

ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS OF NIGERIA: FUNCTIONAL OR CHIMERICAL

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Abstract

This paper is titled “Entrepreneurship Education in Nigeria: Functional or Chimerical”. The need for this research came as a result of the increase in unemployment rate in Nigeria despite making entrepreneurship studies a compulsory subject for all students in tertiary institutions of Nigeria by the federal government. Some of the discoveries borders on the theoretical approach to this education instead of being more practical. The reason for this has been inadequate equipment and infrastructural facilities. To make entrepreneurship education functional i.e. result oriented, youths with skills and flair for any particular profitable venture should be empowered financially; necessary equipment should be provided among other things. The benefits derivable is that it will lead to the creation of employment opportunities to the teeming youths who are unemployed thus making entrepreneurship education in Nigeria functional rather than chimerical.

Key words: Entrepreneurship Education, Tertiary Institutions, Functional, Chimerical, Unemployment.

INTRODUCTION

According to Osuala (2010) some of the objectives of entrepreneurship education in Nigeria include: (a) to provide meaningful education to youths which could make them self-reliant and subsequently encourage them to derive profit and be independent (b) to provide graduates with the training and support necessary to help them establish a career in small and medium size business. The implication of the above objectives is that entrepreneurship education in Nigeria was introduced for the purpose of eliminating unemployment in the country especially among the graduates. Unfortunately, unemployment in Nigeria is seen generally as a hydra headed socio-economic problem that contends with the economic well-being of the citizens. Presently a good number of qualified and willing citizens are unable to get any employment opportunity. In fact, the greater percentage of these job seekers is graduates from tertiary institutions. Okite, Onyenweaku, and Adigbo (2015).

Unemployment seems to be a global trend, however, Nigeria's unemployment situation deteriorates sequel to entrepreneurship education inability to put in place appropriate mitigating mechanisms to abate or control its spread and impacts. To corroborate this, the national bureau of statistics in 2012 published Nigeria unemployment rate from 2006 – 2011. This publication showed that the unemployment rate of this country has been deteriorating. For instance in 2006, the unemployment rate stood at 5.3%; 2007, 5.8%; 2008, 11.8%; 2009, 19.7%; 2010, 21.1%; 2011, 23.9%. Ijomanta and Orji (2015).

It is indeed indisputable that the Nigerian youths constitute over 70% of this unemployment rate, and unemployed graduates among them constitute greater percentage of the population. According to Nwajibu and Mbata (2002) in Mohammed (2012) in Okite et al (2015), reduction in public sector employment, a shrinking manufacturing sector and rural-urban migration account for the prevalence of unemployment in recent Nigeria. Sequel to this, one is tempted to ask, what is entrepreneurship education doing? Why must we have increase in population, closure of industries, increase in both male and female graduates without jobs, increase in poverty level despite the introduction of entrepreneurship studies in 2006 to be mandatorily offered by all undergraduates in Nigeria tertiary institutions? It is against this backdrop that this paper wants to find out whether entrepreneurship education in Nigeria tertiary institutions is functional or chimerical with a view to suggesting the way forward.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

Who is an entrepreneur?

An entrepreneur is one who takes risk of starting and managing a business. (G. Ibe-enwo , 2015). In the view of Anugwom (2007), an entrepreneur is one who is dissatisfied with present methods and would want to strike at obstacles and make the best of opportunities. This suggests that he perceives business opportunities and takes advantage of them by proper and efficient utilization of his scarce resources. In this case, he alone bears the risks in his business and directs all resources in an exceptional way to achieve his business objectives.

In the view of Ijomanta (2014), an entrepreneur is a person who is able to scan the immediate environment, generate ideas, gather resources and take action to take advantage of an opportunity. According to Drucker (1988), in Udoh (2015), in United States, the entrepreneur is often defined as one who starts his own new and small business. In all the definitions stated above, one common thing that joined them together is that an entrepreneur is one who does not wait to be employed by any government or individual.

Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship has been defined as the willingness and ability of an individual to seek out investment opportunities, establish, and run an enterprise successfully (killy, 1971) in Ile (2001). Njoku et al (2011) defined entrepreneurship as the capacity and attitude of a person or group of persons to undertake ventures with the probability of success or failure. This concept has been associated with several activities concerned with the establishment and operating of business enterprises. According to Inegbenebor, (1989) in Ile (2001), these activities include (i) identification of investment opportunities (ii) aggregation of the scarce resources required for production and distribution (iii) organization and management of human and material resources for the attainment of the objectives of the enterprise (iv) risk bearing and (v) innovation.

In fact and effective performance of the above activities is critical to the birth, survival and growth, of the business enterprises. Entrepreneurship is therefore, a vital factor in the process of economic development of any nation. (Ile, 2001).

Eke, Igwesi and Orji (2011) in Ugwuogu (2015) defined entrepreneurship as a programme that inculcates creative, innovative, productive and managerial skills needed in business enterprises for self reliance and national development. The implication of this definition is that entrepreneurship involves an individual who creates, nurtures and grows a business through personal initiatives, drives and skills for the purpose of providing job opportunity for himself and others.

DEVELOPMENT OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP

The origin of entrepreneurship in Nigeria could be traced to the promulgation of the 1972 indigenization Decree, which classified Nigeria enterprise into the following:

- Enterprises, which are exclusively, reserved for Nigerians.
- Enterprises, which Nigerians must have an interest of 60% and above.
- Enterprises, in which Nigeria are to have a maximum of 40% interest. By this Decree, most enterprises formerly owned and managed entirely by expatriates had their ownership and management bases diluted in favour of Nigerians. This indigenization decree marked a major impetus to the growth of entrepreneurship in Nigeria.

Again, in 1977/78 financial year, it was observed that the situation of unemployment and retrenchment was very glaring consequently, the then Head of State, Gen Olusegun Obasanjo introduced the Austerity measures. This was followed by the president Shehu Shagari regime's Economic stabilization Act in 1982. In 1985, The government of major Gen Buhari promulgated the financial (Miscellaneous taxation provision) Decree". All these actions helped in one way or the other to pave way for entrepreneurship.

Gen Ibrahim Babangida (1985 – 1993) initiated a bold policy through the introduction of the structural adjustment programme (SAP) in 1986). The major objective of SAP was to restructure and diversify the productive bases of the economy in order to reduce dependence on the oil sector and imports. Despite its eventual failure the SAP period afforded more Nigerians the opportunity to try their hands on so many economic activities. The government also provided the necessary motivators to entrepreneurial development within the period.

As documented by Umeabali and Ogbozor (1992:25 – 27), the motivations were provided under the umbrella of the National Directorate of Employment (NDE). The programme provided by NDE include:

- Youth empowerment and vocation skills Development programme (YESVSDP).
- National Open Apprenticeship Scheme (NOAS).
- Small Scale Industries and Graduate Employment Programme.
- Graduate job creation Loan Scheme.
- Small and Medium Scale Enterprises Loan Scheme. Etc.

These entire programmes were designed to encourage young Nigerians and retired people to develop entrepreneurial interests. In other words, the government wanted them to be employers of labour instead of seekers of job. Although, abandoned by recent regimes, they helped in no small measure in elevating entrepreneurial development in Nigeria.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION

Nnadozie (2014) cited in Ugwuogu (2015), opined that entrepreneurship education is a 20th century phenomenon, which as at the last quarter of that century generated several debates among researchers. The point of disagreement was whether entrepreneurial skills and competencies are hereditary or acquired in a formal school setting. Sequel to this argument, a

management thinker and author of several materials on management peter Drucker stepped in to give explanation on the “entrepreneurial Mystique”. In his explanation, he argued that entrepreneurial skill is a magic but not mysterious and has nothing to do with genes. According to him, it is a discipline and like any discipline, it can be learned. (Drucker 1985 in Ugwuogu 2015). This view was reinforced by Karatho and Hodgetts (2007) cited in Ugwuogu (2015) when they opined that entrepreneurship has become increasingly seen as something that could be taught and so should not be seen as some traits which some individuals are born with. Since entrepreneurship has been accepted to be a discipline coupled with its perception as an international phenomenon, entrepreneurship education has attracted several definitions and clarifications across the globe and disciplines. First of the definitions is the one giving by Agolabi et al (2011) cited in Okite et al (2015), they opined that entrepreneurship education is the inculcation in the learner the entrepreneurship skills, knowledge, attitude, ability and competences that make the learner live happily and successfully in the society and contribute meaningfully to its development. It is worthy of note that these skills transmitted to the learner could be technical, business, scientific, vocational etc.

Consequently, the processes through which the skills and competences are transmitted into the learner which help him to generate business ideas or identify business opportunities around him with the aim of setting up a business out fit for profit making is referred as entrepreneurial education. Sequel to this, we infer that entrepreneurship education is that kind of education that equips one with the relevant innovative skills that enables one identify a business opportunity and creatively run the set up business enterprise so as to minimize loss and maximize profit for personal satisfaction.

In the opinion of Mc Millian (2006) in Ugwuogu (2015), it is a type of “learning directed towards developing in young people those skills, competencies, understandings and attribute which equip them to be innovative, and to identify, create, initiate and successfully manage personal or community business and work opportunities including working for themselves.

Nwosu and Ohia (2009) cited in Nnadozie (2014) cited in Ugwuogu (2015) contend that entrepreneurship education is that aspect of formal learning which equips an individual and creates in the person the mindset to undertake the risk of venturing into something new by applying the knowledge and skills acquired in school.

With reference to the above definition, one can observe that entrepreneurship education seeks to provide students with knowledge and motivation to create jobs and business, and thereby become employers of labour instead of being job seekers on graduation. This is made possible because entrepreneurship education seeks to assist learners learn job specific and employable skills that would enable them to have a broad knowledge about requirements, functions, and operations of a particular business.

OBJECTIVES OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP ECUCATION IN NIGERIA

According to Oborah (2006) cited in Udoh (2015), the objectives of entrepreneurship education include:

1. To provide meaningful education for the youths, which could make them self – reliant and subsequently encourage them to derive profit and be self – dependent.
2. To provide small and medium size companies with the opportunity to recruit qualified graduates who will receive training and tutoring in the skills relevant to the management of a small business centre.

3. To provide graduate with training and support necessary to help them establish a career in small and medium sized businesses in the society.
4. To provide graduate with training in skills that will make them meet the manpower needs of the society easily;
5. To provide graduate with enough training in risk management to make uncertainty nearing developed areas;
6. To simulate industrial and economic growth of rural and less developed areas;
7. To provide graduates with enough opportunities that will make the creative and innovative in identifying new opportunities.

Oborah identified the following areas of business opportunities for business education graduates.

ADVANTAGES OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION

Entrepreneurship education has a myriad of advantages that are beneficial to both the entrepreneur in particular and the society in general. They include:

1. It provides necessary skills for one to be self – reliant
2. It helps in the development of new market, goods, and school services.
3. It creates employment for other jobless school leavers.
4. It inculcates the power to think creatively and innovatively into the learners and the practicing entrepreneur.
5. It helps to solve unemployment problem prevalent in Nigeria today.
6. It equips graduate with relevant skills that will enable them meet the manpower needs of the present society.
7. It helps the young school leaver to identify and recognize business opportunities easily and tap the vision quickly.
8. It helps an entrepreneur to contribute to the development of new organizations, industries, markets, trade and commerce.
- 9.

SOME OF THE GOVERNMENTAL EFFORTS TO ENCOURAGE ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN NIGERIA

According to Odia and Odia (2013) cited in Udoh (2015), some of the current interventions by the government to positively engage the youths in national development through encouraging entrepreneurship and providing employment includes:

1. The #200 billion micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) Development Fund to provide cheap and Long – term financial resources for the development of the MSMEs sector in Nigeria;
2. The #100 billion Textile Revival Fund (TRF) for the resuscitation of the cotton, textile and garment industries which has been comatose and moribund;
3. The youth Enterprise with innovation in Nigeria (You Win) programme is a collaboration of the Federal Ministries of Finance, communication and Technology and Youth Development to organize an annual Business Plan Competition (BPC) for aspiring young entrepreneurs in Nigeria and provide a one – time equity grant of #1 to #10 million to 1, 200 selected aspiring entrepreneurs to start / expand their business concepts and mitigate start up risks. It is aimed at generating some 80,000 to 110,000 new jobs for unemployed Nigeria youths over a three – year period.

4. The NYSC venture price competition was introduced by the CBN to sensitize and create awareness in Nigeria youths, awaken their entrepreneurship expertise and orientate serving youth corps members towards seeking alternative employment options, in particular, self – employment;
5. The #200 billion Refinancing / Restructuring of SME / Manufacturing Fund to enable banks refinance and restructure their existing loan portfolios to SME and manufacturing.

Having seen the objectives and advantages of entrepreneurship education in Nigeria and some of the efforts of government to ensure adequate encouragement of entrepreneurship yet the case of unemployment is still on the rise; therefore one is tempted to say that there is a missing link between entrepreneurship education and government efforts.

THE MISSING LINK

Entrepreneurship education seeks to assist learners learn job specific and self employment skills that would enable them to have a broad knowledge about requirements, functions, and operations of a particular business or job. Yet the government and entrepreneurship education coordinators have been missing it through the following areas:

1. **Business Plan Writing Versus Skill and Flair:** Government at times do organize business plan writing competition among the youths and corps members in which several thousands of naira has been giving to winners of the competition. The question is how many of the winners were able to get established with the fund they received. The truth is that greater percentage of the recipients squandered the money and still carries their certificates around looking for job. The reason for this is because such individuals acquired knowledge on how to write business plan without a corresponding skill and flair. In this case, skill has to do with the ability and experience that serves as a propellant to doing a particular business or job very well. Flair on the other hand has to do with the natural ability in an individual to do something well and with ease.
2. **Theoretical versus practical:** entrepreneurship education that is functional should be more of practical work than theoretical work. The implication of this is that a functional entrepreneurship should set the pace of what it would like her students to do. This suggests that entrepreneurship centre in all the tertiary institutions in Nigeria should be able to develop a mini industry, small and medium enterprises on the products they are producing. This will enable them to know the students that have flair for a particular product and as a result absorb them to do their industrial training and youth service there.
3. **Entrepreneurial instructors versus non entrepreneurial instructors**
In some institutions, the allocation of certain courses to lecturers, entrepreneurship courses inclusive does not depend on what the individuals can offer rather on what they will gain. This singular reason has led to wrong choice of instructors to the detriment of the students of entrepreneurship education. To be candid, they are some lecturers who are entrepreneurial in nature what they know and for this reason are already employers of labour. This type of individuals should be appointed instructors to entrepreneurial courses so that they can teach theoretical and practical aspect of the job or business.
4. **Time Factor:** It is a fact that the time allocated for entrepreneurship education in our tertiary institutions is inadequate. Acquiring skill that will be functional may not be gotten in 2 to 6 hours training per week which lasts for about 3 to 4 months.
5. **Equipment and Infrastructural Facilities:** Most entrepreneurship centres in our tertiary institutions operate without adequate equipment and infrastructural facilities.

This account for the more theoretical approach to entrepreneurship education in Nigeria. Functional entrepreneurship education should have all the necessary equipment where the students will be exposed on how to operate the machineries needed for effective production.

THE WAY FORWARD

(1) Government's assistance to the youths for entrepreneurship development should not depend on a good business plan writing rather on the discovered skill and flair in a particular youth. To achieve this, the government should always embark on skill and flair discovery any time she wants to release money for entrepreneurship development.

(2) Entrepreneurship education should be more practical than theoretical. One of the ways of achieving this is through the provision of all the necessary equipment for entrepreneurship education.

(3) Appointment of instructors that are entrepreneurial in nature to handle entrepreneurship education. To achieve this, entrepreneurship coordinators should discover those lecturers who are already entrepreneurs in one field or the other.

(4) Time allocated to entrepreneurship study should be increased. At least 2 days in every week should be allocated to the class offering entrepreneurship course without any other lecture being fixed for those days and this study should be done for a whole session.

(5) Provision of necessary infrastructural facilities and equipment for entrepreneurial education. This can be achieved through the release of more funds for entrepreneurial education centres.

(6) Men of proven integrity should be appointed to man entrepreneurship education centres. To achieve this, the track records of men to be appointment should be checked with utmost sincerity and unbiased.

BENEFITS ACCRUABLE IF THESE SUGGESTIONS ARE ADOPTED

(1) Skill not head knowledge will be acquired by students of entrepreneurship education. When these youths get developed in the areas where they have acquired skills, they will turn out to become employers of labour as against seekers of job.

(2) Entrepreneurial instructors will impart to students what they know how best to do. Both the gains and pains in the business will be revealed to the students because they have been in the business for years.

(3) Allotting more time to entrepreneurship education will help students to practice what they have been taught which will lead to actual skill acquisition.

(4) When the necessary equipment is provided for entrepreneurship education, it will offer the students the opportunity to use the machineries meant for them to use in the actual production of goods and commodities.

(5) When men of proven integrity are appointed to man entrepreneurship centres, they will not squander the fund meant for entrepreneurial education and development.

CONCLUSION

Odia (2013) cited in Udoh (2015) stated that, the present state of entrepreneurship education in Nigeria is marked by underfunding, negligence, lack of political will, support and investment by government and corporate bodies to invest in education cannot produce graduates who are employable or having the ability to employ others". For this reason, entrepreneurship education

should be made functional through the discovery and assistance of youths who have skills and flair for a particular profitable venture, appointment of instructors that are entrepreneurial in nature, allocation of more time for entrepreneurship studies, provision of necessary infrastructural facilities, and appointment of men of proven integrity to man entrepreneurship centres otherwise the hope of reducing or curbing unemployment in Nigeria might remain chimerical.

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