

RE- BRANDING BUSINESS EDUCATION THROUGH PROMOTION OF ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS FOR SUSTAINABLE GROWTH AND POVERTY REDUCTION

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ABSTRACT

This paper aimed at highlighting the ways of rebranding business education career through acquisition of innovative entrepreneurial skills as a means towards sustaining the economic growth and reducing poverty in Nigeria. Brief analyses of key concepts, importance and problems facing innovation and entrepreneurial skills development were explored in the paper. The authors concluded that acquisition of both innovative techniques and entrepreneurial skills are very crucial for local production and increase productivity. These skills can be achieved through commitment, attitudinal re-orientation, revival of cultural values, and establishing own business after graduation. It was recommended that: There is need to enhance graduates acquisition of skills and capacities for innovation and entrepreneurial skills; Provide adequate facilities needed in the teaching and learning of entrepreneurship in the department of business education in institutions of learning in Nigeria; Ensure that business education is taught and sponsored regularly to foster entrepreneurial mindset.

INTRODUCTION

Business Education can be referred to as a process of developing career in business and enterprising activities. Its primary aim is preparation of an individual for a business career or enabling those in that career to become more efficient and advance to higher business positions (Obi, 2005). Business education is also seen as commercial education or more properly education for business which is concerned with teaching the skills, the attitudes and knowledge necessary for a successful business career (Etuk in Obi, 2005).

In view of the changing business environment and technological innovation in the 21st century, business education is taught to aid understanding and acquisition of knowledge required to establish and own personal business. The standards of the present business education programmes as shown in the “National Policy on Education” (FGN, 2004), introduce students to basics of personal finance, decision making techniques, processes

by which business operate, with little emphasis on entrepreneurship, innovation, economic principles and technological skills of competitive edge and international market environment. The acquisitions of innovative and entrepreneurial skills are catalyst for national development.

To an individual, it is very crucial for job creation, high productivity and employability.

In order to acquire new skills and improve old ones, efforts should be made towards increasing the quality and quantity of graduates of business education. This can be anchored through the process of re-branding.

Re-branding means giving a look to anything and change whatever is the wrong perception hitherto experienced (Imoliosen, 2009). The encyclopedia looks at re-branding as; a marketing strategy in which a new name, term, symbol, design, or a combination is created. Re-branding is anchored on the attitudinal change, re-orientation, renewal, revival of cultural values and instilling or establishing own business after graduation, thereby contributing in the economic growth of Nigeria (Akunyili, 2010). Re-branding in ordinary parlance is to make something new again. Re-branding business education in this study, therefore, means to re-build a new business education career programmes. In this regard, re-branding aims at promoting and renewal of business education career, which implies to re-build a new business education programmes. It may also imply to upgrade, elevate and stimulate the existing business education programmes. This can be achieved through laying more emphasis on innovative skills and the acquisition of required entrepreneurial skills that can foster productivity and efficiency in production.

Entrepreneurship is the willingness and ability of an individual to seek out investment opportunities in an environment and be able to establish and manage such enterprise successfully within the limit of resources available. Entrepreneurship is often viewed as a function which is most commonly associated with direction and combination of productive input (Sparrow, 2007). Entrepreneurship is a process of change where innovation is the most vital function of the entrepreneur (Schumpeter, 2008). Innovative thinking is a skill that can be taught and learnt just like entrepreneurial thinking skills or mindset; with steady training and practice, recipients can improve and may become producer, entrepreneur, inventor, and innovator. People who possess innovative entrepreneurial skill will be very productive workers, while those that lack

such skill will suffer in recent decades from the ongoing decline of manufacturing and rise of service and high-technology jobs.

Despite many antipoverty policies and the fact that government spends billions of naira to reduce poverty, millions of Nigerians young graduates still remain poor and unemployed. Causes of graduate poverty range from lack of entrepreneurial skill to usable skills and lacking of other relevant skills needed for self employment or employability.

Entrepreneurship is designed specifically to focus everyone's attention on improving and sustaining innovative skills, creating jobs, improving quality of life, promoting social well-being and reducing poverty for achieving sustainable growth. It is a way to make the world more livable for the future generations. Sustainable growth can be referred to a rate of growth which can be maintained without creating other significant problem, especially for the future generation. Poverty reduction on the other hand is a term that describes the promotion of various measures, both economic and humanitarian, that will permanently lift people out of poverty. For Nelson Mandela pointed out that poverty is not an accident. Like slavery and apartheid, it is man-made and can be removed by the actions of human beings. Therefore, entrepreneurship is a pivotal tool to achieving sustainable growth and is equally central in reducing poverty. It promotes skills, create jobs and make people break away from the shackles of unemployment and poverty. It is also give people knowledge and skills for lifelong learning to help them find new solutions to their environmental, economic, and social issues. Entrepreneurship enables the poor to create wealth a means of reducing poverty. It creates employment opportunities, increases income and access to basic needs. In fact, entrepreneurship makes an important contribution to economic growth, and creating an entrepreneurial economy has become a primary goal of public policy.

Encouraging youth entrepreneurial interest and spirit is quite necessary. This means that supporting core ideologies, respect for individual initiatives and personal growth and encouraging each individual's ability and creativity are all necessary to build entrepreneurial economy. Okocha (1999) stated that skilled persons are useful both at home and in the society at large. Entrepreneurial skill acquisitions ensure that people possess specific, saleable skills, thus increasing the chances and opportunities of getting jobs or becoming self-reliant. It therefore, behoves on the Federal Government of Nigeria to ensure that all programmes of education, particularly business education are

tailored towards raising, improving standards in content and currency through entrepreneurship skills acquisition (Bolanwe, Adebaba and Ojetunde, 2010).

IMPORTANCE OF INNOVATION AND ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS ACQUISITION IN BUSINESS EDUCATION

Innovation skill development is vital. It is related to creative, strategic and transformational thinking ability and can be taught and learnt just like other disciplines so that the recipients can get improved and become useful members of their societies. Consequently, it is extremely important that business educators and students/graduates in the 21st century in Nigeria feel confident in finding, developing, and implementing new ideas in day-to-day career development in order to maximize their potentials in personal businesses, as well as in different organizations.

Entrepreneurship and innovation are catalyst for national development. It is therefore very crucial to create and build an innovative skill development program in schools with the objective of developing innovation as a core competency for attaining quality and efficient human capital in Nigeria. This will go a long way to expanding intellectual capacity of Nigerian graduates and improving educated people's confidence in developing innovative ideas. By focusing on the above ideas, Dundon (2002) clearly identified dominant elements that can stimulate innovation and 4cs innovation skills. Dundon 4cs innovation skills are critical thinking, communication, collaboration and creativity.

DOMINANT TRAINING ELEMENTS

The following are dominant training elements that can stimulate innovation, and are involved in innovation skills development:

- Creative thinking
- Strategic thinking
- Transformational thinking

Creative thinking implies the ability to discover new idea or a wide range of idea creation techniques, strategic thinking means determining whether it is a new and useful idea and transformation thinking refers to ability to develop, implement and put the new and useful idea to other effectively.

Innovation skills are essential to the development of any new product. It is through these thinking abilities that new products in the form of goods and services are produced to the requirements of customers. With essential skills an individual will be employable and participate in the effective production of goods and services. It is generally recognized that learning new work skills and strengthening those already have are critical to career success and happiness. They increase self-confidence, make the recipient more employable, and open new career opportunities.

4CS INNOVATION SKILLS

The idea of 4cs innovation skills is credited to Dundon (2002). The 4cs innovation skills refers to the combination of critical thinking, communication, collaboration and creativity skills utilized by an entrepreneur to address innovation over a given period of time. The 4cs innovation skills are seen as controllable variables which the innovator puts together to achieve target outcome(s). The Dundon (2002) 4cs innovation skills are represented as critical thinking, communication, collaboration and creativity.

Critical thinking - This is concerned with the use of various types of reasoning (e.g., inductive, and deductive) as appropriate to the situation. It is simply effective reasoning.

Communication – This implies effective communication skill. Partnership for 21st Century Skills Framework noted that to communicate clearly implies:

- Articulating thoughts and ideas effectively using oral, written, and nonverbal communication skills in variety of forms and context
- Listening effectively to decipher meaning, including knowledge, values, attitudes and intentions
- using communication for range of purposes (e.g., to inform, instruct, motivate, and persuade) and in diverse environments (including multi-lingual)
- Utilizing multiple media and technologies, judging their effectiveness as well as assessing their impact.

Collaboration – In the 4cs innovation skill implies collaborating with others. This specifically means:

- Demonstrating ability to work effectively and respectfully with diverse teams
- Exercising flexibility and willingness to be helpful in making necessary compromises to accomplish a common goal
- Assuming shared responsibility for collaborative work, and value the individual contributions made by each team member.

Creativity – This refers to use of a wide range of idea creation techniques. It implies creating new and worthwhile idea, elaborating, analyzing, and evaluating ideas in order to improve and maximize creative effort. It involves demonstrating imagination and curiosity.

The importance of these innovation skills lie in the fact that the success of a beneficiary of any entrepreneurship programme or activity depends squarely on the appropriate combination of 4cs innovation skills. In the present times, the words used to describe the new innovation regime of 21st Century are: Dream, Create, Explore, Invent, Pioneer, and Imagine (Kelly in Olajumoke, 2012). It is quite imperative for Nigeria at the present circumstances to nurture a new generation of innovators who have core life skills in all areas of career development, who are equally supported and encouraged to collaborate with others and act in the face of new opportunities. In other words, graduates of business education need innovative and entrepreneurial mind-set to collaborate and as well combine with other key skills to be able to survival in the present fast changing business environment.

ACQUISITION OF SKILLS FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Entrepreneurial skills acquisition has been viewed as very critical tool for promoting business education in the present education curriculum. This view is supported by emphasis from different authors as follows:

1. Entrepreneurial skills should be taught at all levels of primary, secondary and tertiary education. At the tertiary level, more emphasis should be laid on processes geared towards self employment, establishment of own business after graduation, thereby contributing to the economic growth and development (Yerokun, 2003).

2. It has been observed that entrepreneurship is considered a key driver of economic growth and job creation in both developing and developed countries of the world. Within this context, promoting graduates entrepreneurship and learning innovations skill are areas of top priorities and policy interest to tumble education system and career development in Nigeria (Olaitan and Agbem, 2003).
3. Acquisition of core life skills, entrepreneurial attitude, innovative and creative skills must be emphasized in the school system as a way of solving the challenges of everyday living in the present global dispensation (Nnandi, 2010).
4. Entrepreneurial skill acquisition ensures that people possesses specific saleable skills for the jobs or are self-reliant. Skills acquisition, therefore, is concerned with the learning and development skills for gainful occupation (Olaitan, 1996).
5. Skills acquisition has a number of positive impacts on individual psyche as well as the nation. People with skills become better and more useful human being at home and in the society at large (Okocha, 1999).
6. With adequate entrepreneurial skills for self-reliance, business education graduates will be able to enjoy good health and live to bring up a generation of useful and healthy citizens as they transfer these skills to their children (Bolanwe, Adebba and Ojetunde, 2010).
7. To solve the problem of unemployment, there is need for more functional and skill oriented education..... and this would include entrepreneurship and innovation skills (Maduewusi, in Egbu, 2014 and Arikewufo, in Nnandi, 2010).

The preceding section shows that developing entrepreneurship skill is critical for national development, however there are many problems facing entrepreneurship skill development in business education.

PROBLEMS FACING INNOVATION AND ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT IN BUSINESS EDUCATION

There are myriads of problems confronting entrepreneurial skill acquisition in business education. These setbacks include:

- 1. Lack of entrepreneurial skills and entrepreneurial attitude:** A thorough investigation into the business education programmes in the Colleges of Education, Polytechnics and Universities reveal that these programme have not been sufficiently provided with the necessary manpower to prepare the graduates to meet the challenges of entrepreneurship and modern business world. In this regard, Yerokun (2003) found that less than 20% of the academic staff of most institutions are computer literate with respect to their fields; and 70% of computer literate lecturers use internet only to receive e-mails. This implies that they lack advancement, application, and innovation of computer technology which is technically related to innovation and technical know-how. This disappointing picture may be the same or true to other areas of career development in Nigeria. Olaitan and Agbem (2003) observed that low skill acquisition and poor job performance have become common features among graduates of our vocational institutions.
- 2. Lack of adequate facilities:** There is no gain-saying the fact that there is few number of relevant equivalent tools and materials for teaching entrepreneurship skills. In fact, there is acute shortage and in some cases, these materials are visibly non-existent in the institutions. As a result of this, practical activities involving entrepreneurship skill acquisition are hardly and adequately conducted. Berky (2005) and Offordile (2007), bemoaned the acute lack of teaching and learning equipment and the undesirable consequences the situation has placed the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills in institutions of higher learning.
- 3. Teaching methods:** Skills acquisition is concerned with learning and developing skills for a gainful occupation (Olaitan, 1996). This implies that acquisition of appropriate innovation and entrepreneurial skills and the development of the mental, physical and social abilities and competencies are based on problem-centred, hands –on activity approach. Nonetheless, the reverse has been the case, recently, due to inappropriate teaching skills, techniques and methods used by instructors and lecturers which focused on traditional approaches of teaching and learning (of imparting knowledge).
- 4. Absence of Infrastructural Facilities:** It is a universal belief that certain basic infrastructural facilities aid the development of the mind and body and assist productivity in any environment. These facilities have been identified as good

roads, good water supply, constant power, access to information and communication technology and other tools of trade. A case where these are lacking in a country, the growth of the economy will be adversely affected. In Nigeria, the basic work tools as well as the enabling work environment is lacking. This state of affairs has frustrated a lot of young people with bright ideas and the corresponding spirit to effect a change in some areas of our national life. For instance, the power sector has proven the greatest challenge to any aspiring entrepreneur in Nigeria. Power supply is epileptic and most times businesses have to be run on generators (Onwubiko, 2011). With reference to these challenges as expressed in this section of the paper it is imperative to rebrand career development in business education.

IMPERATIVE FOR RE-BRANDING BUSINESS EDUCATION

It is often observed how most parents and guardians express their dreams in relation to their wards becoming doctors, lawyers or accountants. Trades such as auto-mechanics, hair dressing, welding and carpentry are considered to be exclusive preserve for the children who do not have mental ability to pursue a tertiary education. These parents think and dream this way without considering whether their wards will be gainfully employed immediately after graduation. This misconception calls for promoting and integrating entrepreneurship in business education programme in order to promote more attention on it by promoting employment for its graduates in the interest of the economy.

It is important to note that many unemployed business graduates do not possess the necessary skills and attributes which the modern economy demands. Another problem however is the fact that graduates spend years in schools, studying subjects they will never use, preparing for a world that no longer exist (Osisioma, 2015). It is in this regard that efforts to study the activities people engage in and design the kind of curriculum that will help them carry out these activities more effectively is paramount.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the gaps between 'what is' and what is expected of business education graduates regarding their acquisition of innovation and entrepreneurial skills, this paper recommends as follows:

1. Education planners must constantly review the curricula for currency. They must adopt an all inclusive approach in ensuring that the design of education curricula corresponds with the expectations of the real world and effectively with the global demands.
2. Re-branding business education curricula must be done in line with the provision of adequate funding, infrastructure, relevant instructional materials, training and retraining of resource personnel.
3. The government should set up policies to stimulate motivation and entrepreneurial attitude in young people and provide the right set of skills or platforms to start-up and run a business.
4. The government should ensure a working partnership (public private partnership) to bridge the gap between the tertiary institutions and industry; set up incubation centres for demonstration and internship of fresh graduands in every state of the federation; tertiary institutions should work toward becoming entrepreneurial hubs for students and young entrepreneurs.
5. Establishment of functional departments in the various institutions for monitoring, evaluation and conduction of quality assurance on set targets of entrepreneurship skills acquisition.
6. Government should set up a blue-print that will focus on the implementation of national policy on innovation and entrepreneurship skill acquisition and development.
7. Including ethic training in tertiary level entrepreneurship education will enable students to learn through model and practice that entrepreneurship success is incumbent upon mastering an understanding of ethics as well as on learning the requisite knowledge and skills being taught. The educator is obligated to facilitate learning ethics.
8. Ensuring that students at all levels of tertiary education have good field experience in innovative and visionary entrepreneurial industries or organizations before graduation.

CONCLUSION

Entrepreneurship and innovation are extremely important for the development of Nigeria and the development of entrepreneurial spirit in graduates. Re-branding business education through more emphasis on innovation and entrepreneurial skills are considered to be essential ingredient for improving quality and creating a brand of ethics for entrepreneurship in business. Innovation and entrepreneurship skills development give students an opportunity to act on what they have learned, and the ideas they have generated, and turn them into creative ways through continuous practice.

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