

ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN NIGERIAN: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

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ABSTRACT

This paper discuss some issues and challenges of entrepreneurship education in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. This is based on the provisions of the National Policy on Education (2004) which lays emphasis on the need for beneficiaries of vocational and technical education to be entrepreneurs so as to achieve self-employment after graduation and also to eliminate poverty, hunger and disease and the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals (MDG) which are to be realized before 2015. It highlight areas, in entrepreneurship concept. This paper recommends that there should be a responsible way of inculcating in our youths and adults the dream for self-employment as a very good alternative to wage employments before they graduate from tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Entrepreneurship skills development in programmes are multidisplines in order to arrest the soaring unemployment rate in the country.

INTRODUCTION

In contemporary Nigeria, entrepreneurship education has become compulsory at the tertiary institutions as a response to the graduate unemployment. According to the National Policy on Education (2004) which lays emphasis on the need for beneficiaries of vocational and technical education to be entrepreneurs so as to achieve self-employment after graduation and also to eliminate poverty, hunger and disease. The graduate rather than seeking formal employment could set up small-scale businesses after graduation. This is very important because of its influence on the economic and political life of the country. Studies have shown that decisions of entrepreneurs and big corporations are the one that shape unemployment, prices, prosperity, nature of work and occupational structures in any country asserted by Duruamaku 1996; Akinola, 2001; Ojukwu, 2001; and Menzies, 2003 as cited in Oviawe and Ekhovbiye (2008).

In this vein, there is the need to teach and encourage entrepreneurial skills development to the students in tertiary institutions in Nigeria including that of secondary and technical colleges students. This will bring out the hidden entrepreneurship potentialities in students to be nurtured and cultivated early enough. This is the reason why tertiary education has a big role to play in training potential entrepreneurs.

WHAT IS ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION?

Kauffman, (2010) defines entrepreneurship education as “the process of providing individuals with the concepts and skills to recognize opportunities that others have overlooked and to have the insight, self-esteem and knowledge to act where others have hesitated. It includes instruction in opportunity recognition, marshalling resources in the face of risk, and initiating a business venture. It also includes instruction in business management processes such as business planning, capital development, marketing, and cash flow analysis.”

Ngada (2001) said that nation building is the effort made by teachers to move the nation steadily and permanently in the direction of self-reliance and development through dedication to excellence in leadership, discipline, orderliness, honesty, mutual respect and tolerance in national affairs. It is also a concerted effort by the leaders to bring people of a diverse society together to form an economically viable, politically strong and culturally stable nation. Hornby (2001) said that a veritable “vehicle” is something that can be used to express ones ideas or feelings in order to achieve it. Aina (2002) stressed that when something is being sustained, it means that it is the ability to stabilize or perpetrate the gains of nation building. In this case, an individuals, a community, a nation or an ecosystem needs to sustain or maintain the improved condition it has attained without regressing into its erstwhile undesirable state. This

is what entrepreneurship education ought to do by solving unemployment and poverty through the utilization of entrepreneurial skills to harness the available resources to produce the desired goods and services demanded by the citizens. It is against this background that entrepreneurial educational skills acquisition become very relevant to contemporary Nigeria where unemployment is increasing by leaps and bounds. This paper will examine issues and challenges with regards to the implementation of entrepreneurship education in tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

1. Issues of Entrepreneurship Education in Tertiary Institutions

(a) Unemployment, Poverty and Millennium Development Goals:

Okposio (2008) explained that the Millennium Development Goals is an eight-point agenda of the United Nations Organization that is intended to reduce poverty, encourage education, health, environment and global partnership's problems and make solutions to them latest by the year 2015. The agenda of the Millennium Development Goals are:

- (1) Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger;
- (2) achieve Universal Primary Education;
- (3) promote Gender Equality and Empower Women;
- (4) reduce child mortality;
- (5) improve maternal health;
- (6) combat HIV and AIDS, malaria and other diseases;
- (7) ensure environmental sustainability; and
- (8) develop a global partnership for development.

In Nigeria, unemployment has become the biggest problem in the economy. As a result of population explosion in the country, there is a corresponding increase in the rate of enrolment in schools, colleges of education, polytechnics and universities. This is why Omotosho (2008) stressed that there is a high graduate unemployment today because all the two hundred and twenty-nine (229) tertiary institutions graduate thousands of students yearly. Moreover, the unemployment situation in the country has aggravated hunger, poverty, insecurity, etc, so much that the future of the country cannot be easily predicated as a developing one.

(b) Entrepreneurship Skills Development Education

Omenkeukwu (2000) explained that it is through the training of students in entrepreneurship skills right from their school days that can make the desired impact by reducing unemployment situation in Nigeria. Therefore, entrepreneurship education is "an aspect of education that is geared at developing students' skills, ideas and managerial abilities that are necessary from personal reliance. Omenkeukwu (2000) identified the following factors as very imperative in constituting skills for entrepreneurship education:

1. Identifying the potentials and selection of career preference for self-employment.
2. Development of entrepreneurial qualities e.g., innovative ability, risk-taking desire to achieve and goal-oriented leadership.
3. Managerial understanding - this concerns office and marketing management
4. Budget and forecasting.
5. Business financing and organization.
6. Individual entrepreneur. The entrepreneurial traits of the individual are motivated and reinforced through psychological training inputs.
7. Enterprise establishment – it has to do with setting up new business ventures, which would require business opportunity guidance and project planning as the educational inputs.
8. Overall management teaching program – This involves teaching managerial techniques and counseling for successful and profitable operation of business enterprise.

The following agencies have also been involved in promoting entrepreneurship programmes in Nigeria:

The National Youth Service Corps (NYSC): Conducts entrepreneurship training programmes especially at the orientation period or in some cases, towards the end of the NYSC year.

Tertiary Institutions: The National Universities Commission (NUC) and National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) and National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) have expanded their vocational and

technical education curriculum to include entrepreneurship development of small-scale business. They are highly theoretical without a blend of practical input through procurement of various equipment or tools for training including supporting graduates with soft loans to start their own businesses.

The Federal Government: The Federal Government, especially through the Federal Ministry of Employment, Labour and Productivity, have been involved in formulating proposals for Entrepreneurship Development Programme (EDP) of the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) for implementation. Also, the Industrial Training Fund (ITF) has been involved in training students through SIWES during school programmes and this is a way in assisting them to be future entrepreneurs but have not been backed up with funding through disbursement of loans to graduates to start their own ventures.

Despite the involvement of various agencies in promoting entrepreneurship programme in Nigeria, there is still urgent need for more meaningful entrepreneurial skills development in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The need to galvanize students to launch themselves to become future entrepreneurs is very obvious. The programme delivery system lacks the valued ingredient which need to be nurtured at the background of implementation of entrepreneurship education programme which are entrepreneurial culture and spirit needed to ignite students passion for positive thinking and creativity for innovation to increase productivity. Entrepreneurship education programme should be such that enable graduates access to start-up loans which helps start small business across the country. In addition, the need for monitoring unit is very essential to constantly check on entrepreneurship education impact across the nation's tertiary institutions aside bodies responsible for accreditation of courses as a regular checks on programmes being carried out on number of businesses created thus employment is generated from time to time. And also seeing to it that the scheme succeeds as is done in other nations that have become emerging entrepreneurial nations.

2. Challenges of Entrepreneurship Education in Tertiary Institutions

The challenges to the implementation of entrepreneurial skills development in tertiary institutions in Nigeria include the followings:

(a) Curriculum content of entrepreneurship

There is poor monitoring and evaluation of the curriculum content of entrepreneurship education. Generally there is lack of monitoring of assignment given to students as practicals in entrepreneurship education which result in the varied shortcoming which is detrimental to National Policy on Education on entrepreneurship education intention for the national's realisation on education and realisation of the MDG by the year 2015. For instance, drawing from the information the researcher gathered from personal interviews with students of some selected tertiary institutions in south-south and south-west geo-political zones, there is no active participation of all student members of the group because there was no supervision by lecturers or facilitators. The practical lacks direction of what is approved, this gives a free way to some students to only contribute and/or buy outright product and submit because the students do not have the knowhow of the production process. But the crux of the matter is that some lecturers of entrepreneurship education who are suppose to impart these skill, themselves lack such as a result you cannot give what you do not have. Besides, there is no uniformity in teaching entrepreneurship education in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. In some institutions what is taught is not what is examined, while in some though it is taught throughout students' stay in school it is a zero credit unit. Unilag and Uniben students upon interview emphasized the entrepreneurship education in their institution is handed has any other GST course whereby upon registration of the course with certain amount of money, a textbook is issued to them by the entrepreneurship centre. The only other contact with the centre is during examination which is generally German OBJ. In the case of Uniben students the German OBJ is based on entrepreneurship questions while that of the Unilag students, the questions have no bearing with entrepreneurship education but a general knowledge.

Furthermore, the course contents differs considerable from institution to institution. Some teach only theory, and those that manage to teach practicals it is nothing to go by. Only the polytechnics seems to have a standard curriculum but their current application and presentation cannot impart meaningful skills on their student. Notifiably, Yaba College of Technology students interviewed pointed out that the centre of entrepreneurship education in their institution is more

interested in the consultancy services to the neighbouring communities at the detriment of their students skill acquisition.

(b) **Inadequate Educational Infrastructure and Instructional and other facilities:**

There is need for establishment of enterprises centres (villages) where students practicum is facilitated thereby providing the needed synergy of theory and practicals. Instructional facilities such as workshop, laboratories, machineries and equipment, materials and consumables should be provided to enable such centres to be functional as obtainable in other countries that have succeeded in imbibing entrepreneurship education. Adequate educational infrastructure and instructional facilities will enhance effective implementation of entrepreneurship education in Nigeria

Poor electricity power supply: This is the most basic problem because electricity is the power that moves small-scale businesses, laboratory practical works, industries etc. The epileptic nature of electricity have resulted even in the damage of equipment where provision of equipment is available. Provision of constant electricity power supply has remained a mirage in Nigeria's political dispensations as a result of lack of the 'political will' to do so.

Inadequate Funding of Schools: This is a very big problem, hence, the failure to prioritize the use of available funds that would cover areas of need like: employing qualified staff, (competent lecturers, facilitator/trainers with entrepreneurial skills) procuring textbooks, improving on existing infrastructures, procuring equipment, instruments, teaching aids, and the like. Lack of funds has resulted in the absence of workshop in schools, in training and re-training of teachers at all levels, inadequate provision of classroom blocks, laboratories, etc. it is also affected the attendant problems of shortage of libraries and of stocking them with relevant up-to-date textbooks, as well as irregular payment of teacher's salaries and allowances.

(c) **Qualification and competence of teachers**

The poor knowledge of practical use of equipment and maintenance culture and the challenges of skilled facilitator to aid and train students is a threat to skill acquisition in entrepreneurship education programme in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The readily availability of skill facilitators/trainers is among the students themselves who have had a previous skill acquisition and volunteers to teach others in the group when assignment is given. There is need for lecturers to have competency in diverse entrepreneurial skills in order to be able to inculcate in the students such skills.

(d) **Interest level of students in entrepreneurship in tertiary institutions**

Orientation is a major missing link in entrepreneurship education in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Nothing empowers the human race like knowledge, to be informed is to be transformed, and to be informed is the currency of destiny. Students in tertiary institutions in Nigeria are not well aware of the importance of entrepreneurship education in nation sustenance and self-reliance. Tertiary institutions in Nigeria should build a synergy of theory and practice of entrepreneurial development thereby creating an enabling environment where students are not only ready to prove themselves but express themselves creatively by turning things around through innovation, and ready to take risk by turning skills into enterprise. It is necessary therefore for tertiary institutions in Nigeria to empower their students with employable skills with which they can function anywhere, and they can engage in self improvement at all times. They should sell the change associated with entrepreneurship education rather than forcing the change on students so that when they graduate they can be focused on what to do given the needed leverage by seeking information and advice in order to grow and be entrepreneurial in their life styles. During the researcher one-on-one interview session with Benson Idahosa University (BIU) some computer science students opined that their lack of interest may not be unconnected with the presentation of entrepreneurship education by the course lecturers who teach the course as if they are news casters. The students attend only out of compulsion to fulfill the 75% attendance a pre-requisite for examination qualification. In fact, they confess that there is communication break down between students and the course lecturer. For business administration students they see the need for the course and felt the impact so far because it is rekindling their enterprise spirit to be an employer rather than an employee. Their personal opinion is that it has awake their persistence,

innovation, initiative and creativity. Same goes for agriculture and education students they agree that the entrepreneurship education is one that comes with ideas of creativity and skills. The Covenant University students appreciated entrepreneurial skills and mental skills. To them entrepreneurship stands you out to be self-reliance regardless of your field of study to be useful and productive. Business students are in support of course as compulsory to all. There is now a difference in opinion as a result of entrepreneurship education of their idea about life and world of work. Entrepreneurship education have broadens their horizon on how to run a business of your own and be self-reliance and many of them opined that they would rather be entrepreneurs than seeking for paid jobs.

(g) Perception of students and staff on entrepreneurship education in tertiary institutions in Nigeria

Here lies the missing link because according to interviewed Auchi Poly students some members are only interested in their cash contribution without personal participation. While other neither contributes nor participates they only hide under the group as member and get the awarded score for the groups. Most BIU law students are ignorant of the benefits of entrepreneurship education to their professional course. They are opined that the ethics of their profession forbids them from such practice and as such is very irrelevant to them. In short, waste of their time. The only felt gain, for these students is that the grade add up to beef up their GPA. Their active participation in entrepreneurship education is very difficult because of lack of interest due to their mind set. They only offer the course because it is a prerequisite course for graduation. They so disliked the imposition of the course and if given the chance they would rather it be left as an elective course. Whereas, the computer science students looks forward to their institutions making it more relevant to them by including areas that will ignite their creativity such as construction of circuit inverter and solar panels.

Most students interviewed also emphasized the need for their institution to provide the students with competent facilitators through in-sourcing and outsourcing, who can engage them with their expertise knowledge in skills acquisition. They pointed out that there is need to first orient the lecturers, facilitators/trainers themselves to increase their awareness in order to stimulate their psyche towards entrepreneurship education so that they can impact meaning entrepreneurial culture and spirit in their students. For instance, Auchi Poly students claimed to be excited with their juice production but were scared to have a taste of what they have produce because they had no expertise handling of the production process. They stressed the need for networking of departments in some production process. Like their juice production, a home economies facilitator should have been present to tutor them while a nutritionist have to handle the nutritional value/content in this way the group would have been able to produce something they can equally put into use commercially and come out with something new, whereby a new product hitting the market stands. Another group who produce mat said that after their production their product was more expensive than what obtains in the market and as such they could not sell what they have produce. And other students experience were that the worth of their products were too high compare with the market worth and as such could not sell. Besides, their product far was below the standard in the open market.

Auchi Poly engineering students prefer more practical works supervised by lecturers, facilitators/trainers with a write-up on work done with presentation similar to seminar and scores awarded. They were of the opinion that this will make all the exercise to be more functional because in the group assignment the practical works only a very few members participated. Entrepreneurship education should be organized in such a way that the lecturers, facilitators/trainers are on ground while the practical are been done, this will enable the students and the nation to be better for it. Besides, they stressed the need for originality instead of duplication of already existing systems and mode of ideas through copying and faking products. Furthermore, enterprises villages should be established as it is obtainable in other countries that have moved from subset economy into commercial globalize economy through their novel initiatives and inventions. They emphasize the need for standard workshop, laboratories material and equipment. They expressed their need for skills, brainstorming for novel idea for creativity and awareness.

The students of Igbinedion Univeristy also yearn for more organization of conferences/workshop by NGO's, who are successful entrepreneurs to come and give inspiring talk to them. The students suggest that more room should be created in the course of the entrepreneurship education. They request for re-orientation of student in other to imbed enterprise culture, innovativeness, initiative to stimulate them by provision of facilities, guide and assistance in practical works and also sponsorship given when they have novel and productive ideas.

CONCLUSION

What difference is there in tertiary education for a graduate armed with qualifications that are not useful for him to work for himself except he is engaged in the corporate world? Unfortunately, there are a few growing businesses that can recruit, attract and retain fresh graduates. The result is joblessness and young professional settling in careers they have little or no interest in which is causing a great concern of parents, employers and economic managers nationally.

In order to beef up the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills for graduates of tertiary institutions in Nigeria, entrepreneurial skills development should be studied from the secondary school level. In this vein, the skills will gear up the youths and adults to imbibe the culture of hard work, dedication to duty including the "technical know-how" so that unemployment will gradually be eliminated from the economy through self-employment.

RECOMMENDATIONS/SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

All stakeholders in education should evolve a responsible regular funding of entrepreneurship education right from the secondary school education to the tertiary institutions, because it is capital-equipment-base. Funding should also include research and production of learning materials in order to encourage mastery and competence in entrepreneurial skills in vocational and technical education.

The attainment of balance between theory and practical work will be achieved as a result of adequate funding of entrepreneurship education programmes in the respective institutions of learning. Government should take the lead and initiative in fighting unemployment by providing loans to graduates in order to enable them set up their own business centres because of its equipment-capital nature. This should be done by setting up a loan scheme to finance it. All tertiary institutions in Nigeria should be massively equipped with the relevant tools, equipment or machines in order to facilitate competencies of graduates.

Besides, there should be a linkage between tertiary institutions offering entrepreneurship education and industries in order to enforce a smooth transition from school to the industry. There should also be in inter departmental, and faculty linkage to enhance creativity and standard of production. Also, there is need for brainstorming for novel idea for creativity and awareness. Besides, there is a need for the Technology Incubation Centres in various locations in Nigeria and the tertiary institutions to exchange experiences and good practice, and to propose ways to move forward in promoting entrepreneurship education more systematically and with effectiveness. Both bodies should work hand in hand for the successful story of entrepreneurship developmental advancement of Nigeria. The ideas advanced from such interactions will definitely result in detailed catalogue of initiatives that could be usefully taken by all stakeholders concerned.

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