

ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION (EE) FOR ALL STUDENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS (HEIs) IN NIGERIA: A MEANS TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

A sustainable work system can be described as a work system that consciously strives towards simultaneous development at different levels: individual, group/firm, and regional/society. Only a system that is in a continuous state of development can be called sustainable. The move towards self employment and sustainability is and will continue to become, an increasingly important element in economic growth and development. If the unemployment issue in Nigeria is to be tackled, it is critical that the correct infrastructure be put in place. One critical aspect of this infrastructure is the creation of an enterprise culture which will encourage graduates to take the risk of starting a business. This paper examines entrepreneurship education and training and how various disciplines can be taught entrepreneurship to foster the interest in enterprise as a way of sustaining development. It emphasizes the need to teach entrepreneurship to non-business students in HEIs and suggests a module, tripartite, and practical means (involving students, entrepreneurs, and academics) of delivery, as well as assessment procedures. This, the author believes, will eventually lead to sustainability of development.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship Education, Sustainable development, Higher Education Institutions, Unemployment, Entrepreneurship Education module.

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 lifetimes of unprecedented economic fulfillment. But in the coming decades the poorly educated face little better than the dreary prospects of lives of quiet desperation.” (Gillis, 1999).

Education is undisputedly recognized as the bedrock of any meaningful development. Section 1 of the Nigerian National Policy of Education (FGN, 2004) states the need for functional education to be relevant, practical, and acquisition of appropriate skills and the development of competencies as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of his society. This means that the quality of instruction at all levels has to be oriented towards inculcating the values of acquisition of competencies necessary for self-reliance and sustainability. This is where Entrepreneurship Education as a course of study, comes in.

For the tertiary level, which I am more concerned, one of the goals, as stated in FGN 2004, is the acquisition of physical and intellectual skills, which will enable individuals to be self reliant. This shows that the Nigerian Government, in blue-print, lays emphasis on self-reliance and self-employment with the ultimate aim of developing and sustaining the economy. The problem is translating this laudable policy into practical curriculum that will achieve the philosophy behind the policy.

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 education institutions in Nigeria constrained their entrepreneurial capacity to contribute meaningfully to national and sustainable development. 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 Nigerian youths (This Day, 2007). It is not enough to give directives. The machinery and environment for carrying out this directive have to be put in place. There is need for a well-planned and implemented Entrepreneurship Education Program in Higher Education Institutions.

Theoretical and empirical investigations have emphasized the crucial role that technological innovation and entrepreneurship play in fostering the development of today's industrialized nations. These types of

investigation are now seen as crucial to the development of the third world, and they are, accordingly, recognized as important components of technology policy and indigenous socioeconomic planning. The present emphasis on indigenous technical innovation and entrepreneurship stems from the failure of past attempts to stimulate third world development by borrowing or transferring advanced technology from developed nations.

Entrepreneurial forces are relatively strong in this Nigeria, as the lack of jobs and a rise in poverty leaves few other options for the Nigerian people. Daodu (2007) investigated the relevance and modalities of utilizing entrepreneurship and enterprise education as a strategy/instrument for channeling the energies of university graduates in Nigeria away from paid employment into self employment. He reported that:

- (i) graduate unemployment should be recognized as a major socio-economic challenge by all stakeholders in Nigeria so as not to jeopardize the limited gains made so far and overturn the colossal investments in democracy since 1999,
- (ii) graduate unemployment has risen because the Nigerian economy is not expanding at a rate commensurate with the output of university graduates, and
- (iii) the introduction of Enterprise Education (EE) into educational system should include all levels of education.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP: MEANING AND THEORIES

The term entrepreneur is synonymous with independent business activity. The title of an entrepreneur is transient and applied to a state of behavior rather than the ownership of a particular business. The traditional image of an entrepreneur setting up a small local business has been replaced by a plethora of images, entrepreneurial activity is no longer confined to the private sector economy, social entrepreneurs set up organizations with strong ethical or community approach without necessarily generating huge profits. According to Shailer (1994), the entrepreneur, now a widely used term has considerable diverse meaning associated with the intended interest of the users.

One of the popular and very simple definitions, given by Falkang & Alberti (2000), is that entrepreneurs are people with entrepreneurial spirit. People with an entrepreneurial spirit are likely to have knowledge and skills requirements unique and different from other kinds of entrepreneurial types, that is, potential entrepreneurs, managers of entrepreneurs, and entrepreneurial sympathizers. Entrepreneurs learn in the real world through "adaptive" learning (Gibb, 1995). They are action-oriented and much of their learning is experientially based (Rae & Carswel, 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). For Smilor (1997:344) learning is not an optional extra, but is central to the entrepreneurial process:

Effective entrepreneurs are exceptional learners. They learn from everything. They learn from customers, suppliers, and especially competitors. They learn from experience. They learn by doing. They learn from what works, and more importantly, from what doesn't work.

Entrepreneurship has been for a very long time, and over the last 200 years or more, three different theories have emerged:

1. Classical Capitalist Economic Theory - Adam Smith in 1776 described the capitalist as an owner-manager who combined basic resources into successful industrial enterprise. Later, and during the 19th century, the French word entrepreneur (meaning "to undertake") was introduced and used to identify the owner-manager of a new industrial enterprise.
2. Neoclassical Theory - These theorists towards the end of the 19th century saw no place for the entrepreneur. They argued that the market consists of many buyers and sellers who interact to ensure that supply equals demand. The market, which they described as a 'perfect market' would, therefore, be at equilibrium, and this would be achieved by fluctuations in prices with supply levels. They defined 'perfect market' as:
 - Having many buyers and sellers, so no single one has an influence on the market price.
 - Prices are set by the operation of the market - by sales.
 - Products and services must all be equivalent in content so that they differ only in price.
 - All buyers and sellers have complete knowledge of the market and the transactions that take place.

3. The Austrian School - In the early 20th century Schumpeter argued against the neoclassical theory and insisted that entrepreneurship was far too important a part of capitalism to be ignored. He proposed that innovation or the use of an invention to create a new product or service was the driving force behind the creation of new demand for goods and services.

Weber (1930) and Schumpeter (1947) argued that entrepreneurship appears to be more appreciated during economic depression than when times are good. Studies of entrepreneurship lapsed after the Great Depression but had a resurgence in the 1970s and 1980s (e.g. De Bono, 1971; Dobb, 1976; Thring and Laithwaite 1977; Sounder, 1981), when more attempts were made to find practical solutions to economic recession, sustainability, high inflation, and mass poverty.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Three decades of debates about “our common future” have left some ecological foot steps in the fields of economy, ethics, politics, and education that may show us a way to confront challenges of the 21st century. Sustainability does not only have to do with biology, economy, and ecology. Sustainability has to do with the relationship that we maintain with ourselves, with others, and with nature. Sustainability has become a predominant creative theme for the beginning of this millennium, not only relating to the sustainability of the planet, but a theme that supports global social projects able to re-educate our vision and our senses and to activate hope for possible future in which there is earning for all (Maocir, 2002).

According to Backstrom et al (2002), a sustainable work system can be described as a work system that consciously strives towards simultaneous development at different levels; be it individual, group, or firm and regional or society. Only a system that is in a continuous state of development can be called sustainable. Sustainability cannot be defined as a static characteristic of a structure or a process, because everything in the system is constantly on the move. A definition of sustainability should take into account time as an important factor, and should focus on the dynamic qualities of the system. Backstrom et al (2002:67) gave these three central feature characteristics of a sustainable work system:

1. Spontaneous and mutual alignment of individuals,
2. Successfully coping with rapidly changing external conditions, and
3. Fitness development for competitiveness.

The universe is not out there. It is inside of us. It is very close to us. From it we can re-conceptualize our school curriculum. Reconstructing it and cultivating it we can learn many things. We need more integration between social communities (home, school, and work) in order to equip the student to live in the society of knowledge and continuity.

Knowledge is the great resource of humanity. Not only because the transnational capital needs knowledge for technological innovation, but because it is a basic need for the survival of everyone. This is the role of higher institutions that are dedicated to knowledge, grounded in economic and technological advances. Entrepreneurship Education should be more democratic and less exclusive.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION FOR ALL STUDENTS

Entrepreneurship Education focuses on developing understanding and capacity for pursuit of entrepreneurial behaviors, skills, and attributes in widely different contexts. It can be portrayed as open to all and not exclusively the domain of the high-flying, growth-seeking, business person. The propensity to behave entrepreneurially is not exclusive to certain individuals. Different individuals will have a different mix of capabilities for demonstrating and acquiring entrepreneurial behaviors, skills, and attributes. These behaviors can be practiced, developed, and learned; hence, it is important to expose all students to entrepreneurship education.

Entrepreneurship is all about changes (Wilken, 2005) and is valuable to all students, including those who are taking courses other than business and management (Smith, Collins & Hannon, 2006). In their study, students were drawn from fine arts, computing, and engineering degree programs. In the UK, many universities already offer an impressive and sophisticated array of entrepreneurship development activities (Gibb, 2008; Akpomi, 2008). Scott and Twomey (1988), in their study, collected data from English students and reported that 25 percent had a business idea and 41 percent aspired to self-employment. Several other studies (Harrison and Hart, 1989; Curran and Stanworth, 1989; Karr, 1988; Sandholtz, 1990; Hill and Welsh, 1986) have also reported the zeal to own self businesses by students who are not studying business.

Entrepreneurial skills and attitudes provide benefits to society, even beyond their application to business activity. Obviously speaking, personal qualities that are relevant to entrepreneurship, such as creativity

and a spirit of initiative, can be useful to everyone in their working responsibilities and in their daily existence. Also, relevant technical and business skills need to be provided to those who choose to be self-employed and/or to start their own venture – or might do so in the future (Akpomi, 2008). There is, therefore, the need for a policy commitment at governmental and institutional levels to promote the teaching of entrepreneurship to all students.

TEACHING ENTREPRENEURSHIP – SUGGESTED MODULE

Table 1: Course content and number of sessions

MOI	CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT	MAKING IT REAL	REALITY BITES
SESSION 1: My <u>future</u> Lines Lines Lines The entrepreneurial graduate Characteristics of the entrepreneur	SESSION 2: The entrepreneurial <u>process</u> Business planning Social ventures	SESSION 6: Nuts' <u>Bolts</u> Yomp Exhibition preparation	SESSION 10: Nitty <u>gritty</u>
	SESSION 3: <u>Inspiring ideas</u> : Interactive brainstorming and creativity Protecting ideas Team formation	SESSION 7: <u>Exhibition</u> Sharing ideas with those in the know Building up social capital	
	SESSION 4: Entrepreneurial <u>teams</u> Team dynamics Idea MOT – starting some market research Your market research plan from insight product	SESSION 8: <u>Marketing</u> The consumer experience Brand and positioning Marketing communications	
	SESSION 5: Validation and <u>approach</u> Idea MOT – Analysing market research Route to market	SESSION 9: It's all <u>about the money</u> Entrepreneurial finance Cash flow, profit and loss, balance sheet	

Replicated from The Practice of Entrepreneurship 2007/08 Handbook, UoR, p.5

Session 1 – My future: This introductory session set out the course outline and structure, which points out useful materials and outlines the expectations for assessment and style.

Section 2 – The entrepreneurial process: This session gives an overview of the entrepreneurial process involved in a new venture to the market.

Session 3 – Inspiring ideas: Students should be helped to open up their minds to methods of generating ideas, solve problems, and create opportunities during this session.

Session 4 – Entrepreneurial Teams: During this session, students are to reflect on their personal skills and their role as a team member. An interactive exercise will help them to determine their Belbin (this an exercise of questions and multiple choice answers that enables the individual to assess himself, knowing his role in a team – one can have more than one role) team role and the dynamics of individuals who made up each team.

Session 5 – Validation and Approach: This session is required to build on the market research introduced in Session 3 and help give an understanding of how to identify the best route to market ideas.

Session 6 – Nuts n’ Bolts: Many stages are involved in starting a business and this session should help students to understand that. They are to work in groups to identify a goal for each of their business ideas and play a business strategy game called ‘The Yomp’, which allows them to answer the question: what would you do and when would you do it?

Session 7 – Exhibition: Groups to exhibit their ideas which will be assessed by a group of judges. The judges should be from the academia and successful enterprises and government.

Session 8 – This session covers the basic principles of small business marketing.

Session 9 – It’s all about the money: Basic financial aspects of a business plan are to be handled in this session.

Session 10 – Nitty Gritty: This session involves looking at the many decisions each student has made as an entrepreneur on a day-to-day basis. Such decisions may relate to legal issues, administration and company formation, human resources, finance, and risk.

At the end of it all, students should be made to draw together the whole course in the context of the written business plan. They should analyze, grade, and present a number of business plans.

TEACHING ENTREPRENEURSHIP: SUGGESTED DELIVERY SYSTEM

The impact on having an academic staff deliver such a program is also significant. The program is time-consuming. It requires high energy to deliver, and is complex in that the events and activities, which to some extent are replicable, change frequently. The skill set for delivery is non-standard. In the study of Smith, Collins & Hannon (2006), academics reported that they felt they would require training and would need time to shadow other more experienced academics before being able to lead sessions. Such

training would take time and would probably be prohibitive in many Higher Education Institutions (HEI's), where there is pressure to teach high number of students and/or where the research imperative is strong (causing conflict about which activity would take priority).

TEACHING ENTREPRENEURSHIP – SUGGESTED ASSESSMENT PLAN

EE should not be assessed through examinations. Assessment choices would be challenging for a program of this nature and it could be argued that any assessment would change the fundamental aims. The program encourages students to take risks, therefore, any assessment chosen would need to ensure that taking risk is rewarded, an approach that tends to run contrary to the assessment ethos in HEIs in Nigeria.

The assessment of this module should be based on 100% course work. There should be NO EXAMINATION. Students who enroll for the modules should be required to fulfill three pieces of course work:

Table 2: Coursework Requirement

Coursework	Weighting
Assessment 1: Group presentations	20%
Assessment 2: Individual Entrepreneurial learning logs (1 per week)	15%
Assessment 3: Individual Business plans	65%

Source: Replicated from the course manual, *The Practice of Entrepreneurship (2007/08)*

The assessment should comprise three areas: a group presentation, business plan and ongoing learning journal entries. In groups of four or five, students should create a business concept and work on developing it into a business proposition. The group presentations will provide an opportunity for the students to present their ideas on market research and route to a market to a number of judges who will be invited on the exhibition day. After the group presentation, students will be expected to work individually and developed a full-fledged business plan.

The learning journal will be ongoing pieces of work where students are expected to reflect on what they learned in the week relating to the module. The learning journal entries can be completed using a website (if the institution has one and is on-line) or manually.

CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

Currently, the focus and process of education is too mechanistic, using the lecture method which do not promote or encourage entrepreneurial behavior. A considerable challenge faces educators and trainers to derive programs which are appropriate for preparing graduates for the outside world.

Entrepreneurship should be taught to students in all disciplines in the institution. It is not out of place to say that many business ideas emerge from non-business disciplines, but are often waved aside or ignored because students are not sufficiently educated in the knowledge and skills required.

A module of entrepreneurship education, delivery, and assessment methods has been suggested. These could be used as a guide to designing course contents or used as they are. The important aspect being the critical issue of teaching entrepreneurship to all students is encouraged and adopted. Delivery of the course should be tripartite in nature, involving academics, students, and practicing entrepreneurs. This allows educational institutions to benefit from the expertise and synergies obtainable from cross-functional learning. This process will create an improved awareness of the reality of sustainable development and working in progressive organizations.

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