

## Entrepreneurship Education as a Veritable Tool for Youths Empowerment: Implications for Curriculum Innovation in Nigeria

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### **Abstract**

*This paper is focused on entrepreneurship education as a veritable tool for youth empowerment and the implications for curriculum innovation. Nigeria as a country has witnessed unimaginable of youths' unemployment as a result of the poor education to produce youths with needed skills to engage them in meaningful job creation. The paper therefore highlighted the need to embrace the entrepreneurship education in Nigeria educational system where youths can be given practical training for the acquisition of skills to make them become self-reliant. This calls for curriculum innovation at all school levels as a means of making education functional for youth empowerment in Nigeria. The paper describes the concept of entrepreneurship education, the role of entrepreneurship education and strategies for effective entrepreneurship education as well as the implications for curriculum innovation. Based on the study, recommendations were made for necessary steps towards making the country's education functional through constant curriculum innovation.*

**Keywords:** Curriculum, Entrepreneurship, Empowerment, Innovation, Veritable Tool

### **Introduction**

Nigeria unlike most developed countries of the world is prone to and faced with the myriads of challenges and harsh realities which obviously include poverty, unemployment, insurgency, conflict, disease to mention but a few. These challenges were no doubt, due to the nation's inability to identify and develop our numerous talented youths towards self-reliance and self-sufficiency. Entrepreneurship education is seen as a strong force that would impact an empowerment and employment generation in the present-day Nigerian youths. It has been observed by Brown (2012) that, unemployment situation has posed a great challenge to the very existence of individuals in most developing nations, thereby calling for the training of educated youths who can function effectively in the society through entrepreneurship. There is

the need to transform the youths into confident, aggressive and purposeful individuals to bridge the gap between unemployment and job creation.

Entrepreneurship Education which has been recognized as an educational programme that can be utilized to realize the desired economic goals is an acceptable instrument for the attainment of self-reliance of our nation. According to Nwokolo in Arubaji and Oglhuvbu (2011), entrepreneurship education is an aspect of education that is geared at developing in students, skills, ideas and management abilities necessary for personal reliance. It is a programme of human capital resource development and the focus is on developing labour for maximum generation of capital. Ojeifo (2012) on the other hand, described entrepreneurship education as lifelong which starts from the primary school progressing to the secondary and tertiary level of education as well as adult education. It is clear therefore that entrepreneurship is fundamental to driving the economy through job creation and wealth creation by the small and medium scale enterprise established by entrepreneurially minded persons who grow to create businesses. It is believed that individuals who are experienced in entrepreneurial education acquire more creative and innovative ability in business development.

### **Concept of Entrepreneurship**

Entrepreneurship means the ability and the willingness of a person to seek an identify and investment opportunity in an environment with the idea and plan to establish and run an enterprise successfully based on what he/she identified. Entrepreneurship is all about willingness to take risk that would lead to creative task or performance. It involves the ability of the individual to utilize every resources-human, materials, and financial available to become a successful entrepreneur. It is clear and effective manipulation of human intelligence for creative performance. According to Bamidele (2013), entrepreneurship is the key to personal fulfillment, wealth creation, human capacity development and financial empowerment. From all indications, entrepreneurship is seen as the ability to create new ideas, products or services for personal self-reliance and to meet the needs of the society.

### **The Entrepreneur**

The word entrepreneur which was used first by Richard Cantillon, an Irish in the 18th century in France was described as a person who perceives business opportunity and takes advantage of the scarce resources available. An entrepreneur should be seen as a person who waste no time in utilizing every business opportunity within the environment with the resources at his disposal.

### **Concept of Entrepreneurship Education**

Entrepreneurship education is an educational programme designed to train and retrain the individuals for the purpose of acquisition of skills capable of making them self-reliance as well as employers of labour. Entrepreneurship on the other hand, could be seen as the ability and willingness of an individual to identify, utilize investment opportunities and establish an

enterprise favorably. Such individual is referred to as an entrepreneur – a person who has perception for a business opportunity, and uses the available scarce resources for purpose of profit maximization (Akinbode, 2009). Entrepreneurship education is the process of transmitting worthwhile, desirable and socially sanctioned values, attitudes, knowledge and skills from one generation to another (Effiom, Odey & Ogbaji, 2017). According to Aminu (2009), entrepreneurship education is seen as a key for unlocking wealth and close the door of unemployment and poverty especially among Nigerian youths.

Entrepreneurship education has the ability to transform a learner into a viable and productive individual. Its role in this aspect cannot be overemphasized because it embraces skill building programme, creative thinking, product development and marketing negotiation, leadership training and wealth generation.

As observed by Shaibu and Meremikwu (2017), the success or failure of any business depends largely on the ability of the entrepreneur to effectively and efficiently use his/her positive qualities and restrain his/her negative qualities characteristics. According to them, as an entrepreneur, one must be a risk bearer, have self-confidence, exhibit level of drive energy, leadership quality, task oriented, take initiative, delegate authority, must be creative and innovative, resourceful, versatile, knowledgeable and imaginative, aggressive, empathy, trustworthy, fair and honest, loyal and supportive, a good planner and organizer, endurance, ingenuity as well as a pacesetter.

### **The Role of Entrepreneurship Education**

Entrepreneurship Education plays a key role in driving the economy through wealth creation as majority of jobs are created by the enterprises that are started by the entrepreneurially minded individuals within and outside the economy. Entrepreneurship education has been recognized as veritable tool for youth empowerment hence its introduction as a compulsory course in all Nigerian Universities. Most poverty driven countries are being salvaged by recognizing and embracing entrepreneurship education. According to Lucas, Alaka and Odozi (2014), entrepreneurship education can positively impact a learner at all levels on a wide number of contexts, which is why there are such a wide entrepreneurship education programmes and can provide important outcomes at various stages of a learner's life. They further observed that entrepreneurship education equips people with traits of creativity, innovation, independence and foresight of promoting local and modern technologies.

Nigeria as a nation had established many Agencies for promotion of entrepreneurship: these include among others: National Directorate of Employment (NDE), Industrial Development Centre (IDC), Small and Medium Enterprise Development Agencies of Nigeria (SMEDAN). These and many others had helped to provide platform for people to appreciate local technology. Developed countries like Germany, Japan, China, South Korea etc. use training in entrepreneurship to enhance economic development of their countries. Germany for instance, set up unique engineering-oriented business programmes in the University where their potential engineer are encouraged to seek out ideas and subsequently develop the

promising one from invention phase to commercialization. A nation like Norway used entrepreneurship education to inculcate innovation spirit deliberately targeted at youths. Researcher like Oviame (2010) found out that entrepreneurship education will enable potential entrepreneurs create avenues for people to manage innovations, manage entrepreneurial process and develop their potentials as managers of creativity in given fields.

### **Strategies for Effective Entrepreneurship Education**

The era of our formal education system which laid emphasis and efficiencies on paper qualification and white collar jobs has passed. There is therefore the need for Nigeria to embrace an educational system that has the ability and strategy for youth empowerment, job creation and wealth creation. As Ugochukwu (2015) stated, one of the major concerns of most contemporary societies is how to reduce the ever-rising tide of unemployment and achieve appreciable success in wealth creation and poverty reduction and foster socio-economic development.

Quality Entrepreneurship Education is a recognized tool for unemployment reduction, capable of redirecting the minds of youths from focusing on white collar-jobs to being innovative and creative. For entrepreneurship education to achieve its objectives, formidable strategies unemployment and achieve appreciable success in wealth creation, poverty reduction and foster socio-economic development.

For example, entrepreneurship education to achieve its objectives, formidable strategies have to be properly formulated and implemented. One of the steps is to ensure that the federal government's policy on the introduction and institution be extended to our secondary schools if it has not been so. This would be done by adopting the strategies as suggested by Kayoma (2011), these include:

1. A national curriculum project on a comprehensive entrepreneurship development should be set up by the Federal Ministry of Education in collaboration with the Department of Vocational Education of the Universities, Colleges of Education and Polytechnics.
2. Employing qualified entrepreneurship education teachers to teach in secondary schools of the federation.
3. Competency based learning approach should be emphasized to ensure good mastery of entrepreneurial skills.
4. Career guidance to be incorporated in the programme to emphasize the relevance of entrepreneurial skills.
5. Promotional materials to create the awareness of entrepreneurship culture in the citizenry of this nation should be produced and advertised through poster, handbills, radio, television and other networks. The National Orientation Agency (NOA) could play a very vital role in this regard.
6. The Education Trust Fund (ETF) should be involved to make funds available for

implementation of entrepreneurship education in our secondary schools as well as tertiary institutions.

7. The federal government should create an enabling environment to attract learners of entrepreneurial skills at all levels of education.

The above strategies if adhere to, would enhance the realization of entrepreneurship education's objectives as were pointed out below by Osuala (2010).

- a. To provide meaningful education for youths which could make them self- reliance and subsequently encourage them to drive profit and be self- independent.
- b. To provide graduates with the training and support necessary to help them establish a career in small and medium sized business.
- c. To provide graduates with training skills that will make them meet the manpower needs of the society.
- d. To provide graduates with enough training in risk management to make uncertainty bearing possible and easy.
- e. To simulate industrial and economic growth of rural and less developed areas.
- f. To provide graduates with enough training that will make them creative and innovative in identifying new business opportunities.
- g. To provide small and medium sized companies with the company to recruit qualified graduates who will receive training in the skills relevant to management of business center.

The overall and major objective of entrepreneurship education is the creation of jobs through proper inculcation of entrepreneurial skills capable of creating jobs into the leaners. Therefore, entrepreneurship education needs to be given all it deserves and be properly implemented to produce quality and productive graduates. Its objectives are synonymous with the objectives of the Millennium Development Goals, because as job opportunities are created, it would invariably reduce poverty and enhance better standard of living of the individuals in Nigeria.

### **Implications for Curriculum Innovation**

Curriculum is an educational program of experience designed to be used by the teachers under the guidance of the school to assist in education of students. It contains objectives, activities, units and materials to enhance learning. For the fact that the experiences change by day especially in the area of technology, there is the need to follow the challenges. The best means of doing this is through quality education. This therefore calls for regular innovation of our educational curriculum.

Curriculum according to Esu, Enukeoha and Umoren in Abelega and Mkpa (2017) is an organized programme designed to fashion the knowledge, skills, attitudes and value of learners. They stated that the experience should be planned systematical in order to achieve behavioral change in learners that will make them fit into the society. Since the society

witnesses change constantly, and in order to cope with the change, the curriculum must be regularly revisited to suit the society.

It is agreeable that Nigeria as a country has faced so much of societal challenges ranging from unemployment, which had led to much societal menace such as armed robbery, kidnapping, killings, insurgences, drug addiction, prostitute, violence and many other social vices that had kept the country Nigeria insecure. Nigerian youths need to be empowered with skills that would make them self-employed or be fit into the modern labour market.

### **Curriculum Innovation for Entrepreneurship Education**

Entrepreneurship education at all levels of our education is what is needed now for Nigeria to get out of these social problems. The curriculum for entrepreneurship education should be such that gives wide room for option in skills acquisition so as to ensure that learners would select from a wide array of skills that are useful both to them and the society at large.

One of the most important features of entrepreneurship education is its preparation of learners towards the world of work, as a result, its curriculum emphasis should be on the acquisition of skills capable of making one self- employed and employer of labour. Ogwu, Omeje and Nwakenna (2014) advocated the urgent need for a paradigm shift from the traditional content-based curriculum to integrated skill-based curriculum necessary for skills development. Hence the implication for curriculum innovation in Nigeria, in other words, there is the need to redesign or reform the various components of our curriculum so as to re-orient it towards the acquisition of employable skills for direct entry into specific occupation and trades. Curriculum designers should vocationalize and adopt modern/modified approaches. As put by Egbule (2004), in the competency approach to curriculum design, the subject matter is divided into competencies which must be acquired by students before they graduate. According to him, the functional analysis that is performed at the various levels within an industry and integrating them into the curriculum process. This is to produce individuals with specific knowledge, skills, abilities and capabilities in and specialized functions of an occupational area. It is important that Nigerian education curriculum is restricted especially at the tertiary level with emphasis on skills acquisition to enable entrepreneurial activities in the country.

### **Conclusion**

The need for entrepreneurship education in Nigeria has become more pronounced than ever before. This has been so because of the fact that the global economy is becoming more competitive and more complex. More so the Nigerian economy has been into recession for years now. In order to arrest this ugly situation, Nigeria needs change in her education systems and the viable tool for this is entrepreneurship education. This is because entrepreneurship education has been proved to be a veritable tool for youth empowerment and employment generation in every economy. When youths acquire entrepreneurial skills, they explore opportunities in their environment instead of chasing shadows uncertainties and non-existing jobs in the urban areas.



## Recommendations

The following have been recommended for entrepreneurship education to achieve the desired goals and objectives in Nigeria.

1. For the spirit of entrepreneurship education to fully imbued in Nigeria, the curriculum designers should build in entrepreneurship education from primary through secondary school then to tertiary level. It is disheartening that children learn English and mathematics from cradle but jump to acquire entrepreneurship education (if any), only at the verge of completing their educational career.
2. If unemployment must be curbed in Nigeria, sufficient funds by the federal and state government must be allocated to entrepreneurship education, because funds is the life wire of entrepreneurship education.
3. Qualified manpower should be provided by the State and Federal Government to handle entrepreneurship education at all school levels, to ensure that the teaching is more practical base than theoretical base.
4. The State and the Federal Government should encourage students of entrepreneurship education; encourage individuals with entrepreneurship skills through scholarship award and financial assistance.
5. Successful entrepreneurs should be invited by the school management to give talks to the students of secondary schools from time to time as sensitization.
6. String links should be established by the state and federal government with successful entrepreneurs as it will enhance sustenance of entrepreneurship development in the country.
7. Above all, like football in Nigeria, entrepreneurship academy should be established by the Federal Government in all states of the federation where youths would be trained towards acquisition of skills capable of empowering them to become self-employed and employers of labour.

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