

Review

Promoting popular participation for entrepreneurship and sustainable basic educational development in Nigeria

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Accepted 03 January, 2019

This paper acknowledges the fact that education is fundamental and a must to national development; and as such, it should be made accessible to all irrespective of sex, age, and socio-economic status among others. Resulting from this therefore, there is the urgent need to promote people's (Nigerians') participation in sustainable entrepreneurship through basic educational development required to empower recipients who will further contribute to national development. The need for basic entrepreneurship education, the constraints of popular participation and the guidelines for promoting it through the Nigerian educational enterprise were emphasized.

Key words: Involvement, entrepreneurship, sustainable, educational development, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship studies and sustainability have assumed new dimensions in Nigeria due to their prime contributions to the growth and development of the country's economy relating to basic educational development at all levels for people to getting things done. Although, there are numerous entrepreneurship development agencies in Nigeria, most people especially the youth and unemployed are not conversant with their operations and relevance.

Most developing countries like Nigeria are plagued with poverty, unemployment, under employment, disease, and lack of infrastructural facilities. Experts have suggested that graduates or even individuals should be job creators, self employed or employers of labour and not only job seekers (Egboh, 2009). Hence, the field of economic development has under gone a series of transformations over the past few decades. Traditional programs that emphasize recruiting of enterprises or industries continue to dominate the field, but newer innovative practices are also emerging. For example, as recently as 15 to 20 years ago, few economic developers considered tourism development as part of their job descriptions. Today,

such activities are commonplace. Cluster development is another new approach to developing local economies that is gaining adherents across the country.

Entrepreneurial development which is the practice of encouraging recreation and growth of start-up enterprises represents another emerging set of innovative development practices. Beginning in the mid to late 1980's, the number of economic development of organizations began to aggressively encourage local start-ups through the provision of technical assistance, financial support, and the like. These initiatives further expanded during the economic boom of the 1990s. The growing interest has many causes. The transformation of the American business landscape tops the list. For a variety of reason, fast growing new enterprises has assumed more important roles in the American economy, driving innovation and creating new jobs. The large manufacturing facility – long considered the only grail for most economic developers – has become a more elusive target as plants move overseas to take advantage of lower labour cost and larger facilities become more capital intensive. In response, economic developers have had to re-focus on new strategies aimed at increasing the size of home-grown businesses, and entrepreneurial development forms a key part of this new perspective of which basic education development is not left out.

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To achieve the purpose of this paper, we must begin by first putting in proper perspectives the need to secure the participation of the people in development process, the major concepts employed in this discourse such as the concept of education and economic development, popular participation, entrepreneurship and sustainable basic education, and educational development.

SECURING PARTICIPATION OF PEOPLE FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The need to inculcate the right type of values, skills and competences necessary to make the citizens (the youths and unemployed in particular) develop as useful members of the society and contribute towards national growth, has been the driving force behind promoting popular participation for entrepreneurship and sustainable basic educational development in Nigeria through various education policies and programmes in the country. It is therefore not an overstatement to say that the standard and quality of education offered in Nigerian public schools at all levels has deteriorated over time. This probably accounts for the introduction of the new UBE programme by the Federal Government of Nigeria. The new UBE programme is mostly acclaimed for its inclusiveness designed to cater for the school age population (primary and junior secondary, nomadic population and those out of school (non formal education).

One major issue that has continued to occur on the agenda for rapid and genuine educational development in Nigeria in recent times is how to secure the participation of the people in the development process at all levels of education from the primary to tertiary levels. This is because of the interesting belief that no genuine or viable and self-sustaining development can ever be without the involvement of the people. Nowadays, the top-down approach to development which ignores the needs, aspirations, rights and inputs of the local people is not only old fashioned but is also increasingly becoming unacceptable. Consequently, it is crucial to ensure in the course of designing development programmes, the active involvement and contributions of the entire people who should be educated to share responsibility along with the benefits of development (Esenjor, 1992).

The involvements of the local people in educational development processes is being advocated for, based on the fact that the people are more equipped with the indigenous knowledge through informal and non formal education of their environment in terms of all the existing traditional resources in the area which are viewed as important ingredients of sustainable educational development (Omoyibo, 1998). Thus, participation of all in the economy is the only means through which the people's democratic culture, which often results in genuine and sustainable educational development, can be effectively

explored.

Unfortunately, everywhere there appear to be wide differences in the some quantity and quality of people's participation. This means that people's participation is not yet profound in educational development activities to enhance and entrepreneurship and sustainability. The effectiveness of the involvement of the people in the communities in educational development programme has been marred and impeded by all forms of intrigues and negative vices on the part of government officials and prominent opinion leaders in the subject communities. Consequently, educational development scholars have always sought ways of promoting and sustaining the participation of the people in the processes of educational development.

In a frantic effort to search for the most effective ways of securing and promoting people's participation in educational development programmes, (like entrepreneurship education) this paper seeks to make its initial contribution by examining the major concept used, reviewing briefly perspectives of peoples participation in developing counties, highlighting the case of Nigeria; discussing the need for participating in entrepreneurship education, the constraints on people's participation and proposed measures for promoting participation in educational developmental programmes like entrepreneurship.

CONCEPT OF EDUCATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT OF ECONOMY

Education has been defined in various ways as the aggregate of processes through which an individual acquires knowledge, values, attitudes and all other forms of behaviour that are of positive value to the society to which he belongs or as the process of learning to live as a useful and acceptable member of the community. However, Friere (1970) aptly describes education as a process of becoming critically aware of one's reality in a manner that leads to effective action upon it. In other words, not only does education enable the individual to understand the past as well as adjust to, and participate in the present, most importantly it equips the individual with the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes for creating the civilization of the future by way of popular participation for entrepreneurship and sustainable basic educational development in any country. The creation of this civilization of the future depends squarely on the youths to whom the future belongs.

The aggressive pursuit of education by many countries of the world is an indication that education is a social good and key that any nation can use to close the door of poverty and ignorance and at the same time open that of prosperity in terms of economic buoyancy, social advancement and civilization (Ajibade, 1993). One major way of bringing about this buoyancy, social advancement and civilization is through the promotion of popular

participation in entrepreneurship education with the mindset of bringing about sustainable educational and national development. This can be achieved through participations at the different levels of the educational pyramid, that is, primary, secondary and tertiary levels. This will not only equip the recipient with knowledge, requisite skills for self-sustainability but also empower them to contribute meaningfully to national development. Non-formal education, which entrepreneurship education is, is an integral part of the requirement to achieving the aforementioned goals.

In sequence, who is an entrepreneur? The concept of entrepreneurship embraces one who always searches for change, responds to it and exploits it as an opportunity. An entrepreneur is an agent (individual or collective) who champions a novel continuation of productive resources as the means of achieving an economic end.

In fact, an entrepreneur is a person who has possession of new enterprise, venture or idea and assumes significant accountability for the inherent roles and outcome. The term is originally a loaned French word and was first used by the Irish economist Richard Cantillon in 1800, who opined that an entrepreneur is one who undertakes an enterprise, especially a contractor, acting as an intermediary between capital and labour; and chooses a level of personal, professional, and financial risk to pursue opportunity. This is the situation that many youths and unemployed in the country do not want to face.

POPULAR PARTICIPATION OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP THROUGH BASIC EDUCATION

The concept of popular participation is often seen as synonymously alternated for "people's participation", "community participation" and "citizen's participation", which implies the massive involvement of the people in the locality in activities designed to promote and enhance the socio-economic and political development of their community. There has been the tendency in the past to narrow the concept of popular participation.

In modern development parlance, the use of this concept (popular participation) transcends beyond this narrow confine. With popular participation, everyone aspires to contribute to a meaningful change in the society to which they belong. Hence, Arigbede (1990) observes that popular participation is a methodology that recognizes the centrality of the human person in development, that is, the various culture, knowledge, experiences and aspirations of a people for the collective utilization of their limited resources for their own development and that of their society. Popular participation emphasizes that every member of a community, from the lowest to the most influential at any level irrespective of sex or age, must be involved in the process of development. The African charter for popular participation in the recovery

and development process in Africa held in Arusha, Tanzania between 12th and 16th of February, 1990, referred to it as the empowerment of the people. This is to effectively involve themselves in creating structures and designing policies and programmes that serve not only the interest of the people but their becoming part and parcel of the decision-making processes at all levels; and also articulating goals of recovery and development, allocating resources, formulating policies and programmes, executing projects, utilizing projects and monitoring projects performance while sharing equitably in the benefits of recovery and development as well as the enhancement of the effective accountability of the leadership and the masses for all its actions (Adeleji, 1990; Oduaran, 1994).

Popular participation is therefore seen as a method in which everybody in a locality is organized and made to participate in the development of that locality. It allows everyone in the group to be a teacher and a learner. Everybody is active; no one is passive or an observer. It is a collective effort and a continuous process (Omokemi, 1997). Popular participation therefore, is purposefully realizing the collective and personal creativity of the people for a rapid and genuine development.

According to Oduaran (1994), popular participation involves:

1. Total control by the people of their own affairs, be they economic, social or political.
2. Capacity building or empowerment – by ensuring that the people are fully involved in the development process of entrepreneurship through the acquisition of enabling knowledge, skills and attitudes, using the medium of informal training or non-formal training.
3. The utilization of the vibrant micro-organizations of the people themselves to create in their community's continuous drive to survive.
4. Empowerment-development through the psychological instilling of self-confidence into a people who probably hitherto believe that the Almighty God had castigated them to an eternity of powerlessness, miseries, diseases, death, subjugation and degradation.
5. Development to be properly harmonized with human self-fulfillment and crucial solidarity with other human beings.

Based on the aforementioned ideas, popular participation can be conceived as the democratic, ultimate, and massive involvement of the people in activities designed to bring about improvement in their own well-being.

As Arigbede (1990) puts it, popular participation is not a luxury which a nation may or may not choose to indulge in, for it is a pre-condition for real development the people. It is the guiding spirit behind the full involvement of the people in contributing ideas, energies, and resources to the development of their society. It is also

based on the premise that the greatest need of any individual or nation is self-actualization or self-fulfillment and self-reliance.

Hence, the need for popular participation stems from the following advantages:

1. It helps politician and bureaucrats to understand local people and how politics workout.
2. It gives some indications as to the type of programmes and policies that are preferable or acceptable to the people (youths and the unemployed).
3. It helps to stimulate local incentives, and to create self-confidence, co-cooperativeness and homogeneity among the people.
4. It can also stop unpopular programme proposals and create healthy and cordial relation with community between the people and the change agents or the elected officials.
5. It gives every one a sense of belonging and prevents ignorance, frustration, dictatorship and chaos.

Popular participation stipulates that the people for whom any project is being designed must be allowed to take active part in the planning, execution, utilization and assessment of the project or facilities. How relevant then is entrepreneurship education to national development and how can it be sustained through the promotion of popular participation in it?

ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION AND POPULAR PARTICIPATION

Entrepreneurial development is fast becoming a phenomenon especially in developing economies like Nigeria's (It has taken root in Asian countries). Most developing economies of the world including Sub-Saharan Africa are characterized by unemployment and under employment problems. The desire to make everyone self-reliant, rather than looking for the elusive white collar job, makes entrepreneurship education very relevant now than never before. 'Youth' restiveness and gangsterism, and other serial crimes are all factors associated with unemployment, a disease that entrepreneurship education and training can cure through popular participation. It was based on this that the Federal Government of Nigeria put in place some programmes to address these problems. Programmes such as the directorates of employment (NDE) and the various poverty alleviation schemes such as Nigerian Economic Reconstruction Fund (NERFUND), Small-Scale Industries Credit Schemes (SSICS), youth employment scheme, and the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), among others were put in place to address this problem. How far have these programmes helped in reducing unemployment and enhancing popular participation?

Small and medium scale businesses abound that an individual can take advantage of in the form of production

of goods and services. Some business can produce raw materials, others process these raw materials into goods, while others market and distribute the goods. This is how progress is made through directional popular participation. These small-scale industries provide employment for the teeming youths of these countries. Can we borrow a leaf from them? Business enterprises in the area of mining and quarrying provide raw materials for building and construction firms; manufacturing businesses provide both domestic and industrial goods; transportation, communication and other public utilities facilitates the operation of other businesses. While financial, real estate and insurance businesses contribute a great deal to the economy, it is also true to say that the economy cannot do without the wholesale and retail businesses. The solution to unemployment and "arrested" national development, and popular participation in the nation's developmental effort is entrepreneurship education which is tied to sustainable development.

In order to achieve the desire for functional and practical entrepreneurship education and training for national sustainable development, the human resources for the world of works, business educators, entrepreneurs, stakeholders and students at different levels of our educational enterprise must be trained to acquire the requisite knowledge and skill needed in this globalized-knowledge economy.

Constraints of popular participation

There are legions of constraints of popular participation and they can be from many sources which include: (a) the structure of the government, (b) the agency or change agent and (c) the people themselves.

The structure of the government

Popular participation in the country has often been jeopardized. Our past efforts to experiment adult suffrage and democratic rules often ended in a deadlock, leading in most cases to military interventions. The military rule had unnecessarily dragged on for too long that the people have become skeptical about democratic practices. Under military rule for example, massive popular participation is often suppressed. In this circumstance, popular participation does not thrive because of the suspicion it can attract.

In support of this, Ndiaye (1990) opined that the degree of the people's participation is in direct proportion to the degree of freedom that their country allows. Military administrations do not always allow popular participation since the people are not the gun that put them in power. Besides, it is usual to find (in most African countries) that decision making is conducted at national or state level. The government always takes the front seat of all development activities. The administrative set-up or the

bureaucratic structure renders peoples participation in decision-making, implementation and evolution in development programmes impossible. People participation is often resisted when people force their way into the helm of affairs of the system. In addition to the preceding discussion, there is the problem of bad leadership. According to Oduaran (1993), an environment that is barren in dedicated, upright and humane leadership cannot have enviable people-participation in development. As a major problem in African countries particularly Nigeria, we have often witnessed passiveness or 'voicelessness' and powerlessness and even in some cases, withdrawal on the part of the people. These obstacles are also often reflected in the attitude of agency staff or change agents at various levels.

The agency or change agent

Another patent constraint to popular participation is the attitude of the agency staff. At various levels, they often assume they know best how things should be done. Consequently, they often neglect or ignore the suggestions coming from the local population. This situation, Ndiaye (1990) observes, can ruin popular participation. Experiences have shown that even when the agency staff work with the people, they often transform themselves into authority. When they put on this posture, they become anti-people; in this way, the agency staff distant themselves from the people. A very good case was reported by Omokemi (1997). Foley quoted that a change agent or agency staff in Sulabia, Tanzania saying:

"Remember, you farmers are the chickens and we are the mother-hen. If you follow our examples you will survive, but if you are not attentive, you will perish."

In fact, such a worker will only succeed in alienating himself from the people. Understandably, such a situation cannot promote or sprout popular participation.

The people themselves

A notable constraint to popular participation in educational development is traceable to the people themselves. In other words, the most cogent obstacles to popular participation lie within the people. Some of these obstacles according to Oduaran (1994) include ignorance, illiteracy, poverty, inadequate mobilization and apathy or indifference on the part of the people. Many of the people are unaware of their rights and responsibilities. As a result of this, people do not always know what to do. This situation separates them from becoming actively involved in development activities. The situation is also worsened by the problem of illiteracy. Illiteracy

inhibits in many aspect of popular participation. People who are illiterate are very difficult to mobilize because they do not see any reason why they should be active in the development process. Poverty compounded with illiteracy is capable of completely stifling people's participation. Adedeji (1990) observes that the poverty level of our people is rising at a terrific rate. Poverty always set people on the course of searching for minimum basic human needs, for mass movement or participation in development activities (Oduaran, 1993).

These problems highlighted also result in inadequate mobilization: voicelessness and apathy. Under these situations, voicelessness and indifference or apathy, you can hardly expect reasonable popular participation in educational development programmes.

The question may now be asked: How can we promote popular participation in educational development? Popular participation in the real sense of it means involvement of the people in any development programme based on mutual respect. It involves a capacity to identify with other people of the community without being conscious of the various socio-economic problem or barriers.

DEVELOPMENT OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP THROUGH BASIC EDUCATION IN AN ECONOMY

The term "development" has been a very controversial one. It is commonly used interchangeably with terms like 'improvement and change'. To conceive development in this sense is to trivialize the issue. Development is more than mere "change" or improvement. Development is concerned with the transformation of the individuals and societies from traditional relations to more modern ways. The changes that are associated with development provide individuals and societies with more control over their own destiny (Babalola and Atinmo, 2009). It is a progressive improvement or a progressive change. Also, Bamberger (1988) referred to it as a type of social change acquired through entrepreneurship and sustainable educational development, in which new ideas are introduced into a social system to enhance living conditions of the people. This means that development should not be seen purely in physical, economic or quantitative terms based on noticeable growth (Akinpelu, 1989; Oduaran, 1994).

Omoyibo (1998), a politician and a great educator maintains that development is summed up in man's capacity to expand his own consciousness, and therefore, his power over himself, his environment and society. To him, man is the central pivot around which development revolves. Hence, he concludes that development is for man, by man and of man. This means that man is not only the recipient of efforts of development but must also initiate the efforts to develop himself. In other words, the opportunities created or generated by development are

induced through human efforts. Man must show the desire to develop before development can come. True development is thus the kind which can lead to the expansion and growth of man's inner qualities. That is, it must be capable of raising man's ability to dominate himself, become less dependent and more proficient in what he is doing or becoming critical in out look. In other words, development must be seen not just in terms of physical ones built around man who must have the right attitude, skills and understanding to generate it, but also on how to utilize and accommodate development on a more enduring basis (Oduaran, 1994). Modern conception suggests that the term must be seen as human-centered development.

In sequel, development amounts to the optimum realization of the well-being of persons and individuals within a given locality. The emphasis for development is people, as it is people who are stimulated, motivated, helped and encouraged to adopt new methods, to learn new skill for the attainment of improved or enhanced well-being within the context of modern development. The emphasis is on the process and its effects on the people. The process is concerned with the role of individuals in a locality in their attempt to improve their living condition and that of their locality at large. It also implies the perception of a feeling of worry. This worry then becomes a driving force propelling the people to move on the path of learning something about the problem facing them and their community using the technique of communication: This should be followed by setting of objectives and taking action that would lead to the resolution of the problem, as well as assessing the efforts made.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Sustainable development connotes the ability to keep going and keep up the progress made in various segments of the society. In the words of the Brundtland Commission (World Bank, 2003; p.14), development is sustainable, if it "meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs".

'Sustainability' in relation to educational development is not a novelty. Recently, it started to gain grounds in development circles because of its vital nature of a wide range of development projects (Ogunkpa, 1997).

The World Commission on Environment and Development (1987) defined sustainable development as development without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own need. Sustainable development according to Omoyibo (1998) recognizes three important aspects of development namely:

1. Raising people's living level, that is, their income and consumption levels of food, medical services, education etc, through relevant economic growth processes.

2. Creating conditions conducive to the growth of people's self-esteem through the establishment of social, political and economic system and institutions which promotes human dignity and respect.

3. Increasing people's freedom to choose by enlarging the range of their choice variables, for example, increasing varieties of consumer's goods and services.

However, in producing goods and services through entrepreneurship for man's benefits, the environment needs to be preserved in the present in order not to affect future generators well-being.

PERSPECTIVES ON DEVELOPMENT OF POPULAR PARTICIPATIONS IN NIGERIA

Before the era of colonialism, the developing nations or communities were known to be involved in experimentation with popular participation. In fact, in the early days, popular participation was deeply rooted among the people. This was promoted through communal efforts which found expression in the massive use of the age-grade system in transformation activities. Here, according to Oduaran (1994), popular participation is finding firm root in popular education, and is increasingly being used for effective social transformation, which aims at producing a society built on the interest and aspiration of popular sectors.

Popular participation in Nigeria in the last few years can be identified in various mass-oriented government sponsored programmes such as the Green Revolution, Operation Feed the Nation, MAMSER, DIFFRI and Environmental Sanitation to mention but a few. Besides, at different times in the history of Nigeria as an evolving nation, politically, socially or religiously driven mass movements had been witnessed. Equally, there had been remarkable doses of people generated participation in educational development that is without undue interference by governments. Various Nigerian communities were known to have achieved remarkable or significant success in using the age grade system in the initiation, implementation, utilization and sustenance of educational development projects. However, when one considers popular participation in the context of our explanation at the beginning of this paper, then one can boldly say that Nigeria has not witnessed true participation especially in entrepreneurship education and training. This is due to the fact that because government engineered and sponsored people participation does not qualify for the acceptable classification of the term. Besides, the Nigerian policy has not provided the right or conducive atmosphere for promoting popular or people's participation in development processes. Instead, we have had the misfortune of creating conditions that turned out to be constraints to people's participation in the development of the country. It is now important turn our attention to this issue.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROMOTING POPULAR PARTICIPATION FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND SUSTAINABLE BASIC EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

To ensure popular and effective participation local organizations under which local people will have to do the work and organize themselves must be created and encouraged. Examples of such organizations include youth movement, worker movement, and co-operative organization among others.

Besides, one must cultivate local initiative by promoting grass root planning, implementation, utilization and monitoring. In fact, decision making and talking should be decentralized. In other words, the decision making process must be democratized. The people's development committees are needed and should be involved in the process of educational development. In essence, bottom-top planning procedure should be adopted.

Again, viable non-governmental organizations (NGOs) must be cultivated. Non-governmental organization are known to be prominent channels for promoting popular participation by their ability to aggregate interest, resources and energies (Adedeji, 1990). The government must also develop legal and fiscal network for giving enough foundation and support to NGOs.

Government must also legislate on popular education of the people through adult and non-formal education. This will encourage the growth of community empowerment and enhance the people's development capacity. The eradication of illiteracy rate in the land must be pursued with renewed vigour and seriousness. Government should show more commitment and actions in their efforts to eradicate the scourge of illiteracy among the people. This will free the people from ignorance and promote cooperativeness and homogeneity which are prerequisites for sprouting massive people participation.

More importantly, government should be a little more flexible, humane and tolerant in providing adequate and conducive environment or conduction for evolution and the development of popular participation.

Finally, popular organizations commonly referred to as voluntary development organizations (VDOs) should be given the necessary encouragement and assistance that would enable them get access to available resources. This can strengthen the organizations so that they can continue to provide effectiveness for critical decisions of major national, state and local policy issues that affect the people.

CONCLUSION

It is expected that the recommendations proposed will help to sustain and accelerate educational development in Nigeria entrepreneurship education. However, in the case of propagating these ideas, some kind of resistance should be expected. There must therefore, be mutual

cooperation between the people and the government. Government must move closer to the people as a way of removing any suspicion and facilitating the process of mutual friendship and trust. Such mutual co-operation can ultimately promote popular participation in educational development processes like entrepreneurship education which is not only beneficial to its recipient but also to the nation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The contributions of Prof. Eric Arubayi, the Vice Chancellor, Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria; Prof. V. F. Peretomode, and Prof. D. Onoyase, who moulded us academically are hereby acknowledged with immense thanks. Also, to Prof. P. Ikoya, the Dean, Faculty of Education, Prof. P. Oghuvwu, Prof. N. Akpotu, Prof. (Mrs.) E. J. Egwunyenga, and Dr. A. A. Akiri, the Head of Department of Educational Administration and Policy Studies, for their immense contribution and advice when this paper was being written. We also acknowledge Prof. J. Aigbomian, Prof. (Mrs.) Efoghe, Prof. (Mrs.) E. Omoregie of Ambrose Ali University, Ekpoma, and Prof. C. Ogbodo of University of Uyo, Nigeria, for their immense contributions.

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