
DRIVING ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

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ABSTRACT: *The objective of this paper is to discuss issues and challenges driving entrepreneurship education in Nigeria. Since entrepreneurship education remain vital in the real sector and the sustenance of economic development, it has become necessary for Nigerian Government to pay attention to this sector. This paper, therefore, argues that entrepreneurship education will equip the unemployed youths with the skills with which to be self-reliant. Also, the paper recommended that educational programmes at all levels of education should be made relevant to provide the youths the needed entrepreneurial skills. It also recommended that the Nigerian Government should give adequate attention to full blown entrepreneurial education in Nigeria.*

KEYWORDS: Entrepreneurship, Education, Issues, Challenges, Strategies

INTRODUCTION

Driving entrepreneurship education according to Ocho (2005); Ojeifo (2013) is the process through which individuals are made participating members of their society. It enables them to become capable of living in the society and to contribute towards its economic development (Nwachukwu & Nwamuo, 2010; Unachukwu, 2009). This shows that a functional education system takes cognizance of the dynamics of the labour market, equips its graduates with occupational skills and competencies to enable them be self reliant.

The purpose of this paper is to describe the issues and challenges driving entrepreneurship education among youths especially students of tertiary education in Nigeria and to make recommendations on the way forward. The paper is set out as follows: first the concepts of entrepreneurship, literature review and theoretical framework are discussed. Second a discussion of the importance of entrepreneurship education in Nigeria is outlined. Thirdly the objectives of entrepreneurship education and the challenge and strategies confronting entrepreneurship education in Nigeria were discussed. Finally, conclusion and the recommendations towards ensuring a full blown entrepreneurship education in Nigeria were made.

The Concept of Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship is the willingness and ability of an individual to seek for investment opportunities, to establish and to run an enterprise successfully (Solomon, 2007). Entrepreneurship according to Omolayo (2006); Baba (2013) is the act of starting a company, arranging business deals and taking risks in order to make profit through the education skills

acquired. The entrepreneurship spirit is a pre-requisite to an entrepreneurial society and culture. This spirit is required for the overall economic growth of any nation especially developing ones like Nigeria. This is in line with the view of Nwangwu (2006); Ojeifo (2013) that entrepreneurship is the willingness and the ability of an individual or a firm or an organization to identify an environmental change and exploit such an opportunity to produce goods and services for public consumption. According to Peter Drucker (1970) and Knight (1967), entrepreneurship is about taking a risk; it is the process of creating new ventures that did not previously exist; it is the practice of starting new organization, especially new business; it involves creation of new wealth through implementation of new concepts. Drucker (1970) believes that what entrepreneurs have in common is not personality traits but a commitment to innovation. For innovation to occur the entrepreneur must have not only talent, ingenuity and knowledge but he must also be hard working, focused and purposeful.

To Aruwa (2004), it is the ability of some people to accept risk and combine factors of production in order to produce goods and services. It can also be seen as the 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 the identified opportunities.

The concept of entrepreneurship is however associated with a number of activities as it does not occur in a vacuum. For it to occur it demands the presence of an entrepreneur and an enabling environment.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Entrepreneurship has been recognized as an important aspect of an organization and economies (Dickson, Solomon and Weaver, 2008; Ossai and Nwalado, 2012; Arewa, 2004; Akpomi, 2008; Ojeifo, 2013; Baba, 2013). It contributes in an immeasurable ways toward creating new jobs, wealth creation, poverty reduction and income generating for both government and individuals. Schumpeter in 1984 argued that entrepreneurship is very significant to the growth and development of economies. Having understood the role of entrepreneurship in economic development, it becomes apparent that careful attention is needed to invest and promote entrepreneurship. Education is also seen as one of the precondition for entrepreneurship development particularly in a place where the spirit and culture are very minimal. It is said to be an important determinant of selection into entrepreneurship, formation of new venture and entrepreneurial success (Dickson, Solomon, & Weaver, 2008; Nwachukwu & Nwamuo, 2010; Baba, 2013). However, it is equally assumed here that there is a positive relationship between education and individual's choice to become an entrepreneur as well as the result and outcome of his or her entrepreneurial activity.

The move toward poverty reduction should not be considered and treated in isolation, different approaches and strategies need to be employed. For any country to foster genuine economic growth and development, its educational system must be considered in the bedrock of any meaningful development (Akpomi, 2009).

The Nigeria policy on education made it clear on the need for functional, to be relevant, practical and acquisition of appropriate skills and development of competencies as equipment for the individuals to live in and contribute to the development of his/her society (Albadekomo, 2004). Nwangwu (2006); Odjegba (2005); Baba (2013) reported that about 80% of the graduates find it difficult to get employment every year. And at the same time much has not been done in trying to bring collaboration between the entrepreneurs and the institutions. The universities, polytechnics and any other academic institutions community stand to benefit a lot from entrepreneurs located there. Similarly, the entrepreneurs may harness and use the expertise of facilities in those institutions. This kind of interaction and interrelationship will go a long way in bridging the gap that exist between the entrepreneurs and the institutions. Lack of this kind of synergy shows the weaknesses, inadequacies and fallacies of the educational policies in Nigerian in attainment of educational objectives (Aladekomo, 2004, Akpomi 2008).

Human capital theory provides a framework for examining the impact of acquired variables such as education, learning and experience on career outcomes and it was further developed on the assumption that education can serve as a key determinant of decision choice and providing benefit to specific ventures (Ojeifo, 2013). In cognizance of this fact, Adejimiola and Olufunmilaya, (2009); Ojeifo, (2013) opined that education should be designed with a view to create and enhance the supply of entrepreneurial initiative and activities. The bottom line here is to inculcate the spirit of entrepreneurship in the student through education. In fact, this calls for more serious adjustment of policies and new curriculum in line with demand of the present time.

Objectives of Entrepreneurship Education

Entrepreneurship education is oriented towards different ways of realizing opportunities. This is what makes entrepreneurship education distinctive in its focus on realization of opportunity, whereas management education is focused on the best way to operate existing hierarchies.

Entrepreneurship education seeks to provide students with the knowledge, skills and motivation to encourage entrepreneurship success in a variety of settings. Entrepreneurship education according to Paul (2005); Ojeifo (2013) 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-oriented.
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 rate 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

Entrepreneurship is the capacity to harness the right quantity, quality and combination of resources that are consistent with profit making under risks and uncertainty. Essien (2006), defined entrepreneurship as the totality of self-asserting attributes that enable a person to identify latent business opportunities, together with capacity to organize need resources with which to profitably take advantage of such opportunities in the face of calculated risks and uncertainty.

Entrepreneurship is a key driver of our economy; wealth and a high majority of jobs are created by small business started by entrepreneurially-minded individuals, many of whom go on to create big businesses. There is more creative freedom for people who are exposed to entrepreneurship education. There is higher self-esteem, and an overall greater sense of control over their own lives. It is the belief of many experienced business people, political leaders, economists and educators that fostering a robust entrepreneurial culture will maximize individual and collective economic and social success on a local, national, and global scale. It is with this in mind that the National Standards for Entrepreneurship Education were developed – to prepare youth and adults to succeed in an entrepreneurial economy.

As mentioned earlier, Entrepreneurship Education is a lifelong process; starting as early as elementary school and progressing through all levels of education, including adult education. The standards and their supporting performance indicators are a framework for teachers to use in building appropriate objectives, learning activities, and assessments for their target audience. Using this framework, students will have progressively more challenging educational activities; experience that will enable them to develop the insight needed to discover and create entrepreneurial opportunities; and the expertise to successfully start and manage their own businesses to take advantage of these opportunities.

Entrepreneurship education focuses on developing understanding and capacity for pursuit of entrepreneurial behaviors, skills and attributes in widely different contexts. 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. Also the relevant technical and business skills need to be provided to those who choose to be self-employed and/or to start their own venture or might do so in the future.

The economic importance of the entrepreneur has been recognized for several decades. Welber (1930) put forward the thesis that the Protestant ethic is the spirit of capitalism (Green, 1959). Other writers have discussed from different perspectives, the importance of entrepreneurship to different countries in the industrial era. Schumpeter (1947), who is, perhaps, believed to be the first major economist to analyze the role of entrepreneurship in economic development,

attributed innovation to the entrepreneur. He described entrepreneurship as the engine of economic development. He argued that “to study the entrepreneur is to study the central figure in modern economic history”.

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 Education 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.

Challenges of Entrepreneurship Education in Nigeria

Nigeria like most developing nations of the world is faced with myriads of problems and harsh realities which include poverty, unemployment, conflicts and disease (Baba 2013). These situations pose great challenges to the very existence of individuals in most developing nations thereby calling for the training of educated man and women who can function effectively in the society in which they live in. In Nigeria, more than half of the Nigerian populations are under the age of 30 according to the National Population Commission (2001). Therefore it can be asserted that the economy of Nigeria is a youth economy. This reality leaves them without any meaningful means of sustenance livelihood. To make ends meet, they simply indulge in armed robbery, kidnapping and so on. The country wants to increasingly globalize education through information and communication technology, and entrepreneurship. This is why the former President, Obasanjo, mandated that all students in Nigeria, regardless of their major, will need to study entrepreneurship.

Different meanings are ascribed to entrepreneurship education in different tertiary institutions in the country. Some of these programmes commonly present entrepreneurship education programmes in the context of vocational and technical education rather than developing the spirit of entrepreneurship, which is the stimulation of entrepreneurship activities and performance in various disciplines.

Despite the profound benefits of entrepreneurship education it is still not fully blown in Nigeria. The problems that hinder the development of entrepreneurship education in Nigeria include the following (Ojeifo, 2013):

- a) Rampant political and bureaucratic corruption together with the absence of social consensus on importance macroeconomic policy issues.
- b) Poor access to vocational and skills – development training for rural and urban youths involved in the informal economy.
- c) Data for entrepreneurship education has been lacking. There is little or limited programme design for entrepreneurship education.
- 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. There is need for substantial funds for teaching in practical terms for entrepreneurship education; for financing start ups and expansion of business ventures in order to produce successful entrepreneurs.

Strategies for Effective Entrepreneurship Education

In order to achieve viable entrepreneurship that will enhance sustainable development in Nigeria, the following strategies according to Nwangu (2006); Akpomi (2009) and Baba (2013) will help to solve 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. This implies enriching the curriculum to incorporate more vocational and technical training. The development of apprenticeship scheme would give new graduates some work skills and experiences.
2. There should be School-based enterprises where students identify potential business, plan, create and operate small business by using the school as mini-incubators.
3. Government should establish small business schools where interested students and community members can participate. This will make students to be self reliant.
4. Government should develop entrepreneur internship programme by matching students with locally successful entrepreneurs with clearly established education programmes.
5. The Government should establish an enterprise college aimed at fostering the specific skills required for entrepreneurship. This will serve as skill-acquisition centre for the youths.
6. Government should create an economic friendly environment. This centers on reduction of taxes on small scale businesses.
7. There should be enough incentives for students of vocational and technical schools. This will motivate them to establish their businesses after school.

CONCLUSION

This paper has addressed key entrepreneurial issues and challenges in Nigeria. The issue of entrepreneurship education to any nation especially developing country like Nigeria is no doubt of paramount importance. Its role in economic growth cannot be underestimated in all ramifications. Entrepreneurship education is a central pillar to economic growth and development, as well as employment generation and poverty alleviation (Nwachukwu & Nwamuo, 2010). It is therefore necessary that aggressive efforts should be made to see to its full development.

There is therefore, an increasing need for highly skilled and innovative workforce in the global economy. Professionals and non-professionals must have the skills to meet modern business needs and to be able to function in today's knowledge-based information economy. The government should also set machinery in motion to provide an enabling environment characterized by adequate infrastructural facilities.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the study findings and conclusions, the paper makes the following recommendations for effective entrepreneurship education in Nigeria.

1. Youths should be exposed to training in technology, especially new discoveries from time to time. This keep them in tune with trends of the technological world and thus avoids drudgery in their business.
2. All stakeholders must encourage the proposed introduction of Entrepreneurship study across colleges and departments as general courses in Nigerian Universities. Government should set machinery in motion to provide an enabling environment for entrepreneurship.
3. Universities should start to commercialize their research findings instead of leaving them in the shelves.
4. 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 the clutches of poverty.
5. To be effective, educational system in Nigeria also must ensure that entrepreneurship training and knowledge transfer become an integral part of their culture, highly valued by National University Commission and Vice-Chancellors and their Senate.
6. Entrepreneurship teaching has to go beyond the traditional teachings in schools. This implies the need to involve students in experiential training.
7. There should also be openness and linkages with systems of other countries abroad. This encourages exchange of ideas, and knowledge transfer through access to research endeavours.
8. Any new discovery with high potentials for entrepreneurship should be encouraged and fully funded.

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