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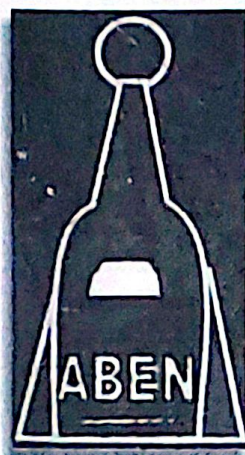
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PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES OF ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILL ACQUISITION IN THE TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS

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Abstract

It is no longer news that the rate of unemployment is alarming and graduates roam about the streets looking for white-collar jobs in Nigeria. This paper focuses on the opportunity and the challenges of acquiring entrepreneurial skills in tertiary institutions in this country. Three Research Questions were formulated and the researchers designed a questionnaire tagged Entrepreneurial Opportunities and Challenges in Tertiary Institutions (EOCTI) which was used to obtain data. The sample consists of 100 students drawn from five (5) institutions in Ogun State of Nigeria. The random sampling technique was used to select 20 students from each of the five institutions in the State. Data collected were analysed using simple percentage frequency. The result revealed that entrepreneurial skill acquisition will improve self-reliance. It will develop leaders that will be shaped and re-shaped to meet up with the changes in the global economy and it will also improve upon the nation's industries to have buoyant national Gross Domestic Products (GDP). It was also revealed that there was inadequate knowledge of entrepreneurship education in some of the tertiary institutions and also poor funding for new and young entrepreneurs. The paper therefore recommends that entrepreneurship education should be included in the curriculum of tertiary institutions and should be made open to all disciplines.

Key Words: Opportunities, Challenges, Entrepreneurial Skills and Tertiary Institutions

Introduction

In a global world characterized by dynamic change, complexity and uncertainty our tertiary institutions face numerous challenges. Entrepreneurial Skill is important for

economic growth and development in the area of poverty alleviation, employment generation and economic vitality has made entrepreneurship education more relevant in developing economies in this century. The increasing national and international competition to win students scientists' research funds and other source of income as well as rankings and reputation is of particular interest. Academics place much emphasis on teaching, researching and publishing and probably community development (George, Jain and Maltarich, 2005). They have come to regard their roles as traditional duties. Entrepreneurship has much to do with opportunity identification, combining of resources, establishing and running an enterprise for profit making or social services. Entrepreneurship involves issues that deal with creativity, commercialization and profitability.

It is important to equip undergraduates in tertiary with the necessary entrepreneurial skills that will enable them to be self-employed and self-reliant after the completion of their programmes. These changes demand from tertiary institutions an entrepreneurial orientation with increasing market orientation and a stronger self-reliance which will be associated with considerable opportunities and also risks. Nigeria is one of the poor countries of the world because sizeable proportions (about 54%) of the populace live in extreme poverty, on less than one dollar per day (CBN, 2005-2007 (draft) report in Oriola, 2009). The development of entrepreneurial skills in Nigeria is not, without some reservations. Although Nigeria is seen as a nation which has developed in the area of private enterprises compared to other sub-Sahara African countries. Nigeria tertiary institutions should make entrepreneurial development studies a compulsory course for all Nigeria students. Lecturers and Instructors also need to be well equipped with the theoretical and practical aspect of the course, because one cannot give what he or she does not have. For the students to be well equipped with entrepreneurial skills, the theoretical and practical aspect of entrepreneurship must be effectively communicated to them.

Definition of Entrepreneurship Education

Entrepreneurship refers to an individual's ability to turn ideas into action. It includes creativity, innovation and taking calculated risk, as well as the ability to plan and manage projects in order to achieve objectives. This supports everyone in day-to-day life at home and in society; make employees more aware of the context of their work and better able to seize opportunities, and provide a foundation for entrepreneurs establishing a social or commercial activity (European Commission, 2008).

Entrepreneurship education attempts to provide the knowledge and learning experiences to help students develop the skills associated with starting a business venture. These include visioning, leading, communicating, listening, problem solving, managing change, networking, negotiating, and team building (Sahlman and Stevenson, 1992).

The World Economic Forum (2009) posited that entrepreneurship education is critical for developing entrepreneurial skills, attitudes and behaviours that are the basis for economic growth. They went further to say that access and exposure to

entrepreneurship within educational systems at all levels are important as they are the outreach to target audiences outside traditional educational systems. Furthermore, they opined that entrepreneurship education provides a mix of experiential learning, skill building and, most importantly, mindset shift. Certainly, they say that the earlier more widespread the exposure to entrepreneurship and innovation, the more likely students will become entrepreneurial, in one form or another, at some stage in their lives.

While buttressing the above, they quoted Drucker (1985) who says that most of what you hear about entrepreneurship is all wrong. It is not magic; it is not mysterious; and it has nothing to do with genes. It is a discipline that can be learned. Therefore, entrepreneurship education can help promote an entrepreneurial and innovative culture by changing mindsets and providing the necessary skills. Schools systems have traditionally focused on providing basic skills and ensuring students to secure future jobs - not on teaching students to become entrepreneurs. Meanwhile globalization, the rapid development of technology and the lower cost of travel have changed the nature of work. It is no longer enough to train students for a career. Schools and universities must prepare student to work in a dynamic, rapid changing entrepreneurial and global environment.

The Objectives of the Paper

This paper therefore aimed at achieving the following objectives:

- i. To identify, if there is any opportunity of acquiring entrepreneurial skills in tertiary institutions.
- ii. To identify the challenges of acquiring entrepreneurial skills in tertiary institutions.

Statement of the Problem

To be fully prepared for entrepreneurship, individuals must look outward in order to interact with and learn about the wider environment and recognize fully the opportunities and challenges that confront them. It is also important for them to know how to make their business grow and successful. A critical look around will show that many of our young graduates are roaming about the streets without jobs. International Labour Organisation report (1999) revealed that only a minority of countries, Nigeria inclusive, is providing jobs to absorb new entrants into the labour markets. The scenario is complicated with the fact that a large number of Nigerian graduates look for paid employment in the public sector and large scale enterprises that are presently downsizing, right-sizing or folding-up completely. The unemployment situation and fact that graduates are not equipped with necessary skills, knowledge and attitude to be self reliant make it alarming and highly frustrating to the graduates. Therefore, this paper was directed towards acquiring entrepreneurial skills opportunities and challenges in our tertiary institutions.

Research Questions

To achieve the objects of this study, the following research questions were formulated.

- i. Does entrepreneurial skill pose opportunities for the graduates?
- ii. Are there challenges being faced in acquiring entrepreneurial skill by tertiary institutions?
- iii. Is there any relationship between entrepreneurial education and entrepreneurial skills?

Methodology

Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The sample consisted of 100 students drawn from five tertiary institutions from Ogun State, namely; Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye; Tai-Solarin University of Education, Ijebu ode; The Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro; Moshood Abiola Polytechnic, Abeokuta and Federal College of Education, Osiele, Abeokuta. The random sampling technique was used to select a total of 20 students consisting of all disciplines from each of the institutions. A self-designed questionnaire titled Entrepreneurial Opportunities and Challenges in Tertiary Institutions (EOCTI) was used to obtain data. The instrument was administered to the respondents personally by the researchers through the assistance of some students in each of the institutions. The research questions were answered after analysis using simple percentages.

Analysis of Data

Research Question One: Does entrepreneurial skills pose opportunities fore graduates?

Table 1

Response	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Agree	95	95
Disagree	-	-
Undecided	5	5
Total	100	100

Table 1 revealed that 95% of the respondents were in favour of the research question, 5% were neutral and none were against. This means that acquisition of entrepreneurial skills pose great opportunities for the graduates.

Research Question Two: Are there challenges being faced in acquiring entrepreneurial skill by tertiary institution?

Table 2

Response	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Agree	100	100
Disagree	-	-
Undecided	-	-
Total	100	100

The above table revealed that all the respondents were in support of the research question. This implies that the respondents strongly believed that tertiary institutions faced a lot of challenges on the implementation.

Research Question Three: Is there any relationship between entrepreneurial education and entrepreneurial skills?

Table 3

Response	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Agree	75	75
Disagree	20	20
Undecided	5	5
Total	100	100

Table 3 above showed that 75% of the respondents agreed with the research question, 20% disagree and 5% were neutral. This implies that the majority of the respondents believed that there is a great relationship between entrepreneurial education and entrepreneurial skills.

Discussion of Findings

Research Questions:

1. Does entrepreneurial skill pose opportunities to the graduates?

Based on the responses from the respondents, the highest 95% of the respondents favoured the research question. This is so because they believed that the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills give graduates the opportunity of running their own business enterprise instead of looking for white-collar jobs that are scarce to come by. Also, it allows graduates with opportunities to explore and fulfil their potentials. That is, preparing today's students for success and eventual leadership in the new global marketplace is the most important responsibility in education today. Entrepreneurship education is an important tool to achieving these objectives (and) should be universally available to provide all students with opportunities to explore and fulfil their potential (World Economic Forum, 2009).

2. Are there challenges being faced in acquiring entrepreneurial skill by tertiary institutions?

The data collected showed that 100% of the respondents agreed that there are challenges being faced in acquiring entrepreneurial skill by tertiary institutions. They were of the opinion that lack of sustained funding pose a great challenge on the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills. This is in line with Gibb and Hannon (2006) view that in the future many institution of higher education will be increasingly confronted with new challenges, such as recognizing and exploiting opportunities for cultivating a competitive profile, utilizing resources more effectively and efficiently, and improving

learning processes for themselves and their stakeholders. In light of these dynamic developments and challenges there exists a broad consensus that universities have to become more entrepreneurial.

3. Are there any relationship between entrepreneurial education and entrepreneurial skills?

The result indicated that majority of the respondents agreed with the research question as 75% of them were in support, 20% were against and 5% were neutral. The respondents believed that there is relationship between entrepreneurial education and entrepreneurial skills because business enterprises are better managed by skilled entrepreneurs than unskilled ones. The skilled entrepreneurs exhibit good leadership abilities to convert ideas, opportunities into competitive profiles and utilizing resources to maximize profits.

Conclusion

Entrepreneurial education and entrepreneurial skill acquisition opportunities have added a new dimension to knowledge for job creation. The result of this study showed that acquisition of entrepreneurial skills can be used to reduce the number of job seekers that have been flooding the labour market as a result of increase in number of students graduating from higher institutions year by year without corresponding job opportunities to accommodate them. It also revealed that entrepreneurial skills acquisition will improve self-reliance and develop leaders that will be shaped and re-shaped to meet up with changes in the global economy and as well improve upon the nation's industries to have a buoyant national Gross Domestic Product (GDP)

Besides the opportunities, the study also revealed that the challenges of inadequate funding and lack of enabling environment for entrepreneurial skill development such as social-political influences on ventures like government policies i.e. legislation, taxation and people's general norms.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and the conclusions drawn from the study, the following recommendations are proffered:

1. Students should avail themselves of the opportunities embedded in entrepreneurial skill acquisition to make them to be self-reliant.
2. Government should address the issue of inadequate funding of tertiary institutions by funding these institutions adequately to enable them meet with their obligations to students.
3. The institution authorities should attend to the challenge of enabling environment by providing the infrastructures, equipment and adequate manpower needed to train students on entrepreneurial skill development.
4. Entrepreneurship education should be included in the curriculum of tertiary institutions and should be made open to all disciplines.



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