ENTREPRENEURSHIP SKILLS DEVELOPMENT: A TOOL FOR ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract
Entrepreneurship Skills Development does not start and end with creating the enabling environment to enhance economic activities only. It calls for 'mass action' requiring an individual's focus toward the discovery and acquisition of entrepreneurial traits, harnessing such revelations to confront and overcome the hostile forces of nature. It is a matter of the individual developing the will-power to survive, consciously working to be free from strangulating forces. This paper looks at entrepreneurship skills development as a tool for economic empowerment in Nigeria. It carefully examines the challenges limiting the success of entrepreneurship skills development in the country probably the sub-sahara Africa at large. Deliberate measures should be put in place to incorporate entrepreneurship skills development schemes into the curricular of the educational system from Primary to University levels, making credit facilities easily accessible to entrepreneurs, protecting indigenous entrepreneurs and improving infrastructural facilities among others are recommendations the paper suggested as a way forward.

Keywords: Entrepreneur, Entrepreneurship, Skill Development, Tool, Economic Empowerment.

Introduction
Economic empowerment is a millennium agenda for developing countries and very consistent with global development goal for poverty reduction. One of the key strategies for economic empowerment is entrepreneurial skills development. This is clearly explained in the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) initiative of the Federal Government of Nigeria.
A further testimony is the ongoing reforms in the educational sector in which the consortium of the National Universities Commission, National Board for Technical Education and the National Commission for Colleges of Education set up modalities for introduction of entrepreneurial education in tertiary institutions.
Entrepreneurship skills development does not start and end with creating the enabling environment to enhance economic activities. As Emeka (2007) puts it, It calls for a "Mass action" requiring an individual's focus toward the discovery and acquisition of entrepreneurial personality traits, harnessing such revelations to confront and overcome the hostile forces of nature. It is a matter of the individual developing the will-power to survive, consciously working to be free from strangulating forces.
The choice to be free from poverty - a function of an individual's real asset (the mind) - requires being independent, self-reliant and not working for (but collaborating with) others. Working for others attracts fringe incomes while the master reaps the 'much' surplus. An autonomous economic man, according to Emeka (2007), must possess skills on idea generation, financial management, human resource management, and time management. However, these are not without challenges and therefore the imperative for this article.

**Conceptual Framework**

Resources available to man in his environment are factors that he must use to produce his desired needs. These factors are essentially land, capital, labor, and entrepreneur. According to Aruwa (2006), the entrepreneur is a vital factor in the process of production. Similarly, improvement in entrepreneurship leads to higher and better production and so to economic empowerment, growth, and development.

For some scholars, the entrepreneur is someone who is alert to profitable opportunities for exchange; possess additional knowledge, information, and acts as an intermediary between suppliers and customers. Others, by contrast, view the entrepreneur as an innovator that causes change in the economic system. This latter notion is supported by Harmann (2011) and Mainomer and Aruwa (2008).

Modern use of the term 'entrepreneur' is usually credited to Joseph A. Schumpeter who emphasized the role of innovative skills in the transformation of economic systems and viewed the entrepreneur as an innovator. In his writings, he stressed the role of an entrepreneur as an innovator, the person who develops a new product, a new market, or a new means of production. While Schumpeter (1934) believes in the entrepreneur's creative destruction, Kirzner (1973) believes the entrepreneur capitalizes on an already upset economy.

Mainoma and Aruwa (2008) defined 'creative destruction' as destroying an old economy in exchange for a far more progressed and modernized one. Nevertheless, an entrepreneur can generally be seen as an agent of change, creativity, innovative ideas for business enterprises and also to help these enterprises grow and become profitable.

Entrepreneurship is a focal point in economic empowerment and development of any country. Onyemah (2011) emphasized the role of entrepreneurship in economic empowerment through the creation of utilities and employment generation within a short period of time. Entrepreneurship is fast becoming a major focus of Nigeria's education system today. It is seen by most Nigerians as a way of life for people within and outside the institution. That is why, Ehirheme (2014) declared that entrepreneurship supports everyone in day-to-day life at home and in society, makes employees more aware of the context of their work and be able to seize opportunities, and provides a foundation for entrepreneurs establishing a social or commercial activity.

**The Goals of Entrepreneurship Skills Development in Nigeria**

Entrepreneurial development is fast becoming a phenomenon especially in developing economies like Nigeria. Most of these economies are characterized by unemployment and
underemployment problems. The desire to make everyone self reliant, rather than pursuing white-collar jobs, makes entrepreneurship skills development necessary today. Ajudeonu (2014) outlined the goals of entrepreneurship skills development to include the following:

- To instill such traits as innovativeness, ingenuity, resourcefulness and endurance to entrepreneurship.
- To give training and impact necessary skills to individuals to be self reliant.
- To generate wealth, spread prosperity and encourages grass root development.

On his own part, Obarah (2006) outlined the objectives of entrepreneurship skills development to include the following:

- To provide meaningful education for the youths, which could make them self-reliant.
- To provide small and medium sized companies with the opportunities to receive qualified graduates who will receive training in the skills relevant to the management of the small business centers.
- To provide graduates with training in skills that will make them meet the man power needs of the society.
- To stimulate industrial and economic growth of rural and less developed areas.

Atakpa (2011) emphasized that one of the strategic objective of entrepreneurship skills development is to produce graduates of international standard with appropriate knowledge and skills in their field of study who will be highly employable and able to employ themselves.

**Entrepreneurship Skills Development and Economic Empowerment**

Economic empowerment is a millennium agenda for developing countries and very consistent with global development goal for poverty reduction. One of the key strategies for economic empowerment is entrepreneurial skills development. This is legibly underscored in the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) initiative of the Federal Government of Nigeria (Emeka, 2007).

According to Ediagbonya (2013), Entrepreneurship education programs can equip students with entrepreneurial skills that will enable them create and develop enterprises in various areas. The emphasis here is that skill training program will redirect the graduates' focus from white-collar jobs or paid employment to self-employment. During the colonial era, people were trained to work for the colonial masters so their education was directed toward such. Hence, Akpomi (2009) lamented that immediately after independence, our educational system was structured after paid employment.

Daily newscast print and online adorned with University graduates being involved in all forms of nefarious activities like kidnapping, Bunkering, Impersonation, Drugs trafficking, Cultism, Armed-robbery and host of others just to become millionaires overnight. Mohammed (2011) posited:

*Many graduates of higher institution in Nigeria have realized that it is a onerous task to secure gainful employment in Government Ministries, Parastatals and Communal houses and industrial establishments. They...*
have even conceived the idea that Nigerian society has no plan for them and consequently the fear of unknown future has compelled them to the ambition of becoming millionaires by all means.

All these problems could be abated by embarking on entrepreneurial skill development which enhances self employment and spirit of infrastructural development. Entrepreneurship education can greatly help in addressing the level of poverty in the country. The issue of poverty reduction has been a top priority of many governments and institutions especially in developing where extreme poverty is conspicuous and has become pandemic. Edidiong (2014) succinctly explained that entrepreneurial skill development will create employment opportunities and actual employment, enhances the level of per capita income, stimulate economic activities and consumption of goods and services so created. This raises the standard of living of the average citizenry. To buttress the role of entrepreneurship skill development on economic empowerment, Effiong and Mbat (2011) asserted that increases in the level of income will certainly increase the level of taxation, level of revenue and hence facilitate further creation of employment opportunities and the provision of new infrastructural facilities as well as old ones.

Challenges facing Entrepreneurship Skills Development in Nigeria

Entrepreneurship Skills Development in Nigeria is beset with numerous challenges that hinders the realization of its objectives. These challenges as outlined by Agommouh (2014) include;

- Inadequate Knowledge in Basic Science and Technology - Innovation is a key not only in developing new products and services for the market but also in stimulating investment interest in the new venture being created. The lack of expertise in this area of matching technology with the appropriate market and making the needed adjustment is a major challenge of entrepreneurship skill development in the country.
- Inadequate Credit Facilities - Nigerian entrepreneurship skills development is also faced with difficulties of sourcing credit facilities to fund it. Financial institutions that offer such facilities usually charge high interest rates and set severe collateral securities. These make the process of skills development difficult in the sub-sahara Africa and Nigeria in particular.
- Poor Infrastructural facilities - The state of infrastructure for the purpose of skills development in the sub-region is almost non-existence and where available, is deteriorating. The sorry state of infrastructure has contributed significantly to the inefficient development of entrepreneurship education in the country.
- Inadequate Support Programs - Nigeria is blessed with creative minds particularly in the field of Science and Technology. However, these resources are wasted due to inadequate support from the government and other stakeholders in the country. The problem is further compounded by the lack of government laws in place which can swiftly turn round and align itself to such innovations and inventions.
• Inadequate Data - Data for entrepreneurship skills development has been lacking in the country. There is little or limited program designed for entrepreneurship training and development.
• High level of Corruption - The widespread level of corruption has made the procurement of licenses, permit for goods and services from government agencies and even the payment of taxes and levies difficult without playing the game of paying bribes and kickbacks. This make the cost of business too high in the country with adverse implication on entrepreneurship skills development.
• Attitude of Nigerians toward locally made products - Today Nigerians have developed negative attitude to locally manufactured goods and services in the country. They have developed high preference for foreign made goods. This has tended to create limited market for locally produced goods and services. The limited nature of this market have detrimental effects on entrepreneurship skills development in the country.
• Other factors that serve as hindrance to effective entrepreneurship skills development in the country include insecurity of life and property, low spirit of competition, poor enterprising culture, poor societal attitude to technical and vocational education development, inadequate facilities and equipment for teaching and learning and government insensitivity to enterprise creation and expansion strategy.

Conclusion
This paper reviewed some issues and challenges of entrepreneurship skills development as it relates to economic empowerment in the country. Entrepreneurship skills development is a central pillar to economic empowerment through employment generation and poverty reduction. It is worth noting that efforts should be put in place to enable full development of entrepreneurship education in Nigeria through the provision of investor friendly environment, providing adequate security and support programs that will help in turning innovative ideas into reality.

Recommendation
For a viable entrepreneurship skills development in the country to be sustained, the following measures could be adopted:
• Entrepreneurship skills development schemes should be incorporated into the curricular of the educational system from primary to University levels. This will help students acquire the technical skills and hidden potentialities, identify business opportunities, take advantage of such opportunities, venture into it and become successful entrepreneurs. Hence national development and economic empowerment.
• Deliberate measures should be put in place to enable entrepreneurs easy access to credit facilities. The monetary authority should come up with a regulation directing other financial institutions to give out loans to entrepreneurs at affordable interest rates and easy collateral securities.
• The government should put in place adequate measures to protect indigenous entrepreneurs from excessive and unhealthy competition from foreign investors. Similarly, the Patent Law should be reviewed and adjusted to accommodate young talented and innovative minds. This will help them flourish and become self-reliant in the future.
• Government and Stakeholders alike should collaborate to establish Vocational and Technical Institutions where interested students and members of the community participate to become self-reliant.
• According to Agommouh (2014), the youths should be given opportunities to gain experiences by linking them to mentors, get access to information and also given opportunity for growth. She maintains that when the youths are provided with information, knowledge, skills and attitudes that would enable them perform well as career men and women, they turn out to be very prospective.
• Deliberate measures should be put in place to create entrepreneurship internship program which will link students with successful local entrepreneurs. This will enhance entrepreneurship skills development, generate employment opportunities, poverty reduction and economic empowerment of the entire citizenry. It is very pertinent for Nigeria as a nation to do everything possible to ensure efficient entrepreneurship skills development which will consequently brings about economic empowerment of the citizenry and national development.

References


The Nigerian economy is in a recession this has seen a sharp fall in the value of the Naira and an attendant rise in the value of goods and services. Virtually every sector has been affected except for maybe those into some form of export, especially those who export agricultural produce. It is high time we took agriculture seriously as it could be a palliative in these trying times. The Nigerian Economy and Entrepreneurship Development