Entrepreneurship Education in Nigeria

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Abstract
This paper discusses the need for entrepreneurship education in Nigeria geared towards enhancing sustainable development in the country. Since entrepreneurship skills remain vital in the real sector and the sustenance of economic development, it has become imperative for government to pay attention to this sub-sector. The problems facing the country ranging from acute poverty, youth and graduate unemployment, dependence on foreign goods and technology; to very low economic growth and development among others has prompted government’s recognition of this fact that has led to the introduction of entrepreneurial studies in tertiary institutions. This paper therefore argues that entrepreneurship education will equip the students with the skills with which to be self-reliant. The paper recommends that educational programmers at all levels of education should be made relevant to provide the youth the needed entrepreneurial skills. All stakeholders must encourage the proposed introduction of entrepreneurship study across faculties and departments as general courses in the country. The federal government in collaboration with state governments should provide scholarships/bursaries for performing students by way of encouragement, Entrepreneurship education should be introduced by youth early in their primary, secondary and tertiary institution, e.t.c

Keywords: Entrepreneurship Education, Vocational Training, Sustainable Development, Entrepreneur, Education.

Introduction
With the soaring unemployment rate in Nigeria, self employment and small enterprise initiatives are presently high on the country’s national agenda, in the hope that they will provide alternative channels of employment. Yearly, thousand of university graduates join the labour market in search of gainful employment. The challenge is thus one of not only tackling the already sizeable unemployed graduates, but also of absorbing
the new entrants into the labour market. Underlying this situation is the fact that the training which tertiary students receive has not been fully successful in equipping them with desirable skills and competencies required for job creation and self-employment (Madumere-obike, 2006, Amaewhule, 2007 and Nwangwu, 2007). The realization of this critical fact underlies the directive of the Federal Government to all tertiary education regulatory agencies to establish necessary mechanisms for the introduction, development and sustenance of entrepreneurial culture among Nigerian youths.

Entrepreneurship education has come to denote all forms of knowledge delivery that seek to empower the individual to create real wealth in the economic sector, thereby advancing the cause of development of the nation as a whole. According to Bassey and Archibong (2005), the goal of entrepreneurship education is intended to empower our graduates irrespective of their areas of specialization with skills that will enable them to engage in income yielding venture, if they are unable to secure jobs in the public sector. It is a reorientation from job seekers to job creators.

The rationale for the inclusion of entrepreneurship curricula in universities according to Cotton, O’Gorman and Stampfli (2000) is that it will help graduates to acquire increased understanding of entrepreneurship, equip them with entrepreneurial approach to the world of work and prepare them to act as entrepreneurs and managers of new businesses. Thus, the objectives of entrepreneurship education as succinctly presented by the European Union (2002) include: “raising students’ awareness of self-employment as a career option (the message being that you can become not only an employee, but also an employer); promoting the development of personal qualities that are relevant to entrepreneurship, such as creativity, risk taking and responsibility; and providing the technical and business skills that are needed in order to start a new venture”. From the foregoing it can be deduced that exposure of university students to entrepreneurial education will ginger-up entrepreneurial drive in students and if properly packaged, can be a significant factor in chronic unemployment reduction among graduates.

In Nigeria, entrepreneurship education is still at its infancy. While most Nigerian
universities have initiated the programme, little research is available to assess its impact and also to confirm if a relationship exists between students taking courses in entrepreneurship and their intention of becoming entrepreneurs.

Therefore, the move by the government through the Federal Ministry of Education to make entrepreneurship education one of the compulsory general studies for students in universities across the country should be seen as a positive step in the right direction. This is to inculcate in the youths the spirit of self reliance. This development will not only address the problem of unemployment and underemployment but will also ensure an entrepreneurial human capacity for national development. It is the hope that with the introduction of entrepreneurial education in our tertiary institutions the universities will better be repositioned to become centres of excellence with the equipping of technical laboratories both at secondary and tertiary levels. This will put the country on the path to join communities of nations that have fought poverty through strengthening of small scale businesses.

**Statement of the Problem**

It has been realized obviously that the type of education offered in most tertiary institutions produce graduates for whom there is no market demands. Graduates are produced for wage employment in the formal sector. Unemployment of graduates from Nigerian tertiary institution has become a major national problem as it is observed. This paper therefore attempts to find out entrepreneurship education in Nigeria.

**Conceptual Consideration**

**Entrepreneurship:** Entrepreneurship education means many different things to educators from primary schools to the university level. At each level of education, it is reasonable to expect different outcomes as students mature and build on previous knowledge. The overall purpose remains to develop expertise as an entrepreneur.

Entrepreneurship according to Isaac, Visser, Friedrick and Brijlal (2007) is the purposeful intervention by an educator in the life of the learner to survive in the world of business. It has as its focus an action orientation primarily embodied in teaching students how to develop a business plan Ronstadt, (1985). Entrepreneurship education develops and
stimulates entrepreneurial process, providing all tools necessary for starting up new ventures Postigo and Tomborini (2002). It is commonly believed that entrepreneurship education is an imperative that would make a positive contribution to improving the entrepreneurship orientation of people, leading to the acquisition of skills, creativity, confidence, drive and courage, in order to create employment for self and others. Also the definition postulated by wikipedia, “is the act of being an entrepreneur” or “one who undertakes innovations, finance and business acumen in an effort to transform innovations into economic goods”. This may result in new organizations or may be part of revitalizing mature organizations in response to a perceived opportunity. The most obvious form of entrepreneurship is that of starting new business which is referred to as Startup Company. Gana (2001), defined it as willingness and ability of an individual to seek out investment opportunities in an environment and be able to establish and run an enterprise successfully based on identified opportunities. Hisrich and Peters (2002), simply captured the term as the dynamic process of creating incremental wealth. They went further to explain that entrepreneurship is the personalized version of actualizing one’s desire, ambition, and expression.

Entrepreneur: An entrepreneur is an enterprising individual who builds capital through risk and for initiative. The term was originally a loan word from French and was first defined by the Irish – French economist Richard Cantillon. Entrepreneur in English is a term applied to a person who is willing to help launch a new venture or enterprise and accept full responsibility for the outcomes. The word entrepreneur was coined from a French word called ‘entrepredre’ which means a person who voluntarily head the military expedition. It was first used during the French military history in the seventeenth century. Ojeifo (2010) in his book, a Handbook on Entrepreneurial Development in Nigeria defined an entrepreneur as the owner or the manager of business enterprise who through risks and initiative, attempts to make a profit.
**Objectives of Entrepreneurship Education**

Entrepreneurship education seeks to provide students with the knowledge, skills and motivation to encourage entrepreneurial success in a variety of settings. 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.

**Importance of Entrepreneurship Education in Nigeria**

The importance of entrepreneurship to any economy is like that of entrepreneurship in any community: entrepreneurship activity and the resultant financial gain are always of benefit to a country. Entrepreneurship education focuses on developing understanding and capacity for pursuit of entrepreneurial behaviors, skills and attributes in widely different context. It can be portrayed as open to all. The propensity to behave entrepreneurially is not exclusive to certain individuals. Different individuals will have a different mix of capabilities for demonstrating and acquiring entrepreneurial behaviors, skills and attributes. These behaviors can be practiced, developed and learned; hence it is important to expose all students to entrepreneurship education.

Entrepreneurial skills and attributes provide benefits to society, even beyond their application to business activity. Obviously, personal qualities that are relevant to
entrepreneurship such as creativity and a spirit of initiative can be useful to everyone in their working responsibilities and in their day-to-day existence.

Entrepreneurship education programme equip individuals with business and personal attributes values and ethics as well as managerial skills and competencies for establishing and operating private enterprise as means of eradicating the effect of unemployment and poverty. Entrepreneurship education as a veritable part of vocational/business education plays a significant role in solving unemployment problems.

As noted by Ojo and Gabinije (2006) entrepreneurship education enable the recipient to develop employable and entrepreneurial skills to make them, stand on their own because of the knowledge and creative ability they have gained which are also needed for self-employment without relying on government for salaried jobs.

Entrepreneurship education trains people to establish small and medium scale business through entrepreneurial skills, knowledge and managerial abilities, they will not only engage in business activities, but they will employ others to work them and become employment of labour.

Entrepreneurship education leads to the creation of more wealth through existence of smaller one in a country which contributes largely to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of a nation.

In the theory of distribution put forward by Say (1824), a neoclassical economist, the entrepreneur plays a crucial role, though he or she is not a production factor. Unlike the capitalist, the entrepreneur directs the application of acquired knowledge to the production of goods for human consumption.

From the above advantages/benefits Entrepreneurship should be taught to students in all disciplines in institutions of higher learning. It is not out of place to say that many business ideas emerge from non-business disciplines but are often waved aside or ignored because students are not sufficiently educated in the knowledge and skills required.

What is the Contribution of Entrepreneurship to Nigeria’s Economic Development?

i. Entrepreneurship has contributed significantly to Nigeria’s economy development, because it has created more employment for job seekers;
ii. The unfavorable economic condition has not allowed entrepreneurship development to promote Nigeria’s economic development.

iii. Corruption and nepotism has made government efforts to promote entrepreneurship to below expectation; hence no significant contribution has been made.

iv. The large scale unemployment that bedevils the economy shows that no significant improvement has been made in the area of entrepreneurship development.

v. The contribution of entrepreneurship to Nigeria’s economic development is marginal due to the lack of access to capital.

c) Absence of regulatory mechanisms for effective oversight of enterprise development initiatives, especially those in the MSME space.

d) The presence of administrative and trade barriers that curtail capacity building and inhibit access to technical support.

e) Significant infrastructural deficits (especially with regards to roads and electricity) and systematic irregularities inimical to small businesses.

f) Absence of a pro-active regulatory environment that encourages innovative enterprise development at the grassroots level.

g) No doubt, one of the biggest challenges of any entrepreneur is access to capital.

Challenges of Entrepreneurship Education in Nigeria

The following are the most important obstacles facing rapid entrepreneurial development in Nigeria.

a) Rampant political and bureaucratic corruption together with the absence of social consensus on important macroeconomic policy issues.

b) Poor access to vocational and skills – development training for rural and urban youths involved in the informal economy.

c) Absence of regulatory mechanisms for effective oversight of enterprise development initiatives, especially those in the MSME space.

d) The presence of administrative and trade barriers that curtail capacity building and inhibit access to technical support.

e) Significant infrastructural deficits (especially with regards to roads and electricity) and systematic irregularities inimical to small businesses.

f) Absence of a pro-active regulatory environment that encourages innovative enterprise development at the grassroots level.

g) No doubt, one of the biggest challenges of any entrepreneur is access to capital.

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.

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 new graduates 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 and community members 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. Creating an economic friendly political environment.

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

Conclusion

Since many years ago, Nigeria has a history of economic stagnation that has led to decline in white collar jobs. The inclusion of entrepreneurship course in all disciplines will to a great extent, assist in solving this problems of high unemployment and underemployment in Nigeria. The concept, objectives, importance of entrepreneurship education, challenges and strategies for effective entrepreneurship education were discussed and recommendations formed the later part of the paper.

Recommendations

1. All stakeholders must encourage the proposed introduction of Entrepreneurship study across faculties and departments as general courses in the country. The federal government in collaboration with state governments should provide scholarships/bursaries for performing students by way of encouragement.

2. Entrepreneurial education should be introduced by youth early in their primary, secondary and tertiary institution.

3. Government must be committed to the needs of quality or functional
entrepreneurship curricula at all levels of education and be reviewed at regular intervals especially three-five years.

4. Federal Government should legislate on collaboration between industry and education in Nigeria.

5. Government should also implement other ways suggested in this study to reposition entrepreneurship education at regular basis.

6. The National Universities Commission (NUC) should as usual set the minimum benchmark of the courses in Nigerian universities. This development should not be politicized, rather, the entire policy frameworks needed for its sustainability and improvement should be provided so as to salvage Nigeria from clutches of poverty.

Reference


