ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION CURRICULUM FOR EMPLOYABILITY: TEACHERS AS CATALYSTS

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Abstract

The road to greatness of any nation hinges on education, and revolves around the teacher. The employability of the individual is vital if the scourge of un-employment is to be meaningfully tackled. Employment is central in entrepreneurship education, and teachers are key. The paper attempted to look at the goals of entrepreneurship education and how teachers of entrepreneurship should teach entrepreneurially and act out their responsibilities as catalysts. It is recommended among other things that teachers should not just tell the students, but show them what it means to be entrepreneurial in practice. This is envisaged to go a long way to engendering the desirable attitudinal dispositions, mindset and motivation in the learners.

KEYWORDS: entrepreneurship, entrepreneurship education, curriculum, employability, teacher, catalysts

Introduction

The gale of unemployment in the Nigerian society is assuming wider dimensions. Fresh graduates face a scenario of dimming expectations of gainful employment in positions directly related to their disciplines of study. The job opportunities of yester-years are virtually non-existent on the one hand, and a great number of graduates may not have acquired the requisite employability skills needed by the employers of labour on the other hand. The challenge of un-employment in the Nigerian society may also have been exacerbated by the problem of nepotism and massive corruption prevalent in the Nigerian polity.

In an attempt to stem the blight of un-employment and in realization of the place of entrepreneurship in national development, the Federal government of Nigeria about a decade ago directed the relevant educational agencies to introduce and cause the take off of entrepreneurship education in all higher institutions of learning; and that it should cut across disciplines, and be applicable to all categories of students in the nation’s tertiary institutions of learning. Evidently, it cannot be gainsaid that there has been a substantial level of compliance, with entrepreneurship education being embedded in the curriculum at all strata of the nation’s educational system. The provisions of the National Policy on Education (NPE, 2014), the National University Commission (NUC), the National
Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) and the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) minimum Academic Standard respectively are statutory pointers to the fact.

The fact, however, that massive youth un-employment is among the myriad of challenges confronting the Nigerian nation may be an indication that entrepreneurship education is yet to achieve its cardinal objective of equipping the individual with requisite skills for employability and self-reliance, either as an employee or employer, a job creator and not a job seeker. It may not be out of place to reckon that the type of entrepreneurship education that these un-employed fresh graduates received may not have equipped them with adequate practical entrepreneurship skills. This is suggestive of the fact that indeed there may be a discrepancy between the policy and practice of entrepreneurship education. It is against the backdrop that education is widely acknowledged as a veritable tool and harbinger for national development, and that teachers are the inevitable human resources, social forces and catalysts upon whose shoulders lie the onerous task of training the upcoming generation in whatever field of human endeavour, entrepreneurship education inclusive, that this paper is premised.

**Entrepreneurship and Entrepreneurship Education**

Related literature is awash with several conceptual explanations and definitions of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship education, pointing mainly to the activities associated with them. Ada (2012) saw entrepreneurship as the innovation utilized by an individual idea which is turned into commercial for the ultimate realization of profit. Thus entrepreneurship is an idea or a process associated with an entrepreneur who is an innovative and resourceful person engaged in a productive venture. Entrepreneurship education on the other hand is used in reference to the teaching and learning process that equips learners with knowledge, skills and competencies needed to recognize business opportunities and services in the business world (Ordu, 2013). Entrepreneurship education could be used interchangeably with entrepreneurial education. Egbule (2015) defined entrepreneurial education as an offering undertaken in formal or informal school systems which equips recipients with knowledge, skills and attitudes to be entrepreneurs. It is apparent that embedded in entrepreneurship education are organized formal and informal activities that equip an individual with requisite personal and business attributes and skills required of an entrepreneur for self-reliance, self-employment or employability.

The National Universities Commission (NUC) Benchmarks on Minimum Academic Standard (2011) enunciated the objectives to be attained in entrepreneurship education to include but not limited to:
- Understanding the relationship of enterprise, entrepreneur, business, entrepreneurship, motivation and creativity.
- Cultivating the spirit of entrepreneurship;
- Developing high entrepreneurial potentialities in students; correcting wrong attitudes and mindsets; building the learners’ capacity to develop business plans to kick start and manage a business among others.

In more specific term, Ordu (2013) highlighted Osuala’s summation of the objectives of entrepreneurship education identified by Dana to include the following:
1. The provision of meaningful education for the youths to enhance their self-reliance and self-independence;
2. The provision of opportunities to small and medium sized companies to recruit qualified graduates, trained and tutored in skills relevant to the management of small business enterprise;
3. The provision of skills training to graduates that will make them meet the manpower needs to the society;
4. The production of graduates with enough training in risk management to make uncertainty bearing possible and easy;
5. The provision of enough training to graduates to make them creative and innovative in identifying new business opportunities; and
6. The provision of necessary training and support to graduates to help them establish careers in small and medium sized businesses.

These laudable objectives can only be attained through a meaningful implementation of the entrepreneurship education curriculum.

Curriculum Issues in Entrepreneurship Education
There are contending views that the Nigerian educational system may have to an extent become a barrier to overall national development. Globally, the curriculum is an instrument used by the educational system to equip the on-coming generation with desirable knowledge, skills and competencies to put them in good stead to effect desirable changes in the society, and make it beneficial to themselves and others.

According to Wiles and Bondi (2011), curriculum is a desired goal or set of values that can be activated through a development process, culminating in experiences for learners. Hence, curriculum, a generic term used in reference to a plethora of educational activities and programmes of studies that take place within and without the school environment, must be in tune with trends in the larger society, if it must be responsive and relevant. The optimal development of an individual for functional relevance in the society is the arm-bit of curriculum.
It is in the light of this that the resultant un-employment challenges facing the nation and the economic recession on the other call to question the essence of entrepreneurship education curriculum. The overriding objective of entrepreneurship education hinges on the inculcation and development of entrepreneurial knowledge, skills, competencies and attitudes in individuals with a view to enhancing their employability and self-reliance; either for enhanced performance either in paid or self-employment.

Maduewesi (2005) identified a number of emergent curriculum issues to include: curriculum relevance, curriculum content overload, learners interest, integration and infusion of new materials, class size and over-crowded time tables, teacher preparation and teacher effectiveness, evaluation and examination system, and curriculum revision and adaptation. Similarly, Egbule (2015) highlighted pertinent issues and challenges in entrepreneurial education to include humanization of entrepreneurship programmes and implementation, lack of competent teachers, weak link and co-operation between institutions and enterprises, low entrepreneurial mindset and get-rich-quick syndrome among youths, poor infrastructural facilities, funding inadequacies, ICT and globalization, insecurity and gender issues. These diversities of issues can be narrowed down to relate specifically to entrepreneurship education curriculum. The following questions become apt. They are:

a) How relevant to the needs, interests and aspirations of the learners is the entrepreneurship education curriculum? Is it learner-centred?

b) How responsive is the entrepreneurship education curriculum to the needs, aspirations and goals of the Nigerian society? Is it society-specific and yet capture the global trend?

c) How well are the teachers prepared and equipped to mediate the entrepreneurship education curriculum?

d) What are the implementation processes and strategies in vogue? Is the curriculum content over-loaded? What resources are available? What evaluation strategies?

e) How are the teachers of entrepreneurship education coping? What are they teaching? And how are they teaching it?

Suffice it to say that the curriculum issues in entrepreneurship education include but not limited to teachers and pedagogical strategies towards entrepreneurship education and employability.

Education ideally equips people with knowledge and skills that enable people fit into meaningfully into the society. Thus education must of a necessity have some measure of utility. Entrepreneurship education, it is apparent attempts to inculcate in the
learners some employability skills, and bring to the fore the latent entrepreneurial spirit in them.

Employability, according to Chatterjee (2008) is used in reference to the marketability of the cumulative skills of an individual, and the capability of such an individual to function as situation demands. The employability of the individual is not limited to gainful employment in the labour market. It also involves the individual’s capability to create job for himself/herself. Thus, employability embraces possessing what it takes to be gainfully employed either as a paid employee or an employer. Employability goes beyond the mere possession of what it takes to be gainfully employed, but actually putting them into meaningful use in paid employment or self-employment.

But what does it take to be gainfully employed? Literature evidence have shown that there are varied determinants of employability, from the perspectives of employers and employees. Nevertheless, central to these determinants are such attributes as knowledge, skills, personal qualities, attitudes and aptitudes. One is prone to ask at this juncture, how can these requisite attitudes be acquired? Or from a different perspective, how can the laudable and lofty goals and objectives of entrepreneurship education be meaningfully achieved and attained? These bring into perspective the roles and responsibilities of the teacher.

**Entrepreneurial Teacher as a Catalyst**

The curriculum is undoubtedly the tool through which education fulfils its functional relevance in any society. Similarly, the most potent forces through which the curriculum goals and objectives are translated into actions are teachers. Consequently, it becomes imperative to reiterate the question: What do entrepreneurship education teachers teach? How are they teaching it? And with what are they teaching it? The “what” question refers to the content of the entrepreneurship education curriculum? The “how” is used in reference to the pedagogic ways and methods by which the teachers teach the Entrepreneurship Education Curriculum Content. While the “with what” connotes the means and resources deployed in the implementation of the Entrepreneurship Education curriculum by the teacher.

In the face of unemployment and in juxtaposition to the laudable objectives of entrepreneurship education, is it not apt to ask: who is best suited to bring these objectives to function than professionally trained, well equipped, competent and committed entrepreneurial teachers?

The National Policy on Education (NPE,)(FGN 2014) rightly acknowledged the roles of teachers in the educational system at all levels by stating inter-alia that “no nation
can rise above the quality of its teachers”. The goals of teacher education as enumerated in the NPE are to:-

1. produce highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of the educational system,
2. further encourage the spirit of requiring and creativity in teachers;
3. help teachers fit into the social life of the community and society at large and enhance their commitment to national goals;
4. provide teachers with the intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment, and to make them adaptable to changing situations; and
5. enhance teachers commitment to the teaching profession.

Dienye (2005) justified the need for the inclusion of teacher education in the NPE to be that:

1. Teacher education is an important component of any educational policy;
2. Teachers are the cornerstone in the realization of the educational objectives by virtue of their role;
3. The quality of teachers would determine the quality of education; and
4. To implement the policy, teachers are indispensable.

In the light of the above, it is very apparent that quality entrepreneurial teachers are key to the success or otherwise of entrepreneurial education. Little wonder Igbokwe and Eke (2011) in Ordu (2015) stated that un-employment today is dependent on the fact that the graduates turned out-because they received more theoretical than practical training – were not meaningfully prepared for creating jobs or possessing employable skills. The reality of this fact had earlier been opined by Imogie (2010) when it was asserted that little or no learning take place in the schools primarily because most of the teachers have lop-sided training that does not equip them with sufficient knowledge of subject matter nor sufficiently equipped for the world of work in contemporary society.

The scourge of un-employment is not insurmountable, nor is the goals of entrepreneurship education untenable. The attainment of the goals of entrepreneurship education hinges on the teachers of entrepreneurship education; a fact alluded to by Ada (2012) who opined that the goals of entrepreneurship education may become more feasible if actual entrepreneurs train for entrepreneurship and actual teachers teach entrepreneurially. One way through which teachers can teach entrepreneurially, Osere (2015) opined is via the integration of community resources in the teaching and learning process. A teacher who can act as an ideal catalyst, Pathak (2005) opined is an authority on his/her subject, flexible in attitude, exemplary in conduct, readily approachable controls and directs when necessary and shows leadership.
Conclusion

Entrepreneurship education is a veritable means to an end. The end being the employability of the individual either in paid employment or self-employment. The primacy of attaining the laudable goals of entrepreneurship education lies squarely with the teacher. To strengthen the nexus between the goals of entrepreneurship education and practical realities, certain essential ingredients must of necessity be reckoned with and put into cognizance. It is often said that “those who are styled by a name should live out the dictates of that name”. Thus, the teacher should be a true catalyst in the teaching and learning of entrepreneurship education. The teacher should be conversant with the entrepreneurship education curriculum so as to fit into and act out the roles and responsibilities expected of the teacher as a catalyst.

Recommendations

The implementation of an entrepreneurship education curriculum to lead to the employability of the benefitting individuals should be carried out by teachers who show knowledge and live out their roles as catalyst. A catalyst according to the Hornby (2001) is anything/persons that cause a change.

The following suggestions are put forward.

1. The teachers of entrepreneurship education must be entrepreneurial in character and approach. The teachers must think and act as entrepreneurs. The cliché of a popular local television opera of some years past, “Bassey and Company”, that to be a millionaire, think like a millionaire comes readily to mind. The teachers should epitomize entrepreneurial skills, abilities and attitudes of entrepreneurs.

2. Teaching is the business of teachers. The teachers of entrepreneurship education should be meaningfully prepared to act as catalysts. Thus, teachers’ preparation programmes for the entrepreneurial education teachers should effectively equip them with what it takes to be entrepreneurial teachers. There should be meaningful content coverage in the curriculum, and adequate provision of vicarious and practical learning experiences.

3. The onus lies on the teachers to facilitate the translation of the objectives of entrepreneurship education to fruition. Therefore the teachers of entrepreneurship education should always strive to ensure that the lesson objectives meet the criteria of specificity, measurability, attainability, relevance and tenability within a time-frame.

4. The success of an individual in any venture depends on the level of motivation. It is incumbent on the teachers to bring out the entrepreneurial zeal and zest in the learners. The classroom for entrepreneurship lessons should extend beyond the traditional classroom setting. This underscores the need for the teachers to be
conversant with innovative teaching methods. The learners as a matter of priority should be provided with relevant hands-on, practical learning experiences that they will need in the workplace environment.

5. The teachers of entrepreneurship should be exemplary embodiments of the attributes of entrepreneurial educators. The teachers should exude passion and confidence, and should live by precepts and examples. They should model the skills and attitudes expected of the learners to emulate. Put differently, the teachers of entrepreneurship education should exemplify the requisite cognitive, affective and psychomotor skills expected of entrepreneurs. The teachers should build an entrepreneurial climate within and without the classroom setting.

References

