attitude towards entrepreneurship (Ofoha, 2011). Vocational subjects in the senior secondary school (SS1-3) include commerce, food and nutrition, building construction, agricultural science etc. The primary goal of these vocational subjects was to refocus the educational system of Nigeria towards raising individuals with enterprise skills and competencies. Vocational education in the senior secondary school is considered pivotal to the realisation of industrialised Nigeria (Ofoha, 2011).

However, these innovative strategies towards enterprise development in Nigeria have not yielded any notable result till date, considering the fact that unemployment and particularly youth unemployment has persistently been on the

increase. The transition into the present 9-3-4 system of education in September 2011 which was aimed at consolidating enterprise development in junior secondary school students has also failed to yield desired results.

Access and Quality of Secondary Education in Nigeria

Access to education according to Okeke (2009) means free and unlimited, unhindered and unfettered opportunities at each level of education to obtain knowledge, skills, and abilities available at that level needed to optimally participate and contribute to development in the society. He goes on to state that this definition of access to education covers the threshold of access or enrolling, attending and completing and possibly transiting to the appropriate level of education. Thus, lack of access to education or "barrier to educational access" means any of the following: failing to enrol in an educational institution; lack of opportunities to attend school regularly, inability to complete the prescribed programme of study (leading to school dropouts), inability to attain a set goal, and inability to transit to the next level of education (Aluede, Idogho & Inonike, 2012).

Quality according to Babalola (2007) is most often seen as fitness to purpose in relation to the user and customer needs. It can also be taken to mean that the product conforms to standards, specifications or requirements. Quality may be defined as the sum of composite of the properties inherent in a material or product. Quality education on its own can be seen as relative term because what constitute quality education vary between country to country based on their economic resources, value system, educational goals and philosophies among others. By and large the general outcome of quality education is a progressive increase in productivity and efficiency. Quality education enables people to express more fully their potential capacities.

The state of education in Nigeria largely explains the high level of underdevelopment or low rate of development in the country. Schools/structures are dilapidated, infrastructure have collapsed, population is increasing, teacher supply and quality are declining, poor method of ensuring quality within the education industry and more terrible is the issue of old curricula which are still in use in Nigeria today (Onifade, 2006). These have failed to address the modern day challenges. Many pupils are not in schools and there is a high rate of illiteracy especially in rural areas in Nigeria.

Modern world is now dominated by vocational, science and technical/technological education to the extent that, in the words of Njoku (2001), there is hardly any economic activity that is not propelled by science and technology. The situation is bad in Nigeria. Ogbechie (1999) admits this when he advocates for urgent review of Nigeria's school curriculum admitting that this would enable the nation to experience growth in its socio-economic milieu. In his words the current curriculum in the nation's school system is not capable of producing knowledgeable, skilled, creative and globally-competitive pupils that will feed the nation's university system. We

should redesign education to align with the challenges of the 21st century. By this argument, if pupils are introduced to such a curriculum at the primary and secondary school level, it will be easier for them to discover their talents. When this happens they will become useful citizens and the challenges being faced in education in Nigeria will be a thing of the past.

Much of the education that is offered to a Nigerian child is unrewarding to himself and the community, hence the increasing rate of unemployment. The quest for quantitative education without due regard for quality can make education irrelevant to the needs of the students and society which is the focus of educational planning (Emetarom, 2004). Low access and quality education can therefore lead to increase in dropout rate due to boredom and frustration. This often results in a constant lowering of standards and efficiency of the process of instruction. Evidence of dropouts especially at the primary and secondary levels in Nigeria, irrelevant curriculum content and lack of appropriate teaching aids suggest that the access and quality of education offered at these levels is far less than what obtains in developed countries (Babalola, 2007).

Steps into a New Horizon Entrepreneurship Education

For our entrepreneurship skill education programme to achieve the desired result, there must be a departure from the current system where we merely emphasize on knowledge and skill, to a more proactive and result-oriented approach or method where emphasis will be placed on knowledge, skill and attitude (Abubakar, 2010). There is therefore the need for a fine blend of the cognitive, psychomotor and affective behaviours to produce the total personality who possesses the requisite skills, knowledge and attitude to be an entrepreneur. This combination provides the impetus for the student to be wholesome and be found worthy both in character and in learning. The need for this mix is predicated on the fact that entrepreneurial education focuses on developing, understanding and capacity for pursuit of entrepreneurial behaviours, skills and attributes in widely different contexts (Akpomi 2008), because entrepreneurs are action-oriented and their learning is experientially based (Gibb, 1995).

What makes one an entrepreneur is not only the content of cognitive and motor skills one has acquired but an interface of these with the attitudinal component (affective) which acts as the driving force, energizer, motivator, push, etc. Our students therefore require a full dose of drive, passion, creativity, vision, courage, ability to assume reasonable risks, patience, perseverance, resilience, ingenuity, tolerance, self-esteem, resistance, integrity, etc. to be able to function effectively as entrepreneurs and thus be both self-employed and employers of labour (Oduma, 2007). The following steps will help to achieve a new horizon entrepreneurship education in the country:

1. There should be some form of genuine school work based learning incorporated in some studies as part of the national economic development strategies. The development of apprenticeship scheme would give secondary school leavers some work skills and experience.

2. Pool local public and private funds to create a small venture capital fund.
3. School based enterprises where students identify potential business, plan, create and operate small business using the school as mini-incubators.
4. Provide small business schools where interested students can participate.
5. Develop entrepreneurship internship programmes matching students with locally successful entrepreneurs with clearly established education programmes.
6. Establishing an enterprise college aimed at fostering the specific skills sets required for entrepreneurship to serve as skill acquisition centres for the youths.
7. Create an economic friendly political environment.

Conclusion

Entrepreneurship education programme was introduced in the curriculum of Nigerian education system with the intended aim of ameliorating the problem of unemployment through equipping students with the skills and competences that will enable them to be self-employed and employers of labour, increase human capital development through training, boast the economy of the nations through wealth creation. The inclusion of entrepreneurship education will to a great extent, assist in solving the problems of high unemployment and underemployment. To stimulate entrepreneurial activities through entrepreneurship education can be attained through access and quality education. We can achieve a new horizon entrepreneurship education by adopting a more practical approach to the implementation of the entrepreneurship education curriculum.

Recommendations

1. A more practical approach to the implementation of the entrepreneurship education curriculum should be adopted.
2. The Federal government in collaboration with state governments should provide scholarships/bursaries for performing students by way of encouragement.
3. The community where the school is situated should help in providing needed facilities for the teaching of entrepreneurship education through community based programmes.
4. There should be some form of genuine school work based learning incorporated in some studies as part of the national economic development strategies. The development of apprenticeship scheme would give secondary school leavers some work skills and experience.

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