

EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION: A ROAD MAP TO POVERTY ALLEVIATION

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ABSTRACT

This presentation is a thrust into the effective implementation of entrepreneurship education as a road map to poverty alleviation. The paper focused on the meaning of the concept entrepreneurship education and its objectives. The meaning of poverty and its causes. The role of entrepreneurship education in poverty alleviation and the obstacles to the effective implementation of entrepreneurship education. It was deduced that, despite the prime position occupied by entrepreneurship in the Nigerian educational system with respect to the inculcation of livable skills, poverty, unemployment and other societal ills, still pervade the land. Thus, certain factors that militate against its effective implementation were brought to bear. These factors include the quality of entrepreneurship education teachers and the way it is taught, poor funding, non-available of quality text materials among others. On the whole, the following recommendations among others were made, the training and re-training of teachers who impart entrepreneurship skills via entrepreneurship education; the use of separate departments to teach it, the granting of scholarship by government to every qualified Nigeria that wants to pursue a teaching qualification in entrepreneurship education.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, Education, Poverty Alleviation.

INTRODUCTION

There is no doubt, that knowledge acquisition, which is the product of education is the most potent instrument for developing and empowering individuals, not only in achieving their potentials, but in particular, to master their social and material environments as well as strive to survive in the knowledge, information and market driven world. Education is therefore, central to one's ability to respond to the opportunities that development presents. This is because, it forms the bed rock of any meaningful development - be it economic, political and social among others. It is also because, the aim of schooling is that of fostering socio-economic integration in the society. And so, the educated person should be able to perform economic, social and political functions required of him or her.

The curriculum of the Nigerian education system of the colonial era failed to equip school leavers with the skills needed to leave useful lives and to contribute to the development of the society. There are indeed, vast numbers of school leavers who are idle because they cannot find meaningful vocations. The reason is because, they have no training to embark on life-coping endeavours and this has consequently increased the incidence of poverty. Entrepreneurship education can be of immense assistance towards alleviating poverty, as it is the foundation for developing the flexible skills needed to participate in knowledge intensive economic activities both within and outside. Collaborating this view, Mezieobi (2013) and Bortoms (2008) agreed that; the present global dynamics in the environment and technology, require innovative education that will revolve around the needs of the youths, communities and employers of labour. They added; the improvement of entrepreneurship education is a necessary condition

for national development. It is therefore, based on this aspersions that the writer choose to thrust into issues that shroud the effective implementation of entrepreneurship education as a recipe to alleviating poverty.

In this paper, emphasis is made on some implicit key concepts as follows: the meaning and objectives of entrepreneurship education; the meaning of poverty and its causes; the role of entrepreneurship education in alleviating poverty and the obstacles to the effective implementation of entrepreneurship education.

THE MEANING OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION AND ITS OBJECTIVES

Mezicobi (2013) defined entrepreneurship education as an educative process that creates in the individual the ability and skills to become self-reliant and to overcome the dynamic challenges posed by the harsh economy. To Bolarinwa (2001), entrepreneurship education is that type of education that provides training, experience and skills that prepare graduates with entrepreneurship knowledge, competence and skills needed to be self-reliant.

The Consortium for Entrepreneurship Education (CEE, USA) defined entrepreneurship education as a form of education that is out to seek *for* the preparation of people, especially youths, to be responsible, enterprising individual who will become entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial thinkers and who will contribute to economic development and sustainable communities. Indeed, in theory and practice, it is an aspect of education that has the inherent potentialities to create a change in a people to seek how to make job, instead of how to take job; in fact, it teaches it clientele “How” to think, instead of “WHAT” to think.

THE OBJECTIVES OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION

In the opinion of Okon (1990), its objective is not just to teach someone how to run a business, but to encourage creative thinking, promote strong sense of self work, accountability and productivity. According to him, it is all about how to be self-reliant with special reference to finance.

Other objectives of entrepreneurship education is to inculcate in a person;

- The ability to recognize opportunities of one’s life.
- Ability to purpose such opportunities by generating new ideas and marshalling needed resources;
- Ability to create and operate a new venture;
- Ability to think in a creative and critical manner (Kiadese, 2007),

THE MEANING OF THE CONCEPT: POVERTY AND ITS CAUSES

Robert and Jeanette (2008); defined poverty as a state in which income is insufficient to provide basic necessities of life such as food, shelter, medical care and clothing. To them, poverty itself is associated with trauma. This is because the poor gets less of everything considered important and necessary for a decent life (i.e. less money, food, clothing, and shelter). For instance, the children of the poor are more likely to fail in school even when they are intelligent. They are also more likely to drop out of school. Also, they are more likely to become mentally ill, and are equally likely to experience hostility and distrust rather than good neighbourliness.

UNESCO, on human migration attested that, poverty is either relative or in absolute terms”. It stated thus: Absolute poverty measures poverty in relation to the amount of money necessary to meet basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter”. The concept of absolute poverty is not concerned with broader quality of life Issues or with the overall level of inequality in society.

Relative poverty defines it in relation to the economic status of other members of the society, people are poor if they fall below prevailing standards of living in a given societal context.

CAUSES OF POVERTY IN NIGERIA

According to the National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (NEEDS), a Federal Government Reform Agenda Document (2004), poverty in Nigeria is caused by the following factors;

- **Productive Sector Problems:** This manifests itself in limited growth in investment and technological innovation and has constantly constrained the labour absorption capacity of non-agricultural sector, especially manufacturing. This lack of capacity no doubt, has exacerbated poverty especially in urban areas.
- **Widening Income Inequality:** This has significantly contributed to the increase in poverty in Nigeria. Fiscal policies in Nigeria today have not promoted income redistribution and this manifest itself in the decline in the people's living standards.
- **Weak Governance:** Corruption is another factor that has contributed significantly to poverty in Nigeria. And this has been the reason why poverty alleviation programmes in Nigeria have had insignificant effect on the people and economy;
- **Social Conflicts:** The economic and social dislocations caused by internal conflicts have negatively affected the economic well-being of individuals and business in various ways. Conflicts often lead to the death of principal income earners or the destruction and loss of major assets such as houses or land.
- **Environmental Factor:** Empirical evidence has shown that poverty and environmental degradation are inextricably linked together in Nigeria. This is because, more than 75 percent of the rural people depend on natural resources for their livelihood. Environmental degradation reduces opportunities for poor people to earn sustainable income. Left with no options, they engage in extractive activities, thereby, contributing the vicious cycle of poverty and environmental degradation.

THE ROLE OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION IN POVERTY ALLEVIATION

The quality of instruction in any educational system can only be well- oriented if the system recognizes respect for the worth and dignity of the individual. The National Policy on Education (2004) stated that "the skills to be acquired by anyone must be quite integrating, embraced and should be able to withstand the test of time". Njoku (2003) outlined the skills that make life livable to be "cognitive skills, psychomotor skills and affective skills". Unfortunately, the Nigerian society is rife with societal ills, some of which are seen in the educational system. Case of rape, sexual harassment, cult activities, forgery, examination malpractices are some of the viciousness that are in the system replacing the virtue of the educational process. The result is that poverty pervades the land.

Awotua-Efebo (1999), noticed that "we graduate people who have little or no skills to live a functional life..., students graduate without touching the equipment which they have been trained to operate". This, indeed, has helped to increase the incidence of poverty in the land. There is hope, and that hope is found in a new education innovation into the Nigerian educational system called "entrepreneurship education. Entrepreneurship Education as a field of study and a training programme, if effectively and efficiently implemented via a relevant curriculum (i.e, that which inculcates in its clientele appropriate knowledge attitude and skills), functional teaching and non-teaching staff" and above all, functional facilities will help inculcate in its clientele the followings:

- The skills needed to recognize business opportunities;

- Training to enter paid or unpaid employment;
- Impact, through training the necessary skills to individual who shall be self-reliant economically.
- Technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, commercial and economic development;
- Expose students and other clienteles to career awareness by exploring usable options in the world of work;
- An understanding of the increasing complexity of technology;
- Product and production management;
- Success and failure factors in business; and above all
- The ability to create wealth and be self-reliant

To all these, entrepreneurship education can offer, and when diligently imbibed, will go a long way towards alleviating poverty hence its role. This is because, according to Orisa (2013); it is an insurance against poverty and unemployment.

OBSTACLES TO THE EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

Irrespective of the relevance of entrepreneurship education in poverty alleviation, obstacles still exist that poses challenges to its effective implementation. Some of which include:

The Quality of Entrepreneurship Education Teachers

Though, this aspect of education is not a relatively new one but the fact remains that. Till tomorrow, there is no clear distinction as regards to who is qualified to teach it, how and where it should be taught. It is regrettable that this new found educational culture that can comfortably help the nation alleviate poverty with ease is faced with the challenge of who teaches it and in many of the institutions of learning, it is taught under General Studies (GS). This is not only regrettable but pitiable.

The Methods and Strategies Use in its Teaching

Since most of the teachers of entrepreneurship education are inadequately trained in the subject matter content, there is no way they can comfortably impact, not to talk of inspire.

Funding

Entrepreneurship education requires constant hands on deck on the material and equipment used in teaching. In most cases the teachers might be there, but there are no facilities or equipment to expose students to practical skills due to poor funding culture on the part of government and other stakeholders.

The Quality of Entrepreneurship Education Texts

The importance of instructional materials such as textbooks, and other aids in the teaching/learning process cannot be overemphasized. Infact, one of the essential and most dependable materials available to both the students and teachers is the textbooks. Today, it has been observed that, most of the texts are either poorly written or misleading and cannot in any way inspire-learners hence a challenge.

Lack of Entrepreneurship Based Schools

Today, the existing technical and commercial schools do not have the prerequisite manpower and relevant curriculum to embark effectively on the training of would be entrepreneurs.

CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS

Education is a veritable tool of positive societal change. When wrongly implemented will fail to inculcate the right dispositions and skills to the populace or clientele for life-coping. Entrepreneurship education today is wrongly managed and implemented and there are obstacles which hinders its effective implementation and thus impinge on its inherent potentials to alleviate poverty. These obstacles include the quality of teachers, available facilities, and quality of text materials among others.

Poverty and other societal ills result from the socio-economic and political situations which have made incursions into the educational system. Entrepreneurship education can help in the re-orientation of individuals (its clientele) towards the imbibing of life-coping skills instead of unnecessary inclination of school grades and the quenching taste for material things that are the trend.

This re-orientation is expected to alleviate poverty and brings a reduction on ills associated with it. As such, it is recommended that:

1. There should be the training and re-training of teachers who impact entrepreneurship skills via entrepreneurship education.
2. A clear clarification be made on who is qualified to teach entrepreneurship education.
3. Also, separate departments be created in institutions of learning to house this new found educational culture.
4. The Federal Government of Nigeria should grant scholarship to every qualified Nigeria that wants to pursue a teaching qualification in entrepreneurship education.
5. All entrepreneurship education materials especially textbooks should be scrutinized by professionals in the subject matter content and under the supervision of the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC).

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