**A CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION IN NIGERIA**

**BY**

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**Abstract**

*The aim of this paper is to present a curriculum framework developed for entrepreneurship education in Nigeria. This proposed curriculum is based on the premise that every learner needs to acquire the knowledge and skills of entrepreneurship. The paper presents strategies for fitting this entrepreneurial education curriculum into school organization at all levels of education. To ensure the effective implementation of entrepreneurial education curriculum, this paper recommends among other things that entrepreneurship education as a general course across all levels of education should be made a policy issue in Nigeria.*

**INTRODUCTION**

After going through the process of formal or non formal education the learner is expected to be able to contribute effectively to life activities in the society. This effective contribution includes the learner’s ability to be gainfully employed in one job or the other.

At the introduction of Western Education in Nigeria, emphasis was on the acquisition of the 3Rs (reading, writing and arithmetic) with the overarching aim of preparing the learner for “white collar” job or for employment by the missionaries or colonial government. The national Curriculum Conference of 1969 resulted among other things in increase in the number of subjects studied in schools with the aim of making Education more relevant to the Nigerian society and also for unifying the educational services in the different regions. This conference gave rise to the National Policy on Education (NPE, 1977) which has since been reviewed in 2004 and 2007. Despite all these reviews of the NPE and the fact that more Nigerians are acquiring formal education at the present time than at independence it appears the country is facing a different problem. This is the fact that before and immediately after successfully completing formal education even at university level, the recipient or graduate is not sure of getting a job. With not less than 90 universities in the country, the number of graduates joining the labour market every year far surpasses the limited employment opportunities available at Government agencies as well as at corporate organizations and industries. Besides, the global economic crisis which has crippled businesses has made it more difficult for people to find employment.

In fact the skyrocketing rate of unemployment in Nigeria is disturbing. In 1992, the World Bank put the Nigerian unemployment rate at 28%. In April 2009, during the discussion of a panel of experts on youth and employment in Washington, the Director of the National Planning Commission of Nigeria, Omotoso (The World Bank, 2009) put the rate of youth unemployment in Nigeria at between 60 to 70 percent. Omotoso (2009) lamented that only 10 percent of graduates can be absorbed in the Nigerian Labour Market. This is disastrous. There is no gain saying the fact that this high rate of unemployment must have contributed to a large extent to the high rate of crime which has graduated in this country from social disturbances and armed robbery attacks, to kidnapping. It appears that these unemployed youths are taking it back on a society that has failed to give them a proper sense of direction through sound education. Aladekomo (2009) maintained that “Sound education which equips students to challenge the status quo and proffer better alternatives is the way out of the present economic quagmire” (p. 31). In this regard, Omotoso (The World Bank, 2009) reported that among the strategies being adopted by Nigeria to redress the ugly situation was reformation of the education sector. However, mere reformation of the education sector cannot result in job creation.

Obanya (2009) opined that:

The solution is not increased vocalization of education, as is wrongly being canvassed, but a return to the basics. This means returning to real goals of education, which is the cultivation of human talent and creative/imaginative potentials through all round development. (p. 43).

Obanya insisted that for Nigeria to “respond to the changing needs of the world of work (not necessarily the world of direct paid employment”, formal and non formal education in the country should be geared towards inculcating in learners the generic skills of knowledge, communication, adaptability, creativity, team spirit, literacy, information and communication technology (ICT) fluency and lifelong learning. These generic skills are necessary for effective life in the present ICT – dominated world. They are not job specific. Their acquisition calls for the type of general education found in entrepreneurship. That is, the type of education that equips the learner with the knowledge and skills to desire, seek, recognize and utilize available opportunity to do something new to create wealth for self and others and consequently contribute effectively to the society in this era of global economic crisis.

The remaining part of this paper reviews salient elements in entrepreneurship education and presents a curriculum framework for the integration of entrepreneurship education into basic, secondary and tertiary education levels in Nigeria.

**ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION**

Entrepreneurship education is not synonymous with vocational education nor does it mean the same thing as business education. Over the years people have erroneously linked entrepreneurship education with these two areas of study. Consequently a student who would like to be an entrepreneur was advised to offer courses in any of those two areas of study. Entrepreneurship education is in fact the fundamental aim of education. It is the acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitude to enable the learner apprehend life challenges in whatever form and take decisive steps to realize new trends and opportunities for meeting those challenges in all aspects of human life. Entrepreneurship education is indeed a critical resource for whole life education.

What distinguishes entrepreneurship education from other forms of education is its emphasis on realization of opportunity. These opportunities can be realized through starting a business, introducing new products or ideas or through doing something in a different way with the aim of achieving goals. It is in this regard that the European Commission (2007) presents entrepreneurship as “an individual’s ability to turn ideas into action” (p. 1). UMSOBOMVU (2002) affirmed that apart from using the word entrepreneurship to refer to innovative business that the term is also associated with “individuals who create or seize business opportunities and pursue them without regard to resources under their control. They build something from practically nothing and usually reinvest earnings to expand their enterprise or to create new enterprises” (p. 19).

Entrepreneurship is often associated with such words and phrases as innovative, self motivated, confident, creative, dynamic, resourceful, ingenious, endurance, risk daring, pressure management ability and willingness to accept both positive and negative results of life ventures. These are some of the entrepreneurial skills and capacities that learners are expected to acquire through entrepreneurship education. Other entrepreneurial skills are verbal and non verbal expression skills, problem solving skills, team skills, as well as listening and empathy skills. Among the entrepreneurial attitude competences mentioned by Karmelic (2009) are self-awareness and self-confidence, personal responsibilities, flexibility and adaptability, orientation to opportunity, pro-activity and persistence.

Entrepreneurial attitude competences are “dedication to duty and willingness to accept positive as well as negative results of business ventures” (Akudolu, 2000, p. 30). These are some of the skills and attitude competences that learners need to acquire. How can entrepreneurship education be presented to learners to ensure the acquisition of these knowledge, skills and attitude competences? What type of curriculum should be developed and implemented in this regard? The remaining part of this paper presents a proposed curriculum framework for entrepreneurship education.

**ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION CURRICULUM (EEC)**

Curriculum is concerned with the why, what and how of instruction. In other words, it is concerned with the goals and objectives of instruction, the content, organization and evaluation. These curriculum elements form the beacon for the development and implementation of entrepreneurship curriculum. This should constitute a core curriculum for every learner at all levels of education in Nigeria. The Consortium for Entrepreneurship Education (2004) maintained that it is a lifelong learning process starting from elementary level to other levels of education and spanning to adult education. Brown (2000) among other educationists shared this view and opined that “the principles of entrepreneurship are increasingly considered valuable for students at all levels” (p. 3). In this regard, all students at all levels of education in member States of the European Union such as United Kingdom, Cyprus, Ireland, Slovenia etc are exposed to entrepreneurial education (European Commission, 2007). There is no doubt that the effective implementation of entrepreneurship education curriculum will help learners in Nigeria to develop entrepreneurial capacities and the ability to be self-reliant and self-employed.

**The Goal and Objectives of Entrepreneurship Education.**

**Goal:** The major goal of entrepreneurship education is to promote creativity, innovation and self-employment among the citizens through the inculcation of entrepreneurial knowledge, competences and attitudes in the learners. Akudolu (2001) affirms that “the goal of entrepreneurship education is for learners to acquire entrepreneurial capacities and skills that will make them to be self-reliant and self-employed” (p. 30). Entrepreneurial capacities include the ability to take risks, create opportunities and resources, manifest undaunted commitment to a goal, cope with change and generally act with entrepreneurial mindset.

To achieve the major goal of entrepreneurship education there is need to ensure that instructional activities are directed towards the achievement of the following specific objectives.

**Specific Objectives**

Learners who have gone through the curriculum should be expected to be able to:

1. Demonstrate awareness about entrepreneurship.
2. Create entrepreneurial ventures.
3. Demonstrate ability to act entrepreneurially in different aspects of life.
4. Manifest positive attitude towards changes in life endeavors.
5. Demonstrate self-worth and self-reliance irrespective of daunting challenges.
6. Analyze their strengths and weaknesses and be able to take advantage of their strengths while making effort to overcome the identified weaknesses.
7. Recognize their entrepreneurial interests and capability.
8. Demonstrate self-management and take responsibility for themselves and their activities.
9. Engage in lifelong learning so as to manage and enjoy innovations.
10. Identify and exploit business opportunities.

Among the specific objectives of entrepreneurial education mentioned by Obanya (2008:1) are:

1. Demonstrate a good grasp of society – its functions, its economic demands etc.
2. Recognize socio-economic opportunities in environment.
3. Acquire and deploy the skills necessary for turning opportunities into viable ventures. (This includes developing enterprise plans, mobilizing and managing resources etc.).

These objectives can be achieved at different levels of education. For instance, the objective of developing awareness can be achieved at the basic level of education. Lesko (2010) shares this view and maintains that for pupils below the age of 14, “awareness should be raised of the benefits of basic entrepreneurship learning to society at large and to learners themselves, even at the early stages of education” (p. 2). Lesko goes on to say that for pupils from age of 14, the objectives of entrepreneurship education should be to “raise students’ awareness of self-employment and entrepreneurship as options for their future career.”

**Content**

Entrepreneurship education is based on personality traits. It is a way of behavior and in this regard belongs to the affective domain of instructional process. Consequently, the content is not textbook or document – based. Rather the issues in the content of entrepreneurship education are found in the following three dimensions of human behavior:

1. Attitudes and values
2. Knowledge
3. Skills

1. **Attitudes and values dimension:**

Finland Ministry of Education (2009) quotes the Commission of the European Communities as stating that:

An entrepreneurial attitude is characterized by initiative, pro-activity, independence and innovation in personal and social life, as much as at work. It also includes motivation and determination to meet objectives, whether personal goals or aims held in common with others, and/or at work. (p. 27).

In this regard, the attitude and values dimension of entrepreneurship education covers the demonstration of:

1. Interest and enthusiasm
2. Hard work and perseverance
3. Orientation to change
4. Intra-personal skills (knowledge of self).
5. Positive disposition to lifelong learning
6. Initiative
7. Creative thinking

2. **Knowledge Dimension**

The knowledge dimension includes

1. Understanding of concepts and processes in entrepreneurship.
2. Understanding and manifestation of appropriate personal traits/behaviours for successful entrepreneurial performance.
3. Understanding and application of concepts and strategies for effective communication.
4. Understanding and application of basic economics, management and accounting knowledge.

3 **Skills Dimension**

The Consortium for Entrepreneurship Education (CEE-2004) categorized the learning content of entrepreneurial education into Entrepreneurial skills and Ready skills. The entrepreneurial skills comprise the themes of entrepreneurial processes and entrepreneurial traits/behaviours. The ready skills comprise the themes of business foundations, communications and interpersonal skills, digital skills, economics, financial literacy, professional development, financial management, information management, marketing management, operations management, risk management, and strategic management. In fact, the skills dimension is concerned with specialized skill in any area of human endeavour. Consequently, Anyakoha (1997) classified entrepreneurial skills into personality skills and management related skills. Entrepreneurship education should equip learners with skills not only for understanding their capabilities but also for coping with different situations in life.

**ORGANIZATION OF CONTENT AND LEARNING EXPERIENCES**

For the achievement of goal and objectives of entrepreneurial education, the strategies for organizing content and learning experiences should be learner-centered. In this regard effort should be made to help the learner understand the entrepreneurial dimension of the learning content. While making a case for the adoption of special methodology for entrepreneurship education, Anowor (2001) argues that “Since the underlying ingredient is to be located in the affective domain of the human mind, only learning experiences which touch that attitudinal abode will produce the desired outcome. (p. 7).

Among the commonly adopted instructional strategies for entrepreneurship education are group work, role play, projects, games and simulations, field visits, traineeship, mentoring, brainstorming, exchange visits and other forms of practical and learner-driven methodology. Effort should be made to introduce creativity, risk taking and other entrepreneurial traits into any entrepreneurship instructional strategy.

Instructional methods should be entrepreneurship-driven. The implementation of entrepreneurship curriculum as proposed in this paper involves virtually no lectures. Instruction is almost totally project-oriented (learning by doing). Effort is made to encourage self-directed learning. Creativity is built into every student – activity so as to challenge learners to think out of the box. Emphasis is on experiential learning, interactive learning and cooperative learning. It is in this regard that the Finland Ministry of Education (2009) observes that:

The learning environment in entrepreneurship education gives responsibility to learners, encourages them to do things themselves, guides them towards recognizing opportunities and seizing them, bolsters insightful and inventive learning, reinforces learners’ confidence in their capabilities, gives scope for risk-taking and guides towards goal-oriented collaboration with others. (p. 17).

Case study is another entrepreneurship learning strategy that should be used in Nigerian schools. Above all, practical and learner – driven methodology should be used and this includes brainstorming, role plays, varied activities, role models and mentoring as well as study tours and exchange. Items in the attitude and values dimension should also be integrated into teaching-learning activities at different levels of education.

School/world of work collaboration is another important entrepreneurship education instructional strategy. With this learning strategy, learners are given the opportunity to have a practical experience of what happens in the society or in the world of work. Consequently learners are exposed to entrepreneurship-in-practice through the use of life case studies and testimonies of life practitioners as well as actively working with entrepreneurs through the immersion method. The immersion periods are interspersed with school-based learning. Each student is assigned to an entrepreneur for about three months (depending on institutional arrangement) at the end of which the student submits a report to his/her supervisor.

The teacher’s role in the implementation of entrepreneurship education as proposed in this paper changes from that of disseminator of knowledge to that of an organizer, planner, motivator, counselor or coach. The teacher spends time listening to and observing the learner. He/she engages the learner in constructive feedback.

**FITTING ENTREPRENEURIAL EDUCATION INTO SCHOOL ORGANIZATION AT ALL LEVELS**

As already stated, entrepreneurship education should be a school-wide programme covering basic education through tertiary education. The programme can fit into any of the various school programmes as follows:

1. **Basic Education:** Entrepreneurship education should be in-built into all school activities. Emphasis is on the attitudes and values dimension as well as on basic lifelong learning skills. All basic education teachers are expected to use entrepreneurship – driven methodology as already presented in this paper in teaching all school subjects. Though there is no formal lecture on entrepreneurship at this level of education, teachers use every opportunity to develop in the learners, positive attitude towards entrepreneurship. Emphasis is on developing basic entrepreneurship awareness in the learners.
2. **Senior Secondary Education:** At this level, there is no formal lecture but through the systematic use of entrepreneurship-driven methodology, students are exposed to the knowledge and skills dimensions of entrepreneurship education across the curriculum. Fundamental issues in attitude and values dimension are integrated not only into all subjects and learning activities but also into guidance and counseling activities presented to students. Emphasis is on creating entrepreneurship environment.
3. **Tertiary Education:** At this level of education, all instructional activities take place in a strategically planned entrepreneurship environment. Also entrepreneurship education is a compulsory course offered by all the students. The course is taught in creative/non-conventional ways. The course title should show the goal of this type of course, e.g. TURNING YOUR TALENTS INTO LIFE OPPORTUNITIES OR TAKING FULL ADVANTAGE OF YOUR TALENTS. Figure 1 shows the proposed entrepreneurship education curriculum.

**FIG. 1**

**ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| BASIC EDUCATION | POST BASIC EDUCATION | TERTIARY EDUCATION |
| EE Learning Environment | EE Learning Environment | EE Learning Environment |
|  |  | EE General Studies Course |
| EE Awareness | EE Awareness and Appreciation | EE Knowledge, Skills and Capacity |

EE stands for entrepreneurship education

**Conclusions**

Effective implementation of entrepreneurship curriculum in Nigeria requires a transformation of Nigerians’ educational ideology. The education wave has moved from elite education to mass education; from exam – oriented to all-round-development and from employment – oriented to entrepreneurship oriented education. Effective implementation of curriculum for entrepreneurship education in Nigeria will result in the entrepreneurization of learning environment in the country and consequently in the development of confident, empowered, motivated students and innovative employees in the country. To achieve these aims, the following recommendations are made:

1. Entrepreneurship education as general education across all levels of education should be made a policy issue.
2. Entrepreneurship education should be a general course in every tertiary institution in Nigeria.
3. Practicing teachers at all levels of education should undergo professional training through seminars, workshops and other in-service training to acquire knowledge and skills in the adoption of entrepreneurship – driven instructional methodology.
4. Dimensions of entrepreneurship should be a component of teacher preparation curricular.
5. Federal and State Ministries of Education should build resource centres and networks for exchange of good practice.
6. School administrators should establish linkages with entrepreneurs.

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