
ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN NIGERIA IMPLICATION FOR MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS (MDGS)

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ABSTRACT

This paper stresses the importance of redesigning tertiary institutions programmes in Nigeria to accommodate entrepreneurship education. The need to reduce poverty and unemployment among youth after graduation is imperative for sustainable growth of the nation's economy. The paper examines the declaration in Millennium Development Goals (MDGS), one of which was poverty reduction. The implication of it on the teaching of entrepreneurship education in higher education as a way of reducing poverty. The paper concludes by suggesting various practical ways of teaching entrepreneurship education to all students in order for them to be self reliant.

Keywords: Poverty reduction, Entrepreneurship, Tertiary Institutions, Unemployment, Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

INTRODUCTION

"Today more than ever before in human history, the wealth or poverty of nations depend on the quality of higher education. Those with a repertoire of skills and a greater capacity for learning can look forward to lifetime of unprecedented economic fulfillment. But in the coming decades the poorly educated face little better than the dreary prospects of lives of quite desperation" (Gills, 1999).

This above quotation has implication for Nigeria educational system especially the tertiary institutions, vis-a-vis entrepreneurship education. Higher or tertiary education is referred to as the education given after secondary education in Universities, Colleges of Education, and Polytechnics as well as those institutions offering correspondence courses. According to the National Policy on Education (NPE) (2004:36), one of the goals of tertiary education is to acquire both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to be self-reliant and useful member of the society. The above goal as enunciated by the NPE is laudable. However the question that arises is to what extent have the beneficiaries of higher education acquired both physical and intellectual skills which will enable them to be self reliant and useful members of the society? It is a statement of fact that the development of any nation depends largely on the creative capacity of the citizens to be capable of effectively exploring and exploiting the country's natural resources and transforming them into finished products and services so as to enhance the standard of living of the country's citizen.

It has been observed by education stakeholders that Nigeria educational system (primary, secondary, tertiary) are not equipping the beneficiaries with the needed skills to face the challenges of 21st century technology and scientific know-how. From historical perspectives, Nigeria educational system before and after independence in 1960 laid emphasis on

academic subjects than development of skills. Hence there is the tendency to produce an educated class of pen pushers. Adamu (2005:45) noted that the system failed to lay the foundation of economic freedom, manual skills and expertise necessary for successful industrial and agricultural development.

Education stakeholders agitated for revision of tertiary institutions curriculum that would propel the nation to Industrial and technological development in their conferences. The outcome was the emergence of a document referred to as National Policy on Education (NPE) in 1977. This document has been revised severally to accommodate changes orchestrated by technological developments as they affect education.

Many years after the emergence of a new educational system (6-3-34) the beneficiaries of tertiary education are without necessary skills for self-reliance. They are roaming about seeking for government employments that are not available. In the face of high level of unemployment among graduates of tertiary institutions, It becomes imperative that higher education programmes be redesigned to incorporate not only the philosophy of self-reliance but also studies that will equip them with skills that will enable them to become self-reliant. This is where entrepreneurship education as a course of study comes in.

Governments all over the world have been looking for ways out of poverty, unemployment, diseases, hunger that have plagued the masses. To this end many efforts have gone underway to find solution to these myriads of problems. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were an offshoot of such efforts. One of the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is the reduction of poverty. For tertiary level of education to contribute meaningful to this goal, quality of instruction at all levels has to be oriented towards reducing poverty.

Unfortunately however, over the years, the nation's policy makers on education have failed to realize that the type of education offered to students in most higher institutions in Nigeria constrained their entrepreneurial capacity to contribute meaningful to national development and reduce poverty. This critical fact underlies the directive of the Federal Government to all tertiary education regulatory agencies to establish necessary mechanisms for the introduction, development and sustenance of entrepreneurial culture among Nigeria Youths. (This Day, 2007). The implications of this directive on (MDGs) goal is how well have the machinery and environment for carrying out this directives have to be put in place? This called for a well planned and implemented Entrepreneurship Education programme in Nigeria Higher Education Institutions.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

A simple definition given by Falkang and Alberti (2000) is that entrepreneurs are people with entrepreneurial spirit; they are likely to have knowledge and skill requirements unique, different from other kinds of entrepreneurial. Entrepreneurial are action oriented and much of their learning is experimentally based (Rae & Carswell, 2000). They also learn by doing which encompasses activities like trial and error as well as problem solving and discovery (Deakins & Freel, 1998; Young & Sexton, 1997). Entrepreneurs are exceptional learners. They are

creative and risk taken. Students of entrepreneurship education are expected to imbibe the above virtues.

The operational definition of entrepreneurship in this paper is the willingness and ability of a person or persons to explore and exploit investment opportunities, establish and manage a successful enterprise: Writing on the concept of entrepreneurship, Inegbenebor in Ile (2000:1) noted that entrepreneurship is associated with a lot of activities geared towards the establishment and operation of business enterprises. This is the right time in the history of Nigeria education that entrepreneurship education needs to be incorporated and encouraged in the programme of tertiary institutions so that the graduate of these institutions can be self-reliant and useful member of the society.

MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS (MDGS)

In September 2000, at the United Nations Millennium Summit, about 189 Heads of states and Governments met to reaffirm their commitment to fulfill a collective responsibility for sustainable development and poverty eradication by the year 2015. In the Millennium Development Goals, a global initiating identified goals. The goals focused on reducing, (eradicating) extreme poverty and hunger, achieving universal primary education, promoting gender equality and empowering women thereby improving the quality of peoples lives, reducing child mortality, improving material health, combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, ensuring environmental sustainability and building partnerships to ensure that globalization becomes a more positive force for all the world's people. Specific targets and indicators have been set for each goal, to be achieved by 2015. These goals might remain elusive unless much emphasis is laid on the development of entrepreneurial skills. Entrepreneurship Education to all students in Higher Education is the panacea to hasten the process of reducing poverty and reducing unemployment among youth (Olaleye 2009).

ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION IN HIGHER INSTITUTIONS

Entrepreneurship Education focuses on developing understanding and capacity for pursuit of entrepreneurial behaviours; skills and attributes in widely different contexts. These behaviours can be practiced, developed and learned. Entrepreneurship is all about changes Willken (2005), categorized into five key types of changes usually initiated by the Entrepreneur. They are initial expansion, subsequent expansion, factor innovation, production innovations and market innovations. The economic change is most desirable at this time in Nigeria, when poverty level is very high. Higher education institution has to wake up to face the challenges. Olaleye (2009) noted that the various Federal Government programmes on eradication of poverty have failed because graduates of the education system lack the practical skills which can be acquired through Entrepreneurship Education Programme.

In the developed country like United Kingdom many Universities already offer an impressive and sophisticated array of entrepreneurship activities, (Gibb, 2008) Scott and Twomay (1988) in their study, reported that 25 percent of English students had a business idea and 41

percent aspired to self-employment. Several other studies Harrison & Hart (1989) Sandholtz (1990) have also reported the zeal to own business by students.

In a study carried out by Olaleye (2009) in three universities in South-West Nigeria on entrepreneurship education, the findings of the study revealed that 92.2% of the students were aware of the programme in their universities and ready to set up their own businesses. They however complained of fund to establish their businesses. 85% of the respondents complained about the inability of Federal Government to adequately fund tertiary institutions to accommodate entrepreneurship education in their programmes. There was also the complaint of lack of qualified instructors and poor preparations of youths in terms of practical training. All these identified inhibitions need to be addressed if Nigeria is to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015.

Graduates of Higher Education in Nigeria should not sit on the fence. With entrepreneurial education, the nation's graduates will become employers of labour not job seekers. Their skills will enhance business expansion and reduce the level of poverty.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Currently the focus and process of education is too mechanistic, using the lecture method which do not promote or encourage entrepreneurial behavior. Educators and trainers need to derive programmes which are appropriate for preparing graduates for the outside world.

The entrepreneurship programme in tertiary institutions should be designed to equip students with skills, create awareness and willingness among students to embark on economic venture on their own. In designing the programme the philosophy of self-reliance should be given a prominent position. The philosophy provides the base and the ethics of entrepreneurship education and the achievement of (MDGs) Goals.

The following recommendations are made

- * Rigorous efforts should be made to give entrepreneurship education prominent priority in education policies.
- * Internship programmes for all graduates to acquire skills and training for self reliance should be part of the policies and legislation. This programme should be a year duration for all students in tertiary institutions. This is necessary to achieve Goal (1) of (MDGs).
- * Successful entrepreneurs should be encouraged to participate in assisting the youth in tertiary institutions.
- * Infrastructural facilities that will accommodate entrepreneurship education should be provided by Government.
- * Adequate funding of tertiary institutions is necessary to achieve Goal 1 of (MDGs) programmes.
- * Curricula reform which is geared towards equipping the beneficiaries of higher institutions with skills to be self-reliant is necessary for sustainable development of the country.

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