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Entrepreneurship Education and the Educational System in Developing Nations: Emerging Issues, Challenges and the Way Forward

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Abstract:

Entrepreneurship is a worldwide phenomenon with economic growth across the globe positively impacted by the emergence of new and innovative business start-ups. Small businesses play a significant role in job creation, influencing politicians to recognize and support entrepreneurial start-up activity due to its positive contribution to the economy. Reviewed literature highlighted a number of problems associated with entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship education in many nations' world over and particular the developing countries such as Nigeria. This paper reviews the concept of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship education and its implication on education in general and the Nigerian educational system in particular. The major problem relates too much emphasis on bookish knowledge but not on skills and competence; much emphasis on teacher centred methods but not encouraging individual/group learning methods such as project methods, focus group discussion, peer exchange, guess speakers, individual counselling, workshops etc. Other problems facing entrepreneurship education programme particularly in developing nations include inadequacy of qualified and competent teachers to effectively teach and evaluate the programme. The paper recommends among other things that entrepreneurship education should be made compulsory at all levels of educational system so that students at all levels will be encouraged to cultivate the entrepreneurial culture from earlier stage of their life. However, there is the need for empirical research in the area of entrepreneurship education in developing countries particularly in terms of proper methods, design and structure of the programme for effective implementation.

Keywords: Entrepreneur, entrepreneurship, entrepreneurship education

1. Introduction

The concept of entrepreneurship education has recently become a major focus for educational systems all over the world. Acclaimed literatures indicate creation of new ventures and growing businesses are fundamental solution to unemployment and the quickest way to fast-track the economy and reduce poverty (Klappa,2004; Hannon,2005; Akpomi, 2008;Ndedi, 2012). Moreover, entrepreneurship education has succeeded in many developed countries and it has been adopted and applied in the educational institutions of many developing nations (Ronstadt, 1987; Kuratko, 2005; Uduak & Aniefiok, 2011; Sunday, 2012).

This implies that the importance of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship education has been widely recognised but the concepts are poorly understood (Orford, Herrington, & Wood, 2004; Orford, Herrington, & Wood, 2009; Ndedi, 2013). Entrepreneurship in education includes development of both personal qualities and attitudes and of formal knowledge and skills that enable the learners to have competency in entrepreneurship. In this regard, the educational system plays an important role in developing entrepreneurial skills/competencies and sharing attitudes in several ways. With the right political will, planning and adequate funding, the program will achieve its purpose.

However, in Nigeria and many developing countries experiencing high rates of unemployment, poverty and other social disorders, many policies have been implemented without recording any significant successes. For instant, in Nigeria entrepreneurship education was introduced for over a decade into the educational system as a remedy for the teaming youth unemployment and poverty eradication policy but the situation is worsening day after day. It is again this background the paper explores entrepreneurship education issues and the challenges in developing countries and recommends ways of meeting these challenges.

1.1. Justification for the Paper

In this regard, considering the significant efforts make by both individuals and governmentsaim at increasing rates of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial successes through education, so it is important to assess the effectiveness of the program. Moreover, the increasing level of resources allocated to such initiatives have generated a growing interest from both fund providers and academics about the issue of the effectiveness as well as the identification and diffusion of best practices (Vesper & Gartner, 1997; Be'chard & Toulouse, 1998; Henry et al., 2004; Keogh & Gallaway, 2004; Fayolle,

Gailly & Lassas-clerc, 2006; Schwarz, Wdowiak, Almer & Breitenecker, 2009). Entrepreneurship education programs need to be evaluated to provide evidence about their efficacy to providers of funds, policy makers and government; and to justify expenditure of public money. Nevertheless, many researchers have highlighted a lack of rigorous independent evaluation studies of enterprise education programs in particular (Peterman and Kennedy, 2003; Hytti & O’Gorman, 2004; Jones & English, 2004; Matlay, 2008; Burnett, 2008). More recent studies on assessment of the impact of entrepreneurship education (Shulman & Shulman, 2004; Fayolle, Gailly & Lassas- Clerc, 2006; Katz, 2008; Finkle, 2010; Hattab, 2014) argued in a similar way, that there are a number of methodological challenges in evaluating the impact of enterprise education on entrepreneurial skills and attitudes. These challenges include the need to account for self-selection bias; the need for objective measures, as effects may be long term; a need for control groups to demonstrate effects; and finally, a method to account for different kinds of training at different times.

1.2. Concept of Entrepreneurship and Entrepreneurship Education

Entrepreneurship has been recognised as an integral part for the economic growth and development of any nation (Henry, Hill, & Leitch, 2003; Matlay, 2008; Carland and Carland, 2010). It is an essential element for national development, with economic growth across the globe positively impacted by the emergence of new and innovative business start-ups (Fayolle et al., 2006; Dell, 2008; Hattab, 2014). However, the word entrepreneurship means different things to different writers (Sexton & Bowman, 1984; Hills, 1988; Deamer & Earle 2004; Nwachukwu, 2005, Dennis, 2007; William, Robert & Carl, 2007). Therefore, there is no general consensus on the meaning and definition for the concept of entrepreneurship. As an academic discipline France economist Richard Cantillon coined the term, ‘entrepreneur’ (Cantillon, 1755). The literal definition of this French term is ‘to undertake’ or ‘go between’ referring to the position an individual assumed when pursuing an opportunity (Low and MacMillan, 1988). However, entrepreneurship is understood as the necessary behavioural patterns which are influenced by social, economic and psychodynamic forces (Ndedi & Ijeoma, 2008; Ndedi, 2013)

Entrepreneurship education is a new field in the academia but has achieved a growing recognition that it can contribute toward the creation of enterprise culture among learners and entrepreneurship ability increases through education (Ronstadt, 1987; Gorman, Hanlon, and King, 1997; Hattab, 2014). Therefore, considerable academic efforts have been focused upon entrepreneurship education in recent years helping the field to develop and to gain momentum.

1.3. Emerging Issues and Challenges of Entrepreneurship Education in the Developing Countries

Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) reports indicate low indexes of total entrepreneurial activities (TEA) in most of the developing nations (GEM, 2009; GEM, 2010; GEM, 2011). The TEA reveals lower rate of new enterprises in the developing countries and there is the need to deal with the factors which influences behaviour through effective training intervention (Ndedi, 2013). However, the most recent report indicates that factor-driven economies tend to have higher levels of entrepreneurship activity but still there is higher discontinuance rate per entrepreneur in these economies (GEM, 2013).

Lack of unified educational curriculum and standard structure for the entrepreneurship education program poses a very serious challenge in the developing countries. The content of a typical entrepreneurship course varies from one country to another and also according to the teacher’s personal preferences as to definition and scope of entrepreneurship due to the lack of unified theory (Sexton & Bowman, 1984; Gorman and Hanlon, 1997; Shane and Venkataraman, 2000; Carland & Carland, 2010). In this regard, Bechard and Gregoire (2005), identified five items which they considered as obstacles for scholars achieving the goals for entrepreneurship education particularly in developing nations:

- A strong focus on theoretical development rather than educational development.
- A strong tendency to consider education related projects as less legitimate.
- A very limited focus on pedagogy in doctoral training.
- Very few grants available for educational research.
- Few entrepreneurial scholars are interested / rewarded for pedagogical innovation.

Another serious challenge of entrepreneurship education in developing countries is the difficulties recruiting and hiring adequate and qualified teachers with appropriate knowledge and pedagogy to impart entrepreneurial skills and competencies in the students. Obviously, teachers play important role in actualizing the goals for entrepreneurship education (Deakins, Glancey, Menter & Wyper, 2005; Seikkula-Leino et al, 2010). The teachers are mainly responsible for interpretation and integration of entrepreneurship education into their teaching and finding the best methods and most useful practices (Ruskovaara & Pinkala, 2013; Ndedi, 2013). Many studies found that teachers undergo some difficulties in finding appropriate contents and methods to implement entrepreneurial education (Fiet, 2000; Solomon, 2007).

However, entrepreneurship education requires the use of active learning methods that place the learner at the centre of the educational process and enable them to take responsibility for their learning experiment and learn about themselves. The issues relate to too much emphasis on bookish knowledge but not on skills and competencies; much emphasis on teacher centre method but not encouraging individual/group learning methods which learner centred has been identified as one of the problems of teaching entrepreneurship in developing countries. Studies has indicated that active learning is more appropriate for nurturing entrepreneurial attributes and positively correlated with entrepreneurial intention (Garavan & O’Cinneide, 1994; Shariff, Hasan, Mohamad & Jusoff, 2010; Josien & Sybrowsky 2013).

1.4. Call for Action/Way Forward

To successfully address the challenges of entrepreneurship education in the educational system of developing countries, it requires a shift in pedagogy from the traditional methods of teacher centred to learner centred methods, at which each act of teaching focuses on a particular students' activity and learning situation is controlled in such a way that students do not feel insecure while they learn (Gibb, 2005; Finkle, 2010; Ahmad, 2012). The teaching methods usually include case studies, lectures, and assigned reading intended to develop the student's critical judgment and capacity to digest, understand, and analyze information (Collinson & Quinn, 2002; Davies, Hides, & Powell, 2002; Ladzani & Van Vuuren, 2002). Ahmad (2012), proposes that changes in course pedagogy could include a greater use of various types of case studies, lectures by guest speakers, inviting entrepreneurs into the classroom, business ventures assignment with guidance and consultation with practicing entrepreneurs, company visits, computer simulations with new venture decision-making programmes, interviews with entrepreneurs, student entrepreneurship clubs and hands-on experience of business start-up. Many researchers point out that the pedagogy applied to entrepreneurship education should be built on the active role of learners in the learning process (Shepherd, 2004; Gibb, 2005; Solomon, 2007; Gartner, 2008; Fayolle, 2008; Gibb, 2011; Neck & Greene, 2011) and thus, on non-traditional teaching methods. Methods for such purposes include, for example, cooperative learning, team learning, project work, learning by doing, learning journals, drama pedagogy, practice enterprises, workplace guidance and enterprise visits.

Moreover, ensuring successful implementation of entrepreneurship education in our educational system researchers have highlighted the need for training and retraining of the major stakeholders: teachers and principals must obtain the required information already during their undergraduate education, and continuing education should offer up-to-date information on the possibilities and implementation of entrepreneurship education (Deakins et al., 2005; Hannon, 2006; Birdthistle, Hynes & Fleming, 2007; Seikkula- Leino *et al.*, 2010). For entrepreneurship education to achieve its objectives in the education system ODEP (2009), suggests four factors should smear in the process;

- Entrepreneurship should be seen as an integrated part of educational system and instruction: Entrepreneurship must be defined as an objective in education, and be included in the instruction strategy.
- Collaboration with the local community: Instruction in entrepreneurship requires close collaboration between educational institutions and the society particularly local business sectors.
- The needs for teachers' competence: Teachers are important role models. It is important therefore to focus on teacher training and retraining, and also provide courses in competence development for working teachers.
- The needs for proper supervision by the appropriate authorities to make sure the compliance with entrepreneurship curricula as contents in the educational system.

2. Conclusion

Conclusively, entrepreneurship education should be incorporated at all levels and into all disciplines of our educational systems. And in addition, its objectives and contents must suite a particular field of study while considering the needs of the society and nation's interest at a particular point of time. It is also important that educational institutions should be given the legitimacy and motivation to work on entrepreneurship education. However, the appropriate authorities should be able to follow up, encourage and motivate teachers to be good role models and disseminators of entrepreneurship as contents in the national curricula through collaborative efforts with the business sector and other stakeholders. Finally, this paper cannot be completed without recommending for more empirical researches the problems highlighted in this study.

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