

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT) EQUIPMENT: A TOOL FOR ENTREPRENEURIAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE NIGERIAN STUDENTS IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS

BY

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ABSTRACT

At the tertiary level of education, entrepreneurship education is perceived not only as a career opportunity but as a way of upgrading a young person's abilities to succeed as an employee as well as an entrepreneur. The implication therefore is that the overall purpose of entrepreneurship education is the development of expertise as an entrepreneur. It is the process of providing individuals with the ability to recognize business opportunities, the insight, the zeal, the knowledge, the courage and skills to act on them. The entrepreneurship spirit is a pre-requisite to an entrepreneurial society and culture. This spirit is required for the overall economic growth of any nation especially developing ones like Nigeria. This study seeks to examine Information and Communication Technology (ICT) equipment as a tool for entrepreneurial development of the Nigerian youths in tertiary institutions.

KEYWORDS: Entrepreneurship education, Information and Communication Technology (ICT), tertiary institutions

Introduction

Nowadays, our society has become more complex and demanding, especially considering the younger generation and their employment opportunities. Many young people today may finish school but hardly find a job to do in spite of their education, qualification and commitment. In some cases, the best opportunity for them might be creation of their own enterprises. But, on the other hand, setting up one's own business might not be so easy. As stated by Onwuka & Chika, (2006), to realize such solution successfully, special abilities, knowledge and skills, as well as work experience, are needed. Work experience might be acquired through part time jobs or other kinds of flexible work opportunities; on the other hand, it is not so easy to acquire entrepreneurial knowledge and skills.

According to Wickham (2004), entrepreneurship was originated in France during the seventeenth century. In Nigeria, entrepreneurship development existed even before the coming of the colonial masters as most people in the rural and urban communities had started transacting businesses and maximizing profit in their own little ways without calling it entrepreneurship.

The most common source of such knowledge might be a school, but not all of the schools offer such knowledge. There are also some other alternatives – for example, young people can even find a good counselor, who can help them to develop their own business idea and give them some basic entrepreneurial skills. It is worrisome that many youths are yet to realize and appreciate these facts. They lack willingness for entrepreneurship. That is why Suleiman, (2006), stated that entrepreneurship is the willingness and ability of an individual to seek for investment opportunities, to establish and to run an enterprise successfully. In the words of Dangote as stated by Odjegba (2005), entrepreneurship is built on vision, focus and determination.

Entrepreneurship education involves learning of a variety of business related competencies such as improvements of decision-making skills or skills to access information, and using different ICT tools for creating a better working space (DeFaoite et. al. 2003).

Statement of the Problem

The quality of graduates from many tertiary institutions today is hotly debated. It is a question of particular concern for graduates who are seeking employment, and to employers who consider hiring them. It has been the concern of many employers over poor preparation of graduates for work and therefore has strong reason for not giving them the needed job. Equally, students are not prepared enough to fit into the world of entrepreneurship as there may be lack of information and communication technology equipments. In some cases the equipment may be there but students may not be allowed enough access to the equipment for effective utilization. When this happens the opportunity for entrepreneurial development may not be guaranteed. They believe that academic standards have fallen considerably over the past decade and that a university degree or a polytechnic diploma is no longer a guarantee for communication skills or technical competence. This problem has cut across all disciplines including students prepared to become competent and success-oriented-workers. It is quite obvious that in spite of the large mismatch that exists between outputs of higher institutions of learning and labor market demand not much effort has been made by government, school owners and researchers to find out how to fill this gap. It is on this ground that this study is carried out to assess information and communication technology (ICT) equipment as a tool for entrepreneurial development of the Nigerian youths in tertiary institutions.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine Information and communication technology (ICT) equipment as a tool for entrepreneurial development of the Nigerian youths in tertiary institutions, while the specific objectives are as follows:

1. To examine the extent to which students are exposed to entrepreneurial development in the institutions of higher learning.
2. To assess the challenges faced by the school in their quest for entrepreneurial development of the students.

Research questions

The following research questions are deemed necessary:

1. What is the extent of to which students are exposed to entrepreneurial development in institutions of higher learning?
2. What are the challenges faced by the school in their quest for entrepreneurial development of the students?

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Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses research questions will be tested:

1. There is no significant relationship between availability of ICT equipment and entrepreneurial development of students of the institutions of higher learning in Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Entrepreneurship Education

Shai (2009) came out with a three components categorization of Entrepreneurship Education curriculum considered comprehensive enough to equip the products of the school system with the needed skills and capacities of a future life.

□ **Personal Development** – it should build confidence, motivate progress, strengthen the entrepreneurial mindset, foster a desire to achieve and inspire action.

□ **Business Development** – Technical, financial literacy and skills to engage in self employment and in entrepreneurship that can lead to self-improvement. This will include the expected business and functional curricula.

□ **Entrepreneurial skills development** – it should provide training in social skills, networking, creative problem-solving, opportunity seeking, interviewing, presentations, group leadership, community cooperation, seeking dealing with bureaucracy, local cultural norm and how they affect business, etc. Every entrepreneurship curriculum must have the above as its integral elements so as to provide the students with the cherished skills and capacities that can make them self sufficient and highly productive in the society.

THE BENEFITS OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION

The study of entrepreneurial education has never been as important as it is today when the world is confronted with big challenges that extend well beyond the global economy. It has also been spurred by the realization of the extent to which the phenomenon serves as a key factor in economic development. Some of the profound benefits of entrepreneurship education include the following:

1. Improving Academic Performance of Students

As had earlier been established, entrepreneurship education goes beyond teachings on how to operate a business but extends to encouraging creative thinking and promotion of a good spirit of self worth and accountability. This shows that the phenomenon keeps persons (especially youths) who for any reason lack interest in the traditional school teaching committed to their work. Such persons include those gifted or talented, physically challenged or financially challenged. Through entrepreneurship education which emphasizes on other aspects of academics, including self worth, such persons are motivated and enabled to work towards realization of their dreams. With such motivation, they perform better in their academics and graduate from school. Arguing along this line, Charney and Libecap (2003) observed that entrepreneurship is an important educational innovation that provides impetus to learning about learning.

2. Enhancing Performance and quality of Schools

By achieving improved performance of children the quality of schools and their general performance are also improved. This rests on the fact that students who enroll into schools rather than being truants and dropouts are enabled to make success through entrepreneurship. Being thus enabled to be useful to themselves, they also impact on the grading and quality of the schools.

3. Aids the Realization of Goals of Education

The target of education across nations today is the programme of inclusive education. The place of entrepreneurship education in the realization of this programme cannot be over-emphasized. As established earlier, entrepreneurship education motivates students and sustains their interest, their individual problems and challenges notwithstanding. As a result, they develop great interest in school subjects and consequently benefit from education

4. Increasing Economic Competitiveness

In the world today, especially in the face of the global economic meltdown, the establishment of industries capable of creating jobs and wealth has come to be an index and cornerstone for the future economic growth of any nation. Only persons who are greatly skilled in entrepreneurship can establish and sustain such industries. The benefit of entrepreneurship in this area therefore cannot be over-emphasized. This stems from the fact that contrary to conventional wisdom that people are born entrepreneurs, research has shown that this is not so. As observed by Gottlieb and Ross (1997), entrepreneurs are made and not born, and elements of entrepreneurship can be taught and learnt. The expansion of training and educational opportunities for desiring entrepreneurs therefore affords them benefits that would enhance their level of economic competitiveness.

5. New Programme of Study

Entrepreneurship education is also beneficial to mankind as it provides a new programme of learning for research and teaching. Entrepreneurship education additionally offers more practical teachings in acquisition of skills relevant to the needs of the changing environment. It is for these reasons that demand for entrepreneurship education by youths has been accelerated. Writing on this, Cooper, Bottomley and Gordon, (2004), asserted that the rise of programmes in entrepreneurship education has been fuelled by unprecedented student demand as students look for a style of business education that will provide them with transferable skills. This corroborates the earlier finding of Porter (1994) that entrepreneurial education emphasizes imagination, creativity and risk-taking in business whereas traditional business schools tend to over-emphasize quantitative and corporate techniques at the expense of more creative skills.

6. Poverty Alleviation and Economic Growth

Entrepreneurship empowers people to take advantage of opportunities for wealth creation, enthrones a system of incentives that rewards handwork, discourages, condemns and punishes corruption. By so doing, the people especially youths are enabled to create opportunities for employment and consequently income. The generation of income leads to savings and investment including the establishment of industries and companies which are key factors or indices of economic growth.

THE CHALLENGES OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

Despite the profound benefits of entrepreneurship education, it is still not fully blown in Nigeria. The problems that hinder the development of entrepreneurship education in Nigeria include the following:

1. Lack of Finance

There is limited fund and this hinders teachings in practical terms for entrepreneurial education; for financing start ups and expansion of business ventures in order to produce successful entrepreneurs. These funds could come from internal sources like personal savings, financial support from friends, relations, traditional co-operative groups and societies, or externally from institutions like banks, government agencies and nongovernmental organizations.

These sources do not guarantee funds for youth start-up and business expansion, for the following reasons. The funds from internal sources are largely inadequate due to high poverty level. The graduates have little or nothing on themselves. On the other hand, accessing funds from external sources is difficult owing to demand for collaterals by these agencies, and, in some cases requirements for part funding of the total money required for an entrepreneurship activity. The youths have neither these collaterals nor the part funding. The failure to present these denies them access to the funds required for the business ventures.

2. Inadequate Equipment and Technology

The cost of equipment is quite high and cannot be offered by most Nigerians especially young graduates. This makes for difficulty in development of entrepreneurship as technology is closely related to entrepreneurship. It therefore calls for a need for the provision of affordable technologies.

3. Economic Pressure from Parents

There is often great pressure from some Nigerian parents who prefer their children making money in short term trades instead of long term investments in education. This makes it difficult for youths to devote enough time for training in entrepreneurship. It is also the result of such pressures that Nigeria is faced with a high rate of child labour without any skill in entrepreneurship.

4. Education

Entrepreneurship demands a talented workforce. Our system of education fails to provide the necessary foundation for such a work force. Our schools up to the tertiary level presently do not have a well developed curriculum that emphasizes initiatives to increase accountability.

5. Entrepreneurial Attitude

The wealth resources and rich endowment of mineral resources in Nigeria have largely allowed the Nigerian populace and even the government to be complacent. A great majority of Nigerian people have utopian ideas; they live in affluence, in some cases more imaginary than attained. Furthermore, since it is believed that there is a strong climate for entrepreneurs, there is little or no worry about entrepreneurship education. The necessary drive for an entrepreneur is not there, and this leads to poor performance in entrepreneurship. Supporting this view is the assertion by Akpa (2007) that an average entrepreneur is rugged and aggressive.

6. Data

Data for entrepreneurship education has been lacking. There is little or limited programme design for entrepreneurship education. Access to some vital information is denied, both in offices and on the internet.

7. Inadequate Infrastructural Facilities

Due to inadequacy of facilities like good roads, electricity, information, water supply, etc, there are increased problems confronting the development of entrepreneurship education. There is difficulty of communicating ideas and wares with other areas. Without sales, entrepreneurship cannot be fully expressed.

8. Cultural Barriers

Entrepreneurship requires a culture that respects risk taking. Without the willingness to take risks, it is not possible to create value from knowledge. The culture of risk taking in Nigeria needs to be properly addressed, to minimize such barriers to investments.

9. Research and Linkages

Success in entrepreneurship depends critically on openness and linkages with innovation systems in other countries. This is so because strong innovation systems depend both on local content and global connectedness. The level of linkages between our research centers and universities with the outside world is still not fully developed. This is highly essential for entrepreneurship to thrive.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT) EQUIPMENT AND ENTREPRENEURIAL DEVELOPMENT

Recently, extremely quick developments in information-communication technology (ICT) can be witnessed. Researchers increasingly believe that investment in ICT and the existence of appropriate ICT support tools make it possible to create some kind of knowledge and ease entrepreneurial development and practices in various fields of life such as printing/publishing, graphic design, accounting services, documentation/documentary, flashing and formatting of phones, work at home services such movies script writers, research services as well as internet services such as e-registration, e-commerce, e-marketing, down loading of music and software application for people, just mention but a few.

ICT also allows for teaching the younger generations and for making them aware of ICT tools which might increase their employability or self-employment capabilities. Nowadays, almost all youngsters have basic knowledge about the computers which makes it easier to teach them about ICT tools. However, it is important that teachers and counselors also have the knowledge about ICT as well as specific ICT tools. Many of such tools can be used free of charge which is another reason why they might be used for teaching and learning entrepreneurship.

Modern ICT could be used as a mean to establish connections between the business and higher education sector. It represents an important opportunity to provide young people with business competencies and entrepreneurship education. This brings benefits to a variety of stakeholders as well as the students (Hynes & Richardson, 2007). To achieve continuous improvements of entrepreneurial competencies, learning should be implemented effectively. Educators should therefore be aware of teaching methods which might be upgraded to meet the market demands and to provide the students with the set of competencies. For that reason, the use of ICT tools seems to be the best solution (Galloway et al., 2005).

Conclusions

Based on aforementioned findings, it could be concluded that there is low extent of students exposure to entrepreneurial development in the institutions of higher learning in Nigeria. There are also challenges faced by the institutions in their quest for entrepreneurial development of the students. Besides, there is significant relationship between availability of ICT equipment and entrepreneurial development of students in the institutions of higher learning in

Nigeria. Finally, utilization of ICT equipment has significant relationship with entrepreneurial development of students of the institutions of higher learning in Nigeria.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on conclusions from the study:

1. Government should provide substantial funds for teachings in practical terms for entrepreneurial education. With this, the needed equipments which are usually quite expensive will be provided for use.
2. Those parents who put great pressures on their children to make money in the short term over long term benefits of education should desist from that because it makes it difficult for youths to devote enough time for training in entrepreneurship.
3. Being that entrepreneurship demands a talented workforce, our system of education should provide the necessary foundation for such a work force.

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