

Entrepreneurship Education: An Imperative for Sustainable Development in Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper stresses the importance of entrepreneurship education towards enhancing sustainable development in Nigeria. The problems facing the country ranging from high rate of poverty, youth and graduate unemployment; overdependence on foreign goods and technology; Low economic growth and development; among others. This paper therefore argues that entrepreneurship education will equip the students with the skills with which to be self-reliant. The objectives and strategies for re-designing entrepreneurship education are also discussed. The paper also recommended that educational programmes at all levels of education should be made relevant to provide the youth the needed entrepreneurial skills. It is also recommended that the government should give adequate attention to entrepreneurial development in the country through the provision of good economic environment.

Keywords: entrepreneurship education, imperative, sustainable development, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

The need for entrepreneurship education started emerging in the mid 1980s. This is because before this period, unemployment and poverty were not a national concern as it is currently. However, political instability and inconsistencies in the social-economic policies of successive government led to the emergence of high level unemployment in Nigeria. In the mid 80s, the Nigeria economic collapsed while youth and graduate unemployment hit the roof. There was large-scale layoff of workers and early retirements as a result of structural adjustment policies and bad economic trends in the country. In the face of this situation, entrepreneurship, which would have salvaged the situation, was not encouraged. It has been observed that tertiary education has not been properly include philosophy of self-reliance such as creating a new cultural and productive environment that will promote pride in primitive work and self-discipline, encouraging people to take part actively and freely in discussions and decisions affecting their general welfare, promoting new sets of attitudes and culture for the attainment of future challenges.

Nwangwu (2007) opined that the failure of tertiary education to inculcate the above philosophy in students has led to wastages in terms of both human and natural resources. This is because the youth and graduate from tertiary institutions are not equipped with the skills with which to exploit the natural resources that abound in Nigeria. All these factors have rendered the pursuit of self-reliance among our graduates difficult to retain. In their own contributions, Ayodele (2006) identified inadequate capital to be one of the principal factors hindering

entrepreneurship in the country. Other problems identified by Ayodele include irrelevant education that is bookish, theoretic and “white-collar job” oriented. Also Nigeria’s macro-economic environment is unhealthy and unstable for a virile entrepreneurship development. Another problem is the fear of failure by the people to take risk on entrepreneurial activities, while an unstable and conducive political environment drives away investors that are planning to embark on entrepreneurial activities. In addition, government programmes are not designed to promote entrepreneurship, looking at the country – Nigeria, the level of infrastructural development provided by the government is still very low and this has been affecting to a very high extent the level of productivity and entrepreneurial activities in the country. The high rate of many business enterprises as winding up prematurely consequent upon the employable and unemployable youths and adults idle away. It is against this backdrop that this paper set to look into entrepreneurship education as imperative for sustainable development in Nigeria.

What is Entrepreneurship Education

Entrepreneurship, 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. Another view of entrepreneurship education is the term given to someone who has innovative ideas and transforms them to profitable activities. To him, entrepreneurship 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, Nwangwu (2007) opined that entrepreneurship is a process of bringing together the factors of production, which include land, labour and capital so as to provide a product or service for public consumption. However, the operational definition of entrepreneurship is the willingness and ability of a person or persons to acquire educational skills to explore and exploit investment opportunities, establish and manage a successful business enterprise.

Who is an Entrepreneur?

Entrepreneur can be defined as an innovating individual who has developed an ongoing business activity where none existed before. Meredith (1983) defined an entrepreneur as a person or persons who possesses the ability to recognize and evaluate business opportunities, assemble the necessary resources to take advantage of them and take appropriate action to ensure success. Entrepreneurs are people who constantly discover new markets and try to figure out how to supply those markets efficiently and make a profit. He is a person that searches for change, responds to change, and exploits change by converting change into business opportunity.

Objectives of Entrepreneurship Education

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.

Sustainable Development

The concept of sustainable development requires balancing environmental, societal and economic considerations in the pursuit of development and an improved quality of life. Sustainability includes intergenerational equity, gender equity, just and peaceful societies, social tolerance, environmental preservation and restoration, poverty alleviation and natural resource conservation. The major essential tool for achieving sustainable development include the following areas, they were:

1. Improve the quality of basic education;
2. Reorient existing education programmed to address sustainable development;
3. Develop public awareness and understanding; and
4. Provide training for all sectors of private and civil society.

Educational for Sustainable Development

Education for Sustainable Development is the focus or projection of education that seeks to equip people towards creating a sustainable future. Stakeholders such as government, businesses, educational institutions, media, and organizations play important roles in achieving sustainable development. Each of these sectors has a different vision of sustainable development. Some are interested in environmental preservation and protection; some have economic development interests while other may be more interested in social development. According to UNESCO (2000) the way each nation, cultural group and individual views sustainable development will depend on its own values.

In many European nations, Universities and technical colleges trained students of science, economics and business management in skills that helps to build more sustainable societies. Programmes such as Peace Education, Human Right Education, Environmental Education and "Youth Entrepreneur" schemes are carried out in many schools. Hence, such initiatives help students and teachers to gain an understanding of the inter-linkages needed for sustainable development. The emphasis has been on education that will provide life and occupational skills that will enhance the potentials of individual, reinforcing self-sufficiency and improving quality of life.

Entrepreneurship Education and Sustainable Development in Nigeria.

The Nigerian government seems to have woken up to the reality that the country needs to break away from the vicious cycle of poverty, infrastructural neglect, corruption and other social problems. The reason being that, after 45 years of achieving colonial independence, it cannot be argued that Nigeria has attained her optimum level of development. According to Kolawole and Omolayo (2006), many

individuals have difficulties in translating their business ideas to realities and creating new business ventures because of lack of necessary information and skills needed to achieve their targets. To him, the university curriculum was in the past oriented towards making graduates suitable only for white-collar jobs. This underscores why millions of our youths and a lot of university graduates roam about the streets of the major cities and towns in search of white-collar jobs. It is necessary and possible to position Nigerian universities to stimulate economic growth through a deliberate agenda of production of entrepreneurial graduates.

In many countries, including US, high schools offer entrepreneurship education for life-long trade. And many of them offer courses that enable students to meet their general academic requirement while learning a trade. However, because of the recent challenges in world economy many schools have shifted emphasis to training in computers, information technology, and related fields. Public schools work closely with willing industries to establish curriculum and programmes to meet their skill demand. Where is Nigeria in this history of entrepreneurship education? While career education has continued to thrive in many societies, it is unfortunately an area that is neglected in Nigeria (Vanguard, Dec. 23, 2004). No wonder why things are not working as they should in Nigeria. The neglect of entrepreneurship education is rubbing nation of the contribution their graduate would make on the economy; the graduates could establish that roam the streets. It is, therefore socially injurious to neglect this important area or look down on its graduates. The society needs competent auto mechanics and truck drivers, carpenters, plumbers, electricians, electronics and computers, database, web and network technicians, book-keepers, and clerks, medical technicians and nursing assistants, (and other personnel in this category) to function well. These are some of the skills in short supply in Nigeria. The half-baked roadside mechanics in the society often cause more dangers to vehicles when they are contracted to service them. And because of poor training some of the commercial drivers on the road and nurses assistants in the hospitals have sent many people to their early death. Given these facts, it is a disservice to the society to neglect entrepreneurship education. In Nigeria, graduates of vocational and technical institutions are highly skilled entrepreneurs, but the society does not seem to encourage the youths to take this role. Unfortunately, those who influence education policy in the society (legislators, educators, the media, and e.t.c) disappear to feel that graduates of technical vocational institutions are not equal to university graduates; hence there is need for effective strategies for entrepreneurship education in Nigeria.

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 entrepreneur internship programmes matching students with locally successful entrepreneurs with clearly established education programmes.
6. Establishing an enterprise college aimed at fostering the specific skill sets required for entrepreneurship to serve as skill-acquisition centers for the youths.
7. Creating an economic friendly political environment.
8. Improving on the government taxation on small scale businesses.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Evidently, Nigeria is lagging behind in preparing her workforce for the challenges of the rapidly changing global economy. It is concluded that improved and sustainable global economy development depends on a strong entrepreneurship education. It is against this background that the following recommendations are proffered for effective entrepreneurship education in Nigeria, Africa and other nations:

1. Government and other education stakeholders should make sure that educational programme at all levels of education are made relevant to provide the youths and graduates needed entrepreneurial skills.
2. It is also recommended that the government should give adequate attention to entrepreneurial development in the country through the provision of good economic environment to encourage individual participation in business while this is guaranteed entrepreneurship will thrive and consequently improve economic growth.

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