ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN NIGERIA: RELEVANCE, CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES

RITA AZUKA ATAKPA (PhD)
Business Education Department
School of Vocational and Technical Education
College of Education, Agbor
Delta State.
+2347057096748
ritaatakpa@yahoo.com

Abstract
This paper discusses the need for entrepreneurship education in tertiary Institutions in Nigeria. The spate of youth restiveness and graduate unemployment in recent times have compelled the Federal government to search for immediate but lasting solution to the scenario, hence the introduction of entrepreneurial studies across disciplines in higher institutions of learning in Nigeria. The introduction of entrepreneurial teaching and learning especially in Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education is a new development in the education system. It is hoped that it will assist graduates become self employed rather than searching for non-existent paid employment. This paper therefore argues that entrepreneurship education will equip students in tertiary institutions with job specific skills for self employment. The objectives and strategies for re-designing entrepreneurship education are also discussed. The paper recommends that educational programmes at all levels of education should be functional and dedicated to the acquisition of job specific skills capable of generating self employment for the recipient.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, Education, Tertiary Institution and Nigeria.

Introduction
Entrepreneurship education seeks to provide students with the knowledge, skills and motivation to encourage entrepreneurial success in a Variety of settings. Thus, various types of entrepreneurship education are offered at all levels of schooling from primary or secondary schools through graduate university programmes (Lawal 2014). While entrepreneurship education focuses on realization of opportunity, management education is focused on the best way to operate existing hierarchies. However, the propensity to develop entrepreneurially is not exclusive to certain individuals. As different individuals will possess different capabilities for demonstrating and acquiring entrepreneurial behaviours skills and capabilities.

The introduction of entrepreneurial teaching and learning in institutions of higher learning is seen as an innovation in the system. This will assist graduates/young school leavers to become job creators instead of searching for non-existent paid employment. Entrepreneurial studies in tertiary institutions is based on functional education which is
aimed at the acquisition of job specific skills for employment. It also offers a functional education with nascent curriculum to embrace good knowledge of marketable skills capable of generating self employment for the recipient (Oduma 2012).

It is however, believed that entrepreneurship education across higher institutions of learning in Nigeria will assist to harness the business potentials of graduates despite their various disciplines. Thus, it is believed that the present youth/graduate restiveness in the country today resulting from the frustration of unemployment can be addressed by strengthening the capabilities of the youth in enterprise development. It is therefore, imperative to expose all students in tertiary institutions irrespective of their various disciplines to entrepreneurship education.

**Concept of Entrepreneurship**

The entrepreneur is a factor in micro economics and the study of entrepreneurship dates back to the work of Richard Cantillon and Adam Smith in the late 17th and early 18th centuries, but was largely ignored theoretically until the late 19th and early 20th centuries and empirically until a profound resurgence in business and economics in the last 40 years. The word ‘entrepreneur’ was coined out from the French word ‘entrepredre’ which means a person who voluntarily head the military history in the 17th century.

According to the Oxford English Dictionary the entrepreneur is one who undertakes an enterprise, acting as intermediary between capital and labour. Kathryn and David (1994) remarked that the function that is specific to entrepreneur is the ability to take factors of production, land, labour, capital and use them to produce goods and services. Thus, the entrepreneur perceives opportunities that other business executives do not see or do care about.

Agonomuo (2005) defines the term ‘entrepreneur’ as a person who undertakes and develops a new enterprise at some risk of failure or loss. He is the one who shoulders the risk and uncertainty of using economic resources in a new way and the one with the right motivation, energy and ability to build something by his or her effort in order to satisfy his customers and make profit.

However, the term entrepreneur is perceived differently by different sectors of the society. Economists see him as a creator of industrialization. And also as a man who is activated primarily by profit motive.

Gana (2001) viewed entrepreneurship 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 identified opportunities. Hisrich and Peters (2002) defined entrepreneurship as the dynamic process of creating incremental wealth. They further explain that entrepreneurship is the personalized version of actualizing one’s desire, ambition and expression.

Entrepreneurship involves the capacity to find out and evaluate business opportunities, gather the necessary resources and implement actions to take advantage of the opportunities while guided by high achievement motivation. Entrepreneurship therefore describe the willingness, innovative and creative abilities of an individual to seek out investment opportunities, to establish and run an enterprise successfully (Memezie 2003).

Lawal (2014) defined the term entrepreneurship as the act of being an entrepreneur. One who undertake innovations, finance and business acumen in an effort to transform innovations into economic goods. This may result in new organizations in response to
perceived opportunity. Thus, the most obvious forms of entrepreneurship is that of starting new business. The writer sees entrepreneurship as the ability of an individual to seek out investment, opportunities, withstand the rigours and failures inherent in the business and eventually achieve success.

In the 20th century, the understanding of entrepreneurship owes much to the work of economist Joseph Schumpeter in the 1930s and other Austrian economists such as Carl Menger, Ludwig vonMises and Friedrich von Hayek. Schumpeter sees an entrepreneur as a person who is willing and able to convert a new idea or invention into a successful innovation. Entrepreneurship employs what Schumpeter called “the gale of creative destruction that replaces in whole or in part inferior innovations across markets and industries, while simultaneously creating new products including new business models. He further remarked that, creative destruction is largely responsible for the dynamism of industries and long-run economic growth.

Objectives of Entrepreneurship Education.
Entrepreneurship education is a functional education centered on making graduates to be job producers rather than job seekers.

According to Paul (2005) and Oborah (2006), the objectives of entrepreneurship education include the following:

1. To provide meaningful education to the youth which will make them become self reliant and subsequently encourage them to derive profit and become self dependent.
2. To provide small and medium size companies with the opportunity to recruit graduates who will receive training and tutoring in the skills relevant to management of small businesses.
3. Stimulate industrial and economic growth of rural and less developed areas.
4. Provide graduates with the training and support necessary to help them establish a career in small and medium size business.
5. Offer institution graduates with enough training that will make them to be creative
6. Provide the graduates with training in skills that will make them meet the manpower needs of the society.
7. Provide graduates with enough training in risk management to make uncertainty bearing possible and easy.
8. To serve as a catalyst for economic growth and development.
9. Reduction in rural urban migration.

However, the essence of entrepreneurship education is to produce entrepreneurs who can make use of their initiative and innovative skill to invent businesses and manage same in order to escape the dangers of poverty and frustration of employment.

Relevance of Entrepreneurship Education
The economic development of any nation demands active participation in all economic activities by its people. This could be achieved through entrepreneurship development education. Thus, the more people are trained to use their innovative, creative and initiative abilities to be self employed, the more the realization of the vision of entrepreneurship education would be actualized.
a. Entrepreneurial abilities and skills would contribute effectively to economic activities leading to self employment and the creation of jobs. This will help to expand opportunities for others to be employed.
b. Entrepreneurship education will lead to increased employment, reduce poverty level, bring about entrepreneurs working together for common good and consequently establishing a stronger economy.
c. The acquisition of entrepreneurship skills will be beneficial to the society. Entrepreneurs can recognize a genuine opportunity when they come across one.
d. Entrepreneurial studies will produce entrepreneurs that will stimulate rural economic and industrial development, thereby contributing to the development of rural and less developed areas.
e. Through entrepreneurs, the standard of living and that of the society are improved upon.
f. Entrepreneurship development is a reliable economic measure in tackling the problem of unemployment in any economy. It can be oriented towards different ways of realizing opportunities. The most obvious form is that of starting new business which is generally referred to as start-up company.

Challenges of Entrepreneurship Education
Entrepreneurship education is widely conceived as one of the surest strategies for escaping the socio-economic problems of unemployment and poverty, but it is most often misconceived by scholars. The series of obstacles militating against entrepreneurship education in higher institutions are:
1. Deplorable or complete absence of infrastructural facilities have contributed to the poor development of entrepreneurship education in tertiary institutions in Nigeria.
2. Lack of relevant experience and lack of self confidence are two reasons often cited by students and new graduates for not engaging in entrepreneurship after graduation (European Commission 2008)
3. Young graduates may have brilliant ideas (creativity and innovation), but these entrepreneurial ideas would be stifled without enough funds to finance it at the start-up stage and sustaining it.
4. Lack of vocational and technical skills development training for rural and urban youth involved in the informal sector.
5. Lack of systematic tracking and poor interventions. This makes it extremely difficult to know if the activities and programmes implemented have had any impact.
6. Monumental corruption among the political class together with the absence of concensus on macro-economic policy issues.
7. Poor policy implementation, self greed and the private interest syndrome have marred most policy implementation effort in Nigeria.
8. Entrepreneurship studies is not properly taught in our Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education. As a result most young graduates look for white collar jobs after graduation due to lack of adequate knowledge or enough exposure, training and orientation to start up business of their own.

Strategies for Effective Entrepreneurship Education
Entrepreneurship education in tertiary institutions (Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education) offers the chance to develop knowledge-intensive high growth enterprises for all academic disciplines, not only the technical ones. Thus tertiary institutions should create an environment that fosters entrepreneurial mindset, skills and behaviors across various disciplines. However, in order to achieve a viable entrepreneurship education in higher institutions in Nigeria the following strategies should be taken into consideration.

1. Establish school based enterprises where students identify potential business, plan, create and operate small business using the school as main incubator
2. Provide tax relief and tax vacation for young graduate entrepreneurs to enable them improve their capital base.
3. Start- up funds/ credit facilities can be established to provide young graduates with brilliant ideas (in terms of creativity and innovations) with enough capital to finance their businesses at start-up stages and sustain it.
4. Encourage private involvement in in-service technical and vocational skills often recognized as the most effective modality for linking skills in the economy.
5. Sensitizing students that creating a new venture can be an alternative to employment
6. Develop Entrepreneurship intensive programmes by attaching students to locally successful entrepreneurs with clearly established education programmes.

Conclusion
The importance of Entrepreneurship education with the resultant financial benefit cannot be over-emphasized. In contemporary, Nigeria society, entrepreneurial education is gaining attention more than ever before. Entrepreneurship is however, widely conceived as one of the surest ways of escaping the socio-economic problems of unemployment and poverty.

Recommendations
a. Government should endeavour to provide good infrastructural facilities, like electricity, public health clinics and linkage routes and road networks especially in the rural areas.

b. A support learning environment for entrepreneurial education is essential. As business formation do not regularly take place directly after graduation.

c. Establishment of Entrepreneurship Development Board (EDB) which should be responsible for coordinating all entrepreneurship activities across the country.

d. Establishment of entrepreneurship development bank to distribute loan to registered graduates of any of the approved vocational training institutions.

References


