Enhancing the Entrepreneurship Education in Nigeria

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Abstract

The impact of globalization on the education system is overwhelming as it has greatly affected not only the curriculum but also the instructional process including the entire system. This paper examines how to optimize the teaching of entrepreneurship education in tertiary institutions in Nigeria within the context of the globalised competitiveness. Such challenges and expectations go with certain responsibilities. The youths of today must brace up for the challenges of adult life. To function effectively and productively in workplaces requires the acquisition of certain basic skills and capacities. This paper emphasizes the need for strengthening of entrepreneurship teaching so that the society at large can benefit.

Key words: Curriculum, entrepreneurship, education, and tertiary institutions.

Introduction

According to section 8(58) of FRN (2004), tertiary education is the education given after secondary education either in universities, colleges of education, polytechnics, monotechnics including those institutions offering correspondence courses. One of the goals of such education is to “acquire both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to be self-reliant and useful members of the society”.

Article 64(c) of the same section indicates that Universities education shall contribute to: making all students, as part of a general program of all-round improvement in University education, to offer general study courses such as history of ideas, philosophy of knowledge and nationalism. This provision demands the strengthening of entrepreneurship education curriculum in the tertiary institutions.

Our world is fast changing, interdependent and certainly amongst the most interesting in human history (Enu, 2010). It is indeed an era of greater challenges. These challenges bring possibilities for those responsible for educating subsequent generations. On the strength of this, Greig, Pike and Selby (1991) asked the following questions:

How should schools go about in the task of preparing young people for more informed and effective participation in world society?

How can teachers best help develop global understanding in the face of this exciting yet daunting prospect of adult life in the 21st century?

What kind of skills, capacities and insights students need to make sense of, cope with and handle an accelerating rate of change in this growing world?

A synthesis of the above questions constitutes a rich content scope of Entrepreneurship Education. In a report of the Global Education Initiative (2009) on
Educating the Next Wave of Entrepreneurs and Unlocking Entrepreneurial Capabilities to meet the challenges of the 21st century, an aspect of the report states thus:

Preparing today’s students for success and eventual leadership in the new global market place is the most important responsibility in education today… Entrepreneurship education is an important tool to achieving these objectives (and)… Should be universally available to provide all students with opportunities to explore and fulfill their potentials.

Similarly, Alvin Toffler, the popular futurist declared as follows: “our job is to prepare children for the future…. But the challenge is preparing them for the right future’. To fit into the future perfectly and function with the skills needed in this dynamic and responsive society requires entrepreneurship education knowledge. The rapidly expanding nature of entrepreneurship education has become an evolving aspect of higher education. It is a culture that is meant to transform the Nigerian tertiary education system towards global trend.

Supporting the above, Obanya (2010) is of the view that Universities have always striven to be the best among equals. That the advent of the “Knowledge Economy” and its emphasis on such values as ‘cutting edge’ (in terms of ideas, innovations, facilities, and most importantly technology) and global competitiveness has influenced the academic ambition of tertiary institutions in general and universities in particular in a ‘Sky-is-no-longer-the-limit’ direction. He furthered stated that there is an external socio-economic push for people to seek education in competitive institutions for eventual exposure to face the competitive world. There is a tendency to equate the nation’s education system on a global league of world class universities. When this is achieved, it becomes an index of rising standard of our tertiary institutions in terms of curricular content and human resources, which can measure up for global competitiveness.

**What Is Entrepreneurship Education?**

The Commission Communication (2006) defined entrepreneurship education as the individual ability to turn ideas into action. It includes creativity, innovation and risk taking, as well as the ability to plan and manage projects in order to achieve objectives. This support everyone in day to day life at home and in society, makes employees more aware of the context of their work and better able to seize opportunities, and provide a foundation for entrepreneurs and enabling a social and commercial activity.

UNESCO (2008) stated that entrepreneurship education is made up of all kinds of experiences that give students the ability and vision of how to access and transform opportunities of different kinds. It goes beyond business creation. It is about increasing student’s ability to anticipate and respond to societal changes.

It is also seen by UNESCO as education and training which allows students to develop and use their creativity and to take initiatives, responsibility and risks. To Lee & Wong (2008) entrepreneurship education is a catalyst for economic development and job creation in any society.

The above views show that entrepreneurship education by its scope, nature and characteristics is a rebranding education culture meant to guarantee a comprehensive educational system re-engineering arising from the obvious deficiencies of the existing education system. It is aimed at equipping the students with requisite skills and capacities needed in the world of work.
What Is The Content Of Entrepreneurship Education?

Entrepreneurship education is a product of the rising challenges in society. Its curriculum content must be responsive enough to address the obvious shortcomings of our present school system. That is why Ogunkunle (2009)remarked that global changes in recent times call for innovations in the school curriculum. Entrepreneurship education is aimed at meeting the challenges of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) if curriculum must be responsive and relevant to the current and anticipated needs, problems and aspirations of the learner (Emah, 2009).

Entrepreneurship education is an aspect of both responsive and functional curriculum and so the curriculum contents are mutually interrelating and overlapping. Based on this, Parson (2009) as published by Esu (2010) identified the following as the domains of skills such curriculum content must transmit to learners at all levels of education.

1. **Personal care skills** – covers bathing, grooming, toileting, sexuality, medical needs
2. **Domestic skills** – covers shopping, cooking, laundry, housekeeping.
3. **Recreational skills** – covers street crossing, use of Cross-walk, use of walk button, store recognition, public transit use.
4. **Employment Skills** – covers pre-vocational skills and work experience
6. **Modified/functional academics** – covers partial integration, small group instruction in areas supporting community life, food recognition, safety signs, time and money.

In the same vein, Robert & Scott (1997) had previously identified the following as content areas of entrepreneurship education:

1. **Self – confidence**
   - Confidence building
   - Independent, individualistic
   - Optimistic
   - Leadership, dynamic
2. **Originality**
   - Innovative, creative
   - Resourceful
   - Initiative
   - Versatile, knowledgeable
3. **People – Oriented**
   - Gets along well with others
   - Flexible
   - Responsive to suggestions/criticism
4. **Task – Result-oriented**
   - Need for achievement
   - Profit oriented
   - Persistent, perseverance, determined
   - Hard working, drive, energy.
5. **Failure – oriented**
   - Foresight
   - Perceptive
6. **Risk Taker**
   - Risk taking ability
   - Likes challenges
Finally, Shai (2009) came out with a three components categorization of Entrepreneurship Education curriculum considered comprehensive enough to equip the products of the school system with the needed skills and capacities of future life.

- **Personal Development** – it should build confidence, motivate progress, strengthen the entrepreneurial mindset, foster a desire to achieve and inspire action.
- **Business Development** – Technical, financial literacy and skills to engage in self-employment and in entrepreneurship that can lead to self-improvement. This will include the expected business and functional curricula.
- **Entrepreneurial skill’s development** – it should provide training in social skills, networking, creative problem – solving, opportunity seeking, interviewing, presentations, group leadership, community cooperation, seeking dealing with bureaucracy, local cultural norm and how they affect business etc.

Every entrepreneurship curriculum must have the above as its integral elements so as to provide the students with the cherished skills and capacities that can make them self sufficient and highly productive in the society.

### Entrepreneurship Education in the Nigerian Education System

A national crisis exists in Nigerian public education and that is why Soludo (2006) wrote that Nigeria’s educational system was “down and out” as the university system was characterized more by the days of strikes and lockouts rather than days in classrooms. The lawlessness prevailed at all levels, and a culture of impunity, fostered by decades of militarization and bad governance. The Centennial Global Business Summit (2008) identified the causes of educational crisis include unaccountable teachers, dysfunctional schools, and systemic barriers like lack of political and economic will to drive changes.

These barriers have created a new environment now for innovation through ambitious social entrepreneurs and it is being focused in the following areas as shown by the Centennial Global Business Summit (2008):

- **People** – This is aimed at improving the quality of teachers and incenting them appropriately, as well as energizing parents and communities.
- **Schools** – By introducing new types of schools to compete with the ones we have.
- **Performance** – Developing tools and products to optimize learning through technology – e.g Curriculum optimizing and tools to interpret student’s performance data and actions warranted.
- **Institutional Barriers** – completely reinventing educational systems from inside out.

Every nation desires development through better quality of education and human resources. One of the key success factors in this regard is that Nigerian tertiary institutions must strengthen their entrepreneurship education curriculum to be able to catch up with the realities of the globalized world. The United Nations (2011) clearly indicated that entrepreneurship and innovation are increasingly recognized as important drivers of economic growth, productivity and employment in this present era of global competition. This stimulating innovation and growth-oriented entrepreneurship is a key to economic and societal challenge in which universities and other tertiary institutions have much to contribute (Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs and Local Development 2008).

From the Global Education Initiative (2009) standpoint, entrepreneurship education is critical for developing entrepreneurship skills, attitude and behaviors that are the basis for economic growth. It is essential for developing the human capital necessary for the society of the future. In his preface to the report of the Global Education Initiative (2009), Meyer Dirk, wrote thus:

> Education is the clearest path to individual opportunity and societal growth. It is also noted that
entrepreneurship education is especially vital to fuelling a more robust global economy. For it brings new ideas to life through innovation, creativity and the desire to build something of lasting value. Therefore we must continually foster educational cultures within our, governments and communities to keep the entrepreneurship pipe-line filled for generations to come. (P:17).

Supporting the above, researchers namely Akpomi, (2009) Adejimola & Olufunmilayo (2009) Dickson, Solomon & Weaver (2008) and Vincett & Farlow (2008) have jointly consented that developing entrepreneurial skills among students at all levels has become an issue of priority to both educational policy makers and practitioners. This has resulted to sustained efforts through researches and introduction of entrepreneurial programs and courses in institutions of learning and other entrepreneurship based centers for the purpose of inculcating the culture and spirit of entrepreneurship.

Similarly, Abubakar, (2010) noted that the shift from general education to specifically entrepreneurship education becomes necessary in the present realities of the need to develop and empower particularly the youths in the society. There is seeming consensus on the importance of entrepreneurship in ameliorating some socio-economic problems especially poverty, unemployment, and all sort of social vices in the society.

Role of Tertiary Institutions in Promoting Entrepreneurship Education.

Entrepreneurship education is a challenge for developing counties since the content and learning experiences are yet to be fully integrated into the curriculum in institutions higher learning. In some countries, these new initiatives are still grappling to gain political and economic support. But the growing demand and popularity of entrepreneurship education in recent years has led to the establishment of special centers in universities for the delivering of specific curriculum instructions on entrepreneurship and other innovative subjects in new venture creation, enterprise development and capacity building.

The European Commission (2008) indicated that higher education institutions should have a strategy of action plan for teaching and research in entrepreneurship, and for new ventures creation and spin-off. The real essence of entrepreneurship education is to ensure the improvement of educational quality by equipping the young ones with basic skills that will make them functional and productive in the society. This challenge is in line with UNESCO (2005) on the role of higher education in improving educational quality. UNESCO made reference to the Dakar Framework for action which gave new impetus to the promotion of quality of education by designating one of the six EFA goals: “improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills”.

Similarly, FRN (2004) (59) a, b, & d listed some of the goals of tertiary education in Nigeria. Emphasis on Entrepreneurship Education implies that the problem is more of that of employability. Most times, the skills that people have are not appropriate for securing employment. Universities are centers of learning have always been places where the skills and knowledge of students are chiseled to suit the requirements of the work places. It is therefore imperative that our universities assess well in advance and structure courses in a way that will help their students to be gainfully employed in the labor markets.

Brideges, Juceviciene, Jucevicius, Mclaughin & Stamkeviciute (2007) in their book entitled Higher Education and National Development… strongly stated that universities and societies across the world are consulted in the expansion of their central aims and purposes to
be able to accept the challenge of development in the society in which it’s located. This change of direction has much implication for the curricula, instructional procedures and on the students as a whole.

The authors advanced further that universities are increasingly expected not mostly to respond to these changes but to drive economic and social development in the new environment, contributing to business competitiveness and innovation through ‘knowledge transfer’ ‘research-based business start-ups’ ‘demand-led education and training’, the development of ‘the learning society’ and the contribution of higher level skills to knowledge economy’. At the same time, the university struggle to meet up with its traditional roles in the formation of an intellectual leadership, the education of a democratic citizenry or the cultivation of a wise and highly skilled community.

In establishing the conceptual link between higher education, and economic growth in Africa, Bloom, Canning & Chan (2005) indicated that in a knowledge economy, tertiary education can help economies keep up or catch up with more technologically advanced societies. Higher education graduates are likely to be more aware of and better able to use new technologies. They are also more likely to develop new tools and skills themselves. Therefore their knowledge can also improve the skills and understanding of non-graduate co-workers, while the greater confidence and know-how inculcated by advanced schooling may generate entrepreneurship, with positive effects on job creation.

Tertiary education can also have direct benefits to the society. How? By producing well-trained teachers, this can enhance the quality of primary and secondary education systems and give secondary graduates greater opportunities for economic advancement. All these are essential characteristics of entrepreneurship education.

Equally, DEBloom & Rosovsky (2004) advanced that higher education is a determinant of income and can produce public and private benefits. It can create greater tax revenue, increase savings and investment and lead to a more entrepreneurial and civic society. It can as well improve a nation’s health, contribute to reduced population growth, improve technology, and strengthen governance. A typical example of the public benefit of higher education to a country’s economy as observed by the author is India’s leap into the world economic stage which is inextricably linked to its decade-long successful efforts to provide high-quality and technologically oriented tertiary education to a significant number of its people.

Conclusion

This paper has examined the relevance of entrepreneurship education in the Nigerian society fully appreciative of the in-built potentials. Having lost faith with the traditional school system due to its inability to equip the youths with the capabilities of adult life, the paper with a sense of passion strongly solicits for the strengthening of the teaching of entrepreneurship education at the tertiary institutions level. The teaching of entrepreneurship education at this level will be seen as an added impetus tailored at re-engineering the overall tertiary school curriculum for maximum national productivity.

The author considers the entrepreneurship education as an emerging agenda for the transformation of Nigerian tertiary education and brought to limelight the role of tertiary education in the promotion of entrepreneurship education.

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