

# MULTIDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL OF RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT

**MULJORED**



**ISSN**

**1596 - 974x**



**PUBLISHED BY:**

**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT**

**NARD**

**Volume 17 No. 2, September, 2011**

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# INTEGRATING ENTREPRENEURIAL EDUCATION INTO EARLY CHILDHOOD AND CARE EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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## **Abstract**

Entrepreneurial education is increasingly considered valuable in every society that desires steady economic growth. Most Nigeria graduates as at today are job seekers instead of job creators. This results from emphasis on certification rather than productivity and relevance to the needs of the society after graduation. This paper therefore examines the areas of Early Childhood Care Education programme in Nigeria into which entrepreneurial education can be integrated in order to make the products of the programme productive, relevant and self-reliant. It is recommended among other things that Nigerian government should begin to develop entrepreneurial thinking through legislation that will promote entrepreneurial education. This will ultimately make education to play its role in the achievement of vision 2020 in Nigeria.

## **Introduction**

Education is an important process of effecting the cognitive affective and psychomotor development of a child. Durosaro (2008) calls education the master-key to rapid social, political and economic development of a nation. Development connotes positive changes, therefore for any nation to develop, there is the need for a constant appraisal of our educational system in order to reposition it for progressive changes. National development is measured by the propensity of each nation and its citizen's ability to provide for its needs. Ability to achieve this anchors largely on the functionality of the education provided by such a society.

In Nigeria today however, one of the challenges faced by Nigerian graduates is that of employment after graduation. Most of them spend several years roaming the streets after graduation looking for jobs that are not there. This problem could be largely attributed to lack of emphasis on functionality in the area of curriculum development and implementation. Products of Nigerian educational system are largely job seekers rather than job creators.

The Early Childhood and Care Education (ECCE) programme in tertiary institutions in Nigeria, if properly harnessed and well implemented is capable of making the products entrepreneurs rather than job seekers. The programme has the potential of making the products to be functional and self reliant. This is the more reason why it must not be handled with the idea of schooling process – the practice of going through school, passing examinations and waiting for job after issuance of certificates. Unfortunately, the ECCE programme as recent as it is in Nigerian educational system is treading the path of schooling process. This is evident in lack of well trained specialists to handle the programme, the dearth of necessary teaching facilities in the institutions offering it and worst still, the attitude of government at various levels to ECCE. Something has to be done and urgently too.

## **The Concept of Entrepreneurship**

The meaning of entrepreneurship has been a subject of debate among scholars, educators, researchers and policy makers since the concept was first established in the sixteenth century. According to Kautz (1999), "the definition itself is evolving as the field itself comes into the

mainstream of global business". However, despite the complex and dynamic nature of entrepreneurship, an operational definition can be identified to help explain the characteristics of entrepreneurial activity and its importance to the economy of any nation.

Clayton (1989) provides an operational definition of entrepreneurship as the pursuit of opportunity involving the creation of an organization (or sub-organization) with the expectation of value creation of the participants. The entrepreneur is the individual (or team) that identifies the opportunity, gathers the necessary resources, creates and is responsible for the success of the organization. Entrepreneurship is the process by which organizations are formed with resultant job and wealth creation. Entrepreneurship is about using skills, aptitudes and attitudes to turn opportunities into reality. It is a way to improve every aspect of life. It is a way to live, work and achieve – a way of life. Entrepreneurial activities are substantially different depending on the type of organization that is being started. Entrepreneurship ranges in scale from solo prospects (even involving the entrepreneur only on part-time) to the major undertakings creating many job opportunities.

The acts of entrepreneurship are often associated with true uncertainty, particularly when it involves bringing something really novel to the world, whose market never exists. Therefore, entrepreneurs are said to be among other things, risk bearers.

### **Entrepreneurial Education**

To begin a discussion on entrepreneurial education, it is important to give a distinction between entrepreneurial education and business education. While a universally accepted definition of entrepreneurship may not exist, there is agreement that entrepreneurs have common personality traits (Noll, 1993). Noll goes on to say that entrepreneurship needs to be defined more broadly than business management in that it includes creativity, risk taking and innovation, traits not normally nurtured in a standard business environment.

Bechard and Toulouse (1998) define entrepreneurial education as a collection of formalized teachings that informs, trains, and educates anyone interested in participating in socio-economic development through a project to promote entrepreneurship awareness, business creation or small business development. They point out that entrepreneurial education focuses on combining and carrying out a new combination of business elements while education for small business ownership focuses on the skills needed to produce or acquire an existing business.

Gottlieb and Ross (1997) define entrepreneurial education in terms of creativity and innovation applied to social, governmental and business area. Entrepreneurial education therefore can be viewed in terms of the skills that can be taught and characteristics that can be engendered in the students that can help them develop new innovative plans. Though the skills taught in business education classes are needed by entrepreneurs as well, the curriculum generally addresses important functions of running business rather than aspects of starting a business.

Entrepreneurial education seeks to provide students with knowledge, skills and motivation to encourage entrepreneurial success in a variety of settings. It seeks to prepare people, particularly youth, to be responsible, enterprising individuals who become entrepreneurs or entrepreneurial thinkers by immersing them in real life learning experiences where they can take risks, manage the results and learn from the outcomes.

In the face of global economic crisis which has affected Nigerian economy adversely, nothing can be more desirable at this point in the curriculum content of educational system in Nigeria than proper integration of entrepreneurial education into the various educational programmes.

### **Early Childhood and Care Education (ECCE)**

Before explaining the concept of Early Childhood and Care Education, it is important to draw a distinction between it and other closely related concepts such as pre-primary education or early childhood education.

The National Policy on Education (2004) defines pre-primary or early childhood education as the education given in an educational institution to children prior to their entering the primary school. This includes crèche, the nursery and the kindergarten. Maduwesi (1991) defines pre-primary education as a semi-formal arrangement usually outside the home, whereby young children from about the age of three are exposed through play-like activities in a group setting for mental, social and physical learning suited to their developmental age, until the mandatory age of government formal schooling.

Obanya (2004), while trying to draw a distinction between pre-primary or early childhood education and ECCE asserted that "we are no longer in the era of nursery education, kindergarten, pre-school education or even early childhood education, the discipline has gone ahead to recognize that all these can be components of what we do, but none of them takes full account of the all-round development needs of the not-yet-in school child. ECCE therefore refers to a wide range of programmes, all aimed at the physical, cognitive and social development of children before they enter into primary school. It is an expansion of what early childhood education or pre-primary education used to be. The Jomtien World Conference on Education for All (March 1990) Justifies the need for emphasis on ECCE, and that education begins not just at birth but at conception. This implies that ECCE goes beyond pedagogy. It involves a lot more than educating the pre-school-age but also comprises provision of care, parenting and family education.

The provision of ECCE programmes can free members of the household from childcare responsibilities, allowing parents to work and older siblings to attend school. ECCE programme in Nigeria is expected to improve the care and support given to young children at the community level and thereby giving every Nigerian child a good head start to life.

### **Functional Education in Nigeria**

Durosaro (2008), asserted that historically, Nigeria had a sound formal functional, traditional education. The curriculum of the traditional functional education included vocational training, character moulding, dance and culture of the community, local numeracy and local crafts among others.

The western education introduced by the missionaries was tailored to the needs of the missionaries and the colonial masters for interpreters and trade clerks, hence it was not functional for the indigenes (Durosaro, 2008). Several efforts have however been made after independence to restructure the curriculum through introduction of 6-3-3-4 structure which include pre-vocational subjects at the junior secondary schools. For education to be functional, it must not only give cognitive and affective development but it must also make the citizens acquire some basic skills. A functional education must give people a vocation and instead of creating a pool of job seekers, it must be able to develop a pool of job creators who could even be self-employing. Ajeyalemi, (2008) refers to functional education as that which comes from the child's needs, and that uses the child's interest as a mechanism for activating him towards his desirable activities. The primary and junior secondary curricula are being reviewed to refocus the system to functionalism by the introduction of local craft, primary science, business studies, introductory technology, ICT education and wood work.

### **Vision 2020 in Nigeria**

According to Abdullahi (2009), Vision 2020 is a comprehensive framework designed to stimulate economic growth in the country. The framework also offers a blueprint for sustainable political development in Nigeria. One of the main objectives of vision 2020 is to place Nigeria in the top 20 leading economies of the world by the year 2020. It is important to note that the achievement of vision 2020 by Nigeria is largely dependent on entrepreneurial and functional education. With the current economic situation in Nigeria and the vision 2020 in mind, nothing should be more desirable now than entrepreneurial and functional education.

### **Entrepreneurial Education and ECCE Programme in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions**

Essentially, education is to help the individual become a contributing member of the community and not just living a parasite on others (Durosaro, 2008). A truly contributing member is one who is self-reliant. The ECCE programme in Nigerian tertiary institutions can develop entrepreneurial skills and make its products to be self-reliant if it advances knowledge, wisdom and understanding of the products in experimenting, practicing, innovating, improvising and thinking scientifically and reflectively. ECCE programme products in Nigeria can develop entrepreneurial skills in the following areas:

- i. **Consultancy Services:** The National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) minimum standard for Nigerian Certificate in Education (NCE) in ECCE highlights the areas of consultancy services that are open to NCE graduates to include the following:
  - a. Monitoring and supervision
  - b. Advisory and research
  - c. Provision of services
  - d. Vacation programmes
  - e. Training programme

Products of ECCE programme can adequately earn their living from some of the consultancy opportunities listed above.

- ii. **Production of ECCE Resources:** Resources in ECCE include equipment and facilities that are needed in ECCE centres. Such resources include wall charts, toys and other play materials. Graduates of ECCE programme have the potential of producing such things.
- iii. **Establishment of ECCE Centre:** ECCE centre is a facility outside home, set up to provide care and support for the development and education of young children from birth to the age of five years (NCCE 2008). Products of ECCE programme in tertiary institutions having acquired the knowledge and skills needed for establishment of ECCE centres can do so after graduation.
- iv. **Restablishment of a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO):** A non-governmental organization which is aimed at providing special care for some target children in the society such as orphans, abandoned children and children with certain disabilities could be established by products of ECCE programmes. Financial assistance to run such NGO could be gotten locally from some philanthropists, religious organizations and Ministry of Women Affairs while international financial assistance could come from bodies such as the United



Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) and United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

- v. **Marketing of ECCE Resources:** Both locally produced and imported ECCE resources could be marketed in the various ECCE centres across the country by the products of this programme. With this, they do not have to wait after graduation looking for white collar jobs that may not be available.

As laudable as the ECCE programme is and with the potential it has to contribute its quota to the economic development in achieving vision 2020, it is however unfortunate that it is not yet given the desired attention by various levels of government in Nigeria. Oni (1999) asserted that a nation's process of socio-economic growth must entail some structural, institutional and attitudinal changes which provide dynamism. There is the need for government at various levels to begin to develop positive attitudes towards ECCE programme in the higher educational institutions within their domains.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Provision of entrepreneurial and functional education is important for the achievement of vision 2020 in Nigeria. It therefore becomes expedient that education in Nigeria be reformed to shift from certificate-driven to employment and vocational driven. This demands functionalism and skill acquisition as well as entrepreneurial training for the products of the educational system. Products of ECCE programme in Nigeria having been exposed to some entrepreneurial skills are supposed to be able to stand on their own, establish and provide certain services thereby making meaningful contributions to the socio-economic development of the country. Based on this conclusion, it is pertinent to give the following recommendations:

- i. ECCE programme in tertiary institution should be given a prominent place in the educational system. Government should increase their interest in training personnel for this level of education.
- ii. ECCE should be introduced in all colleges and universities offering education courses in Nigeria. This will make the products of the programme more readily available to play their part in the achievement of vision 2020.
- iii. Facilities to train and make the products of ECCE functional and develop entrepreneurial skills should be provided in the various tertiary institutions.
- iv. Curriculum of ECCE in tertiary institutions should include components that will make students identify various entrepreneurial activities available for them in their area of specialization.
- v. Generally and most importantly, government should develop a culture of entrepreneurial thinking through legislation that will promote entrepreneurial education.

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