

# REINVENTING NIGERIAN EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE YOUTH EMPOWERMENT THROUGH ENTREPRENEURIAL EDUCATION

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## ABSTRACT

*This paper discusses reinventing Nigerian education for sustainable youth empowerment through entrepreneurial education. The paper focus on the meaning of entrepreneurship, entrepreneurship skill development in Nigerian educational system, historical development of entrepreneurship in Nigeria, characteristics of entrepreneur, types, the challenges of self-employment to Nigerian youths and role expectations of an entrepreneur before conclusion. Recommendations made among others are that, students should be trained in some occupations in order for them to be useful to themselves and the nation at large. There should be an improvement in students' occupation/career information through community linkages such as field trips, shadowing experiences and internship.*

Keywords: youth empowerment, entrepreneurship,

## INTRODUCTION

Education may be regarded as a method of teaching people out of ignorance. It is a means of socializing human beings. It involves the bringing up of a child in the community and constantly training him to adjust himself/herself to the changes in his environment and around the world. The aim of education in Nigeria should revolve around entrepreneurship education. Schooling in Nigeria must prepare the young generations from the primary through secondary and university education to tackle the problems of self-reliance rather than thinking of government employment. Our education system will fail if, while training our young men and women intellectually, be true and obedient citizens of the nation without entrepreneurial education. With entrepreneurial education, there will be reduction in the level of unemployment, not through frustration, thuggery, indiscipline, armed robbery, etc. because the devil use an idle hand.

Identifying exactly what entrepreneur and entrepreneurship are has been a difficult task, as different people tend to give different definitions (Oyedepi & Salau, 2010). The term entrepreneur according to Kehinde, Salau and Bello (2008) was first used in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century by an Irish man by name Cantillon who was then living in France. The term therefore is a French word. Williams (1976) defines entrepreneur as "a risk taker, a man who braves uncertainty, strikes out on his own and through native with devotion to duty and singleness of purpose, somehow creates a business and industrial activity where none existed before". Odeyemi, Kehinde, Bankole and Abifarin (2004) defines an entrepreneur as a person who is able to look at the environment, identify opportunities to improve the environment, gather resources and implement action to maximize those opportunities.

Gana (1995) defines entrepreneur 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 the identified opportunities. Kehinde et al (2008) defines entrepreneurship as a process whereby an entrepreneur organizes the factor of production i.e. land, labour and capital to transform a business idea into profitable reality.

To qualify as an entrepreneur according to Kehinde *et al* (2008), it is not sufficient to be a business man/woman just managing an enterprise. He/she has to be an originator of profitable business ideas.

Gana (1995) said, the single function, which constitutes entrepreneurship, is innovation. Whilst the business director is mostly engaged in managerial activities which are non entrepreneurial. The emphasis must be placed on the ability to gain command of and combine resources in a new way, which will be profitable. The entrepreneur must be prepared to risk his personal energy and financial resources to achieve unpredictable results. The beauty of entrepreneurship education is its ability to combine the three domain of instructions (psychomotor, affective and cognitive domains) if properly managed.

### **History and Development of Entrepreneurship in Nigeria**

The only conclusion from the literature is that several factors not just one are responsible for why an individual goes into business. Lile's (1974) said, "Certain kinds of experiences and situational conditions, rather than personality or ego are the major determinants of whether or not an individual becomes an entrepreneur.

Entrepreneurship development in Nigeria is not far from what Liles (1974) stated above. Experiences and situations have been responsible for the development of entrepreneurship in Nigeria. But the study of Akeredolu (1975) revealed that the problem of capital and inadequate management skills have been major drawbacks of entrepreneurial development in the country.

Some theories according to Kehinde *et al* (2008) have it that the earliest beginning of entrepreneurship dated back to the writings of Richard Cantilon (1755). But there were no serious theoretical studies and formulations on entrepreneurship until the works of Max Weber and Joseph Schumper NIM (2007). The theories postulated by these authors are aggressively empirical and diverse in nature. They ranged from sociological, psychological to economic imperatives. Some even relate the emergence of entrepreneurs to religious, social and cultural characteristics.

Despite the fact that, the Nigerian business environment offers many entrepreneurial opportunities, it is only the promulgation of the 1972 Nigerian Enterprises Promotion Decree (revised 1977) that brought serious attention to entrepreneurial development (NIM, 2007). It was after the decree that the federal government and the various state governments started what was referred to as business assistances. The aims of this is to help indigenous businesses in acquiring the necessary capital, technical knowledge and the essential managerial skills. The small industries division of the federal ministry of industry was also instituted to further the interest of small-scale industrialist.

Oyedeji and Salau (2010) said, over the years, the Nigerian government has paid particular attention to the development of small-scale sub sector through the granting of loans directly or indirectly. Nigerian Industrial Development Bank, National Directorate of Employment, National Economic Reconstruction Fund, Nigerian Agricultural Cooperative Bank etc. are some of the agencies established by government for the attainment of the objective of developing the small-scale sub sector of the economy; but not much have bee done in the area of entrepreneurial education.

### **Characteristics of an Entrepreneur**

According to Kehinde *et al.* (2008), entrepreneur has many characteristics. These are physiological characteristics, sociological characteristics and economic characteristics

#### ***Psychological Characteristics***

- High need for achievement and success
- Strong desire for responsibility and independence
- High degree of self-confidence
- Full of experimentation

#### ***Social Characteristics***

- They are goal oriented
- Capacity to adjust to change
- High organisation of both human and material resources

### *Economic Characteristics*

- Profit oriented
- Risk taking ability
- Capacity to speculate and innovate

### **Entrepreneurial Skill Development in Nigerian Schools**

The goal of this type of education should be education for self-reliance. This type of education has a greater role to play today in the promotion of employment in our economy. This means that the product of our education at various levels would no longer have to wait for anybody to generate employment for them because they would have been fully prepared for self-employment. The skills that would be acquired would assist the graduates from secondary schools and the universities in establishing and manage small business on their own. Even those that could not attain secondary education too would have been better prepared to face the challenges of self-employment.

Entrepreneurship education equips people with managerial skills that will enable them manage both human and material resources towards the attainment of the objective of self-reliance. Salau (1999) stated that entrepreneurship education plays a major role of the ultimate supplier of vocational and consumer education in a civilized society. It is an education that teaches and shows the students and the public how to make a living and how to develop plans and forecast for future. It is the only education that can expose students to industrial enterprises practicum where students would be made to come face to face with the reality of life.

The fundamental business principle according to Ansoff (1965) is a mental process of making judgment of choices in exchange of values based on money concept. Fundamentally in our society where the rate of unemployment has gotten to astronomical dimension it is pertinent for our education system to be oriented towards entrepreneurship education where the pupils/students would learn the techniques and rudiments of entrepreneurship and being able to put them into use for personal use and societal satisfaction.

Stressing the importance of entrepreneurship education, Nanassy, Malsbary and Tonne (1977) in Salau (1999) maintained that, to be economically literate and informed citizens, wise consumers and competent workers, each person must have some understanding of the world of business and how it functions. Everybody must possess at least minimum knowledge, skills and understanding with which to make contributions to the world of work. Entrepreneurship education plays a very important role in providing students, at all levels, with the ability to function effectively in our business world whether public or private sectors.

According to Salau (1999), entrepreneur education has the following functional competency:

- a. Ability to select and apply successfully the required knowledge and technical skills to solving problems in one's area of work and life;
- b. Possession of the required skills for a particular job;
- c. The technical know-how in the application of the knowledge acquired; and
- d. The drive and the industry to discharge successfully the functions of the occupational role that may find himself/herself. P. 3.

From the above, we can say, entrepreneurship education is that part or aspect of the total educational programmes that provides the knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes needed to perform in the business world as a producer and/or consumer of goods and services that business offers. If general education is thought of as the adjustment of the individual to his environment, entrepreneurship education must be thought of as the adjustment of the individual to his business environment (Salau, 1999). Entrepreneurship education therefore could be seen as the education about business and education for business. This is perhaps why Nwakolo (1990) stated that, though business sectors are the engine for the national economic development, but entrepreneurship education is the fuel to the engine. Hence the need to develop this type of education right from the primary school to the university level of our education.

For Nigeria to be among the 20 developed economy in the world by the year 2020 as envisaged by the Late President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, entrepreneurship education must be given the desired prominence at all levels of our education. The present situation where entrepreneurship education is taught to students at school of vocational and technical studies at the Nigeria Certificate in Education (N.C.E) and general study level (GNS) is unacceptable though should be improved upon. The first pragmatic step should be a deliberate plan that will allow for curriculum innovation that will accommodate this type of education in our society. This will no doubt allow for the teaching of both the theory and the practice of entrepreneurship development in the nation's educational system. This will equip our primary, secondary and university graduates with specific skills that will make them self-reliance.

### Challenges of Self-Employment for Nigerian Youths

NIM (2007) said, in the face of the serious and growing threat of youth unemployment in Nigeria today, the need for the Nigerian youth of today to seek avenues for self-employment and self-fulfilment now seems impelling.

Before now, the problem of unemployment in Nigeria was basically that of primary and secondary school leavers, because they were generally considered as ill equipped and lack specific skills to offer the labour market. Today, the explanation is largely irrelevant as even professional and well-equipped youths are now finding it difficult to get job in the Nigerian labour market. Thus, rather than employers vainly searching for skills that are not there, the situation has become one of skills vainly searching for jobs that are not there. It is from the aforementioned that generally unemployment is high in Nigeria. Something has to be done urgently, otherwise the situations may be out of control (Oyedeji and Salau, 2010).

In other words, the Nigerian graduates of today at various levels, can no longer rely on the Nigerian labour market to provide him/her job. He has to vent for an alternative source of employment, which is SELF-EMPLOYMENT (NIM. 2007).

### Types of Entrepreneur

Entrepreneur according to Odeyemi et al (2004) can be classified into two categories namely; the one which establishes and runs a business of his or her own, and the one who lived to manage a business which he or she does not own.

There are so many other types of entrepreneurs as viewed by Gana (1995), Odeyemi et al (2004) and Kehinde et al (2008), among them are:

- a. **The Small Business Owner** – These are entrepreneurs who take responsibility for owning and running their own venture.
- b. **High flyers entrepreneurs**:- These are notable for their variety of products, much larger ventures reflecting success in the market place, wider variety of investment sources including institutional and international agencies.
- c. **The Cantillion Entrepreneur**:- This type of entrepreneurs brings people, money and materials together to create an entirely new organization.
- d. **The Industry Maker Entrepreneur**:- This create a new firm coupled with innovation of greater dimension or importance which leads to the development of a whole industry, new products and also a whole technology to produce them.
- e. **The Administrative Entrepreneur**:- This is a manager, who operates within an established firm. He or she occupies the chief executive or a senior managerial role or position in an enterprise.
- f. **The Senior Citizen Entrepreneur**:- This group is made up of senior citizens that just undertake a venture to keep them occupied during retirement.
- g. **Resources Exploiters**:- These are entrepreneurs who deal in business such as mining, war supplies dealers and real estate developers.

- h. **Workaholic's Entrepreneurs:-** These are ambitious venture owners. They possess administrative experience and bigger businesses than those of senior citizens.
- i. **Swinger's Entrepreneurs:-** These are young entrepreneurs with only limited industrial and technical experience.

### Role Expectation of an Entrepreneur

An entrepreneur no doubt plays an important role in the economic development of a nation, the more entrepreneurs a nation has, the better are the chances for accelerated economic development. The contributions of entrepreneurs to the economic development of any nation according to Kehinde et al (2008) and NIM (2007) are as follows:

1. **Utilizing Local Resources:** By utilizing local resources, entrepreneurs increase their value, such as: conversion of waste products into useful products e.g. use of livestock waste as fertilizer in market, gardening, etc.
2. **Employment Creation:** All entrepreneurs are employers of labour and hence assist in solving the unemployment problem. Most employment is created through small-scale industries.
3. **Promotion of Technology:** By being creative, entrepreneurs are able to contribute to the utilization and development of technology e.g. development of blocks making, ice cream, chalk, washing machines, etc.
4. **Capital Formation:** Entrepreneurs create wealth e.g. by paying salaries and wages to their employees, encouragement of good banking habits as more money is saved in banks and by ploughing back their profits into business.
5. **Promotion of an Entrepreneurial Culture:** Entrepreneurs become models to be imitated by potential entrepreneurs because of the successful images already portrayed by the existing entrepreneurs.
6. **Diversification of Business:** Entrepreneurs diversify business opportunities by being able to locate their business in various areas and identify alternatives in product use.

### CONCLUSION

Introducing entrepreneurship education in schools will no doubt play a major role in the quest for our economic transformation and the social development of our country. It is the surest way to initiate students to the world of business right from infancy and a way of making graduates from our various schools and the universities to be self-reliant. Because to be economically literate and informed citizens, wise consumers and competent workers, each person must have some understanding of the world of business and how it functions which entrepreneurship education provides. Entrepreneurship education will no doubt proffer solutions to our unemployment and social problems.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- a. Training, goal setting and decision making for the selection of tentative career paths.
- b. There should be an improvement in students' occupation/career information through community linkages such as field trips, shadowing experience and internship.
- c. Students should be trained in some occupations in order for them to be useful to themselves and the nation in general.
- d. There should be individual and group counseling to clarify work values and develop copying and planning skills.
- e. The nation must of necessity enrich and position entrepreneurial education properly, as well as provide it with the required support services to enable her consolidate and maximize its expected contribution to national development and the eventual sustainable youth empowerment.
- f. The notion of a target and sound entrepreneurial education for sustainable youth empowerment can only be achieved if certain imperatives are put in place. The enabling environment must be provided in a simple and consistent manner, so that the main objectives of materially developing

the nation for sustainable youth empowerment through in part, the use of entrepreneurial education can be achieved.

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