

Review

Entrepreneurship education from Pre-colonial to Post-independent Nigeria

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Abstract

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The basic goal of any nation is the economic empowerment of the citizens. To this effect, education has long been recognised as potent tool for the actualisation of national goals. The economic crunch across the globe in the last centuries has led to the evolvement of various strategies to solving the problems. The increased emphasis on entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship education is a most popular approach. This paper focuses particularly on the history of entrepreneurship education in Nigeria from pre-colonial era to post-independence. The study closely examined African traditional education and its entrepreneurial nature with the state of economy in that period. It also probed into the colonial era and when western education was introduced, and posits that the vacuum in entrepreneurship education is responsible for the present educational problems in Nigeria. The work also looked into the various programmes of government to improve entrepreneurship education through skill-oriented learning and education for self reliance with suggestions on how to improve entrepreneurship education in Nigeria.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship education, Nigeria, pre-colonial, post colonial

INTRODUCTION

In every society, whether developed, developing or underdeveloped, education has been considered as a viable tool for the preservation of culture and a means for achieving personal and national emancipation. Every society has a goal it pursues, the need of a society or nation at one point or the other determines the type of education it adopts. It is in this light that Okoli (2011) maintains that every society, whether civilized or primitive evolves means of satisfying its needs and transmitting its culture to the younger ones. The study argues that every society evolves its own education necessary at a particular point in time. The primary goal of any nation is the economic empowerment of its citizens. Education must then be tailored according to need and not according to some international prescription.

Today, the level of poverty, the rise in unemployment rate, and the inability of the governments to meet the expectations of their people have reinforced the need for

more emphasis on entrepreneurship across the globe especially in developing countries. The discovery of oil in many countries in Africa especially Nigeria seems to have crippled the resourcefulness that Africans were known for. Duru (2011) laments that the oil boom has indeed distorted our people's attitude to work which have negatively impacted on their psychological quotient. An average Nigerian prefers to avoid investment of novelty that requires innovation. As such, a good area with bright prospects for investment and wealth creation are neglected.

Entrepreneurship is not new concept in the African traditional set up. It is a question of nomenclature. It may not have been known with the above name, but it was obviously the practice in African society before colonisation. Nigerians were self-reliant and innovative. The educational system inculcated in the enterprising masses self-reliance. The hallmark of the African

traditional education was functionalism.

Although today's educational system integrated aspects of vocation and skill acquisition processes, however it has been observed that these have not been implemented. Educational institutions in Nigeria produce thousands of graduates who are both unemployable or unemployed roaming the streets and escalating rate of unemployment. Odia (2013) lamented the obvious downward social mobility in Nigeria. He strongly advocates for the emergence of the middle class which today has diminished. He argued that in the past, graduates and professional accountants were classified as being in the middle class, but have today been degraded to the lower class. This presupposes a problem in the educational institutions that produce today's graduates. This is largely because graduates of tertiary institutions were not equipped with functional knowledge and skills which will make them self reliant. The vacuum has led to increased emphasis on entrepreneurship education at all levels of education in Nigeria. This is with the hope that it will equip learners with necessary skills to help ensure enterprise and thereby reducing unemployment and poverty in Nigeria.

The purpose of the work is to take a retrospective look at the entrepreneurship education from the pre-colonial era, colonial days and the post-independent Nigeria. The work will look at how entrepreneurship education fared during this periods, and how it was able to tackle the problem of unemployment then and suggest ways to better improve entrepreneurship education in today's Nigerian Schools.

Clarification of Concepts

Entrepreneurship

Like many concepts, entrepreneurship has no single universally acceptable definition. Many individuals and writers have evolved different definitions of the concept. Some of the definitions given by economists seem to narrow entrepreneurship to the world of buying and selling alone. To some economists, the entrepreneur is a person who is willing to bear risk of a new venture provided there is significant chance for making profit. According to the U. S. Department of state / Bureau of International Information (2013), the concept was first established in the 1700s and since then, the meaning has taken different dimensions. The concept is derived from the word "enterprise" which means an undertaking or project, especially a daring and courageous one. It involves risk. It is important to know that, it is not only the world of business that involves risk. According to Ronstadt in Emmanuel (2002), entrepreneurship is the dynamic process of creating incremental wealth. This definition is versatile because it did not peg it to a particular means of generating wealth. This could be

business, trade, vocation or even invention. The underlying principle in entrepreneurship is innovation and novelty .It can also be described as the capacity and willingness to develop, organise and manage business venture.

Entrepreneurship education

Rather than a narrow definition, the European commission (2011) suggests a broader definition which sees entrepreneurship education as a process by which learners are equipped with a wide set of competencies that can bring about greater individual, social and economic benefits since the ability gained can be applied in any aspects of people's life. From the foregoing, it is reasonable to see entrepreneurship as individual's ability to transform ideas into profitable action. It also involves the ability to plan and execute project for the purpose of achieving predetermined objectives. Entrepreneurship education is therefore seen as that type of education fashioned out to prepare learner's for innovative ventures which leads to self reliance and economic emancipation. It seeks to provide students with the knowledge, skills and motivation to encourage entrepreneurship success at various settings.

African Traditional Education (ATE) and Entrepreneurship

The works of many African and non African educational analysts and scholars have beyond reasonable doubts dispelled the erroneous views of some foreign writers about African Traditional Education. Fafunwa in Okoli (2011) stated that these western writers described ATE as worthless, conservative, barbaric, and primitive, but a critical look at ATE shows that it is merely a misconception and a fragrant negation of the meaning and purpose of education. This is because educational programme is designed by the society to bring about the acquisition of skills and attitudes that are considered valuable to that society. African Traditional Education will be used interchangeably with African Indigenous Education in this work.

Darisoanj (2012) defined African Indigenous education as a form of learning in African Traditional societies in which knowledge skills and attitudes of the tribe were transferred from elders to younger ones via oral tradition and practical enterprise. African indigenous education is acquired by the young from the example and behaviour of elders in the society. The education grows out of the environment and the learning process is directly related to the pattern of work in the society. Although most aspect of the indigenous education is informal, yet it met the need of the then society. In other words, ATE was community oriented and planned to solving the problems

of the immediate community. Its major aim is to prepare learners to fit into the community.

Oladele (2011) notes that before the advent of colonialism in Nigeria, unemployment was a rare phenomenon, this is because Nigerians and Africans at large were said to be highly entrepreneurial and were productively engaged. Nigerians across the then three regions – West, East and North were highly entrepreneurial. The North for instance was able to produce vegetables and fruits all through the year in all the seasons through the irrigation system they developed for themselves. The Igbo's were recognised internationally for their entrepreneurship especially in business. The people of Benin Kingdom were notable for the bronze art as early as the 13th century. The beauty of these indigenous inventions made the British confiscate many of them to British Museum in London.

In African Traditional Education, there is no value for paper qualification, yet the learners graduated ceremoniously. Oladele (2011) maintains that there were no formal examinations at the end of training but the learner was considered a graduate if he / she was able to function effectively in what was learnt over certain period of time. In the same vein, Okoli (2011) holds that the indigenous African education emphasized social responsibility, job orientation, political participation and spiritual and moral responsibilities. In other words the education is geared towards functionality, where there is no room for laziness and indolence was abhorred in African societies. If there was any unemployed person, it was because he/she was lazy or indisposed health-wise. The kind of education a person receives in African traditional society was determined by gender. Roles were gender based. The girls were taught how to become effective mothers and nurses, how to cook, keep homes and how to handle their husbands, when they are married. The boys were trained to be good farmers, hunters, warriors, good fathers and other male oriented occupations. Whatever a child learns in African Traditional Education was not for mere head knowledge, but was important to the socio-economic advancement of the individual and society at large.

It is important to know from the foregoing that African traditional education has influenced greatly the current emphasis on the need for increased entrepreneurial education with the development of problem solving curriculum and the promotion of a lifelong education.

Entrepreneurship education during colonial era

The beginning of colonial era in Nigeria marked a down turn for her education. Most historians believe that the colonial masters did not introduce any new system of education to Africans, especially Nigeria, but rather distorted the already existing structure. Commenting on the type of education introduced in the colonies of Africa,

Rodney (1972) argued that it was education for underdevelopment. He believed that pre-colonial African education was alright, because it grew out of their environment and available resources. A casual look at the colonial education structure reveals that it was not intended to emancipate Africans economically, socially, and otherwise. Rodney (1972) maintains that the objective of the colonial school system was to train Africans to work in the local administration at the lowest rank. Few Africans were selected and given such education that will help them participate in the exploitation and domination of their own countries.

It is regrettable to note that the Europeans introduced a biased system of education. It was selfishly designed not to give young African learners sense of dignity, confidence and pride as members of African societies, but the system created a gulf of inequality between Africans and the Europeans whether in Europe or in Africa. Okoli (2011) noted that the colonial government were aloof as regards education of their Nigerian colonies for over forty years of their occupation. The missionaries are Africans first educators in the western sense and they managed education in Nigeria for forty years (1842-1882). This further clarifies the fact that the British government during colonialism had no good intention for Nigerian education. For these years, they were busy milking Nigeria of her rich resources with no human capital development.

The school curriculum and method of learning during this period de-emphasised any form of entrepreneurship. Okoli (2011) stated that the school curriculum consisted of the 4R's – Reading, writing, religion, and arithmetic. Rote learning, memorization and indoctrination were the methods of learning. It is in this light that Rodney (1972) lamented that colonial education was limitation within a number of other limitation.

Morel and Lugard in Ogunlade (2007) criticized the lack of organization of education in Nigeria by the British. They decry that education in the colony was not developing along proper lines. It was obvious that the education was excessively bookish rather than being technical; it was said to produce only clerks and soon, Africans under this system of education were gradually detached from their traditional society and economy. These and more led to agitation from Africans and non Africans for a better educational policy. One of the immediate responses was the recommendation of the Phelps-Stokes report which suggested that education should be adapted to the aptitudes, mental ability occupations and culture of the people. This colonial government programme of environmental adaptive education did not succeed as noted by Ogunlade (2007). This educational misdemeanours by the British government is still plaguing Nigerians till date. There have been concerted efforts by Nigerian government since after independence to break from the past educa-

tional limitation to a more pragmatic educational system.

Entrepreneurship education in Nigeria today

Since independence, Nigeria government became more and more aware of the short comings and limitations of the colonial education heritage. Concerted efforts are being made to make education functional and a tool for national development. The history of entrepreneurship education in Nigeria according to Odiya(2011) started in the 1960s. This is seen from the various government programmes such as the Entrepreneurship Development Centre(EDC), Nigeria Industrial Development Bank (NIDB), National Directorate of Employment(NDE), National Open Apprenticeship Scheme(NOAS),etc. As promising as they sound, these programmes were short lived. The reason for the short life span of these programmes is not farfetched. It is simply because they were not inculcated into the educational system. Education is a powerful force that can ensure the sustainability of any worthwhile ventures. In Nigeria today, school curriculum at all levels are now developed with entrepreneurial mindset. This is with the aim that it will create self reliance, employment, and economic growth and development. It is in response to the need for a more productive education that the 1969 curriculum conference was convened by the then National Education Research Council (NERC). Decisions at this conference led to the development of philosophy of education and consequently, the National Policy on Education of 1977 which was subsequently revised in 1981, 1998 and 2004. Ofoha (2014) believes that the emergence of the 6-3-3-4 system of education in Nigeria which implementation started in 1982 brought about significant innovations in Nigerian Education system, but only in theory. There is no practical implementation. Among the innovation is the 'vocationalisation' of the secondary school curriculum. Prevocational subjects were introduced into the Junior Secondary School (JSS) curriculum while vocational subjects were introduced into the Senior Secondary School (SSS) curriculum.

Integrated subjects such as Introductory Technology in the past were to prepare learners to acquire basic vocation such as woodwork, metal work, basic electronics, technical drawing, automobile mechanics, etc. This is to empower learners to be productive at the end of the Junior Secondary School. In today's curriculum, the above integrated subject is now called Basic Technology. At the senior secondary school, the integrated vocational subjects are now learnt separately. They include subjects such as Agricultural science, food and nutrition, auto mechanics, commerce, typewriting, etc. Due to the frequent review of Nigerian curriculum, various changes are made to accommodate modern trend in education. The changes are merely change of nomenclature, the structure and objectives remain the

same. The subjects mentioned above are aimed at developing entrepreneurial skills. Entrepreneurial subjects such as photography, catering, craft, and data processing have been recently added in the new secondary curriculum. The new secondary school curriculum structure which came into effect in September, 2011 has made it mandatory for every senior secondary school students to take at least a subject from the trade/entrepreneurship subjects.

At the tertiary level, Ifedili and Ofoegbu (2011) stated that in her efforts to ensure job opportunity and self reliance, the federal government of Nigeria through the ministry of education has made it compulsory for every students in the university to take a course in entrepreneurship before graduation. This is to free them from dependency on white collar job, to be self employed and self reliant after graduation. With all these efforts, the effects of entrepreneurship education are very low as millions of Nigerians are dependent on the grossly inadequate government jobs. Millions of graduates across the country gathered in various stadia sometime this year for the Nigerian Immigration Service recruitment where less than a hundred thousand were to be employed. This is an obvious indication that entrepreneurship education practice is still very low in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

From all indications, it is clear that entrepreneurship education has been on in Nigeria before colonialism. Since after the 1969 Curriculum Conference, concerted efforts have been on to revolutionilise education into a more functional enterprise, but it is disturbing to note that the purpose is still far from realisation, especially when one looks at the high rate of unemployment and economic retrogression among many Nigerians. The dividends of entrepreneurship education to the developed countries of the world are yet to be seen in this country. The reasons are obvious; lack of government commitment in the provision of fund for proper implementation of the programmes, corruption, ignorance on the value of entrepreneurship education and above all poor infrastructure. The entrepreneurial programme is the 6-3-3 4 crying for implementation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to surmount the challenges militating against the success of entrepreneurship education in Nigeria, the following recommendations are made with hope that it will improve its practice in Nigeria.

* Government should as a matter of urgency provide fund for entrepreneurship education for all levels of education.

* Entrepreneurship education cannot succeed without infrastructure. The skills cannot be acquired theoretically; to this effect government should ensure the building of infrastructure such as workshops, farmlands and machines which will lead to practical learning by students.

* Most of the good policies of government end in papers. There has not been proper supervision to ensure strict implementation. Supervision should be conducted regularly in all schools to ensure compliance.

* There should be training and retraining of teachers at all levels to equip them for the task

* Workshops and seminars should be regularly organized to boost awareness of the need for entrepreneurship education.

* At the end of secondary school, students should be able to practice one or more vocational or entrepreneurial skills, government should therefore provide the enabling environment and resources for them to practice.

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