

SECURING THE FUTURE OF SECRETARIES THROUGH ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION

Mrs. Rosemary Adaego Ukpog
College of Administrative and Business Studies
Umaru Ali Shinkafi Polytechnic Sokoto

ABSTRACT

The introduction of entrepreneurship education in all the Nigerian institutions is a blessing in disguise to secretaries because there is a continuous research and development in the electronic and technological advancement and as a result, the secretary's role has and will continue to be upgraded. Change is constant and entrepreneurship is all about change. Entrepreneurship education will enable secretaries to acquire more new skills on new production techniques, new machines and their usage and at end, be able to establish a business of their own for self – sufficiency and self – reliance for future development. Rather than suffering in penury when government job is not forth coming or when the take home pay is nothing to write home about, there are lots of opportunities that are waiting for secretaries to tap and harnessed in their immediate environment for a better tomorrow. This paper focuses on entrepreneurship education, its benefits to secretaries, viable options and training programs for secretaries, secrets for success, conclusion, recommendations and the way forward. An urgent intervention is highly needed to secure the future by empowering and assisting secretaries in Nigeria to reach to a greater height so as to save the nation from disgrace and shame in the near future.

Key Words: Entrepreneurship Education, Its Benefits to Secretaries, Viable Options

1. INTRODUCTION

The role of secretaries in business organization has changed tremendously from that of typewriting, shorthand dictation, answering of telephone calls and processing of mails. These were as a result of changes in technology. Today, secretaries are exposed to office technology including computer, internet, etc., which makes work much easier and knowledge more accessible.

The word 'secretary' has been defined by many people in their own different perspectives. To some, a secretary is a glorified "errand person", while to others, a copy typist who sits before the typewriter, makes tea and coffee for the boss etc. Gone are the days when all these disgusting definitions were attached to secretaries. It is worthy to note that secretaries are morale builders, indispensable persons, contributors to the successful conduct of the day to day running of a business organization. Lee (1986) defined secretary as an Executive Assistant who possess a mastering of office skills, demonstrates ability to assume responsibility without direct supervision, makes decisions within the scope of assigned authority.

Ajetunmbi (1986) sees a secretary as a person employed to work such as receiving and giving out information, recording correspondences, preservation of documents for future references. Road side copy typists should not be regarded as secretaries. Real and qualified secretaries are those by virtue of their training possessed 80, 100 or 120 words per minute in shorthand and 35, 50, or 60 words per minute in typewriting, a holder of National Diploma (ND), Higher National Diploma(HND), or Bachelor of Science (B.SC) in Office Technology and Management or in Secretarial Studies or Administration.

Qualified secretaries have wide knowledge of business ethics and versatile knowledge in their changing environment. Entrepreneurship education will equip secretaries to be innovative, to identify, create initiative and successfully manage their businesses and jobs, which will enable them to be job creators than job seekers. To do this, secretaries must develop to creatively identify business opportunities that lie in their immediate environment and see how such can create wealth and this therefore, calls for an urgent need for them to embrace entrepreneurship and its education.

It has been established that no country can grow economically without the positive support of the entrepreneur and entrepreneurship. Many countries today such as China, Malaysia, Singapore, Korea, Indonesia, India and Brazil where Nigerians patronizes their products, are doing very well as a result of self – reliance. The U.S.A. Small Business Administration (2002) in a survey of Business Owners, report that America's 25.8 million small Businesses employ more than 50% of the private workforce generates more than half of the nation's gross domestic product and is the principal source of new jobs in the U.S. economy.

Marcel (2014), the release or the rebased GDP data showed Nigeria as the largest economy in Africa, this hallmarked a bright prospect for the economy, however, lessons from the experiences of the developed countries shows that resources alone are not enough to fight the development battle. Nigerian secretaries most especially graduates of universities, polytechnics and other institutions of

learning, most often depends on government as the sole provider of employment, this has proven ineffective year after year. The only true and purposeful investment is the secretarial entrepreneurship education which will enable them to be self-reliance and equally boost our economy, and finally secure the future by developing the country.

2. MEANING OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Entrepreneurship is all about “change”. According to Echu, Goyit and Dakung (2010), entrepreneurship is simply “a process by which individuals either on their own or inside an organization, pursue opportunities without regards to the resources they currently control”. Going by this definition, an entrepreneur does not look primarily at that “which is there” but looks at that “which can” and then moves on to see how such a venture can create wealth. It is a process of creating something different with value by developing the necessary time and efforts, assuring the company financial risk and receiving rewards of monetary and personal satisfaction. It involves initiating changes in production. The definition of entrepreneurship cannot be complete without mentioning the word “entrepreneur”.

An entrepreneur is someone who moves the economic resources from lower to a higher productivity and greater yield. They are the “change agents”.

3. ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION

Entrepreneurship education offers solution to a problem. It creates awareness. It seeks to prepare people, particularly the young people to be responsible, enterprising individuals who become entrepreneurs or entrepreneurial thinkers by immersing themselves in real life learning experiences where they can take risks, manage the results and learn from the outcome. Through entrepreneurship education, secretaries learn organizational skills, time management, leadership development and interpersonal skills, all of which are highly transferable skills sought by employers (Griffin and Hammis, 2003).

4. BENEFITS OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION TO SECRETARIES

According to (Bonte2001), the benefits of entrepreneurship education of both young and old are so numerous and they are equally relevant to secretaries but few will be mentioned:

Training: It trains the secretary to identify, analyze, utilize and create something new. It is an avenue to create wealth e.g. money, equipment, energy, skills knowledge, managing time etc.

Income and Profit Generation: Secretaries that are currently working generate extra income and profit which helps in solving the financial problems of the family. It also eradicates poverty and reduces inequality thereby building a strong bridge for the nation.

Social and Psychological Satisfaction: Secretaries will derive satisfaction, sense of pride, security and respect from the society.

Independency: It helps secretaries not only to live a responsible life but protects, avoids maltreatment or harassment from employers or bad superiors and equally prevents secretaries from becoming a beggar.

Employment Generation: It reduces unemployment in the country. Family members especially, the children benefit more since entrepreneurship is habitual (a continuous process) even when the originator dies, the children continue with the business.

Increase in GNP and Utilization of Resources: There will be an increase in Gross National Product and natural resources like farm products are preserved for future use without being wasted especially when they are in a large quantity due to many entrepreneurs establishing new businesses.

Reduction of Social ills: Social ills like prostitution, theft, armed robbery, begging, hooliganism and host of other negative vices are reduced.

Improvement in the standard of living: The standard of living of secretaries will greatly be improved as they equally contribute a great deal to the up liftmen of the standard of living of their family members, societies and nation.

Saving Culture: Wasteful spending is avoided. Secretaries intending to establish a small business save towards it and this reduces the rate of consumption in the society.

Encourages Creativity: It help secretaries to be creative in form of invention, innovation, or extension.

Academic Performance: It improves the academic Performance, school attendance and educational abilities.

Relationships: It improves interpersonal relationships, teamwork, money management and public speaking skills.

Development: It helps secretaries and the government to make plans for the future, and it brings about inter relationship among other countries.

5. VIABLE OPTIONS/TRAINING AVAILABLE FOR SECRETARIES

Entrepreneurship is not only a wealth creating venture; it is also characteristically a risk-taking endeavor. No matter how small the involvement of business venture is, some levels of risk are associated but with the vision to succeed, such risks are worth taking. Entrepreneurs must know that if there is no risk, there will be no reward. Again, if an entrepreneur dares nothing, when the day is over, nothing will he/she gain. It is therefore very important to note that an entrepreneur is not a risk dodger but one who reasonably faces risk with the eyes set on the rewards that lie within and beyond such risks (Tulgan, 1996).

It is important that secretaries are conversant with the available training options that were established by the Federal Government of Nigeria. The Industrial Development Center (IDC), is one of the training centers established by the Government in some part of the country e.g., Owerri, Zaria, Maiduguri, Abeokuta, Sokoto, Benin City, Uyo, Bauchi, Akure, Port Harcourt, Ilorin, Kano and Ikorodu in 1965, 1969 and 1970 respectively (Ohakwe, 2012). The aim was to train entrepreneurs, managerial assistance, and other opportunity. It can be oriented towards various ways such as:

Opening of a new business: - This is a program where secretaries learn how to launch a new business as an integral part of the learning process for a period of two years. It is also known as Venture Creation Program (VCP) (Einar, 2016).

Promoting innovation or introducing new product or service or markets in existing firms: - This approach is also called corporate entrepreneurship i.e., the secretary can be working in an organization while providing services or markets to another organization.

Creating charitable organization: - This approach is designed to be self- supporting in addition to doing their good works. It is called social entrepreneurship or social venture.

Sections/departments that are available includes:-

- Ceramic Department:- This is a department where secretaries will be trained on how to make materials like jugs, tea cup, pots, interior decoration etc.
- Food and Chemical Department:-Secretaries will learn how to use chemicals to produce products like liquid soap, pomade, candle, ice- cream, fruit juice etc.
- Metal Department:- This department deals with various machines for industrial use. They include soap making machine, candle making machine, welding machine, heat treatment machine. etc
- Wood work Department:- This is where the secretary will learn how to use machine to manipulate wood into various sizes and shapes to produce wooden hanger, chair, interior decorating materials, furniture etc.
- Textile Department:- Secretaries can produce textile materials of all sorts e.g., weaving materials, dyeing of African fabrics like Campala, Adire, Batik etc.
- Leather Department:- Secretaries will be trained on how to use animal skin to produce materials of all kinds e.g., leather bag, shoe, belt etc.

Other Viable Options include:-

- Event Organizer, Business Centre, Fish Ponds, Poultry, Restaurant, Tailoring Institute, Computer Accessories, Rental Services, Snail Farming and many humble and yet promising business ventures.

Prominent entrepreneurs known around the globe today are what they are because they were able to face their challenges and took advantage of opportunities of wealth creating ventures. An example of such prominent entrepreneur is Alhaji Aliko Dangote who is one of the richest men in the world. While delivering a lecture at Lagos Business School, he declared “I started as a cement trader” (Emmanuel, 2015). Entrepreneurship generally begins humbly and blossom gradually. One does not need huge sums of money in order to begin a business. Nigeria has thousands of silent opportunities that need to be explored especially secretaries and all they need to know are as follows:-

- Change their mindset, recognizing what they want, why they want it and how to go about getting what they want.
- Conduct self- approval (competency).
- Scan the environment.
- Select the best idea/opportunities/project and then,
- Capture/implement the idea/project.

6. SECRETS OF SUCCESS

There is no formula for success but secretaries should learn from successful entrepreneurs like Alh. Dangote by:-

- Thinking success, having clear vision and openness attitude.
- Be passionate with what they do and love it too.

- Focus on their strength.
- Never consider the possibility of failure.
- Work hard.
- Look for ways of networking.
- Be willing to learn.
- Persevere and have faith.
- Discipline one self.

7. CHALLENGES

In the course of running a venture, entrepreneurs do encounter so many problems but few are mentioned below:-

- i. Finance: Access to capital is a major constraint. Most lending is through collateral and when an entrepreneur have nothing to show, it becomes a problem (Ohakwe,2012)
- ii. Infrastructure: - Poor infrastructure has been one of the major causes of Nigerian products not being competitive in the international market. Lack of public power supply adversely affects the processing, packaging and storage that protects and prolongs the retention of products until they are consumed.
- iii. Documentation of Processes and Outcomes: - Records are poorly kept which makes it difficult for small business to have financial records, or statements, feedbacks, future operational plans as well as in developing strategic plans.
- iv. Corruption: - This has retarded the economic growth of Nigeria because most corrupt leaders looted much money outside the country which would have been used in helping people especially the youths desiring to become entrepreneurs. Even though some commercial banks offers loan, the interest rate is too high and most times, the actual money i.e., the amount an entrepreneur applied for might not be given to him/her completely because some corrupt individuals who are responsible in issuing out these loans, dubiously take their own shares.

8. FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS AVAILABLE FOR ENTREPRENEURS

Despite the above challenges encountered by entrepreneurs, there are a lot of promising financial institutions established by the Nigerian Government to assist Small and Medium Enterprises. They include:-

- Rural Banking System.
- World Bank Assisted SMEII Loan Project.
- People's Bank of Nigeria.
- Community Banks.
- The Nigerian Industrial Development Bank Ltd (NIDB).
- Agricultural Credit Guarantee Scheme Fund.
- Nigeria Export / import Banks.
- The Small and Medium Industries Equity Investment Scheme (SMIEIS).
- Nigerian Agricultural, Co-operative and Rural Development Bank (NACRDB).
- The Bank of Industry.
- Refinancing and Rediscounting Facility.

9. CONCLUSION

It is no longer a gain saying that Nigerians, most especially the secretaries of today must face and accept the reality that the time to rely on government for everything is over. With little capital, certain business could be embarked upon which in the long run can catapult one to a greater heights. With great determination, secretaries can always obtain capital to begin an enterprise through lending institutions and commercial banks which the Nigerian government introduced to assist entrepreneurs.

There is no point dying in penury when there are lots and lots of opportunities that lay wasted in our various communities and immediate environment. Secretaries should realize that they are the future leaders and the government should not be ignorant of the fact that secretaries are the backbone of the nation as they ensure the efficiency and smooth running of every organization they belong to.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

An urgent intervention is needed to secure the future by empowering and assisting secretaries in Nigeria to reach to a greater height so as to save the nation from disgrace and shame in the near future. It is equally important to note that:-

1. The way forward obviously lies in the development of entrepreneurship education by encouraging and equipping secretaries to become entrepreneurs. Therefore, adequate capital, infrastructure, introduction of more financial institutions be created mainly for them.
2. There is the need to address more of the viable options practically rather than the theoretical point of view.
3. The government should provide more resources for secretaries to learn more about entrepreneurship education such as a foundation or program that focuses on creation of entrepreneurs and the development of entrepreneurship as an academic discipline with a strong emphasis on programs that encourages independence and self-reliance for individual secretary.
4. The consortium whose membership include local schools, districts, polytechnics, universities and non-profit organizations interested in developing entrepreneurs should develop standards for entrepreneurial education premised on the philosophy that entrepreneurship is a life- long learning process(Dunn,1978).
5. It is also important to introduce the Junior Achievement Program which begins at the elementary school level, teaching children how they can impact the world around them as individuals, workers and consumers. This program continues through the middle and high schools grades, preparing students for future economic and workforce issues.
6. Government should promote Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), promote value addition and natural resources, focus on educational system and processing, providing granaries and storage facilities to ensure food security.
7. Nigeria as a nation must unite and develop the will power to break away from their past by equipping and placing the young secretaries as the utmost priority just as Korea, Indonesia, Malaysia, India, China and Brazil did in their various countries.

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