

**EDUCATION IN THE 21st CENTURY: THE NEED FOR ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT**

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**Introduction:**

It is a common knowledge that Agriculture was the first profession man got involved in, judging from the story of the Garden of Eden in the Bible. But that was not before education. After man was created he was given some instructions (educated) on what to do generally and what to do specifically in the garden. The instruction was necessary because there was how God wanted man to be, behaviourally and responsibly. The only way to evoke this was through education. So, education started from the first day of human existence. The very first thing a new born baby does after coming out from the mother's womb is to cry. The cry is not necessarily announcing its arrival but it is to indicate a sharp change of environment. From then the child begins to learn certain things to enable him/her adapt to the new environment. So, what is education?

**A. Concept of Education:**

Professionally, education is one of the concepts that cannot be fully articulated and comprehensively appropriated with a single definition. An Encyclopedia of Education defines it as ***a form of learning in which the knowledge, skills and habits of a group of people are transferred from one generation to the next through teaching, training and research.*** I consider this definition very useful because of the component parts embedded in it. Specifically, it provides the purpose of education to include acquisition of appropriate knowledge, skills and

habits. Secondly, the definition also provides the means through which education can take place to include, teaching, training and research.

However, good as this definition seems, it could be necessary to ask the following questions:

- (i) Does every desirable learning results in education?
- (ii) Is it not possible to have learned something and yet not educated?
- (iii) Who is an educated man?

Analytically, an educated man is not only the person who has received learning in the knowledge, skills and habits but one who can:

- (a). Function properly in the knowledge realm – the mind enlightened, intelligence sharpened and enhanced, and can think effectively and creatively.
- (b). Apply skills acquired in solving specific problems of the society.
- (c). Exhibit a positive habit; this has to do with societal values such as honesty, integrity, fairness, respect for elders and constituted authorities, etc.

It should be noted that these three-prong emphasis of the product of education is holistic. By implication, therefore anyone that scores even 2/3 of this cannot be said to be educated. One can therefore be certificated but not educated; intelligent, brilliant in his/her profession or any human endeavour, yet not education. One can be learned but not educated.

Education exists in three basic types, namely: formal, informal and non-formal, as indicated by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). While formal education emphasizes institutionalization of education with formal curriculum, disciplines and school system; the informal education is expected to occur under informal settings at home and in public gathering. Non-formal education occurs outside the formal school system. It takes place mostly under artisans such as carpenters, mechanics (radio, cars, and generators), hair dressers, tailors/seamstresses, ICT operators, etc. it should be emphasized that no form of education is dispensable. The current problem of unemployment in the country now could be associated with the overemphasis on formal education at

the expense of other forms, especially the non-formal. The near total lack of emphasis on informal education has resulted in moral and social decadence in our society.

#### **A. Concept of Entrepreneurship.**

Entrepreneurship is generally seen as the act of expressing creative skills in visual forms. It is an act of undertaking innovations or introducing new things (mostly financial and business-wise) in an effort to transform the innovations into economic goods. According to Schumpeter (2012), *an entrepreneur is a person who is willing and able to convert a new idea or innovation into a successful venture.*

It should be noted that entrepreneurship is a factor in microeconomics and the study of entrepreneurship dates back to the works of Richard Cantillon and Adam Smith in the late 17th and early 18th centuries. The works of these men were largely ignored theoretically and empirically until late 19th and early 20th centuries. However profound resurgence of business and economics, globally in the last 40 years, has made entrepreneurship a concern to almost everyone. To all intend and purposes, entrepreneurship is of great important in the following areas:

1. Acceleration of economic growth in both developed and developing countries.
2. Promotion of capital formation and creation of wealth.
3. Reduction of unemployment and poverty.
4. Reduction of youth restiveness by engaging them in productive activities.
5. Provision of a pathway to financial and economic property.

From the discussion so far, entrepreneurship can therefore be seen as the process of exploring opportunities in the market place and arranging resources required in exploiting these opportunities for a long term gain. Associated with entrepreneurship are skills and entrepreneurial thinking. These need effective education, teaching, training and research.

#### **C. Challenges of Education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.**

It is interesting to know that in every country, education sector has its challenges, characteristics and emphasis. This is so because of the changing nature of the society. Everything is in the state of flux. Economy, population, state of security, government, policies, natural events, and so on, do change from time to time. Education is therefore used as an agent to either enable citizens to cope with changes or to initiate positive changes.

For instance in the research world, there was a time the global emphasis was on discovering problems; its nature, magnitude, causes and adverse effects. Later on the emphasis shifted to finding solutions to the existing problems. The current emphasis in this century goes beyond finding solution to an existing problem to discovering and wanting to do somethings to prevent the problem from showing up later.

Globally and particularly in Nigeria the 21<sup>st</sup> century is besieged by lots of challenges. These include:

1. Insufficient access and participation in Education.
2. Insecurity.
3. High index of unemployment.
4. Youth restiveness.
5. Examination malpractices.
6. Corruption and moral decadence.

In an attempt to tackle these problems globally, the United Nations in 2000 established what is known as Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The first two of the eight goals are eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, and achieving universal primary education.

The agreement was made among the 189 United Nations member state and at least 23 International organizations to achieve these goals by the year 2015. The goals of eradicating extreme poverty and hunger as well as achieving universal

primary education have direct bearing on the need for the development of entrepreneurial skills.

In Nigeria in an attempt to meet the challenges and achieve the MDGs, several changes have been introduced into our formal education system. Universal Basic Education has been launched, new school structure is on board, curricula have been re-visited, teaching has been given a fully recognized professional status and quite a number of educational facilities have been acquired. Besides, Free and Compulsory Education is on in some states, prominent among which is our state, Akwa Ibom.

However, much more is yet to be done because:

1. Unemployment rate is still very high;
2. Poverty level is not abated;
3. School curricula and implementation still have numerous problems;
4. Poor performances in external examinations still persist;
5. Examination malpractice is in the increase.

#### **D. Developing entrepreneurial skills using education.**

To tackle especially the problems of high unemployment rate as well as high poverty index, there should be deliberate emphasis on the development of entrepreneurial skills. This can be done through Education, precisely entrepreneurial education. This form of education provides occupational survival skills (Nelson and Leach, 1981). School programmes are expected to equip learners with skills capable of making them self-reliant as well as preparing for job markets and hence able to face the challenges ahead.

#### **Some of the ways of achieving this include:**

- (i) Not over emphasizing formal education and certification beyond the post primary level. Non-formal education should be encouraged and emphasized.

- (ii) Emphasis should be rekindled on the acquisition of laboratory skills which are basic prerequisite for entrepreneurial skills development. This underscores the need for the provision of laboratory facilities and their proper utilization at all levels. Teachers should be discouraged from embarking on group practical except for purposeful collaborative work. Students should handle the equipment individually and have laboratory skills developed in them. Teachers should avoid a cook-book practical work in science as this does not help in the development of reflective thinking, critical mind and creativity in the learner.
- (iii) Although much has been done to the curricula of various subjects at the post primary level, very little is done at the tertiary level. Single disciplines that do not guarantee job employment should be phased out. Subjects should be integrated with the needs of industries and establishments.
- (iv) Teachers should be trained, re-trained frequently and monitored to ensure effective implementation of the curriculum.
- (v) There should be more of Vocational, Science and Technology Education.
- (vi) Entrepreneurial skills development should be incorporated into school curricula at all levels of education. No one should be allowed to graduate who has not acquired some particular skills.
- (vii) Government and private sectors should be partners in developing education and entrepreneurial skills in the citizens.

Whatever argument exists, the private proprietors of schools should be encouraged financially and infrastructurally. This is because it is the responsibility of government to educate its citizens. It is a well-known fact that government at all levels does not have sufficient institutions to make education accessible to all citizens. For instance, there are only 40 federal universities, 38 universities owned by states and 51 private universities in Nigeria, giving a total of 129 universities as against millions of applicants looking for admission every year. In the University of Uyo, for instance, in the last admission exercise, over 40,000 candidates indicated

interest to study in the university, but only about 4,000 (10%) were admitted. For the sake of quality, no university is allowed to exceed the carrying capacity. So private institutions accredited by NUC and other related bodies are very useful.

It is worth noting that graduates from such institutions will also return to serve the government establishment and parastatals. While government may not declare free education to include those in the private Secondary School for some obvious reasons, some forms of assistance should be given Akwa Ibom indigenes and the proprietors of those institutions.

### Conclusion

The developmental issues of the 21<sup>st</sup> century which requires skills and competencies for survival make it imperative for our education system to incorporate the development of entrepreneurial skills into the various curricula at all levels of education. This should be aggressively and honestly pursued. Training someone on a particular skill is better than giving out money to start a business. Many of those who had gotten such monies have diverted and misappropriated them. Those who are involved in this training and are handling money for the training should be sincere and honest and should be effectively monitored.

In conclusion, I want to say that the perennial problem of unemployment and high poverty index cannot be solved without the development of entrepreneurial skills. And the most effective way of doing this is through education at all levels. There should be a synergy among industries, government and the private sector to provide the type of quality education that can produce these skills.

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