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THE IMPERATIVE OF EDUCATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP AS PILLARS OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

Abstract

For any nation to talk of development there must be a combination of factors which would make the entire exercise feasible. In this regard, the present work is a focus on sustainable development in Nigeria with strong emphasis on education and entrepreneurship development. The paper acknowledges the fact that education is vital for human development and societal wellbeing. However, education in the present Nigeria as the work proffers should be geared towards the developmental needs of the country in line with entrepreneurship development. To talk of sustainable development in a country is to put in place socio-economic infrastructure which would resist shock by standing the test of socio-economic expectations of such people. With the present socio-economic realities of the country which is marred by inflation, drastic dwindling of the price of oil in the international market, unemployment, underemployment and brain drain, the country needs a thorough paradigm shift from the traditional quest for whitecollar jobs to entrepreneurship development. To this effect, education in line with development of entrepreneurship studies, skills acquisition and vocational instruction could make a meaningful impact. Consequently, classic education as it is obtainable in the secondary and especially tertiary institutions ought to incorporate practical entrepreneurship programmes and initiatives in line with the country's development plan. The work argues therefore that with a robust entrepreneurship undertaking in the country, the problem of job creation would be reasonably addressed, unemployment would reduce, and self-employment would accelerate. A combination of these factors would aid the nation's thrive for sustainable development.

Keyword: Entrepreneurship, Education, Sustainable Development, Employment

Introduction

The work is anchored on the harmonization of education and entrepreneurship for a resultdriven sustainable development in Nigeria. It underscores the fact that education is vital for the wellbeing of the individual and society in general. However, education is fruitful when it is harmonized with the general development of a given society. In this vein, the paper argues that considering the dwindling fortunes of oil in the international market, coupled with inflation and its associated unemployment, effort by both government and private sector in Nigeria ought to be shifted more to entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship education for job creation and self-employment for sustainable development. The importance of blending formal education with entrepreneurship in the present Nigeria is important since entrepreneurship embraces but not

limited to the idea of starting one's own business, the courage to start and withstand the risk of new venture, innovation, self-empowerment, creation of opportunity for others and search for positive change with the bid to stimulating economic growth.

To confront the current socio-economic demand of Nigeria today, the paper insists that education should be harmonized with entrepreneurship. In fact: "Most researchers have defined entrepreneurship as an activity that involves the discovery, evaluation and exploitation of opportunities to introduce new goods and services, ways of organizing markets, processes and raw materials through organizing efforts that previously had not existed" (Agwung-Fobellah, 2013: 1). Education in Nigeria should not be in isolation of entrepreneurship since any given government policy to advance entrepreneurship equally promotes job creation and economic growth at large. To this effect, government should make provision for incentives which could encourage entrepreneurship and effective competitive market system for sustainable development. "Sustainability is more than a victory in an endurance context...True sustainability requires a double-edged focus on people and practices" (Reeves, 2010: 88). As it stands today, it is a fact that entrepreneurship cannot be ignored in the development of any nation. With the modern trend in the advancement of science and technology, entrepreneurship should be reconciled with education for a critical input for socio-economic development of Nigeria.

1: 1: Education

There is no human in the society who can cohabit with others without education. Education is an essential component of human life because it provides the framework for human formation both informally and formally.

The fact remains that education is vital for the thought pattern and development of every given society and that is a major reason why even: "Those who intend to teach should be aware of the trends that affect the work of classroom teachers, the issues that involve their status as professionals, and how these concerns change over time" (Ornstein & Levine, 1989: 1). "Education can provide more and better chunks. You learn complicated ideas and concepts one small piece at a time, often slowly and painfully. But when you have finally learned them, complicated patterns of information and thinking become contained within single chunks, which you can now manipulate and contrast in your mind simultaneously with other such chunks" (Funder, 2004: 484).

The fact, as it stands remains that education has as a matter of reality taken a mainstream stance in societal development and teaching has become consequently a competitive profession. Thus: "Times have changed. Today, teachers aspire to be professionals with expert knowledge concerning the content and methods of instruction in their particular fields. In addition, teachers are well organized as a group and have gained greater rights to be judged mainly on the basis of their performance rather than on the basis of their behavior outside school" (Ornstein & Levine, 1989: 43).

As it stands today mode of teaching has diversified to the extent that graphic organizers have become important tools for instruction and should be encouraged. This is because the idea of

picture is worth a lot of words. By graphic organizers we mean: “visual and spatial displays that arrange information graphically so that key concepts and the relationships among the concepts are displayed” (Gunter, Estes, and Mintz, 2007: 287).

“a student must learn from his or her current point of experience, understanding, and skill” (Tomlinson, 2001: 44).

Education must serve the needs of man and the society in general and that is why today: “School systems and university systems are now more and more engaged in a struggle over what should be transmitted, over the autonomy of transmission, over the conditions of service of those who transmit, and over the procedures of evaluation of acquirers” (Bernstein, 1990:

86).

1: 2: Education, Society and Sustainable Development

From all indications, education is necessary for the welfare of the human society and sustainable development. According to *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, to sustain something or somebody is to: “provide enough of what somebody/something needs in order to live or exist” Secondly, to sustain something is: “to make something continue for some time without becoming less”. To sustain therefore is to maintain a set goal because it is desirable. Education can be a key to sustainable development if it is geared towards addressing the needs of the society in line with the dynamics of the changing socio, technological and economic realities of life. To this end, sustainability has peculiar features which include the need for public service with moral aims. Secondly, it involves a thorough commitment to changing contexts at different levels, extensive capacity building, accountability, learning, commitment to short-term and long-term goals, cyclical energizing and a pronounced credible leadership (Fullan, 2005: 14). There is the need for education to be linked with societal development of the human society. It is in this regard emphasized that: “The central challenge for educational systems around the world is the substitution of effectiveness for popularity. Transforming professional development into student results is a guide for teachers, leaders, and policymakers who are willing to take on this challenge” (Reeves, 2010: 2). In the private and public sectors of the present Age, education is the backbone of service delivery and efficiency of output. This is why an essential output of bureaucracy is a citizenry which is educated in the issues and processes of government and societal development. From all angles: “Education of the citizenry contributes to the bureaucracy's responsibility for engaging the public in the democratic and administrative process and achievement of an enriched sense of community. Education empowers the citizenry. It balances bureaucratic values and engagement as inputs in the administrative process” (Richard & Stillman, 2005: 347). Consequently, the fact is that an educated citizenry is an empowerment partner in governance and developmental considerations. The fact then remains that the education of the public is in harmony with both the tenets of efficiency and professionalism per se. Furthermore, education is a strong pillar of societal development because it enlightens the public in democratic issues and processes, coupled with the essence of individual values in administrative life and the engagement of the citizenry in administrative matters. Education is dynamic and with the innovations in science and technology, education ought to constantly be associated with changing human realities and

societal needs in general. In this regard, it is obvious that: “If we expect teachers and school leaders to improve professional practices and decision making, then we must first give them different knowledge and skills than they have received in the past. This common sense, however, is routinely ignored by school leaders and policymakers who validate effects without considering causes” (Reeves, 2010: 15). Students of the present Age usually focus on the opportunities and basically rewards of post secondary and tertiary education and that is why academics and education in general should be aimed at the wellbeing of man and development of the society at large.

1: 2: The Idea of Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship is necessary for the development of a nation since it encompasses the search for positive change for new opportunity driven goals, thereby encouraging innovation and resource creation. Thus: “Entrepreneurship is the practice which has a knowledge base. Entrepreneurship is not confined to big businesses and economic institutions. Entrepreneurship behavior rather than personality trait is more important to enhance entrepreneurship. The foundation of entrepreneurship lies in concept and theory rather than in intuition” (AgwungFobellah, 2013: 6). In the field of entrepreneurship, new values are usually developed, while material is transformed into a new resource or resources which are usually combined into new and more efficacious output. To this end, innovation is the nucleus of entrepreneurship. The essence of entrepreneurship is pronounced, as it makes entrepreneurs their own bosses who embark on their own decisions, often bereft of bosses. Thus, they choose whom to associate with in their business transactions, determine their work schedule, the nature of pay package to encourage productivity and equally vacation itinerary. In addition, Agwung-Fobelah in continuation notes that:

- Entrepreneurship offers a greater possibility of achieving significant financial rewards than working for someone else.
- It provides the ability to be involved in the total operation of the business, from concept to design and creation, from sales to business operations and customer response.
- It offers the prestige of being the person in charge.
- It gives an individual the opportunity to build equity, which can be kept, sold, or passed on to the next generation.
- Entrepreneurship creates an opportunity for a person to make a contribution. Most new entrepreneurs help the local economy. A few – through their innovations – contribute to society as a whole. One example is entrepreneur Steve Jobs, who co-founded Apple in 1976, and ignited the subsequent revolution in desktop computers. (pp. 9 – 10).

Entrepreneurship education enhances high-impact learning and: “The pursuit of high-impact learning requires not only that we achieve individual and organizational focus, but also that we focus on the right things: teaching, curriculum, assessment, and leadership” (Reeves, 2010: 65).

2: 1: Harmonization of Entrepreneurship and the Nigerian National Policy on Education

Education and learning environment in particular should not be taken for granted for a desired output, whether we intend the conventional school, campus environment or learning centers.

A learning center in this vein is a place: “where a variety of activities introduce, reinforce, and/or extend learning, often without the assistance of the classroom teacher” (Opitz, 1994: 13). In any case, it needs to be reminded that for learning centers to be result-oriented, they must be educationally-friendly. Thus: “If students are working independently in the learning centers, they will need to have some familiarity with both the content and format of activities” (Voltz, Sims & Nelson, 2010: 21). One cannot undermine the nature of learning environment because the ways in which educational facilities and even furniture are organized actually affect the scholar’s comfort and psychology which by extension affects the pupil or students’ safety, influences the teacher’s pedagogic disposition and the entire academic exercise. Entrepreneurship education helps to prepare the best for the future through the study of theoretical and practical solutions to socio-economic needs of the society. The truth of the matter is that: “Then, after graduation, you can apply what you learned about the existing best practices to meet the challenges of the future. By studying entrepreneurship and innovation in college you can learn to understand and adapt to change because change is the very core of entrepreneurship. It has been said, quite truly, that in tomorrow’s world, the rate of change will continue” (Agwung-Fobelah, 2013: 12). An important implication in the foregoing argument is that change or innovation is the heartbeat of entrepreneurship, which in effect is geared towards the creation of jobs and wealth.

2: 2: Entrepreneurship and Employment Prospects in Nigeria

In this era of liberal global market economy and quest for job creation: “a market-oriented visible pedagogy is a truly secular form born out of the ‘context of the cost-efficient education’, allegedly promoting relevant skills, attitudes, and technology in an era of large-scale chronic youth unemployment” (Bernstein, 1990: 86). Entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial education are important in this difficult period of time in the history of Nigeria. It needs to be clarified in this regard that entrepreneurship is more than the traditional concept of starting a business. In other words, entrepreneurship: “is a process through which individuals identify opportunities, allocate resources, and create value. The creation of value is often through the identification of unmet needs or through the identification of opportunities for change....One of these goals is sustaining employment” (Agwung-Fobelah, 2013: 174). To this end: “When Nigerians especially unemployed youth are mentored and provided with the needed resources and enabling environment for business start-ups, they will economically be engaged thereby shunning the illegal acts of hostage-taking, kidnapping, bombing and vandalism” (p. 175). With attention shifting to entrepreneurship development in Nigeria, the classic rural-urban migration would reduce, just as government would be compelled to provide social amenities to the rural areas for effective entrepreneurship thrive.

With the dwindling value of Naira, fall of the price of oil in the international market with its attendant unemployment and gloomy economic future of the nation, entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship education poses a viable alternative. The issue is that: “When something isn’t

working, our first reaction is to look for a new strategy – a way to fix the problem...Deeper levels of learning happen when we uncover what is not working and use that information to call our beliefs into question” (Moss & Brookhart, 2012: 8). Unfortunately the Nigerian economy has been oil dependent for decades, a situation which makes it imperative that anything which affects the price of oil, automatically affects the Nigerian economy and the country as a society. In the present time whereby the Nigerian government is trying to diversify its economic mainstream, entrepreneurship would play an important role especially in areas of small and middle scale industries. In fact: “systems thinking in practice....is the key to sustainability” (Fullan, 2005: 43). Hence, by embarking on practical entrepreneurship initiative at different levels, citizens would start to develop their skills and intellectual knowhow on other areas of entrepreneurial potential which have been undermined all this while as a result of oil boom.

Entrepreneurship education in Nigeria as a pedagogic mechanism should enhance the autonomy of scholars while having a link with orientation. The government needs to promote this line of thought because: “At the same time as the economy is moving towards a greater concentration upon mergers and corporate growth, at a more micro level an entrepreneurial ‘artisan’ culture is being encouraged in the service sector” (Bernstein, 1990: 86). To capture it better: “This is reflected in market-oriented visible pedagogies to develop imaginary apprenticeships into the skills for this function, e. g. decorating, plumbing, carpentry for the self-employed” (pp. 86 – 87). It has to be acknowledged that successive Nigerian governments have introduced measures, initiatives and programmes for poverty reduction and by implication youth empowerment. Such poverty reduction initiatives and empowerment programmes include: Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP), Green Revolution Programme (GRP), Directorate for Food, Road and Rural Infrastructure (DFRFI) and lately National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) and Youth Enterprise with Innovation in Nigeria (YouWin) among others. However: “Although government made substantial impact on the development of entrepreneurial skills and education, part of the huge entrepreneurship problems could be traced to corruption, especially in public offices” (Ikharehon, J. I.

“Entrepreneurship and Poverty Reduction in Nigeria: The Missing Link” in *International Journal of Gender and Development Issues*. Volume II, No. 5. 2015: 12).

For a country like Nigeria that is estimated to have over 170 million people, all efforts should be made to keep her economy stable, otherwise the adverse effect of the reverse would be disastrous. Entrepreneurship initiative would generate another opportunity for the building of new capacities, competences, motivations and development of latent skills outside of the dominant oil industry. The truth of the matter is that, the more the Nigerian people are committed to exploring other opportunities outside the oil sector for their socio-economic wellbeing, the better for them; and basically, entrepreneurship has a key role to play in such a circumstance. It needs to be emphasized then that: “individuals and groups are high in capacity if they possess and continue to develop knowledge and skills, if they attract and use resources wisely, and if they are committed to putting in the energy to get important things done *collectively and continuously*. This is a tall order in complex systems, but it is exactly the order required” (Fullan, 2008: 57).

2: 3: Education and Sustainable Development in Nigeria

The goal of education in Nigeria must be geared towards sustainable development. National Policy on Education should enhance learning outcomes for students by establishing goals which would be in line with those outcomes which are in conformity with sustainable development in the country. Educational curriculum then ought to be a general framework for the pursuit of standard. Hence: “While different students may be at different points on the learning continuum, they are all moving in the same direction toward accomplishing the same learning goal. It is our challenge to determine where each student falls on the learning continuum and plan the best route to move each student forward” (Voltz, Sims & Nelson, 2010: 72).

Conclusion

It has been acknowledged in the process of this discourse that education is an important key to both human and societal development. However, the paper upholds that education in Nigeria today ought to take into consideration the need for entrepreneurship development as an antidote to the socio-economic challenges facing the country. One thing is to develop educational programme and another thing is to use the programme for sustainable development of the country. For instance: “Presently, with over 106 universities in Nigeria (both federal, state and private) and the increasing demand for higher education, there has been the problem of suitable employment for the varieties of graduates who are turned out by these higher institutions every year” (Agwung-Fobelah, 2013: 178). It is obvious that the Nigerian economy is absolutely weak as to absorb the whole number of graduate into the labour market yearly. Emphasis should therefore be laid on the harmonization of education with entrepreneurship development as a veritable paradigm shift in this face of dwindling price of oil in the international market.

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