



EDUCATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP: A ROAD MAP FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Nigeria is faced with myriad of problems among which are graduate unemployment, poverty, crime, and other social vices, which are as a result of economic meltdown or unsustainable development in the country, which needs urgent attention. In order to overcome this menace, this position paper examines the nature and concept of education and entrepreneurship its application for graduates of Nigerian institutions. The objective of the paper is to identify and analyze the relevance of entrepreneurship and education as a road map to economic development in Nigeria. The paper also attempts to examine the challenges of the educational sector in Nigeria which include lack of adequate funding, issues relating to policy formulation and implementation as well as the much emphasis placed on certificates over skill sets. The paper therefore recommends the adoption of an indigenous system of education that is skill based fashioned after the models operated by Asian countries in order to enhance the alignment of the educational system with national demands and priorities.

Keywords: *Entrepreneurship, education, development, unemployment and poverty*

Introduction

There is no doubt that Nigeria has consistently grappled with the twin problems of unemployment and underemployment for its teeming youths. This is more

worrisome when this is juxtaposed with the fact that the country has all it takes to develop but unfortunately it could not due to the complex nature of the country's social problems. The country is endowed with vast agricultural and natural resources, and has a relatively important industrial sector, compared to other West African or Sub-Saharan countries (less than 30%). The job market is over saturated; the literacy level in Nigeria remained at the bottom.

The Nigerian economy which used to thrive on agricultural exports such as cocoa, groundnut, hides and skin, is now solely dependent on the price of oil in the international market. It is a common knowledge that any fall in the price of oil will result to a fall in the domestic Nigerian economy. It was therefore no surprise that the Federal Government of Nigeria, through the National Universities Commission (NUC) and other higher institutions board introduced Entrepreneurship Education (EE), which is aimed at equipping tertiary students with entrepreneurial skills, attitudes and competencies in order to be job creators and not just job hunters. This is to improve the economic, technological and industrial development of the nation, as well as to reduce poverty to its minimum.

Entrepreneurship is no doubt a dynamic process of vision, change, and creation. It requires an application of energy and passion towards the creation and implementation of new ideas and creative solutions. Characteristics of entrepreneurship policies include the willingness to take calculated risks in terms of time, equity, or career; ability to formulate effective venture teams; involvement of creative skills to marshal needed resources; and fundamental skills of building solid business plan. Recognizing opportunity where others see chaos, contradiction, and confusion is also an important priority for entrepreneurship driven policies (Kuratko & Hodgetts, 2005). These are expected in the long run to help create business and thus enhance economic development. Other characteristics such as seeking opportunities, taking risks beyond security, and having the tenacity to push an innate idea through to reality generally permeate entrepreneurs (Kuratko & Hodgett, 2005).

However, in spite of the introduction of formal education in Nigeria in the 1840s, it is unfortunate to note that most Nigerian institutions produce graduates who are at best only suited for white collar jobs and have little or no basic skills of any other vocational relevance which naturally lead to high unemployment

rate especially among higher institutions graduates (Ejere & Tende, 2012). This therefore leads to critical questions such as: To what extent is Nigeria's current educational system well suited for its perennial problems of underdevelopment? To what extent is the current curriculum tailored to fit the needs of national growth and development? Why is Nigeria's educational system often described as being too theoretical in inclination and outlook? These are questions critical to this paper. To make this paper amenable to enquiry, the paper will be divided into five sections. Aside the preceding section that provided an introduction/background to the subject matter, the next section will attempt a conceptual review of key concepts

Conceptual Clarification

The Concept of Education and Entrepreneurship

Education is the process of imparting knowledge, skill and judgment. Attesting to this assertion, the Dictionary.com adds that it is, the act or process of acquiring general knowledge, developing the power of reasoning and judgment and generally, of preparing oneself or others intellectually for mature life. Fafunwa in Sowunmi (2013) defines education as, freedom from ignorance, of ideas, of history and events of any sentiment of one's surrounding.

Formal education was introduced into Nigeria in the 1840s through trade links from Lagos, Calabar and other coastal cities. The Christian missionaries played major roles in not only setting up but operating the schools in all the southern part of Nigeria. The aim of education at that time was to enable the recipients read the Bible in the English Language Imam (2012). What the British Government did was to give grants to some mission schools instead of expanding the educational system entirely.

As formal education was taking its root in southern Nigeria, Northern Nigeria proscribed Western education. Northern leaders rather established Islamic schools that gave attention only to Islamic education. Thus, the educational pattern in Nigeria was lopsided-Western education on one hand, and Islamic education on the other. It should also be noted that, the kind of education introduced was limited to only the primary and secondary strata. At the inception of the 20th century, Nigeria had only two tertiary educational institutions; namely, Yaba Higher College and the University of Ibadan founded

in 1934 and 1948 respectively. The University of Ibadan, at its foundation, was only a college of the University of London until two years after Nigeria's independence that it became autonomous. The belief then was that Great Britain was not interested in educating Nigerians; hence, did not promote education in Nigeria.

However, after independence, more universities were established, like the University of Nigeria, the University of Ife, Amadu Bello University, Zaria and the University of Lagos. From the 1970's upwards, more universities were set up; Polytechnics and some Monotechnics were also set up. According to Saint, Teresa, Hartnett and Strassner (2004), "... by 1984, Nigeria had established a well-regarded higher educational system, offering instructions of an international standard in a number of disciplinary areas. However, some decades after these escapade in education there is still much hue about fallen educational Standard, crisis in Nigerian education system and much more. Entrepreneurship is a process that helps the youths to be self-confident and be more creative in their various undertakings. Ejere and Tende, (2012) refer to it as "a key competence for all". It also means the ability of an individual to convert ideas into action. Entrepreneurship has also been defined as the pursuit of opportunities beyond the current resources you currently control (Stevenson & Jarillo, 1991). The World Economic Forum (2009) positions entrepreneurship as the engine that fuels innovation, employment generation and economic growth. These outcomes are strategic to nations and the question of how entrepreneurial mind-sets are developed, enhanced and encouraged is important for empirical research. Kuratko, (2005) on his part argued that entrepreneurship perhaps has emerged as the most potent economic force the world has experienced in the last two decades. Entrepreneurship education (EE) on the other hand, is recognized as an important factor in nurturing entrepreneurial intention (Kourilsky & Walstad, 1998). It offers individuals the capacity to identify business opportunities and the intuition, knowledge and skills to act on them (Chang & Sung, 2009). Furthermore, it is important to all economies because it is a crucial driving force behind employment generation, economic growth and competitiveness. Entrepreneurship education equips students with the motivation, skills and knowledge required to stimulate

entrepreneurial intents. In general it covers all the events that lead to the development of entrepreneurial mind-sets among students.

Entrepreneurship education has gained wide acceptance over the past decade and the rapid growth of its demand and supply require enquiry of the curriculum design and the pedagogical approach adopted. The benefits of Entrepreneurship education are numerous and include ground-breaking ventures, start-ups and new jobs (Aouni & Surlemont, 2008). Although Entrepreneurship education is primarily for venture creation, the general message that students get is that of working for government to ensure job security. The need for entrepreneurship education is therefore justified because it is central to the development of social and economic wellbeing (Ikavalko, Ruskovaara, & Seikkula-Leno, 2008).

Data from several European countries including Spain and the UK indicate that business and economic studies offer the majority of entrepreneurship courses in higher institutions. Although entrepreneurship education modules have been introduced in virtually all institutions of higher learning in Nigeria, it has not yet been adequately integrated into the curriculum either in terms of the teaching methods to be adopted or the required infrastructure. This has made the impact of the curriculum to be particularly weak. Even though there is an increasing attention to graduate entrepreneurship in the advanced world (World Economic Forum, 2009) there is dearth of research on education and entrepreneurial intentions in the developing countries (Iakovleva, Kolveried, & Stephan, 2011). However the few research on developing countries indicates that while only 17 per cent of start-ups are necessity driven in developed countries the situation is a lot different in developing countries where 32 per cent are driven by necessity to engage in start-ups activities (Iakovleva, Kolveried, & Stephan, 2011).

The Concept of Development

The literature on development has been preoccupied by intellectual dilemma. This is because the concept is explained from different dimensions and it could mean different things to different people. Within the context of education and entrepreneurship, the popular perspectives of development are indices that emphasizes on improvement in skill sets and their relevance to national goals and priorities.

Thus, within this context, development involves a rise in the level of people's standard of living which can best be determined by the level of income and people's access to the basic necessities of life such as food, shelter, water, education, self-esteem and the expansion of people's choices. It also involves expansion of choices to job opportunities through acquisition of relevant skills that is capable of proffering solutions to societal needs.

Flowing from the above line of thinking, Seers (1969) subscribes when he postulated that development can be best understood by asking three questions that relates to it. He opined that:

The questions to ask about a country's development are therefore, what has been happening to poverty? What has been happening to unemployment? What has been happening to inequality? If all three of these have declined from high levels then beyond doubt this has been a period of development for the country concerned. If one or two of these problems has been growing worse, especially if all three have, it would be strange to call the result development even if per capita income is doubled. (Seers, 1969).

This therefore implies that economic development goes beyond economic growth or advancement but a general improvement in the living standard of the people. This further goes to suggest that education through entrepreneurship is very critical in attaining this kind of development as it guarantees a sure way out of poverty, unemployment and inequality through job creation and invariably self-reliance.

Challenges facing the Educational Sector in Nigeria

The Nigerian economy has been plagued by several economic and social problems with mass poverty being at the top of the list. This is quite ironic for a country that is endowed with vast natural and human resources. In the quest to finding plausible solutions to the problems faced by the country, studies have shown education as a leading instrument for promoting economic growth. For several decades, United Nations has placed great emphasis on primary and, more recently, secondary education.

However, the educational sector in Nigeria is plagued by many problems. This is attributed to the attention given to education by the Nigerian governments (both past and present) is relatively low. Even many years after independence, it is stunning to know that the adult illiteracy rate is still at 74% (Ibidapo-Obe, 2007) and the gross enrollment rate is also low. The minimum amount to be spent by a country on education as stated by the United Nations (UN) is 26% of the country's annual budget. Ironically, according to the data by Herbert (2002) from 1977-1998, the total education budget represented an average of 9.7% of total government expenditures, while its percentage share of the GDP from 1991-2009 has maintained a value of 0.85%. Its highest value was 5.11 % in 1981 and its lowest was 0.85% in 1991 (UNESCO, 2011). Looking at the statistics above, it is clear that expenditure on education is still very low.

Another challenge facing the educational sector in Nigeria is the problems associated with policy formulation and implementation. The gap that often exists between policy formulation and implementation provokes inquiry to identify factors that constrain the effective implementation of educational policies. The problem of policy implementation is traceable to the planning stage which comes immediately after policy formulation. Okeke (1985) and Ukeje (1986) have stated clearly that good planning will ensure effective implementation. Good planning of curriculum that is strategically crafted to meet national needs and priorities ought to consider such factors as the planning environment, social environment, political environment, and financial and statistical problems. It is in recognition of this observation that Aghenta (1984) noted that for education to achieve all ends, it has to be carefully planned. The plan must take into consideration ... the needs of the society; the political, socio-cultural, economic, military, scientific, and technological realities of the environment are very important to its survival.

In addition to the above, it is pertinent to note here that emphasis in the global economy has drifted away from certificates to skill sets. To this end, for Nigeria's educational sector to meet up with global demands, emphasis must be placed on skills that are solution oriented rather than mere acquisition of certificates. Unfortunately, the too much emphasis on the latter has resulted into the mad rush for certificates acquisition by hook or by crook which is evident

in the high level of certificate forgery, examination mal practices to mention among other vices.

Conclusion and Recommendations

A country that seeks to experience rapid economic development must give high preference to ensuring its educational system is in tune with global and national demands. The educational sector is one that is better placed to ensure an increase in output per worker and this can transcend into economic development. The importance of education is reminiscent in its role as a means of understanding, controlling, altering and redesigning of human environment. It also has a link with economic development (Education also improves health, productivity and access to good paid employment).

Studies have all revealed that increase in national income and per capita income is a function of education and that differences among nations can better be explained by differences in the endowment of human, rather than physical capital. This underscores the reason why the ‘Asian Tigers’ in the past three decades allocated between 25-35% of their annual budgets to their educational sector.

To this end, this paper recommends the following:

- a. The Nigerian government should get involved actively as regards financing educational pursuits with proper emphasis on entrepreneurship in the country. The priority being placed on education and entrepreneurship is low regardless of the United Nations specifying that 26% of the country’s budgetary allocation should be accorded to the education sector. This needs to be addressed as expenditure on education secures the future of the nation and the world at large. Government needs to channel more resources to the capital segment of education like building of classrooms and laboratories, purchase of teaching aids etc. as these will help in enhancing knowledge, increased productivity and by implication promoting economic growth. It is a well-known fact that the funding of the educational sector is a burden that is becoming too large for the government to bear alone. It has also been realized that the revamping of the educational sector is a collective effort from both the public and the private sector.

With this realization, the private sector should be motivated to do more beyond its regular contributions of 2% of its profit to the Educational Trust Fund (ETF). The private sector could contribute more by organizing some in-house seminars or mentorship program where students are linked with professionals that can enhance their knowledge base and develop their skill set to help them meet up with global and national demands.

- b. There is a need to as a matter of urgent national priority rejig our current educational curriculum to make it more skill based. Emphasis should be on what one can contribute rather than what has. This would help to position our educational system to be a panacea to the myriads of social problems bedeviling the country. Additionally, an indigenous system of education fashioned after the models operated by Asian countries should be adopted. Ideas that are alien to the cultures of Nigeria should be avoided because they are bound to fail.
- c. Education planners and other relevant stakeholders need to ensure that entrepreneurship education is well entrenched and well positioned to inculcate skills that create jobs which would invariably reduce unemployment, crime, government's expenditure, poverty, social unrest, create wealth and raise the standard of living in the country.

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