



QUALITY EDUCATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROGRAMME

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Introduction

Quality education has always been a source of concern to the stakeholders especially, employers of labour. Owing to this development, interests in entrepreneurship education has also been rising in Nigeria as a measure of ensuring quality education. One of the compelling driving forces behind these interests and concern is perhaps the growing body of research on the relationship between entrepreneurship and economic growth. This actually point to, and reinforce, the critical contribution of job creation, innovation, productivity and economic growth in an emerging economy like that of Nigeria. A number of factors have been identified in the research literature as being associated with the level of entrepreneurial activity in developing and developed countries, acting as either promoters or inhibitors. In my view as an Educational planner, such multi-faceted and varied influencers include social and cultural factors; attitudinal factors; taxation and ease of business entry and exit factors; population, immigration and GDP growth factors; labour market and regulatory factors; the relative size of the public to the private sector; the density of small firms/business owners in the population; and the prevalence of entrepreneur role-models, just to mention a few. The studies in entrepreneurial education and their findings provide a great deal of important input to our understanding of the factors influencing entrepreneurial behaviour in the Nigerian society. One may conclude that in making entrepreneurship education policy, context certainly matters. One may also conclude that it is difficult to find simple correlations between the level of entrepreneurial activity and, for example, economic growth. So how are policymakers to cope with sorting through this vast array of factors believed to influence the emergence of entrepreneurship? No one field of research by itself has the capacity to produce the definitive answer to such questions as: what can be done to improve the quality of education so as to increase the level of entrepreneurial activity within an economy or what is the precise role of government in that process? This brief keynote will hopefully address these and similar questions.

The Role of Education

Education is basic to the future of Nigeria. The nation's ability to prosper and to thrive in an increasingly knowledge-based global society and economy depends on our educated population. The values and practices of pure research, i.e. discovery, originality, innovation etc, all shape and motivate learning. The most frequently stated objectives of especially higher education in Nigeria are critical thinking, scientific and quantitative reasoning, preparation for citizenship, moral reflection, readiness for work, respect for diversity, broad intellectual knowledge, the transmission of culture, and appreciation of our national values. At the root of all these legitimate

and important goals is an even more fundamental purpose of learning: intelligibility which breeds entrepreneurship. We cannot improve a world we do not understand, and we cannot advance if we do not comprehend ourselves, our strengths, limitations, and motivations. By making the world and ourselves increasingly comprehensible and thereby manageable, education establishes a foundation for human growth, creativity, fulfilment, and progress. If intelligibility which results in, among other things, entrepreneurship is a fundamental goal of education, then Nigeria's education system must reflect the experience and conditions of our contemporary life. Education, no matter how qualitative, cannot make intelligible a world from which it is removed or does not address. Education must teach students how to make sense of their education by engaging in entrepreneurship, which means affecting the reality in which they (will) actually live. Education cannot succeed if it becomes insular and static. A distinctive strength of quality education should be dynamism and adaptability, a capacity to address urgent, current questions of nature, society, and human experience as well as classic ones.

Entrepreneurship is now a dominant force in Nigeria's contemporary system of education. It generates ongoing innovation and improvement of our institutions. It makes them more efficient, affordable, and, thus, effective. Entrepreneurship enhances the quality of our collective and individual lives. It changes the way we work, the way we communicate, the way we live. Innovation and improvement depend on intelligibility. In the final analysis, we cannot devise or enhance the incomprehensible. We cannot repair what is mysterious to us. Because intelligibility is a fundamental purpose of education, and generating new knowledge is the highest expression of learning. Entrepreneurship and education are inextricably bound to one another. Each has an ineluctable interest in the success of the other. Against this background, entrepreneurship should be both a legitimate subject in education and a pervasive approach to learning and the management of universities.

Why Entrepreneurship Matters

Entrepreneurship is the transformation of an innovation into a sustainable enterprise that generates value. An entrepreneur is any entity, new or existing, that provides a new product or service or that develops and uses new methods to produce or deliver existing goods and services at lower cost. Entrepreneurs innovate new ways of manipulating nature, and new ways of assembling and coordinating people. The innovator shows that a product, a process, or a mode of organization can be efficient and profitable, and that elevates the entire economy. Entrepreneurs take risks to develop a novel, sustainable enterprise—a new or improved product, service, or mode of organization that can exist independent of its originator—that benefits the economy and society. Though entrepreneurship can involve—and thus often is mistaken for—invention, creativity, management, starting a small business, or becoming self-employed, it is neither identical with nor reducible to any of them. The defining trait of entrepreneurship is the creation of a distinction between replicative 'entrepreneurs—those producing or selling a good or service already available through other sources and innovative 'entrepreneurs, who matter for economic growth. Hence, entrepreneurship entails the commercialization of an innovation. Entrepreneurship emerges from the realm of commerce, but it cannot be restricted there. Quality education is the bedrock. It is through quality education that cultural and social values and economic policies and behaviours are shaped and validated. For entrepreneurship to be a mainstream and routine business practice, it must reflect its society's view of how the world should work and how human beings should behave. Social attitudes, political practices, economic policies, and the legal system must support creativity, risk-taking, and the implementation of new enterprises. Entrepreneurship cannot thrive if the education system does

not support it by ensuring quality education. Entrepreneurship is a process of fundamental transformation: from innovative idea to enterprise and from enterprise to value. Entrepreneurship is more than just a business practice, it is an educational product which is a distinct mode of thought and action, and which derives from business but can operate in any realm of human endeavour. Entrepreneurship requires knowledge, imagination, perception, practicality, persistence, and so on, which are all acquired through quality education. Entrepreneurship is a self-actualizing activity that integrates the self, the entrepreneur, with society and quality education is a process of ensuring self-actualization. Unavoidably, therefore, entrepreneurship is an exercise in social responsibility. To suppress or constrain innovation and improvement means ignoring a society's needs and wants, holds it back, and diminishes its future. Entrepreneurship is the unique process that, by fusing innovation and implementation, allows individuals to bring new ideas into being for the benefit of themselves and others.

Entrepreneurship in Education

Entrepreneurship is and should remain as part of our educational endeavour mainly because of the following: it is critical to understanding and succeeding in the contemporary global economy; it is already an expanding area of learning; it is becoming a basic part of what universities themselves do; and it seeks to meet many of the goals of a quality education. To neglect entrepreneurship therefore, is to make learning (and generally education) worthless to the world it is supposed to help. Entrepreneurship has long been overlooked as a topic of economic study, but recent scholarship has underscored its leading role as a major generator of wealth in the contemporary economy. The continual creation of new enterprises is a fundamental reason for the economic growth and technological innovation of the Nigerian economy. Entrepreneurship's centrality to the steady improvement of human welfare explains its pertinence to education. Although entrepreneurship has been a relatively standard component of the curricula of most business schools in Nigeria, it is beginning to emerge as a discrete area of study. The exceptional curricular expansion of entrepreneurship is a good reason to rethink its place in the general undergraduate curriculum. Increasingly, universities and all institutions of higher learning are agents of entrepreneurship. For universities and other institutions of higher learning to advocate entrepreneurship as a core activity and then fail to teach that activity broadly to their students disconnects the school's mission from its practice. Finally, although it is among the newer subjects in the academy, entrepreneurship fulfils many of the established goals of a high-quality education. Entrepreneurship is not an isolated activity. It is embedded in larger structures. Even if conceived narrowly as solely a business practice, entrepreneurship ultimately is unintelligible without knowledge of the interlocking and reinforcing systems of law, economics, politics, finance, and cultural values that make it plausible and thereby foster it. Moreover, because entrepreneurship has a practical focus, its study naturally and easily demonstrates how ideals and theories actually affect behavior. Indeed, entrepreneurship's focus on the pragmatic can channel the ambition and talent of young people away from fanciful speculation and toward concrete projects.

Exploring Entrepreneurship policy Frameworks for Quality Education

Prescriptions about what entrepreneurship policy should be have been derived either from the development of theoretical and/or conceptual frameworks or from findings of research on the

experiences and needs of entrepreneurs. What has been proposed is an eclectic theory of entrepreneurship that weaves together into integrated framework aspects of culture, occupational choice, the resources available to entrepreneurs, and the extent of entrepreneurial opportunities in the economy. This framework is intended to provide insights to policymakers striving to promote entrepreneurship. These researchers suggest a number of possible roles for government policy in influencing the level of entrepreneurship at the country level. They distinguish between the supply side and the demand side of entrepreneurship and highlight the different sets of policy interventions available to governments depending on which view is taken vis-a-vis the determinants of entrepreneurship. Influencing the demand side are factors such as the demographic composition of the population, the resources and abilities of individuals and their attitudes towards entrepreneurship. The supply side is influenced by opportunities for entrepreneurship created by new technologies, the differentiation of consumer demand and the industrial structure of the economy. On the demand side, entrepreneurial opportunities are created by market demand for goods and services, whereas the supply side generates (potential) entrepreneurs that can seize the opportunities, provided they have the resources, abilities and preferences to do so. The actual rate of entrepreneurship is determined by occupational choice decisions and may deviate from the equilibrium rate due to demand-side forces, such as changes in market structure and technological developments. The discrepancy between the actual rate and the equilibrium rate is expressed through a surplus or lack of entrepreneurial opportunities, which will then lead to either the entry or exit of entrepreneurs.

I want to propose that Universities and other institutions of higher learning should develop a policy focus on entrepreneurship for three major reasons, namely:

- |) There is a strong positive relationship between new firm start-up rates and measures of economic prosperity|
- |) New ventures are contributing substantially to both gross and net employment growth, while large firms are shedding jobs|
- |) The ability of Nigeria to replenish the stock of businesses and jobs and to accommodate the volatility and turbulence in the small business sector will enable it to be best positioned to compete effectively in the global economy|

To succeed in the implementation of entrepreneurship education Nigeria must therefore, consider and take a special note of the following policy implications:

- |) Enhance general and entrepreneurship-specific education|
- |) Lessen the regulatory burden on new and small firms|
- |) Strike a balance between the need to protect the unemployed with the need to encourage higher levels of individual self-sufficiency|
- |) Facilitate greater levels of female participation in business ownership|
- |) Compensate for gaps in the population age structure in cases where there is a projected decline in some specific age group, i.e., the group with the highest propensity for becoming entrepreneurs and|
- |) Encourage tolerance of diversity in personal income and wealth.|

Universities, as well as other institutions of higher learning have a key role to play. Whereas the role of government, at various levels, is to act as a catalyst, it is the main agent who must plan

the strategy, build the vision, mobilise key players, and commit resources to promote the emergence and development of new entrepreneurs and dynamic enterprises.

Conclusion

Even though, mine is supposed to be a keynote address, I nevertheless hope that the discussions and issues raised will prompt questions and challenges, which will hopefully be addressed by subsequent presentations. I want to conclude by posing yet some more questions vital to the issues of entrepreneurship and education in Nigeria. That is if entrepreneurship is to promote quality in education or the vice-versa, how then should we teach and learn it? Does it need to become a distinct field of learning or a discipline, in order to find a durable place in the overall curriculum? The Conference should endeavour to address these and similar questions in the communiqué to be issued at the end.