

THE PLACE OF THE THEATRE IN ENHANCING ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES

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Abstract

This paper advocates the harnessing of theatrical performances in achieving entrepreneurship education in Nigerian Universities. This is predicated on the fact that, many Undergraduates in Nigerian Universities who offer Entrepreneurship Studies as a compulsory course under General Studies treat it with levity given that, it is not directly related to their core courses of study. However, given the nature of the Nigerian economy and the difficulty of acquiring white color jobs, it is paramount to bequeath our Undergraduates with entrepreneurial skills to be independent and self-employed upon graduation. Considering the significance of entrepreneurship training in Nigeria, it is imperative to employ all measures to achieve this noble objective. Consequently, theatre being a performative art form can be employed to make entrepreneurship education more graphic, feasible, interesting and attractive to Undergraduates offering it. The paper therefore submits that, entrepreneurship training should be made interesting and feasible through the instrumentality of the theatre using creative and improvisational drama, songs, music and dance for easy understanding and assimilation.

Key words. Theatre, Entrepreneurship, Education and Curriculum.

Introduction

Over the years, Nigeria has been confronted with myriad of problems ranging from graduate unemployment to poverty, lack of basic infrastructural facilities (power, roads, water and housing), terrorism, crime and other social vices as well as corruption. To a large extent, these problems have been occasioned by the weak political system in the country which has manifested in the nature of the nation's institutions. Regrettably, though successive governments have tried to put policies in place to curtail and halt some of the problems confronting the country, the situation is growing worse by the day with unemployment in the increase and this calls for urgent attention.

A critical look at Nigeria reveals that so much has gone wrong. For example, according to Olorundare and Kayode, "The Nigerian economy which used to thrive on agricultural exports such as cocoa, groundnut, hides and skin, is now solely dependent on the price of oil in the international market. It is a common knowledge that any fall in the price of

oil will result to a fall in the domestic Nigerian economy” (156). Being a mono-economy with poor security and infrastructural facilities has made things worse as investment opportunities are very slim thereby causing an increase in unemployment. It was therefore not surprising that the Federal Government of Nigeria, through the National Universities Commission (NUC), introduced Entrepreneurship Education (EE), in Nigerian Universities with the aim of equipping undergraduates with entrepreneurial skills, attitudes and competencies in order to be job creators and not just job hunters upon graduation.

According to Gana, entrepreneurship is the “willingness and ability of an individual to seek out investment opportunities in an environment and be able to establish and run an enterprise successfully based on identified opportunities” (17). Clearly, entrepreneurship is a dynamic process of vision, change, and creation. It requires an application of energy and passion towards the creation and implementation of new ideas and creative solutions. According to Alakbarov, “Entrepreneurship education is an inevitable strategy for inculcating an entrepreneurial culture and orientation in a nation, creating employment, raising individual incomes, transforming communities and enhancing national economic development. Nations that have embraced entrepreneurship have made good progress in addressing the problem of unemployment, and achieved impressive results” (19). Reiterating the benefits and relevance of entrepreneurship training in all societies of the world, Cho reveals that, “entrepreneurship education promotes entrepreneurial intention because the entrepreneurial knowledge and skills acquired by the students can arouse their interest and motivation to start up a business” (27). In undergoing entrepreneurial training, Hartshorn holds that “every student has the opportunity to be an entrepreneur and self-employed” (14).

Consequent upon the above, in 2007, the Nigerian government through the National Universities Commission (NUC) established a compulsory Entrepreneurship Education programme in Universities as a way of equipping Undergraduates with entrepreneurial skill to create jobs for themselves after graduating from the University. This explains why Nigerian Universities have Entrepreneurship Education under General Studies Unit as a compulsory course for all Undergraduates offering different courses. This is outside the inclusion of Entrepreneurship Studies as a course of study in the curriculum of Universities in Nigeria.

Entrepreneurship education seeks to provide students in tertiary institutions with the knowledge, skills and motivation to encourage entrepreneurial success in a variety of ventures. Regrettably, many Undergraduates are not interested and treat the entrepreneurial training given to them with great levity thereby making it an exercise in futility. Many see it as a waste of time to study their courses of choice and this calls for great worry. As such, there is every need to arrest the situation in order to redirect the interests of Undergraduates in Nigeria which informs the call for theatre in enhancing entrepreneurship training.

Generally, theatre is a collaborative or hybrid art form which combines words, voice, movement and visual elements to express meaning. The field of theatre encompasses not only live improvised and scripted work, but also dramatic forms such as film, television and other electronic media. Due to the increasingly pervasive influence of contemporary theatrical media, theatre has enormous importance in citizens' lives. It is not possible for students to achieve media literacy without understanding and having hands-on experience with theatre. Theatre is about the examination and resolution of fundamental human issues, and is built on understanding and presenting interactions between people. This means, theatre fundamentally provides a vehicle for people to reflect on important aspects of life and develops their sensitivity thereby deepening their understanding of others' points of view. This will no doubt benefit students in an academic environment as their interests can be influenced and horizon broadened and reshaped. This is very important because many Nigerian undergraduates are not fully sure of what is good for them. Consequently, they misplace their interests by indulging in unprofitable ventures. Using the instrumentality of theatre will certainly redirect their interests in gainful exploits such as entrepreneurship studies.

Basically, a theatrical piece entails a process in which performers use their voice, body, and imagination to express concepts, ideas, and feelings before an audience. This implies generating stories and 'imagined worlds' that are communicated through words, voice, movement, aural elements, and visual elements. In doing this, different elements of the theatre are fused together in order to communicate meaning and add value to humanity. It is on the basis of this premise that this paper posits that the theatre should be adopted in achieving entrepreneurship training in Nigeria Universities.

Conceptual Framework

For the avoidance of any ambiguity, the following concepts are conceptualized within the context of this paper. They include: entrepreneurship education, and theatre.

Entrepreneurship Education

On a general note, the term entrepreneurship is viewed as a formed of education or training that is aimed at bequeathing individuals with business skills in order to make them independent and self-sustaining in the society. This is mostly paramount in mono-economies where the means of production are principally owned by the government and citizens scramble for white color jobs. As such, entrepreneurship education enables citizens to diversify and be employers of labour instead of employees of labour. This explains why Agu defines entrepreneurship education as, "the type of education designed to change the orientation and attitude of the recipients and the process will equip them with the skills and knowledge to enable them start and manage a business. It aims at developing the requisite entrepreneurial skills, attitudes, competencies, and disposition that will predispose the individual to be a driving force in

managing a business” (18). In this way, recipients of this form of education from all disciplines are expected to diversify and create wealth outside the box.

Furthermore, Akpomi posits that, “entrepreneurship education can be said to focus on developing understanding and capacity for pursuit of entrepreneurial behaviours, skills and attitudes in widely different contexts. This type of education is open to all and not exclusively the domain of some self-acclaimed business gurus. This is more so true in the sense that these behaviours can be practiced, developed and learned therefore it is important to expose all students to entrepreneurship education” (154). In this way, this form of education assists students to develop positive attitudes, innovation and skills for self-reliance rather than depending on the government for employment. Such an experience will in return produce graduates with self-confidence and capacities for independent thought to discover new information leading to economic development.

More technically, entrepreneurship education has been defined as, “a collection of formalized teachings that informs, trains, and educates anyone interested in participating in socioeconomic development through a project to promote entrepreneurship awareness, business creation, or small business development” (UNESCO/ILO). This implies a process of seeking to foster self-esteem and confidence by drawing on the individual’s talents and creativity, while building the relevant skills and values that will assist students in expanding their perspectives on schooling and opportunities beyond. Consequently, Aig-Imoukhuede identified ten of the attitudes and skills that would-be entrepreneurs should develop, as well as the corresponding objective of entrepreneurship education. These skills and attitudes include:

1. Positive attitudes, high aptitude for rational critical thinking and timely decision making.
2. Clear vision, generation of progressive ideals, drive and passion for success.
3. Ability to convert vision in concrete reality.
4. Creativity, innovativeness, courageousness and self-confidence.
5. Ability to assume reasonable risk.
6. Mercurial ingenuity, resourcefulness, patience and/or opportunities insight.
7. Confidence and good judgement, which involves taking decisions and making choices.
8. Prudence, which means due care in the management of resources especially financial.
9. Willingness to learn and develop a disposition to pick-up, store knowledge and use it.

10. Hard work an indispensable ingredient of success in business and other sectors.

For the purpose of this paper, entrepreneurship education is the process of equipping students with an enhanced capacity to generate ideas and the skills to make them happen. It is equipping students with the additional knowledge, attributes and capabilities required to apply these abilities in the context of setting up a new venture or business in order to make them self-sustaining. It is worth stating that, methodologies for achieving entrepreneurship education are based on the use of personal, behavioural, motivational, attitudinal and career planning activities.

The Theatre

Etymologically, the word theatre is derived from a Greek word 'theatron' meaning "a seeing place". This is why Milly Barranger posits that, "it is a place where something is seen, something is done and action is witnessed" (4). Throughout recorded history, the use of space to imitate and present human experiences for the audience occupies a special place and has always come to the fore in explaining what theatre is. In view of this position, theatre is often described as buildings or arenas for dramatic and theatrical performances.

However, narrowing down the concept of theatre to space is not fair as the arena or building will amount to nothing without performances. This justifies Edwin Wilson's assertion on theatre that, "It is a medium that expresses a worldview of ideology and gives us a sense of life. In this medium, the production and reproduction of real life is evident through dramatization" (2). Ultimately, theatre is an artistic performance before an audience at a given place. This presupposes that for theatre to effectively take place, the elements of performance, performer, place of action and audience must be present.

According to Hussaini Tsaku, "Theatre ultimately is valued today because of its capacity to improve the quality of life by increasing sensitivity, sharpening perceptions, reshaping values so that moral and societal concerns take precedence. Theatre focuses on human beings, it concentrates on human concerns" (321). This means that, human beings remain the centre of theatrical performances and according to Wilson (5), "in it, we see human beings in action, what they do and why they do it. For it to happen, two groups of people-actors and audience must come together at a certain time and in a certain place. A shared indivisible event that includes both those who perform and those who observe. The experience is entertaining, provocative, imaginative and magical".

In the context of this paper, theatre is referred to as a collaborative art form that uses live performers to present the experiences of a real or imagined event before a live audience in a specific place. The performer may present this experience through the combinations of gesture, speech, song, music or dance while elements of design and stagecraft are used to enhance the physicality, presence and immediacy of the experience for aesthetics

purposes and creation of the illusion of believability. Theatre has been a powerful medium of human expression and exploration from immemorial, offering its community a deeper understanding of itself, both on collective and individual basis, through a synthesis of entertainment and instruction. Its functionality at all times in recorded history is not in doubt which is why this paper posits that it can facilitate entrepreneurship education in Nigerian Universities.

The Curriculum of Entrepreneurship Education in Nigerian Universities

According to Kourilsky, “An entrepreneurial curricula contain information on how students can identify and shape opportunities, assess business concepts, develop operational plans, fund and launch ventures, grow new enterprises and case studies which should be discussed in the classroom to provide students with another venue for examining entrepreneurial strategies and learning about the successes and failures of new ventures”. Entrepreneurial curriculum contains information on how students can identify and shape opportunities, assess business concepts, develop operational plans, fund and launch ventures, grow new enterprises and case studies which should be discussed in the classroom to provide students with another venue for examining entrepreneurial strategies and learning about the successes and failures of new ventures.

The curriculum of Entrepreneurship Studies for General Studies in Nigerian Universities is similar though slight differences may exist from one University to another. Generally, EPS 201-Entrepreneurship & Innovation, EPS 202- Business Creation and Growth, EPS 301 & 302 Methods & Delivery are the courses mounted in many Universities under the auspices of General Studies. EPS 201-Entrepreneurship & Innovation is an introductory course for those studying Entrepreneurship for the first time. It is designed and aimed at creating awareness, providing the knowledge and skills that are important to achieving success in all human endeavours. According to Benue State University Makurdi Centre for Entrepreneurship Students’ Information Handbook, the course objectives include:

- To provide a hands-on, practical guidance to understand and discover critical aspects of Entrepreneurship;
- To develop competencies, know-how, experience, attitudes, resources and network required to pursue different Entrepreneurial opportunities;
- To introduce students to the key requirement for starting an enterprise; and
- To expose students to the many of the vital issues and immerse them in key learning experiences such as the theories of Entrepreneurship, the Nigerian business environment, and the concept and management of innovation (9-10).

Furthermore, EPS 202- Business Creation and Growth is introduced in the second semester of the second year of undergraduates in many Nigerian Universities and is aimed at developing students’ competencies and confidence in creating viable business with high potentials for new value addition and high income. The course is designed to

enable students achieve economic independence after graduation. Fundamentally, it is meant to help change students' mindset away from paid jobs and overdependence on families and government. By the end of the course, the students should be able to start and manage businesses at the micro or family level. They will also be able to grow ventures capable of generating employment and better utilize resources. The course objectives include:

- To enable students, appreciate the importance of businesses in the society.
- To make students recognize the need to grow existing businesses.
- To enable students, appreciate the value and importance of family businesses.
- To challenge students to continuously diversify the scope of businesses.
- To expose students to management principles and practices (Benue State University Students Information Handbook from Centre for Entrepreneurship Studies, 14).

On the other hand, at the 300 level, all the theories learnt in 200 level are put into practice under EPS 301 and EPS 302-Methods and Development. The courses are taught using practical approaches in business. The trade areas are categorized into three groups namely: A, B and C respectively and students are expected to choose areas of interest and suitability.

Group A areas include:

- Soap/detergent, tooth brushes and toothpaste making.
- Cloth dying/textile blocks making.
- Rope making.
- Water treatment/conditioning/packaging.
- Food processing/ packaging/preservation.
- Tanning industry.
- Vegetable oil and salt extraction.
- Fisheries/ aquaculture.
- Bakery.
- Leather tanning (18).

On the other hand, group B areas of trade include:

- Photography.
- Paper production.
- Farming (cropping)
- Tailoring.
- Interior decoration.
- Printing.

- Animal Husbandry (poultry, piggery, goat etc.)
- Book keeping (22).

Lastly, group C areas of trade include:

- Bricks, nails screws making.
- Plumbing.
- Vulcanizing.
- Glassware production/ceramic production.
- Metal working/ fabrication steel aluminum doors and windows.
- Refrigeration/Air conditioning.
- Plastic making.
- Domestic electric wiring.
- Radio/TV repairs.
- Carving.
- Weaving.
- Brick laying/making.
- Iron welding.
- Building drawing.
- Carpentry.
- Metal craft-blacksmith, tinsmith etc.
- Sanitary wares.
- Vehicle maintenance (26).

The above areas of trade can provide a source of living to any human being provided he/she is efficient and effective. Consequently, it is incumbent upon the Lecturers teaching these respective trade areas to make them very interesting and simple for comprehension. This can be made possible by making the teaching practical where the materials needed for learning any of the aforementioned will be demonstrated for students to follow and learn more easily. In doing this, the drama and theatre approach can be adopted with no conventions and practical demonstrations done along the lines of using songs and music to arouse interest and achieve concentration of the learners. This will go a long way in not only achieving effective teaching and learning but also enhance retention of what is learnt which can be used later in life.

Challenges of Entrepreneurship Education in Nigerian Universities

In spite of the gains of entrepreneurship education, several challenges currently face Nigerian Universities in their attempt to properly engrain entrepreneurship education. According to Amoor (78), these challenges include:

Lack of lecturers with practical entrepreneurial training and consciousness. Although lecturers' awareness of entrepreneurship education has grown and attitudes towards the new curriculum has become more positive, majority of lecturers still do not know enough the aims, contents and work method of entrepreneurship education. Consequently, they may be unable to effectively impart the desired knowledge and entrepreneurial skills to their students.

Lack of comprehensive curriculum. The task of drawing up course content to be included in the curriculum of entrepreneurship-related education programme in Nigerian Universities will require a very long educational process (Blenker, Dreisler, Færgemann, & Kjeldsen, 45).

Lack of capital. Entrepreneurship education is capital intensive and both lecturers and students need money to practice the theory of initiating, establishing and running enterprises. This undoubtedly constitute constraints which subsequently frustrate the integration of the entrepreneurship in academic programmes in Nigerian Universities.

Furthermore, Brown succinctly highlights nine basic factors that hinder entrepreneurship education in our universities in Nigeria. These are:

- ❖ Poor knowledge based economy and low spirit of competition;
- ❖ Poor enterprising culture;
- ❖ Lack of entrepreneurship teachers, materials and equipment;
- ❖ Unavailability of relevant funds;
- ❖ Non-inclusion of entrepreneurship program in the general school curricula;
- ❖ Poor societal attitude to technical and vocational education development;
- ❖ Inadequate facilities and equipment for teaching and learning in practical-related courses;
- ❖ Insensitivity of government to enterprise creation and expansion strategy;
- ❖ Poor planning and execution of processes of action.

Isaac Odiba & Pauline Ann Baba (38) summarize these challenges to; finance and funding, unfriendly business environment as well as political and social instability. They explain further that, educational programmes generally and University education specifically has been facing underfunding. The University Lecturers need enough seminars and workshops at the nations that are also successful in entrepreneurship education to cope with the subject matter, and the visits will require finance. Odiba (363) posits that poor funding has resulted in inadequate infrastructural facilities. In fact, poor funding and inadequate provision of resources to cope with the ever increasing demand for education have led to inadequate provision of facilities for effective teaching and learning.

Besides, the unfriendly condition of business environment constitutes a major challenge in entrepreneurship education in Nigerian Universities. As a result of this, the zeal to receive this form of education is drastically affected. In addition, there are delays in business registration to difficulties in accessing bank loans as well as accessing sponsorship in the area of entrepreneurial development.

Moreover, political and social instability as witnessed in many parts of Nigeria have affected not just entrepreneurship education but the educational sector generally. Instability in Nigeria is witnessed majorly in the spheres of social and political domains. Cases of incessant strike actions, violence and religious crisis abound in Nigeria thus, posing a threat to meaningful entrepreneurship education development. Nigerians in most parts of the country live in fear due to the activities of terrorists and bandits who steal/rob, kill, and destroy lives and properties. These and other forms of civil vices pose serious threat to entrepreneurial education in the country.

By and large, Nigerian Universities have tried to execute entrepreneurship education in spite these challenges and one can only hope for a well-funded and more stable University system devoid of strikes and insecurity challenges which truncate academic activities in order to achieve set objectives.

The Role of Theatre in Enhancing Entrepreneurship Education in Nigerian Universities

It is a truism that combining content with experiential learning is challenging as there are pitfalls. One of such is the problem that emanates from the operational inexperience of the students. These could take any form and perhaps very detrimental. Another pitfall is less concrete and arises from the fact that, when students are selected from a large number to carry out certain tasks, such internal selectivity breeds a certain amount of elitism that can be poisonous to the morale of the large group. Besides, it is common knowledge that in very group of learners, there are different abilities while the problem of interest is also there to contend with. Arising from all these in the circumstance of entrepreneurship education, the need to teach the students some essential basic skills of budgeting, scheduling, and personnel and production management in order to enable them to operate as entrepreneurs stands out strongly.

Consequent upon all these concerns, the theatre comes to the fore. The import of Theatre Arts in the acquisition of knowledge by students cannot be debated. It is simply a tool and method of teaching through which students' understanding and thoughts are easily made clearer. Generally, many subjects which are practically inclined like Entrepreneurship require visuals and illustrations to back up the process of learning. To this end, Ajibade and Eleme carried out a study on the importance of visuals in primary and secondary schools in Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria. They discovered that, "students perform better using visuals and illustrations to learn than those who learnt

without them” (161). They explained that, teaching and learning is a complex process that can be reinforced with learning aids which stimulate, motivate as well as arrest learner’s interest. Whenever the eyes and ears are used together, there is always better results. Theatre arouses interest thereby leaving an appreciable impact on the learners. As such, it helps them to concentrate and remember their work as well as share experiences through active participation in class. This is why the theatre should occupy a central place in the teaching of entrepreneurship in Nigerian Universities. According to Ajakeye, “Creative art is a correlation of all other subjects in school, for it influences their successful teaching through sketches or illustrations” (3). Theatre being a major aspect of creative arts should therefore be keyed into the teaching of Entrepreneurship. This could be achieved by making the learning process performative using creative and improvisational drama, songs, music and dance. This will not only enhance effective teaching but also arouse interest in the learners.

Outside the cardinal functions of entertainment, education, and information which theatre plays, it performs several other roles to the society namely: mobilization, development, cultural presentation, promotion and preservation. Theatre also promotes our cultural heritage and creates identity among other roles. In synergizing theatre with entrepreneurship education in Nigerian Universities, the Nigerian agenda can be effectively taught thereby fostering our cultural heritage and identity. This is important particularly because of the image problem that Nigeria seems to have with the outside world. If theatre is adopted in achieving entrepreneurship education, it will contribute in stimulating the skills, creativity, and dexterity of Nigerian Undergraduates.

Conclusion

The future of Nigerian economy depends on a new generation of entrepreneurs that would have to come up with ideas and resolve to make them a reality as well as having the vision to create wealth and jobs. For this to be achieved, there is need for a cultural change in Nigeria. Entrepreneurship education is needed in Nigerian economy to create jobs, reduce unemployment, crime, government’s expenditure, poverty, social unrest, create wealth and raise the standard of living in the country. To effectively achieve this, the teaching of entrepreneurship in Nigerian Universities must be intensified. The Centres for Entrepreneurship in Nigerian Universities must synergize with Department of Theatre Arts in their respective Universities in order to brace up the practical teaching of entrepreneurship for a more result oriented programme. Given the Nigerian economy with high unemployment rate, Nigerian Universities cannot afford to get it wrong with Entrepreneurship Studies.

Recommendations

Arising from the views presented in this paper, the following recommendations are made.

- i. Given the nature and functionality of theatre in all societies of the world, there is every need to give it a place in the teaching of Entrepreneurship in Nigerian Universities. This will certainly improve the productivity of students in the area.
- ii. Lecturers teaching Entrepreneurship Studies should engage with Theatre Arts Lecturers and explore possible areas of synergy for effective partnership in teaching Entrepreneurship.
- iii. Nigerian Universities should make it a point of duty to regularly organize workshops on Entrepreneurship in order to crossbreed ideas on how to advance the teaching of Entrepreneurship for an improved economy that is capable of reducing unemployment and poverty.
- iv. The window of TETFund should be explored in accessing funds for entrepreneurship education in Nigerian Universities. This is the surest way of funding the programme.

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