

INDIGENOUS SKILLS AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION: A CRITICAL BLEND FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: *Generally, education is regarded as the most potent for achieving national development. This plausible statement clearly places education beyond any other sector in the onerous drive for national development. Sustainable development goals were articulated by the United Nations to fathom how far away countries are from achieving national development through the creation of National sustainable development strategies. While it is recognized that there are thousands (of unaccountable number) of strategies that could make education sustainable through the various tiers of education, indigenous skill elements are crucial in the delivery of entrepreneurship education for sustainability. Blending the potentials of both systems (entrepreneurship education and indigenous skills) is tantamount to forging sustainable development for the future.*

KEYWORDS: Indigenous skills, Entrepreneurship education, blend, Sustainable development.

INTRODUCTION

Recently, the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013, p. 26) created Vocational Enterprise Institutions (VEI) with the mandate “to educate students to think creatively and transform knowledge through technological processes into wealth and a broader economic base”. Its curriculum covers “all vocational and craftsmanship areas ... and other indigenous fabric making, artisans, apprenticeship etc”:

- a. Adire, Aso-Oke, Akwaete; and other indigenous fabrics and products;
- b. Gwado (local blanket), mats, drums;
- c. Welding, sheet metal work;
- d. Motor vehicle repairs (Auto-mechanical, Panel Beating, Auto-Electrical, Vulcanizing etc)
- e. Electrical wiring Domestic and Industrial;
- f. Construction (Plumbing, Painting, Bricklaying, etc);
- g. Catering;
- h. Performing Arts (Dance, Drama, Film production, Media, etc);
- i. Hairdressing and Beauty;
- j. Art;
- k. Agriculture;
- l. Fashion design;
- m. Sports;
- n. All other vocational skills (p. 27).

In section 5, subsection D (109), the policy document again initiates establishment of Innovation Enterprise Institutions (IEIs) “designed for students ... desirous of obtaining appropriate skills, knowledge and certification to pursue a chosen trade, or career” (FRN, 2013: 47). The stated IEI policy goals not only preempt but specifically suggest entrepreneurship on items (iv):

- (i) Train post-secondary students, who are desirous of acquiring industry specific skills, knowledge and appropriate certification to pursue a chosen trade or career;
- (ii) Educate post-secondary students to think creatively and transform knowledge through technological processes into wealth, and have a broader economic base;
- (iii) Provide technologically based skill training that ensure students understand how their expertise fits into improving the society and fulfilling national goals;
- (iv) Acquire entrepreneurial skills;
- (v) Increase access to technology education at tertiary level;
- (vi) Provide training that enables students to acquire specialized industrial skills that empower them to compete globally; and
- (vii) Provide training that enables students acquire nationally branded continuous education (p. 47- 48).

These policy positions, VEI curriculum (in section 3, subsection 58) and IEIs policy goals (in section 5, subsection 5D 109-iv), seems to:

- i. address common issues – wealth creation through acquiring skills predominant in the country;
- ii. suggest indigenous skills (section 3, subsection 58) a subsume of entrepreneurial skills (section 5, subsection 5D 109-iv);
- iii. support and encourage ‘domestication’ as an appropriate and necessary strategy for sustainability in education development.

This thinking lends credence to the United Nations summons, as articulated by UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) through its program of action for sustainable development—Agenda 21, that member countries pursue strategic and co-ordinate action for sustainable development through the creation of national sustainable development strategies.

It also reinforces SD goal number 4 intention to “ensure (member countries create) inclusive (an education that includes almost everything within its scope) and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”; to build upon and harmonize the various sectoral economic, social and environmental potentialities and possibilities predominant in the catchment area that education is designed to serve, that is, indigenous to the recipient (UN Division for Sustainable Development – DSD 2004).

The sustainable mantra actually permits and encourages pursuit of indigenous education. Its emphasis on creation of national sustainable development strategies suggests a belief that satisfying current needs without sacrificing future requirements is a possibility, mainly, within national or domestic systems (Globalwarming360; craven, 2008; brooks, 2015; Wikipedia, 2016).

It is to be noted that entrepreneurship development does not stripe education off its character and orientation rather reinforces the fact that educational systems are subject to the peculiarities of the nation it is designed to serve (Fafunwa, 2004). But, many education managers are just beginning, or are yet to begin, realize this strategic code. Once the emphasis is right, this thrust would expurgate moribund code and introduce new thinking.

Indigenous education defined

The term indigenous means “native to a land or region, especially before an intrusion” (Hornby, 2000). In this light, Fafunwa (1974, p.16) defined indigenous education (or indigenous skills) as: *Practical farming, fishing, weaving, cooking, carving, knitting, ... wrestling, dancing, drumming, acrobatic display, racing, etc, while intellectual training ... local history, legends, the environment (local geography, plants and animals), poetry, reasoning, riddles, proverbs, story-telling, ... profound native philosophy, science and religion (and so on which provide the Nigerian people with the goods and services which they either consume themselves or export abroad in order to enable payment for imports).* ---- Template 1.

The National Open Apprenticeship Scheme of the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) training template provides a modern equivalent of these indigenous skills:

ARCHITECTURAL DRAUGHTSMANSHIP

ACCOUNTANCY

Booking, Accountant trainee, Typing and Shorthand

ARTS

Painting and Sign writing, Photography, Leather works, Interior design/Decoration

BUILDING TRADES

Cabinet making, Carpentry, Plumbing/pipe-fitting/joinery, Bricklaying/masonry
Brick manufacturing

CIVIL ENGINEERING WORKS

Block laying, Plumbing, Surveying, Computer technology, Computer operating
Computer programming, Computer repairs/ maintenance

ELECTRICAL/ELECTONICS

Electrical installations, Radio/T.V maintenance, Generator maintenance

MECHANICAL TRADES

Auto mechanics, Auto electrical works, Refrigeration/ AC maintenance
Outboard engine mechanics, Metal mechanist, General fitting, Panel beating,
Sheet metal technician, Foundry technology, welding.

WOOD WORKS

Cabinet making/ joinery, Upholstery, Boat building, Coach building , Wood machinist
(Source: National Directorate of Employment, 2005). ---- Template 2

What then is Entrepreneurship in Education?

An entrepreneur is a creative risk-taker who identifies, critically analyze and execute a business opportunity by mobilizing required human and material resources to execute the project resulting in a new business enterprise and profits (Nwagwu, 2007). Entrepreneurs exhibit certain qualities:

- (i) risk-taking;
- (ii) responsibility;
- (iii) Confidence;
- (iv) Immediate feedback;
- (v) Energy;
- (vi) perseverance;
- (vii) correctible;
- (viii) Goal setting;
- (ix) Understanding (empathic and accommodative);
- (x) Futuristic;
- (xi) Organizational ability;
- (xii) Tolerant;
- (xiii) Decision making; and
- (xiv) Motivated by achievement instead of money.

In other to succeed, entrepreneurs diligently perform many interrelated functions such as:

1. Identifying and converting an unmet need into a business opportunity;
2. Selecting investable ideas from a pool of project ideas;
3. Setting up a business unit with legal status - vision, mission, etc;
4. exhibiting creativity, imagination and innovation by being innovative, adaptive, benchmarking and synthesizing ideas, materials, etc;
5. Mobilizing and integrating business resources in the most effective ratio, eg, obtain initial and additional capital funding, required technical expertise and information (Akpan, 2004, p. 6).

However, entrepreneurship, to Hisrich, Peters and Shepherd (2008: 8) is a:

dynamic process of creating incremental wealth. The wealth is created by people who assume the major risks in terms of equity, time and/or career commitment or provide value for some product (agricultural, commercial and industrial, etc) or service (transportation, tourism, banking, etc). The product or service may or may not be new or unique, but value must be infused by the entrepreneur by receiving and locating the necessary skills and resources ----- Template 3

There are business, managerial and personal dimensions which involve acquiring the ability to: (1) take initiative (2) organize and re-organize social and economic mechanisms to translate resources and circumstances into products, and (3) to confront success or failure (Hisrich et. al., 2008). Nwagwu (2007) believes that entrepreneurship entails creativity and taking risk and involves recognition, analysis and making decision to execute business opportunities by mobilizing required human and material resources in order to execute projects that creates new business ventures and profits. Akpan (2004) views it as a ‘profit-seeking behavior’ of individual and institutions who organize other inputs to produce commodities for profit-making. It could even be self-assertiveness borne out of self-confidence, self-reliance and optimism, as opined by Essien (2006). Amesi (2017, p. 105) defines it as the “formation of a new economic activity” tailored towards creating a new commodity and hence similar to self-reliance, self-employment or job

creation. Entrepreneurship means value-added (i.e. innovation and creativity) (Nijhawn and Khalid, 2007); or, the parallel of small scale businesses that “create new products, new processes and/or re-engineer exiting methods of production” (Bassey 2001, p. 610).

There are two schools of thought that complements thought (Akpan, 2004): first, is Cole’s, all profit-oriented ventures that add value to customers’ money demonstrate entrepreneurship; and Schumpeter’s insistence that entrepreneurship is exhibited only where new things are accomplished or where old things are executed in a new way. In other words, entrepreneurship education should provide recipients of such education with:

1. Ideas that would dare risks and confront environmental exploitation without depending on ‘foreign hand-outs’;
2. Attitude that cultivate the need and how to assume risk of venture;
3. knowledge that business opportunities are endemic to particular areas;
4. Skills that could exploit those (identified) opportunities;
5. Habits that are resourceful to exploiting identified opportunities; and
6. Values that always appreciate new ways of accomplishing and exploiting our environment for the greater good of the people.

However, we share sentiments with Anyanwu (2008) because his definition highlights the need to qualify the character of these business opportunities which every other scholar agrees entrepreneurship entails. Anyanwu describes entrepreneurship as recognizing business opportunities, exploiting those opportunities and creating enterprise to exploit the opportunities in the ‘local environment or economy’. That means, entrepreneurship is not all about identifying opportunities, new ventures, new products, new profits only but, most importantly, considering the nature and character of those opportunities (i.e. what and where those opportunities abound – prevalence).

The emerging construct further strengthens thinking that:

- i. indigenous skills makes the core content of entrepreneurship education;
- ii. these skills (mostly existing in small scale firms and micro businesses) are the opportunities that could and should form the development thrust of an entrepreneurial education;
- iii. Their prevalence provided local rice, palm oil and kernels, and flour bread sustaining for the boys could also become the reality for the men, as well.

Although, it is almost indisputable that entrepreneurship revolves around business opportunities (small and medium scale enterprises); in skills, ideas, habits, attitudes, local entrepreneurship (Dana, 1992; Idih, 1997) but isolating the character (type, location, etc) of those opportunities remains the critical first step. Even though NDE, VEIS and IEIs trains graduates and freshers or drop-outs on these skills, specialized institutions (and especially universities) are yet to correctly transcribe the curricula contents (i.e. specialized theoretical courses) into practical account. They should redesign courses rich in local content and pedagogy to avoid graduates who have acquired university entrepreneurial training and still require retraining with NDEs, VEIs, IEIs and so on.

It would be similar to the European and Asian countries like England, Germany, India, Japan, Taiwan, Singapore and South Korea, etc, recorded success from “experiential learning” (Bassey, 2001, p. 613). Nigeria could redesign entrepreneurship education (entrepreneurship studies) with

‘practical-based’ business opportunities endemic in our local or indigenous environment (economy), significantly peculiar in character and orientation. We believe in a customize approach: course content (curricula), classroom teaching, pedagogy, teacher preparation, including the enabling infrastructure and not just attempting to replicate the success buttons of European and Asian experiments (Bassey, 2001; Leigha, 2015). It could convert the negative circumstances in Nigerian school system: large class sizes, inadequate quality teaching staff, few instructional materials and staff offices, ill-equipped science laboratories, insufficient classrooms, poorly equipped engineering workshops, examination malpractice and unmotivated workforce (Hartnett, 2000) etc, into strength.

Indigenous skills and Entrepreneurship education

Thus, real entrepreneurship education, especially within the sustainability mantra, should incorporate aspects of indigenous skills:

Practical farming, fishing, weaving, cooking, carving, knitting, ... wrestling, local geography - plants and animals-, typing and Shorthand, Painting and Sign writing, Photography, Leather works, Interior design/Decoration, Cabinet making, Carpentry, Plumbing/pipe-fitting/joinery, Bricklaying/masonry, Brick manufacturing, Surveying, Welding, Upholstery, Boat building, Wood machinist, etc, such as those skills examined in template 1, 2, and 3 above.

Entrepreneurship education creates wealth (Hisrich, Peters & Shepherd, 2008), a product (tangible and intangible commodities) from the adroit organization and control of resource inputs. Effective identification and exploitation of this economics is critical, not only to the utility value added current consumption, but most importantly, to future requirements (Dabalen & Oni, 2000). In fact, the value could be added in two major ways: firstly, employment would be easily generated where teaching and learning process is based on how to recognize, exploit and create enterprise for local opportunities (Babalola, 2007). A carefully planned, designed and delivered local opportunities (i.e. indigenous skills) entrepreneurial curriculum where students engage *practical farming, fishing, weaving, cooking, carving, knitting, local history, local geography - plants and animals-* (Fafunwa, 1974, p.16) would naturally confer an employable orientation on graduates. It is academically impossible for a student to engage in local skills (*typing and Shorthand, Painting and Sign writing, Cabinet making, Carpentry, Plumbing/pipe-fitting/joinery, Bricklaying/masonry, Brick manufacturing, Welding, Upholstery, Boat building, Wood machinist, etc* (NDE, 2005) four (4) years in a row and would not become self-employed on graduation as well as secure an employable future.

Secondly, teaching and learning process is based on how to recognized, exploited local opportunities entrepreneurial curriculum students would produce byproducts: cassava, yams, plantains (from *practical farming*), fishes (*fishing*), clothes, baskets, chairs, (from *weaving*), African and inter-continental dishes (from *cooking*), sculptures, arts, images, etc (from *carving*), clothing, dyes, ceramics, etc (from *knitting*), wrestlers (from *wrestling*), drummers, singers, dramatists, etc (from *drumming*), acrobats, contortionists, etc (from *acrobatic display*), local geography (*plants and animals*) could generate income for both student and the school from the products (Clayton, 1995; Pennington, 1999; Case & Fair, 2002; McConnell, 2012). Therefore, designing an entrepreneurial education system in Nigeria should target curriculum capacity to recognize, exploit and create enterprises to exploit practical farming, fishing, weaving, cooking,

carving, knitting, local geography, typing and Shorthand, Painting and Sign writing, Photography, Leather works, Interior design/Decoration, Cabinet making, Carpentry, Plumbing/pipe-fitting/joinery, Bricklaying/masonry, Welding, Upholstery, Boat building, Wood machinist (Frank & Bernanke, 2004; Okala, 2004; NDE, 2005), etc, is the key. Unless and until the right key is developed and used, this wealth may be trapped or locked down much longer than earlier envisioned. Entrepreneurship and indigenous skills are like Siamese twins and any attempt at separation may damage one or both.

CONCLUSION

Indigenous skills represent the economic hub of a society and its people according to which an education system must design, mobilize and implement so as to perpetuate that society. The nature, character and orientation of that society is embedded in such enduring and evolving skills, ideas, knowledge, habits and attitudes and values to which its young must imbibe to enable survival, maintenance and conservation. Entrepreneurship creates incremental wealth resulting from the ingenuous and innovative application of skills or opportunities endemic is that society. That means, the former is the subject and object of the latter. And the success or failure of the entrepreneurship depends solidly on the character and development of indigenous skills prevalent in that society. Pursuit of this concept is 'domestication' strategy for national sustainable development which the United Nations summons, as articulated by UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) through its program of action for sustainable development—Agenda 21 intends for Nigeria at this time. Thus, establishment of any strategy such as entrepreneurship would an attempt in futility if the subject matter of this plan deviates from **inclusivity** (an education that includes **almost everything within its scope**) that could promote lifelong learning opportunities for all; It is a mantra where block houses built by the boys collapse on men, and where nitric-acid fertilizers applied by the girls harms cassava quality for the women.

Recommendations

Based on the above analysis, the following recommendations are considered necessary:

1. University courses need to be redesigned to reflect skills and opportunities indigenous to our society.
2. Schools (primary, secondary and tertiary alike) should endeavour to expose students to the culture of recognizing, analyzing and exploiting business opportunities endemic in their locality all through their years of study in order to create an enduring orientation.
3. School researches, particularly at the university level, should target refining local skills to modern status rather than imposing foreign skills and ideas to the relegation of local skills and ideas.
4. Admissions into tertiary institutions need to be based on aptitude demonstrating ability and willingness to churn local skills into fresh ideas to encourage appreciation among youth.
5. There is an urgent need for partnership among government, individuals and agencies to develop school infrastructure in order to establish capacity for entrepreneurship education delivery in the system.
6. An effective business - education relationship is also necessary to both create enterprise for ensuing education byproducts and tailor education researches towards desired direction of change and sustainability.

7. Educational planners and managers need to recollect data relating to skill content required in the economy and those educational institutions offer as entrepreneurship. This would promote harmony between education and the market economy.

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