

THE ROLE OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION IN ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

This paper specifically sets to examine the role of Entrepreneurship Education in ensuring Economic empowerment and Development. The concept of Entrepreneurship education has been briefly examined in relation to Economic Development. Economic Development is described as the quantitative and qualitative changes in the economy. Examining the concept of entrepreneurship education, this paper has included its goals and objectives. A section is devoted to examining the specific roles of Entrepreneurship Education in ensuring economic empowerment and development in Nigeria. One of the major recommendations advanced in this paper is that Government should make accessible loans available for graduates so as to start up their businesses.

Introduction

Education remains a pivot upon which the wheels of the society revolve. Farrant (2009) defines education as the process of learning to live as a useful and acceptable member of the society. From this definition, it is obvious that the essence of education is functionality. Section 1 paragraph 7b of the National Policy on Education emphasizes that the national educational goals involve the acquisition of appropriate skills and the development of mental, physical and social abilities and competencies as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of the society (FRN, 2004). This section of the National Policy on Education is also in harmony with the position of Farrant. The essence of any educational programme is to ensure that the products of the system are equipped with the relevant knowledge, skills and attitude needed to contribute meaningfully to the economic development of the nation.

The inability of the graduates of the educational system to contribute meaningfully to the economic development of the nation by being self-employed

was what informed the introduction of Entrepreneurship education in schools. The call for the introduction of Entrepreneurship education in schools is an indication of its importance in economic empowerment and job creation in particular. This education has become necessary as Nigeria continues to churn out graduates that are hardly self-reliant but solely dependent on white collar jobs.

According to Idada, Okosun, Anolu, Atagana and Aiwansedo (2011), Entrepreneurship education is the kind of education given to people with a view to developing Entrepreneurship qualities properly followed up with support services for smooth take off and successful running of business. In a similar vein, Ekankumo and Kemebaradikumo (2011) have stressed that Entrepreneurship education seeks to provide student (especially those in tertiary schools) with the knowledge, skills and motivation to encourage entrepreneurial studies in a variety of settings. From these assertions, it is obvious that a well implemented Entrepreneurship education will climax in economic empowerment and development. The essence of Entrepreneurship education is to build in the students Entrepreneurship spirit and culture (Akpomi, 2009; Adejimola & Olufunmilayo, 2009).

The term empowerment refers to increasing the spiritual, political, social, educational, gender or economic strength of individuals and communities. It is perceived that a well-planned and implemented Entrepreneurship education is capable of creating more jobs in the country and redirecting the focus of the unemployed graduates. Economic empowerment involves empowering of previously disadvantaged sections of the population. It is this that translates to economic development which is the quantitative and qualitative changes in the economy (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economic-Development>).

Entrepreneurship and Entrepreneurship Education

Entrepreneurship plays a vital role in economic development through creation of utility and generation of employment within a short period (Onyemah, 2011). It is the act and art of being an entrepreneur or one who undertake innovations or introducing new things, finance and business acumen in an effort to transform innovations into economic goods. This may result in new organizations or may be part of revitalizing mature organizations in response to a perceived opportunity (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Entrepreneurship>). Entrepreneurship can be defined as the willingness and ability of an individual to seek out investment opportunities in an environment, and be able to establish and run as an enterprise successfully based on the identified opportunities. In this definition, the following words-willingness, ability and investment opportunities are integral to the understanding of entrepreneurship. In other words, the entrepreneur must have the ability/technical knowhow in addition to being willing to establish an enterprise. This definition further reveals that not all opportunities that appear are worth

investing in. So, the responsibility now falls on the individual or would-be entrepreneur to seek for investment opportunity. Stallworth in Nwafor (2007) describes entrepreneurship as the creation of a new economic entity centered on a novel product or service or at the very least, one which differs significantly from products or services offered elsewhere in the market. Ugiagbe in Owenbiugie and Iyamu (2011) stress that entrepreneurship is the process of bringing together creative and innovative ideas and coping with management and organizational skills in order to combine people, money and resources to meet an identified need, thereby creating wealth.

There are various forms of entrepreneurship and the most obvious form of it is starting new businesses popularly referred to as Start-up Company. A start-up business has numerous advantages. There is joy and satisfaction of creating one's own kind of business of his/her dreams. He/she is able to choose a business name, a location and site, a product or service, a target market, technology, employees and operating procedures. The main disadvantage of a start-up business is the mountain of unforeseen/unexpected problems generally associated with business formation and often encountered in the process of building a business (Inegbenebor, 2006). These problems may take the form of negative attitude of the consumers towards the product or service, inadequate capital to finance operations and unexpected hitches in the performance of some of the fixed assets in the business.

The need for education in the developmental effort of any nation cannot be underestimated. The development of education sector is a sine-qua-non for the development of all other sectors. According to the European Union Commission in Ekankumo and Kemebaradikumo (2011), Entrepreneurship education seeks to provide students (especially those in tertiary schools) with the knowledge, skills and motivation to encourage entrepreneurial studies in the variety of setting. The commission emphasizes that different aspects of entrepreneurship education are offered at all levels of schooling. In a similar vein, the consortium for Entrepreneurship Education (2004) maintains that it is a lifelong learning process. Starting from elementary level to other levels of education and spanning to adult education. Akpomi (2009) also holds the view that Entrepreneurship education focuses on developing understanding and capacity for the pursuit of entrepreneurial behaviours, skills and attitudes in widely different context. According to Alain (2009), Entrepreneurship education refers to all activities aim at fostering entrepreneurial mindsets, attitudes and skills as well as covering a range of aspects such as idea generation, start-up, growth and innovation. Akudolu (2010) sees Entrepreneurship education as the acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitude to enable the learner understand life challenges in whatever form and take decisive steps to realize new trends and opportunities for meeting those challenges in all aspects of human life.

Goals and Objectives of Entrepreneurship Education

The overall objectives of Entrepreneurship education is to continuously foster entrepreneurship culture amongst students and faculty with a view to not only educating them but to also, supporting graduates of the system towards establishing and also maintaining sustainable business ventures, including but not limited to those arising from research ([http://www.thnigerianvoice.com/nvnew/45849/1/why-we-set-up-entrepreneurship-studies-in-varsities .html](http://www.thnigerianvoice.com/nvnew/45849/1/why-we-set-up-entrepreneurship-studies-in-varsities.html)). Oborah (2006) outlines the objectives of Entrepreneurship education as:

- To provide meaningful education for the youths, which could make them self-reliant and subsequently encourage them to derive profit and be self-dependent;
- To provide small and medium sizes companies with the opportunities to receive qualified graduates who will receive training and tutoring in the skills relevant to the management of the small business centres.
- To provide graduates with training in skills that will make them meet the manpower needs of the society.
- To provide graduates with the training and support necessary to help them establish a career in small and medium businesses;
- To provide graduates with enough training in risk management to make uncertainty almost possible and easy;
- To provide graduates with enough training that will make them creative and innovative in identifying new business opportunities and
- To stimulate industrial and economic growth of rural and less developed areas.

Garavan and O’Cinneide in Chigbuson (2011) give the following as the goals of Entrepreneurship education:

- To foster entrepreneurial mindsets, skills and behaviours among the recipients;
- To empower students with the competencies and skills necessary to prepare them to respond to their life needs, including running their own business, so that they become productive citizens;
- To develop innovation in youths and develop their skills to identify, create, initiate and successfully manage personal, community, business and work opportunities.
- To increase the awareness and understanding of the process involved in initiating and managing a new venture as well as to enhance the public’s perception of learners of small business ownership as serious career option; and

- To identify and stimulate entrepreneurial drive, talent and skills to undo the risk-averse bias of several analytical techniques and to devise attitudes towards change.

Roles of Entrepreneurship Education in Economic Empowerment and Development in Nigeria

The introduction of Entrepreneurship education in Nigeria tertiary institutions is actually a direct response to the changing socio-economic and political conditions in the world and Nigeria in particular.

According to Ewubare (2010), Entrepreneurship education programme can equip students with entrepreneurial skills that will enable them create and develop enterprises in various areas. The emphasis here is that the programmes have a way of shifting the focus of students from paid employment to self-employment. During the colonial era, people were trained to work for the colonial masters and as such, their education was patterned towards such. Immediately after independence the emphases of our education system was after paid employment (Akpomi, 2009). Another rule of Entrepreneurship education is that it has the tendency of equipping and making students experts in the production of certain items. The curriculum framework of this programme has been designed such that individuals will be able to channel their creative abilities and skills to an area or areas of interest. The interest area may be barbing, soap making, farming and so on (Agoha, 2011).

The knowledge of Entrepreneurship education helps the students to gain information that will help to boost teaching and learning (Agoha, 2011). Entrepreneurship education builds the spirit of being entrepreneurs in the minds of the students. Thus, Entrepreneurship education has a way of discouraging laziness and idleness among our teeming population. Most people that are idle today or probably lazy are those that seem to know little or nothing about entrepreneurship. That is, what it takes to develop business plan, start and manage business.

Entrepreneurship education can greatly help in addressing the level of poverty in the country. The issue of poverty eradication has been a top priority of many governments and institutions, especially in developing countries where extreme poverty is conspicuous and has become pandemic (Akpomi, 2009; Kalirajan, 2009). The incidence of poverty in Nigeria is on the high side, where about 70% of the total population has been classified as poor (Ewhrudjakpor, 2008). This state may be seen as a direct consequence of the absence of entrepreneurial spirit and culture which Entrepreneurship education is suppose to foster. In other words, the relevance of Entrepreneurship education is felt more in the area of checking or reducing poverty. Entrepreneurship education equally helps in checking high dependency ratios (that is, the ratio of dependent population to working population) in the country. Once the working population are equipped

with these entrepreneurial skills thereby leading to self-employment, burden arising from dependent population will be reduced.

Conclusion

This paper has successfully x-rayed the concept of empowerment in relation to Entrepreneurship education and Economic development. The term empowerment has been examined in relation to enhancing the productivity of the country and this in turn leads to the development of the nation. The paper has equally examined the concept of Entrepreneurship education including its goals and objectives. The roles of Entrepreneurship education in empowering the citizen and bringing about economic development in Nigeria is examined also.

Recommendations

It is obvious that economic empowerment and development cannot take place if there is no proper implementation of Entrepreneurship education programme. Based on this, the following recommendations are therefore necessary in ensuring economic empowerment and development:

1. There should be adequate funding/financing of the programme in order for the objectives and goals of the programme to be realized;
2. People should be encouraged to embrace Entrepreneurship education or training in order for them to become self reliant and wealth creators;
3. The Government should make accessible loans available for graduates of the programme so as to start up their businesses;
4. There should be uniformity in the curriculum offerings in the various institutions that are saddled with the teaching and learning of entrepreneurship education.
5. There should be adequate provision of necessary resources (that is, human and material) needed to fully run the programme.

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