

ENTREPRENEURSHIP MINDSET AND POLYTECHNIC EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: THE CONCEPT, THE TARGET AUDIENCE, AND THE EXPECTED OUTCOMES

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ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to bring to the limelight the importance of the development of Entrepreneurial mindset, understanding the purpose of Polytechnic education in Nigeria; the paper also identifies the target audiences and the expected outcomes of Polytechnic education. The problem that triggered this study was the observation that the Polytechnics in Nigeria had drifted away from the objectives for which they were established, which is to impart the necessary entrepreneurial mindset to its graduates who shall be enterprising self-reliant after their graduation. The paper employed Content Analyses as its methodology and theoretically adopted Behavioural Approach as its basis. The paper concludes that Polytechnic and entrepreneurial education goals are to boost the level of entrepreneurial mindset among its key target audience and nurture entrepreneurship culture in an individual and encourage him to become financially independent. The paper gives three recommendations for effective sustainable EDI in our institution.

Keyword: Entrepreneurship Mindset, Target Audience, Polytechnic Education, and Outcomes.

INTRODUCTION

It was estimated by the International Labour Organisation that there are over 70 million youth in the world that are openly unemployed, not to speak of enormous underemployment faced by many young people in developing countries. This therefore called for a new approach – an approach that placed youth empowerment as a sustainable developmental policy. The aims of this paper therefore are to bring to limelight, the importance of development of Entrepreneurial mindset, understanding the purpose of Polytechnic education, identifies the target audiences, states the expected outcomes of Polytechnic training, and recommends the best practices for the establishment of formidable Entrepreneurial Development Institutions in the Polytechnic.

The motivation for this study was the observation that, particularly, most of our tertiary institutions, particularly, the Polytechnics in Nigeria, have drifted away from the purpose for which the Polytechnics were established. For instance, according to National Board for Technical Education (2007), the basic goal of Polytechnic Education in Nigeria is to impart the necessary entrepreneurial mindset to its graduates who shall be enterprising and self-reliant after their graduation. However, what is obtained today as the graduates of Polytechnic, are the teeming population waiting to be employed by either the public or private sectors. This tradition has failed to increase economic and financial independence of the Polytechnic grandaunts outside the labour market.



As a remedy this ugly trend, the National Board for Technical Education has since produced the necessary documents for the teaching and learning of entrepreneurship education in all institutions under its regulatory purview. To effectively implement the curricula, the board has organized an intensive capacity building tagged “Train the Master Trainer” workshop on Entrepreneurship Education for polytechnic and monotechnic teachers across the nation that their capacity is enhanced for the task ahead.

It is against this preceding that this paper attempts to explain the concept of Entrepreneurship Mindset and Polytechnic Education in Nigeria. The paper also identifies the target audience and enumerates Polytechnic education's expected outcomes and finally suggests the best practices to establish and sustain Entrepreneurship Education Institution (EDI) in the Polytechnics in Nigeria. The paper employed content analyses as its methodology.

Entrepreneurship versus Entrepreneurs

According to Adigbite (2009), scholars from multiple disciplines have grappled with a diverse set of interpretations and who entrepreneurs are. The Consortium for Entrepreneurship Education (2008), averred that, entrepreneurship involves more than just "starting businesses" but:

“...the ability to create and build something from practically nothing. It is initiating, doing, achieving, and building an enterprise or organization, rather than just watching, analysing, or describing one. It is the knack for sensing an opportunity where others see chaos, contradiction, and confusion. It is the ability to build a "founding team" to complement your skills and talents. It is the know-how to find, marshal and control resources often owned by others and to make sure you don't run out of money when you need it most”.

In other words, Haftendorn, Klaush and Carmela (2003), are of the view that, Entrepreneurship involves life attitudes such as creativity and curiosity, motivation by success, willingness to take risks, ability to cooperate, identification of opportunities, ability to be innovative and tolerate uncertainty, including the readiness and the courage to act in the socio-cultural and economic context. Cultures that value and reward these behaviours promote a propensity to develop and introduce radical innovations. In contrast, cultures that reinforce conformity, group interests, and control over the future are not likely to show risk – taking and entrepreneurial behaviour.

Going by the above concept of entrepreneurship, Nelson, Robert and Scott (1997), defined an entrepreneur as a person who can look at his environment, identify opportunities for improvement, gather resources, and implement action to maximize those opportunities. Similarly, Tolentino (2008), added that, entrepreneurs are people with the ability to see and evaluate business opportunities, gather the necessary resources to take advantage of those opportunities, and initiate actions to ensure business success.

Entrepreneurs behave differently because they risk their own money, organize their work, make all the final decisions, must find customers to survive and at the same time handle diverse

activities. Self-confidence, optimism, originality, people oriented, perseverance, hard work, foresight, and the ability to take calculated risk, are just few personality traits, needed to appraise entrepreneurial mindset.

Types of entrepreneurs

Manu, Robert and John (2005), identified eleven types of entrepreneurs as follows:

1. **Self Employed:** Individuals who perform all the work and keep all the profit. This includes everything from family run stores, agents, repairs persons, accountants, physicians, engineers, photographers, and lawyers. It can be a full-time job because no one else is involved
2. **Opportunistic Entrepreneurs:** Those who start a business and expand as fast as possible to hire other employees. Usually, these additional employees have the necessary expertise that the owner does not have.
3. **Inventors:** Those with inventive abilities, who design a better product and then create companies to develop, produce and sell the item. High technology companies of this type are a new trend.
4. **Pattern Multipliers:** Those who look for an idea someone else has already had so that they can then create their own business based on this model. Franchise operation or chain stores are a form of this approach.
5. **Economy of Scale Exploiters:** Those who benefit from a large volume of sales by offering discount prices and operating with very low overhead.
6. **Acquirers:** Those who take over a business started by somebody else and use their ideas to make it successful. This often happens when there is a financial problem in the current operation. Fresh management ideas may save the business
7. **Buy – Sell Artists:** Those who buy a company to improve it to sell it again for a profit.
8. **Speculators:** Those who purchase a commodity and resell it for a profit. Real estate, art, antiques, and crops are typical speculator items.
9. **Entrepreneurs:** Those who create new ideas and turn them into a successful project within an existing business.
10. **Franchisee:** A franchisee is an individual who starts a business for which a widely known product image has already been established. The franchisee owns the business and assumes its operating responsibilities subject to specifications set out by the franchisor.
11. **Necessity Entrepreneur:** Unemployed person who needs to establish his own business to survive, such as shoe shiner, and micro trading.

Entrepreneurship Education

As opined by Cooney and Trudie (2008), entrepreneurship education is now a key part of the tertiary institutions landscape in many countries around the globe. Institutions are creating the types of learning environments that are conducive to encouraging and supporting students' enterprise and graduate entrepreneurship. Going beyond the notions of employability, entrepreneurship capacities enable graduates to create their futures, exploit the opportunities that

emerge in their complex and unpredictable worlds, and better contribute to economic development and social wellbeing. The UNESCO Inter-regional seminar Report (2008), gives the following definitions and possible aims of Entrepreneurship Education that:

1. Entrepreneurship education is education and training that allows students to develop and use their creativity and take initiatives, responsibility, and calculated risk.
2. Entrepreneurship education is made up of all kinds of experiences that give students the ability and vision to access and transform opportunities of different kinds.
3. Entrepreneurship education goes beyond business creation; it increases students' ability to anticipate and respond to societal changes.

And the possible aims of Entrepreneurship Education include:

1. To raise the level of awareness among key stakeholders as a viable and realistic option for career development.
2. To nurture entrepreneurship culture in an individual and encourage him to become entrepreneur.
3. To reach all young people (male and female) not just those taking technical route.
4. To allow youth to develop skills and empower them with the competencies necessary to prepare them respond to their life needs, they become productive citizens.

Nelson, and Scott (2005) identify the following for effective implementation of Entrepreneurship education programme in any tertiary institution:

1. The facilitators should possess working experience in small scale enterprises.
2. Integration of entrepreneurial role models as case studies in training programmes.
3. Active participation of trainees in idea generation and business planning.

Due to the preceding factors, teaching of entrepreneurship education requires a different approach from conventional models of education. According to Teacher's Guide on Entrepreneurship Education for Polytechnics and Monotechnic in Nigeria (2007), there are many differences between the conventional teaching and entrepreneurship teaching mode. In the former, students play a passive role leaving completely the active role to the trainer. On the other hand, entrepreneurship teaching involves a participative style and an orientation towards action and learning by doing. Gibbs (1996), as was quoted by Cooney and Trudie (2008) highlighted the differences of two approaches as given in the table below:

Table 1: Conventional and Entrepreneurship Approach

Conventional Approach	Entrepreneurship Approach
Major focus on content	Major focus on process delivery
Led by teacher	Pupil centred
Expert hands on knowledge	Teacher as a fellow learner
Emphasis on theory	Emphasis on practice
Participants passively receive knowledge	Participants generate knowledge
Learning objectives imposed	Learning objectives negotiated
Sessions heavily programmed	Sessions flexible and responsive to needs

It is clear with the aid of the above table that entrepreneurship teaching requires a practical approach where information and knowledge are generated among participants.

The Target Audience

Target Audience refers to those teaming population of Nigerian Youth admitted into various academic programmes in higher education. These special categories of people are the driving forces of every nation in nation building, economic development and security of the nation. Hence, it is very much clear that, a generation without the hope of a stable job is a burden for the whole of society, and certainly, poor employment in the early stage of a young person's career can harm job prospects for life. The government's economic investment in education and training will be wasted if youth do not move into productive jobs that enable them to pay taxes and support public services. These stunning and disturbing figures stirred the anger of the Head of States of all member countries of the United Nations to fight against Youth Unemployment as part of the Sustainable Development Goals, consequently, entrepreneurship education serves as an economic empowerment tool for youths and potential retirees of both academic and non-academic staff as well. According to Haftendon and Carmela (2003), more than 1 billion people today are between 15 and 25 years of age and nearly 40 per cent of the world's population is below the age of 20. Eighty-five per cent of these young people live in developing countries where many are especially vulnerable to extreme poverty.

The Expected Outcomes

The basic philosophy of developing Entrepreneurial Development Centres or Institution is to create within our youth a mindset for "Entrepreneurial culture" so that they can compete favourably in a labour market. It however should be noted that, this expected outcome is not achieved immediately or in a short-term period, for entrepreneurial attitude is built through a long-term rigorous activity because:

Entrepreneurship education is a long term investment that is likened to a tree – it is planted in the knowledge that it will take several years to come to fruition and it is not a good idea to keep digging it up to look at the roots (Cooney, Thomas, and Trudie (2008).

In this respect, the Consortium for Entrepreneurship Education (2008) reports that, the objectives of Entrepreneurship Development Institutions is geared toward achieving three major goals:

- 1. Encourage Young people to be entrepreneurs by:** Providing opportunities for youth to start and operate enterprises of appropriate size and scope, reinforcing the concept that successful entrepreneurs take calculated risks based on sound research and relevant information, requiring youth to develop a business plan that addresses its financial, marketing and operational aspects, providing opportunities for young people to understand basic economic concepts such as savings, interest, supply and demand; and to generating an understanding of a variety of industries, including, among others, finance, retail, service, and technology.
- 2. Encourage responsible enterprising behaviour by** demonstrating entrepreneurship's place in the for-profit, not-for-profit, and public sectors, as part of school-to-career efforts, community service, and overall economic development strategy, emphasizing the need to operate enterprises and organizations in a legal, ethical, and socially and environmentally responsible manner, involving adults as case studies or guest speakers from the surrounding community to serve as mentors, advisors or role models for youth, utilising an action-oriented curriculum that provides age-appropriate experiential learning opportunities, and the youth shall be engaged in entrepreneurial directed activities that include, but not limited to, business plans, creating and operating businesses, field trips and group problem solving.
- 3. Operate accountably, by documenting,** reflecting upon, and evaluating the progress of the centre for continuous improvement and results oriented training, the centre being Entrepreneurial Development Institution shall endeavour to involve youth from all backgrounds irrespective of their formal education level, the training activities of the EDI centre shall have a measurable outcomes that provide value for the participants and the community served, lastly the activities and leadership of the EDI shall be transparent and responsible, by acting ethically within the established laws being the drivers/initiators and social change agents within the institution or community the centre serves..

CONCLUSION

Finally, it is important to emphasise here that, goals of entrepreneurial education in our tertiary institutions amongst others are to create the level of awareness or entrepreneurial mindset among its key target audience as a viable and realistic option for career development, to nurture entrepreneurship culture in an individual and encourage him to become entrepreneur. to reach all young people (male and female) not just those taking technical route, to allow them to develop skills and empower them with the competencies necessary to prepare them respond to their life needs, so that they become productive citizens, and most importantly, to build within them those entrepreneur traits needed to be competitive and successful in a business environment, either as



employers or employees such as: self-confidence, optimistic, resourceful, creative, responsive to suggestions and criticisms, and drive for achievement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Consequent to preceding discussion and for the fact that, students are easily influenced, the following are in a nutshell, recommended for effective and successful development of Entrepreneurship Education Institution, particularly in the Polytechnics:

1. EDI should have a clearly defined mission and vision to guide its activities, such as the reason for its existence, its scope, and its objectives, for an organisation without clear mission and vision, risks drifting away from its original purpose and consequently would fail to achieve its goals.
2. That the students, community members, and potential retirees of the polytechnic community - both Academic and non-Academic, who imbibe the mindset of entrepreneurship, should be involved as the EDI target audience to establish small and medium scale enterprises clubs and associations.
3. The EDI should from time to time organise networking events such as excursion, workshops, seminars, symposia, lectures and so on among the stakeholders, for cross fertilisation of business plans ideas or any other business innovation. In this view, the school management shall actively participate, and financially be committed to establishing Entrepreneurial Development Institution within the Polytechnic.

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