

Empowering Nigerian Women through Entrepreneurship Education

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Abstract

There is no controversy about the rampant vices that are daily increasing in Nigeria as a result of unemployment. On daily basis this embarrassing phenomenon is calling for concerted actions to embrace entrepreneurship education for women because when you educate a woman, you educate a nation. It is becoming increasingly clear that investments in women pay-off many folds, when women are given opportunities for training and development generally and entrepreneurship education in particular. Empowering women underscores the ability to make genuine choices; genuine choices are functions of incomes; and incomes are functions of knowledge gained through education. This paper, therefore, attempted to discuss the concept of entrepreneur and entrepreneurship education for women. The challenges facing women entrepreneurs and means of overcoming the identified challenges are the main issues of this paper.

Keywords: empowerment, entrepreneurship and education, women
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Introduction

In recent times, women empowerment appears to have become the crucial index of the quantity and quality of meaningful contribution to sustainable national development. Nigeria in its quest to catch up with the developing nations cannot do without empowering women through the knowledge of entrepreneurial education. Going down the memory lane, in 1879, when the Wesleyan Missionary Society established their secondary school in Lagos, they stated equivocally the rationale behind the establishment of the institution thus:

"If a woman is to be a helpmate to a man, it is quite clear that the nearer she is brought to the condition of a man the more perfectly and congenially she will fulfill her task. Therefore, high-class education for the women in Africa is an absolute necessity. Such education, if continued, will make women good wives, good mothers, and ornaments of society (Iliya, 1995)".

The implication of this rationale is that qualitative education which will enhance women productivity, in form of entrepreneurship education is needed. In the message of Annan (2006) as the Secretary General of United Nations, on International Women's Day declares that "We are re-

solved to work for gender equality and the empowering of women as vital tools to combat poverty and diseases and achieve the development that is truly sustainable." It has been observed that there is an increase in global concern for women issues being victims of pervasive sexism and a myth of male superiority. From the first women conference in 1975 to that of Copenhagen in 1980's, Nairobi in 1985 and Beijing in 1995, emphasis had been on the need to facilitate women empowerment in all nations.

To empower women is to enable them have the ability to make right choices. These choices are greatly influenced by the type of educational or training background which determines their incomes. The incomes invariably influence their ability to own properties, contribute to the upbringing of children, status in their respective families and communities.

The emphasis is quite understandable because women have suffered discrimination in many societies, especially, in the developing countries. Ironically, women bear the major burden of responsibility for food production and child rearing; they have little or no access to the means of generating income to empower them financially.

The government of Nigeria is the largest single employ-

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er of labour in the country. This type of experience has not helped to increase economic and social satisfaction anywhere in the world. Continuous migration from rural to urban in search of almost non-existing job opportunities is in the increase in Nigeria. Anyanwu (1991) found out that migration from rural environment to urban areas in Nigeria was 53%, while urban to rural stood at 2.6%. This is believed to have even increased since then. It is only the private sector that can actually generate job opportunities continuously, through entrepreneurial activities.

Entrepreneur is a form of education, a move towards self-reliance, a reasonable channel that will greatly assist in curbing the employment problems. This is because its emphasis is on the acquisition of skills and capacities needed to be self-employed. Daini (2006) referring to Tuck (1995), while advocating for education reforms in the country, asserted that:

“Education without a change in the nature of jobs does not create any wealth. Education needs to provide what is considered important at the work place and so the need to reform its content and practice such that it can produce not only academic people but also adaptable, flexible, hardworking, mindful, responsible, punctual, trainable workers and individuals who are loyal and responsible to the cause of the workplace”.

Giving women the rightful consideration as regards this assertion would surely enhance women entrepreneurship drive. Kiadese and Adetayo (2007), quoting Bassey (2005) explained that the last four decades have witnessed a rapid spread in entrepreneurial education. The inevitability of its global acceptance is occasioned by its capability for new venture creation and contribution to sustainable economic development. Generally, entrepreneurship contributes significantly in the area of employment generation, thereby improving the standard of living, equitable income distribution interdependence of business ventures, conservation of foreign exchange, and encouraging effective utilization of domestic resources and reversing rural-urban migration.

Methods

Entrepreneurship Education

The Centre for Entrepreneurship Education and Development (CEED), Canada describes entrepreneurship education as a vehicle for teaching students to look for a need or a problem and to create a solution. With reference to higher education, Nelson (1996) noted that entrepreneurship education is much relevant in the tertiary education curriculum as it provides students with skills and knowledge to successfully launch and operate their own business ventures, provide them with the opportunity to develop, own, and practice skills and perspectives that are vital to entrepreneurial success.

In defining entrepreneurship, Hisrich and Peter (2002) stated that there are specific kinds of behavior that include the following:

- Initiative thinking.
- The organizing and reorganizing of social and economic mechanisms to turn resources and situations to practical profitable account.
- The acceptance of risk or failure.

It was explained further that going by economists' point of view, an entrepreneur is one who brings resources, labour, materials and other assets into combinations that make their value greater than before.

An entrepreneur also introduces changes, innovations and a new order. In the view of psychologist, an entrepreneur is a person typically driven by certain forces seeing the need to obtain or attain something, to experiment, to accomplish or perhaps to escape the authority of others. Entrepreneurship education, in the words of Soyebi, Olatoye and Adekunle (2016), is the type of education designed to change the orientation and attitude of the recipients and the process which will equip them with the skill and knowledge to enable them start and manage a business. To Enu (2012), entrepreneurship education extends beyond just business creation i.e. it is made up of all kinds of experiences that give the recipients the ability and vision of how to seek and access opportunities of different kinds in the society.

According to Hisrich and Peter (2002), entrepreneurship is the dynamic process of creating incremental wealth. The wealth is created by individuals who assume the major risks in term of equality, time or career commitment or provide value for some product or service. The entrepreneur therefore is someone who should be innovative, creating new market new products or modifying old ones by adding values, and applying creative strategies and ways of managing by coordinating factors of production. According to the Consortium's National Standard (USA), entrepreneurship is not simply an add-on to existing classes; it can become integral and innovative piece of the learning environment. An entrepreneur in the words of Isimoya (2005) has the following motives:

- An innate desire to be independent.
- A craving for challenge.
- A need for self-fulfillment provided that one has the ability to succeed independently.
- The glamour attached to entrepreneurship i.e. the joy of creating wealth.

The objectives of entrepreneurship education, according to the opinion of Okon (1990) in Kiadese and Adetayo (2007), is not just to teach someone how to run a business, but to encourage creative thinking, promote strong sense of self-worth, accountability and productivity. Entrepreneurship education is all about how to be self-reliant with special reference to finance. This could be realized by developing potential business ideas, understanding the role of enterprise in local community and developing the skills of women in entrepreneurial activities. Other objective of entrepreneurship education is to inculcate in a person,

“The ability to recognize opportunities of one’s life, ability to pursue such opportunities by generating new ideas and marshaling needed resources; ability to create and operate a new venture; ability to think in a creative and critical manner” (Kiadese & Adetayo 2007).

The Consortium for Entrepreneurship Education (CEE, USA) defined entrepreneurship education as a form of education that is out to seek for the preparation of people, especially, youths, to be responsible enterprising individuals who will become entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial thinkers and who will contribute to economic development and sustainable communities. Entrepreneurship education has the inherent ability to create a change in the mental orientation from the “take-job-syndrome” “to the make-job-syndrome” mentality. The reason is that it is a carefully organized process that leads to the acquisition of entrepreneurial competences through the teaching of entrepreneurship courses training and giving certificates for educators, economic developers, business counselors and prospective entrepreneurs. The knowledge so gained will enhance the ability to set up a gainfully productive business for self-employment as against being employed. It is about willingness and ability of individual to find out investment opportunities establish ready to bear attendant risks in order to have successful enterprises. Entrepreneurship education should be fashioned in such a way to encourage women by equipping them with entrepreneurial approaches to the world of employment opportunities.

Challenges Facing Women in Entrepreneurship

The main challenges facing entrepreneurs generally in Nigeria are financial constraints- poor financial background which resulted in inability to attract financial assistance from finance institutions. Entrepreneurs and promoters of small and medium scale enterprises in Nigeria affirm that the most formidable obstacle to long-term profitability and competitiveness of women entrepreneurship is lack of investment capital. The dearth of long-term capital as observed by Lemo (2004) is due to a number of reasons:

- Weak domestic financial sectors dominated by deficit financing by government.
- High risk profile of the small and medium scale enterprises.
- Small and medium scale enterprises’ promoters are not knowledgeable about capital raising processes.
- Severe shortage of professionals and investors who are endowed with the professional skills and judgment required to finance small and medium scale enterprises and thereafter work with the other.

Other challenges are:

- High cost of operation, expenditures in the area of procuring materials and equipment.
- Very poor infrastructural facilities-roads, water, electricity.

- Lack of entrepreneurship education.
- Poor managerial, accounting and control mechanism and inappropriate marketing skills.
- Over taxation.

Results

The challenges identified above are not insurmountable therefore; the following steps should be taken in addressing them.

- The government at all levels (Federal, State and Local) should vigorously pursue public enlightenment programmes for women empowerment through entrepreneurship. The women at nooks and crannies of Nigeria should be trained and taught success skills needed as entrepreneurs.
- To carry out the training, the Local Government Area in the country should be segmented. Each segment to be well sensitized by making adequate publicity before the commencement of entrepreneurial training. The training should be in two stages or types. Stage one to be inform of workshop for the experienced/practicing entrepreneurs. They would be in-charge of second stage. The second stage should be the training of the would-be women entrepreneurs. Adequate fund should be provided for both stages, just as funds are usually provided for elections and census preparations.
- Strong financial control system that will ensure strict financial accounting, budgeting, cash management and cost accounting should also be imparted. Information programmes would also build awareness of the opportunities afforded through entrepreneurship education. Entrepreneurial opportunities should also be exposed to the women, because the more entrepreneurial opportunities are recognized, the more likely the opportunities are pursued.

In empowering women, they should be encouraged in the following areas:

Self-confidence-what is being undertaken is worth the while; future orientation- foresightedness; risk-taking ability and adventurous; leadership strategies to motivate, responsive to suggestions and criticisms, good judgment, critically minded and objectivity on issues; perseverance stamina to withstand frustrations; readiness/willingness to learn new things; ready to improve to do things better; dynamism-to be ambitious and dynamically minded; courage because entrepreneurship is fraught with risks and setbacks; and prudence in the management of resources.

To help cushion the effects of high cost of production, the government should allow women entrepreneurs to enjoy tax subsidy and other fiscal and monetary incentives.

All participating financial bodies should create an avenue for monitoring and inspecting the activities and prog-

ress of the sponsored entrepreneurial activities. If done, it will enrich the desired outcome that will lead to sure success route to Nigeria industrial revolution.

Nigerian citizens generally and women in particular should desist from having wrong perception to financial assistance from government or non-government agencies. These aids are not means of sharing "national cake"; they should be prepared to live up to any performance target. It is significant that entrepreneurs should have very clear concepts as to the corporate direction of the business in the short, medium and long term. There should be good government succession plans that will sustain entrepreneurial development.

Conclusion

What can we do to encourage women entrepreneurship in the Nigerian economy? To make economy to grow, create jobs and provide food and other life needs in Nigeria? Indonesia which had the same per capita income as Nigeria in 1960s, decided to choose entrepreneurship route to sustainable development; today Indonesia has per capita income 4x that of Nigeria.

Money provided must be monitored and supervised regularly so as not to divert it to frivolous ventures such as buying new clothing materials for celebrations. Entrepreneurship activities are important because they are the fulcrum of innovation in any economy. Even in the developed economics, most innovative companies started as small entrepreneur before they grew over time into the large companies of today. For example, Hewlett Packard (HP) Company, a very large computer system in the world, started in a garage in California as a small enterprise in 1950s with only \$5000.00 in borrowed funds. Today HP has \$60billion in sales turnover. Small and Medium enterprise is usually started by entrepreneurs.

The Nigerian government needs to be responsive to the social and economic needs of the women in particular and the society in general. The suggestion of Amana (2004) should be viewed with seriousness. He suggested that if Nigeria decides to create an average of 5 million Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) per year for the next 4 years, which would create 20 million SMEs. At an average employment of 4 people per SME, that will take care of almost all unemployed.

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