

CHAPTER 23

ENTREPRENEURIAL EDUCATION: A TOOL FOR JOB CREATION AS PERCEIVED BY NIGERIAN UNDERGRADUATES

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Introduction

The mind-set of most educated elites is shaped to seek and secure paid employment in the public sector of the economy. The average Nigerian undergraduate consider employment in the private sector as a waiting-strategy. Adegoke (2002) stated that before the year 2000, self employment was held in ridicule. A self employed graduate was considered to be a mark of frustration. Not minding the profit derived from such ventures, such graduates are often considered very inferior in the midst of other colleagues.

This picture is so because higher education did not emphasize education for self-reliance but rather prepared their products to meet the needs of the public service. Gana (2002) noted that the impact of globalization and internationalization, driven by information revolution, has introduced change and competition for survival and prosperity in global business. Uncertainty, instability and the need for innovation and entrepreneurship for national survival and prosperity becomes imminent. It is this driving force that has propelled the budding elites to embrace entrepreneurship. As paid employment is in serious lack and there is the need for survival, the average Nigerian youth is challenged to seek for innovative ways in ensuring good financial stand. Based on this premise, entrepreneurial education was introduced in virtually all tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

Entrepreneurial education came into limelight when Nigeria was faced with the realistic nature of unemployment and the dynamic economic conditions which continues to fluctuate. There was the need to introduce a form of education which will not only encourage self-reliance but will impact positively on the creative and innovative abilities of the individuals. Entrepreneurship therefore is the process of creating something new with value by devoting the necessary

time and efforts **assuming** the accompanying financial, psychic and social risks and receiving the **resulting** rewards of monetary and personal satisfaction and independence (Hisch and Peters 2008). Dollinger (2006) perceive entrepreneurship as the creation of an innovative economic organization for the purpose. It becomes clear therefore that entrepreneurship could be regarded as the process by which economic and commercial activities necessary for the improvement of the standard of living of the society are created by entrepreneurs. Risk is involved and creating profit is also essential. Innovations are commercialized in such a way that economic benefits are derived.

Entrepreneurial education was introduced into virtually all tertiary institutions as a general studies course. The university education is not complete without the student passing the entrepreneurial studies which is intended in making the student an entrepreneur.

An entrepreneur is considered to be a daring person with a vision and originality. He is considered to be reservoir of new knowledge, he decides on how the business should be run, he co-ordinates the activities of the different factors of production, he anticipates the future trend of demand and prices, he invests and introduces new ideas and he carries out new activities (Sundharam and Vanish, 2009).

Jonaga (2002) opines that an entrepreneur is someone who brings things like money, materials and labor together in new business, productive process or improved organization to of gain or growth under conditions of risk and uncertainty. Odusina (2005) stated that entrepreneurship is the process of using available capital in any form for business endeavors in an open and free-market economy for the sole purpose of making profits ensure business success by perhaps creating something new. It must be noted that the act of creating or innovating usually requires exceptional determination as well as acumen, initiative and creativity which need not be innate or in born but must be fuelled by the desire to out compete others, exceed or to change a stagnant situation.

To be an entrepreneur, the individual must be ready to take major risks in terms of equity, time and career commitment. He should be able to provide value for the products or services. The major thinking of an entrepreneur is creating wealth and finding better ways to utilize resources while reducing waste. An entrepreneur is someone who has the ability to see and evaluate business opportunities; he gathers the necessary resources and initiates appropriate action to ensure success. He uses organized efforts to pursue opportunities, to create

value and growth by fulfilling wants and needs through innovation and uniqueness.

Introducing entrepreneurship education to every Nigerian undergraduate, it is assumed that the vision of such students will be sharpened and sharpened in such a way that the average student can now translate their visions into economic and commercial activities that are capable of enhancing the well-being of the entire citizenry. They can now identify feasible and viable business opportunities and have special activities in assembling and organizing the necessary resources to exploit the opportunities at a profit.

When formal education was introduced to the shores of Africa and Nigeria in particular, the missionaries as well as the colonial government at that time did not emphasize a functional education where the recipients can sustain their lives without waiting for the white-collar jobs. Emphasis was placed on literacy so the nation produced several literate individuals who could not utilize their education to sustain their lives without a paid employment. The education was tailored to meet the existing survival situation in the society. Instead this form of education produced graduates who completely ran away from farming, fishing, blacksmithing, etc. which were the survival tools of the society. The average graduate as at that time would not want to be seen in the farm as that was not only derogatory but it was considered dirty.

With the increase in population and the subsequent economic meltdown Nigerians were now faced with the realistic ways of designing several survival strategies to be able to cope with the existing excruciating situation. Unemployment created an avenue for innovativeness and the pride of the ivory tower was properly defined to face the realities of the time. Undergraduates were now made to look inwards to be job creators and not job seekers. This gave birth to entrepreneurship studies in virtually all higher institutions in the country.

It is hoped that with the study of entrepreneurship, the Nigerian undergraduate will be well equipped to face the economic challenges of the time, he will be creative and innovative to produce wealth and he will be able to use his wealth of experience in school to create, manage and produce wealth. Entrepreneurship then becomes core course in the General Studies Unit of the various universities.

Ifechukwu (2000) lamented that entrepreneurial education which was designed to equip students with the practical economic realities of the time and how

cope with the challenges has become a theoretical course which students scramble to pass just to obtain a degree in their respective field of study with little or no practical exposure to any entrepreneurial skills. Ikeagwu (2006) observed that entrepreneurial studies is taught only in a semester in most universities as a general studies course. The student is exposed to the theories of entrepreneur just for about thirteen weeks after which he is made to write an examination qualifying him as a student that has undergone entrepreneurial studies. Ikeagwu (2006) however suggested that entrepreneurial studies should be part and parcel of the course work the student must register for throughout his number of years in the university and not just a course for one semester. Entrepreneurial education is not just skill acquisition training as it is often misconstrued. It is a form of training that will bring out the business ingenuity in the individual. In virtually all the fields of study in the university, Asuka (2013) advised that the teachers should design a course of study relating it to the specialized field for survival. The school curriculum should be designed in a way that the education to be received must match with the realities in the society in such a way that the sustaining elements of the course of study should be highlighted. This entails that some subjects which are not relevant to the present day realities should be scraped and the existing ones should highlight the sustaining elements. A graduate of physics or chemistry should be innovative since education is intended for living. That an educated man cannot live well mean that there is a problem with the educational system (Asuka, 2013). The average Nigerian undergraduate student is more concerned about his certificate (He, 2003), he ensures that he passes his courses without any carry-over or failure. He is quite hopeful that the credentials will fetch his daily meals and handles entrepreneurship with levity. Kilby (2001) noted that very many undergraduate students have positive desire for wealth but with little or no sweat attached.

Undergraduate Perceptions of Entrepreneurial Education

The concept of entrepreneurial education was first introduced to the undergraduate students formally through the curriculum designed for the university education. Though, very many students were informally introduced to entrepreneurial education either by their parents or relations. As at that time, they consider their involvement in informal entrepreneurial education as either a punishment or a waste of time. Okpara (2002) stated that the minds of the young ones at this stage is that their graduation from the university is a sure

road to success as the paid employment especially the oil sector is ever there to absorb them.

At school, the course is considered one of the essential courses that will make up the requirements for the award of the degree. The student is therefore faced with the challenge of passing the course and not internalizing the details of the course for self reliance. Emphasis is placed on passing the course. It is assumed that the application may come later depending on the existing economic situation.

The teaching of entrepreneur is usually for a semester in most universities. After thirteen weeks, the student is tested based on the lectures received. Uzoma (2001) stated that a semester is not enough to inculcate the spirit of entrepreneurship in the student especially when he is not exposed to any practical aspects of the course. The perception of undergraduate students is that of passing the course after the semester.

Umoh (2001) noted that female students are more interested in business especially petty businesses, while the male students believe in paid jobs. The female students perceive that women are naturally gifted in petty businesses which are regarded as part of their traditional role. Skills such as bead making, catering, hairdressing etc are regarded as gender roles associated with women. They may not involve huge capital and less stressful. The male undergraduate students often believe that a huge capital is required to open up any business. Since most of them believe that they may not have the necessary financial support, they may handle courses in entrepreneur with levity.

Entrepreneur is better taught when there is an entrepreneurial village which will serve as the workshop for the course. In most universities, Pandey (2000) states that since there is no workshop to actualize the knowledge of entrepreneurship hence most students perceive entrepreneur as a mere theoretical course. The application of the knowledge acquired is not properly harnessed.

The society has greatly affected the perceptions of undergraduate students in entrepreneurial education. Democracy ushered in politicians with great affluence. In every capitalist economy, those with affluence are often regarded as 'high-ups' in the society. Okpara (2002) noted that it is the dream of every young Nigerian to get to the top through the means in which most others have climbed. Entrepreneurs are few and many are still struggling for survival but politicians control great affluence with little or no entrepreneurial education.

The society respect these set of individuals who have made it while those who are still struggling have little or no sympathy by the society. This has greatly affected the thinking of the young undergraduates that there is always an easy way out instead of struggling to be self-reliant.

In most tertiary institutions, entrepreneur is often translated to mean skill acquisition and the next and immediate skill that readily comes to mind is agriculture. Most of the students were exposed to farming before gaining admission into the university. Exposing them to any form of training which will carry them back to the farm will be highly rejected. The perception of undergraduate students concerning entrepreneurship is using the training not only for survival but a way of making wealth that will be appreciated by the society.

The Way Forward

For the training of entrepreneurship to yield the desired result a lot of steps must be taken by the student, the school, the government and the society.

The students must be made to face the realities of the time. Unemployment is soaring high and the nation's economy cannot withstand a public service paid employment for an graduates. The admission rate of intakes into the nation's universities is so high. It is the desire of every parent in Nigeria to send their children to the university. With the high number of graduates produced every year, there is the need for all undergraduate students to embrace a form of education tailored towards survival and self-reliance. Since entrepreneurial studies have become a compulsory students should be made to embrace the course in such that it should be practical-oriented.

The universities must ensure that the teaching of entrepreneurial studies is not only theoretical but practical. An entrepreneurial village could be set up to ensure that students acquire skills that could be useful to them after school. The curriculum should be redesigned to ensure that entrepreneurial studies form part of the course work from the first year to the final year. The first and second years could be theoretical while the third and final year could be practical base. This will enhance a better understanding and application of the course. As a general studies course, the teaching and learning should be properly monitored to ensure that the students are actively engaged.

The policy of the government towards the teaching and learning of entrepreneurship studies should be such that entrepreneurial education should be linked to the society and made to address the realities of the time. Capital is very essential in any business. Most undergraduate students, who may be interested in establishing businesses on their own, may often be discouraged as a result of lack of capital. Government could through her policies make available to young graduates soft loans which may not involve strong collateral. The ministry of education should redesign the entrepreneurial education curriculum in such a way that every course of study is made to look inward at the survival or self-reliant nature of the discipline. The skills to be developed may necessarily not be stereotyped; all disciplines will be considered relevant and important. Entrepreneurial studies should not just be acquiring skills of managing business without proper innovations. Emphasis should not just be placed on the existing skills which have been saturated in the market, but new avenues should be opened which are to some extent relevant to the special discipline of the student.

The society should be re-orientated to know that the aim of education is to gain better understanding to the issues of life and be able to face the challenges of life. Education should not be seen as an avenue to gain paid public service employment or an avenue to make wealth. There is dignity in labor and society should not look down on any young graduate who have decided to be self employed. Most parents consider this situation as very unfortunate and it is often considered as the height of frustration. The young entrepreneurs are not often given necessary encouragement and support by the society. They are considered as failures and never-do-well. If there is a symbiotic relationship between the society and the school, the society could be well informed through the various media on the prospects of young entrepreneurs, the society will then be able to give the necessary support.

Conclusion

Entrepreneurial education has come to stay in the various institutions of higher learning in Nigeria especially in the universities. It is intended to build in the young undergraduates the spirit of self-reliance and inspiring the innovative minds to create situations or projects that could be translated to wealth. The form of education became necessary as a result of the present economic situations in the country as well as allowing young minds to be creative and innovative instead over dependence on the paid public service.

The problems facing this form of education are numerous. The students themselves have a negative passion towards the course as it is regarded as a mere general studies course which is required for the award of the degree of study. The teaching is purely theoretical as no entrepreneurial villages are attached for students to develop skills which are needed to be entrepreneurs. The curriculum is theoretically based with little or no practical touch. The society look down on young entrepreneurs especially when they don't have the required capital to boost their business

Entrepreneurial education is very important in any nation. When citizens generate wealth instead of waiting for paid jobs, the nation is moving towards a self-reliant nation.

Recommendations

It is therefore recommended that:

1. Entrepreneurial education should not just be a general studies course but it should form part of the course work in virtually all disciplines in the university
2. Entrepreneurial studies should not be taught for just one semester
3. The curriculum of entrepreneurial education should be reviewed to include practical.
4. A special orientation programme should be organized by the government to sensitise the entire Nigeria nation on the benefit of entrepreneurial studies.
5. Entrepreneurial villages should be established to enable students acquire desired skills
6. Entrepreneurial education should be relevant to the needs and aspiration of the society
7. Fund should be provided by entrepreneurs to boost their business.

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