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**Entrepreneurial Skills as a Strategy for Developing Self-Reliant Attitudes Among  
Secondary School Learners in Nigeria: A Paradigms Shift for Lifelong Learning**

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**ABSTRACT**

*Entrepreneurship education was introduced into Nigeria educational system to provide the necessary skills, competence, and understanding and to prepare the learners to gain self-reliant attitude that will contribute to sustainable living in the country. This paper examines the use of entrepreneurial skills as an approach to cultivate the self-reliant attitudes in secondary school students through the development of entrepreneurial skills. Literature from eminent scholars have pointed out that students themselves need to possess certain traits such as passion, pro-activity, tenacity and hard work in order to acquire these entrepreneurial skills to encourage them actualize self-reliance. It is observed that when these personality traits are inculcated in students, they can possess qualities that would guarantee their self-reliant attitude and endure in learning new skills for sustainability. Hence, it was concluded that the effective implementation of entrepreneurship curriculum that will bridge the theoretical gap between business studies and other trade subjects taught in secondary schools to mitigate the learning crises that sabotage the performance of students. It was recommended among others that government through the Ministry of Education should endeavour to ensure that there is policies harmony for attaining higher productivity through entrepreneurial skills' development in secondary schools in the study area.*

**KEYWORD: Entrepreneurial skills, self-reliant attitudes, learners, secondary schools, lifelong learning.**

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**Introduction**

Secondary school learners are those individuals prepared by secondary school education. They are learners who received education after primary education and before tertiary level of education. Secondary education in Nigeria is categorized into basic education (3 years) and senior education for the remaining three years respectively. Learners at the first three years of junior education are expected to be awarded a Basic Education Certificate after passing the requisite assessment or examination(s). The learner, at the senior secondary stage when

successful after examinations is promoted to offer different subjects at the higher level as classified under diverse areas of studies such as science, technology, humanities, business studies and compulsory cross-cutting subjects (entrepreneurship studies) (Effiong & Akpan, 2017). This is in consonance with the broad goals of secondary education that has been enunciated by the National Policy on Education, that a student at such period of education shall be prepared for useful living in the society and high education (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2013).

The phrase that individual shall be prepared for useful living is holistically attributed to the dynamics of entrepreneurial skills' development. Perhaps, if this is achieved it would help to endure the learner for sustainable economic development in the society and guarantee their later life. This could be impossible except the school environment is completely subjected to learning society, and opportunities recognised for learning for every person wherever they are and however during their old age (Effiong, 2017). Effiong, Obushi and Adebola (2017) stated that if sustainable economic development is to be achieved through inculcation of entrepreneurial competence, learning should take place at all stage of life that is, starting from cradle to tomb. The authors enunciated that the pattern of learning should endeavour to be implanted in all life background from home, community, pass through school to workplace, back home to community again to the grave. However, a lifelong learning gains could be possible through the potentials of the learning to become self-reliance which can be acquire through entrepreneurial skills' development at the learning situation.

### **Education for the development of self-reliance**

Before 1980, where education was regarded as a profitable adventure to managers of education and government of Nigeria, learners were usually informed on the direction of their learning for future guarantee in education (Effiong, 2012). Recently, it is expected that at completion of junior secondary school level of education, learners are supposed to diversify due to their potentials and learning capacity either to continue in the upper class or possess entrepreneurial skills to become self-reliant.

Okoye and Ogunleye (2015) asserted that after junior secondary education, students are expected to stream into senior secondary schools, technical colleges, while some are streamed into vocational training centre or an apprenticeship scheme based on the result of tests to determine the ability, attitude and vocational interest. The authors added that these projections would make them to offer six core subjects, a maximum of two electives from vocational and two subjects from non-vocational in order to register the maximum of nine-subjects at the senior secondary examination. After the attendance of compulsory basic education, a learner is free to move to senior secondary schools or technical schools or college of choice, sequel to the child's learning capacity.

Notably, the philosophy behind the establishment of technical colleges was to provide trained manpower in the applied sciences, technology and business particularly at craft, highly developed craft. It was also to inculcate the technical experience and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, commercial and economic development; give training and develop the necessary skills to individual who shall be self-reliant economically (Okoye & Ogunleye, 2015). The self-reliant paradigms that would affect the economic life of learners positively should be traceable to the development of the needed entrepreneurial skills through learning process.

## **Entrepreneurship Education and Skills' development**

However, the concept of entrepreneurship has been discussed in several researches, which become a foundation for skill development and provisions for lifelong learning gains among young people in the society. Entrepreneurship education is the key to the development of functional skills that can mitigate the uproar of poverty, and job scarcity in the society. Ementa (2013) offered that the objective of entrepreneurship education at the senior secondary school is to offer functional education for the youths to enable them become self-employed and self-reliant; stimulate individual for economic growth in the less-developed areas. The author further stated that entrepreneurship education can provide learners at this level of education to creative and innovative in identifying novel business opportunities; train them in areas of skills relevant to the management of small business centres; inculcate the spirit of perseverance in them to make them persist in business and assist them to acquire skills needed for the society. The pattern of education will help to develop the skills of entrepreneurship which is recognised as entrepreneurial skill or competence. Entrepreneurial skills are competences of an individual, which regarded as an entrepreneur.

## **Entrepreneurial Skills as a strategy for developing self-reliance**

Explicitly, several researches have pondered on the entrepreneurial learning as a strategy for developing self-reliant attitudes of students, individual vocational choice and behaviours (Berger and D'Ascoli 2012; Gegenfurtner 2012). Theoretically, the hypothesis of planned behaviours is well-vested in the conceptualisation that describes entrepreneurial skills as a strategy to develop students to become self-reliance. This tactically elucidated that students' entrepreneurial career selection is based on the assumption that this choice is a complex and deliberate behaviour that requires various cognitive processes and can most accurately be predicted by purpose (Guerrero et al. 2008). Perhaps, the acceptable attention for the development is a choice from the learner based on factors such as control over behaviour, attitude towards entrepreneurship, subjective and social norms. Control over behaviour suggests how learners perceive their abilities and the level of skills acquired to enable them carry out entrepreneurial activities. This is because entrepreneurial talents may exceedingly impact learners' intelligence and capacity to perform the tasks required for setting up their own businesses or acquisition of skills (BarNir et al. 2011). It is postulated that secondary school students ought to be enforced, guided and their behaviour controlled to ensure that they subject themselves to learning important skills of entrepreneurs.

In addition, attitude towards entrepreneurship become another factor which describes learners' knowledge of the worth and the significant of entrepreneurship as well as their expectations from the results of their learning, coupled with the price individual has to pay in starting their own business after school. Learning situation at secondary level is the opportunity to model important learning experiences in learners and the teacher has a duty in this regard. For the right attitude to emerge in learners, sometimes motivation from the teacher or facilitator is welcomed to encourage attitude formation for effective learning gains. Attitude of students towards learning make learning to be considered meaningful and successful, while teachers will be motivated to teach when the learner is ready to learn. Liñán (2008) noted that attitudes of students toward entrepreneurship are likely shaped by a variety of personal and environmental characteristics such as interest, ability, the value and environmental support. Thus, when students are modeled to form important learning attitudes such as perseverance, listening competence, attentiveness

and enthusiasm, learning itself becomes interesting. These attitudes are formed in students in order to successfully develop entrepreneurial skills needed for them to become self-reliance.

Moreover, subjective and social norms denote students' perceptions of how significant others are supporting their accomplishment and their tendency to comply with them. Chen and He (2011) observed that the higher students receive support from the significant others, the stronger is their goal to choose entrepreneurship as their future career path. These factors are presumed to shape students' cooperative objective to engage in entrepreneurship and enhance their motivation and desire to establish their own businesses in future. It is believed that social value of entrepreneurial skill is capable of making students in secondary schools to increase their enthusiasm for acquiring these skills. This is because the manner the society regards individuals who possess skills; the more the interest of such innovative characteristics will be pursued in school.

For example, in our society of today, people celebrate politicians because they believe there is more money in politics; every lady wants to get married to a politician and undermine an entrepreneur. This conception is reducing the attractiveness of the area, and can make students in secondary schools, even the University to forget about skills development, including entrepreneurship. These characteristics may negatively affect learners' perception and control of their behaviour towards entrepreneurial skills development, attitude towards learning these skills and their subjective norms. These attitudes of the learner may thwart the effort of the teachers, schools and the society for sustainable economic development anticipated. Hence, these factors influence students' entrepreneurial purpose, which could make all forms of teaching strategy to fail and result to their ineptitude behaviours to cooperate with learning entrepreneurial skills (Fayolle and Gailly 2008).

### **Common traits for the development of Entrepreneurial skills**

- **Passion:** Passion has been cited as the most observed phenomenon in entrepreneurial studies, as a core characteristic of creators of wealth (Smilor, 2011). This is observed to be central inherent attribute of successful leaders. Entrepreneurs who are high in passion confront opportunities and challenges with zeal, ride out the long hours necessary during venture growth phases, and experience a venture's successes as well as difficulties as if they were personal events (Locke, 2010). Thus, students who have passion for learning would love to acquire successful traits such as entrepreneurial skills to become self-reliance. It is this character trait that would assist teachers to inculcate in students' entrepreneurial skills suitable for sustainable economic development for their future livelihood.
- **Pro-activity:** This is the propensity to take action to influence environmental change. Entrepreneurs who possess this personality type would search for opportunities, show initiative, take action and persevere in any endeavours until they attain achievement level (Bateman & Crant, 2013). Researchers believe that entrepreneurs with this personality trait typically use organizational strategies that involve high levels of environmental searching and long-range forecasting which allows them to successfully identify new opportunities (Kickul & Gundry, 2012). This implies that learners in secondary schools can learn to plan their actions before event occurs. When this is developed in them they would have the

potential to endure in business world as independent people and continue to learn more skills for sustainability.

- **Tenacity:** Tenacity always regularly recognized as perseverance. It involves the ability of the entrepreneur to sustain goal-directed action and energy even when experiencing hindrances (Baum & Locke, 2014). A number of researchers have noted the important role of tenacity in predicting an entrepreneur's willingness to confront formidable barriers to market entry (Gartner, Gatewood & Shaver, 2011). Students in secondary schools desire tenacity in their behaviour traits in order to help them acquire the needed entrepreneurial skills to be self-reliance. These traits would further make them to lifelong process of learning for sustainable livelihood.
- **Hard work:** For any successful attainment, there must be some element of hard work. Ikpe (2019) asserted that no one tends to achieve success just by sitting but commitment and hard work. The author iterated that successful entrepreneur must possess the spirit of hard work to achieve the goal of the business. Hard work is the bone of every successful student. A student who does not possess hard work as an attitude may likely fail subjects in one's academic endeavours, and such individual may find it difficult to succeed in business.

### **Rational for achieving Entrepreneurial skills**

Developing important entrepreneurial characteristic is a very important aspect of strategy for achieving self-reliant and inculcation of lifelong learning into children in school. The learner is an entity that is to be developed for future operation and development, therefore, characteristic or personality has to be built in them such as needs for achievement, locus of control and motivation. When an individual is possessed with these characteristics, there is that tendency to become self-reliance and endure in learning that would bring important accomplishment and life satisfaction. These characteristics are as follows:

- **Need for Achievement:** maintaining high standards and aspiring to accomplish difficult tasks (Smilor, 2011). People with a high need for achievement take responsibility for outcomes, engage in activities that have a moderate degree of risk and require skill and effort (Mitchelmore & Rowley, 2008). This motive has also been found to predict firm founding and the successful performance of firms.
- **Locus of Control:** the degree to which a person believes that their actions can directly affect an event, or that they can control an outcome. Researchers have discovered that founders of successful entrepreneurial firms have a high internal locus of control, meaning that they feel like they have significant control over the outcome of events (Smilor, 2011). Students who have locus of control will surely perceive as having conviction of surmounting all barriers to pass examination, which their presumption may make to them to succeed.
- **Motivations:** Motivation is a primary index for entrepreneur. Without motivation, students cannot learn values and skills needed for their daily living. Motivation makes them to pass examinations, and would make them to set their goals, consistent in their belief system, build capacity for success in all aspect of their endeavours. However, goal setting and self-efficacy are promoted by motivation and they are explained as follows:  
Goal Setting: A learner that desires to become self-reliant should endeavour to set goals even when in school. Students set goals to read their books, give themselves target in order to achieve success during examinations. This behaviour and attitude would make such

students to set target on entrepreneurial skills that one wants to acquire in order to become self-reliance. This is because entrepreneurs who are motivated to set goals, particularly, business growth goals, have been found to increase firm growth along with firm performance and innovation (Boyd, 2013). Challenging goals of all types have repeatedly been found to lead to greater performance, highlighting the importance of setting goals that are specific, attainable, and time-bound.

**Self-Efficacy:** A person's belief in their own ability, in other words, their task-specific self-confidence (Mitchelmore & Rowley, 2008). Entrepreneurs with high self-efficacy will persist even in the face of setbacks, will take negative feedback more positively, will use feedback to improve their performance, will set more difficult goals, and will exert more effort over a longer period of time. Researchers have found that when entrepreneurs have high self-efficacy, there is a strong relationship between this motivation and firm growth (Baum & Locke, 2014).

### **Pertinent factors for developing entrepreneurial skills among secondary school learners**

Certain factors can help learning in secondary school level of education to develop entrepreneurial skills that can assist their living standing in the future. These skills according to Effiong and Akpan (2017) are as follows:

- **Interpersonal Skills:** Learners who are groomed with strong interpersonal skills have ability for working well with people from diverse backgrounds with intent for creativity. These learners will be very much insightful with regards to the behaviour of others, learn to understand motives and actions surrounding the environment, quick to be aware of strained relationships, and well attuned to both verbal and nonverbal behaviours.
- **Strong Initiative:** Learners, inculcated with high initiative are often driven to work hard. These potential entrepreneurs will frequently work independently and are often driven to achieve task mastery, regardless of the extra effort necessary to do so. Such learners will set specific time bound and challenging goals for themselves. They will be very confident in their capabilities to perform well and enjoy seeking out novel opportunities.
- **Ambition:** Such learners are always ambitious, motivated, persistent, and persevere even in the face of difficult challenges with the school subject and in relationship with others.
- **Adaptability and Flexibility:** Learners who are ready to possess entrepreneurial skills are highly flexible and adaptable to relationships and other issues, often deal very well with ambiguity and have a unique ability to choose actions even without all necessary information. These types of individual are innovative and creative, often developing novel solutions to complex problems. They handle change well, often generating new goals and actions to deal with unforeseen events.
- **Willingness to Take Risks:** learners whose attitudes are developed for successful entrepreneurs will be willing to take risks; they will be capable of identifying and calculating risk assessments. They are typically skilled at developing alternative plans and articulating worst-case scenarios, take calculated risk and learn in the process, sometimes from past experience.
- **Willingness to Learn:** Learners who have a strong willingness to learn often pursue opportunities that allow him or her to acquire new skills and expertise. These set of students initiate personal career development and often employ the feedback of others to help them make and organize their insightful career decisions.

### **Conclusion**

It is concluded that the effective implementation of entrepreneurship curriculum that covers the business studies and other trade subjects taught in secondary schools should bridge the gap of skill deficiencies among learners. This is because the developing effective entrepreneurial skill for the yearning of the learning and ability to accomplish the needs of the society have been hampered, hence, secondary schools keep on producing graduates that cannot be self-reliance. Therefore, this has created laxities to hinder the actual development of entrepreneurial skills and self-reliant attitudes in secondary school and hampered the sustainability of the skills in the life of the learners.

### **Recommendation**

It is recommended that Nigerian government through the Ministry of Education should endeavour to review the present policies of entrepreneurship education with the involvement of teachers, to ensure that the policies are matched with the teaching procedure in the classroom for higher productivity as well as achieving the goals of education. This will go a long way to strengthen teaching methods, procedures, principles that will guide teachers to develop in students the entrepreneurial skills that would make them possess self-reliant attitudes and promote their reading habits for lifelong learning personality.



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