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## **Promoting Creativity and Entrepreneurship in Education: The Panacea for Poverty Reduction in Nigeria (Pp. 119-133)**

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### **Abstract**

*Poverty among Nigerian people has been noted to be devastating to the extent that Nigeria was ranked 12<sup>th</sup> among the poorest nations in the world by World Bank in its 2000 World Bank Atlas (Ohia, 2000). Findings also show that most Nigerians live on less than 1 Dollar per day. With poverty, hunger sets in with its attendant crime, corruption and many other social vices. These anomalies are prevalent among Nigerians because of the neglect meted out to TVET, which objectives hinge on the use of head and hands for wealth creation. This paper gives clue to phenomena about creative abilities and entrepreneurial spirit by which possession, one would expectantly become job creator rather than job seeker and as well raise his living standard above poverty level. In conclusion, the paper sadly pointed out that traditional ideas and primitive techniques that served well in the past are relegated in preference for foreign ideas and foreign made goods with minimal concern by Nigerians to improve on local capabilities. What should be done to achieve success were proffered.*

## **Introduction**

The United Nations' international forum for the eradication of poverty took place from 8 - 10th October, 2003 in Bangkok and was inaugurated by H.E. Chaturon Chaisaeng, the Deputy Prime Minister of Thailand. The outcome of the forum was remarked by the Secretary-General of United Nations, Kofi Annan, that poverty and hunger have close links. Kofi Annan noted that approximately 1.2 billion people world over struggle to survive on less than a dollar per day. In that forum, it was also estimated that about 840 million people suffer the gnawing pain of hunger and as many as 24,000 people, many of whom children, die every day as a result.

People who are hungry are more prone to disease, and could as a matter of fact find their capacity to work diminished as well. Hunger also impairs children's ability to learn, with consequences that are felt long after childhood is over. As Ohia (2000) put it, hunger creates several human sociological problems such as loss of social control, corruption, crime, street begging, prostitution, rural urban migration, anarchy and many more. This condition is worse in the developing countries of the world, Nigeria inclusive.

One of the causes of this ugly situation is the trading system adopted by the member countries of the United Nations. The trade system adopted places much tariff on trade exchange among nations. For instance, the developed countries of the world use globalization strategy on technology practices and implementation to intimidate the efforts of the less developed countries (LDCs) of the world to the extent that the rich countries are getting richer and the poor countries are getting poorer (Okoye, 2009). Unfortunately, the World Trade Organization (WTO) has failed to reach agreement on reducing and ultimately phase out tariff and non-tariff barriers on international trade transactions. It is these barriers that shut out many developing countries from the markets of the developed countries thus stunting growth, stifling opportunity and starving millions of people (countries) that wish to trade their way out of poverty (Sheng, 2003).

However, many strategies to alleviate and reduce poverty have been initiated and discussed at both international and national levels. At international level it has been recognized that poverty would be reduced to a very great extent if people are helped to improve on their creative process in line with their traditional work designs. It is believed that people trained in line with their traditional work role can think of a new outlook in the process (Eze and Okoye,

2007; Gray, 2003). For instance, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) (2003) reported that weaving in East Timor Thailand is traditionally the work of women and to increase their creativity on this vocation in order to reduce poverty among them, training was conducted with the help of Timor Aid. Currently, according to Gray (2003), the Ratchburi Jok Weaving Centre established in 1987 as a non-government organization generates an income of about US\$ 100,000 annually for the people while conserving the traditional Thai Jok Weaving techniques but improved. However, improving creativity to reduce poverty as posited by Apted (2003) will be cost effective if public health expenditure should be directed towards diseases of the poor, which is on controlling communicable diseases among children and adults alike. WHO acknowledged that childhood sickness results in disability in adulthood and thus the quality of future stock of human capital is adversely affected. Subscribing to this assertion, Melgaard (2003) noted that high advance qualities of health trigger economic development as healthy individuals are more productive and live longer to generate high levels of income and savings.

Attempts to reduce poverty through vocational training as made in Thailand have also been practiced in Nigeria. For instance, Ezeji (2002) noted that the practices and initiatives on rescore mobilization for eradication of poverty as projected in Nigeria include the inauguration of National Directorate of Employment (NDE), Operation Feed the Nation (OFN), Better Life for Rural Women and Family Economic Advancement Program (FEAP). Other initiatives borne with similar objectives include; Back-to-land, Agricultural Development Program (ADP), Education Trust Fund (ETF), Petroleum Trust Fund (PTF), National Poverty Eradication Program (NAPEP), National Resources Development and Conservation Scheme (NRDCS) and a lot more programs in the country (Okoye & Agwuna, 2009).

These efforts made by various Nigerian Governments to cushion the effects and increasing rate of poverty in the country have failed as a result of dishonesty, cheating, and excessive pursuit of material things (wealth) by the few Nigerians who are either in power or within the corridors of power at the expense of human dignity (Ezeji, 2002). Besides, it appears that all efforts has been on establishing practices directed towards reducing poverty with little or no emphasis on means to increase the creativity and entrepreneurial skills of Nigerians. For instance, there has not been any serious and resounding emphasis on the use of technical and vocational education (TVE) programs to

empower the poor with saleable skills. Just like Eze (2002) put it, the mission of TVE is creation of personnel with technological knowledge, practical skills, desirable work attitude and habits in the correct proportions and at the right time and place to promote entrepreneurship. Point is also made that rationalizing poverty alleviation institutions and practices in Nigeria and making reference to the rural and informal sectors through co-operative societies will to a great extent reduce poverty among the people. According to Polat (2003), co-operatives mobilize savings from the lower income and poor communities and also provide a unique entry point when addressing the needs of people living in poverty and, therefore, must rise to the challenges posed by poverty in the context of decent work, creative enterprise and entrepreneurial activities, by reporting the voices and needs of their members to the table of public policy reform. According to Eze (2002), creative thought is encouraged in people by the right environmental climate for education and since a diversity of learning materials and educational experiences are made available in TVE programs, therefore, TVE becomes the best operating theater for creativity and entrepreneurship.

Creativity by Franken (2003) is the tendency to generate ideas, alternatives or possibilities that may be useful in solving human problems while *google search* on entrepreneurship definition sees it as the process of looking at things in such a way that possible solutions to problems and perceived needs may evolve in venturing. It is the process of using private initiative to transform a business concept into a new venture (UNDP, 1999) while creativity on the other hand is the process of bringing something new into being through the act of turning new and imaginative ideas into reality (Naiman, 2007). This shows that *creativity involves two processes; thinking and then production*. If one has an idea but could not act upon it, it means that such individual is imaginative but not creative. Thus creativity requires whole -brain thinking; right-brain imagination, artistry and left-brain intuition, including left-brain logic and planning (Naiman, 2007). Based on these requirements that could enable someone become creative, there has been the strong belief that only special or talented people are creative and entrepreneurially skilful. However, researches proved that anybody could become a successful entrepreneur and that anyone could be creative if;

- i. he has opportunities.
- ii. he is encouraged.
- iii. he receives training; and
- iv. he is motivated.

Hence, the main thrust of this paper is to explore the means and measures by which creativity and entrepreneurship skills can be promoted among Nigerians as a solution to poverty reduction in the country. This paper thus deals with the following:

- Assertive on entrepreneurship for Wealth Creation.
- Getting started as a successful Entrepreneur.
- Traits need for Entrepreneurship.
- Creativity as everybody's endowment.
- Measures for enhancing creativity.
- Conclusion and Recommendations.

### **Assertive on Entrepreneurship for Wealth Creation**

The spirit of entrepreneurial skill sets in when one has achieved greatness through persistence amidst failures. Entrepreneurship does not connote achieving a supremacy on a desired project but all at a sudden to start dwindling (Hisrich & Peters, 2002). Imagine a business man who wins the award for the best income earnings in a year but fades into difficulty or oblivion the subsequent years to run a poor business operation. In this imagination, there is no consistence in the business. This is probably because there was no persistence in the management style adopted by the business man. The people who persist always find a way (Onstenk, 2003). In a situation like this when, the problem may have ensued due to managerial style, one really needs to sit down and ponder and assess the source of the problem. Pondering gives one the clue to the actual cause of failure (Kannan-Narasimhan & Glazer, 2005). Anyone can start off doing something and could also achieve temporary success therein. But the truth of the matter is that the people who actually make it or succeed are those who do not give up (Okoye, 2007).

However, that does not imply that one should continue with an obviously losing venture or proposition. Point is made that no one achieves success without persistence. If one gave up amidst his venture, it is assumed that every effort he must have made would have been for nothing. Those who psych themselves up to accomplish something but lack the spirit of persistence, always fail at the dawn of the day. *This simply means that entrepreneurial skills could successfully be learned through self teaching, perseverance, trial and error, and sourcing information, help and advice from superiors or mentors.* And as far as possible, the young entrepreneurs should be encouraged as early as possible.

One who desires to become a successful entrepreneur must be excited, enthused and inspired to get started no matter the obstacles and challenges along the means. And above all, such individual should be motivated to pursue his dream of starting off his business by tapping from his creative juices that involve raising money for a takeoff.

The search for financing a business venture probably may not be so easy. At this point, many ideas come into light. The quickest idea that normally comes to mind is to strategize. This idea is always nursed by those who do not have money to start off a business. However, doing so could demonstrate how badly one would want to be in any business (Twain, 2000). Therefore, to strategize when starting a business must be avoided. The next quickest idea that usually trace its path to the mind is the temptation to borrow from a family member or friends. *But be warned that the only thing that might destroy or stain a relationship or friendship quicker than lending to them would be to borrow from friends or relations.* Perhaps, the best option is to seek for loan from a financial institution or to involve a friend who is already in business-making and who also has the money. To borrow from a financial institution such as banks implies that one has some interest to pay in return for the loan. That is the risk. And, therefore, one must strive hard to pay off the debt through the business.

If it is the second option of involving a friend, peace is made by offering a certain percent of the net profit of the capital investment to such a friend. For instance, one may decide to offer, say, 10 percent of net profits for a ₦1m capital investment to his friend who is coopted in a business venture. This option reduces the stress of thinking on how to pay back a loan to a financial institution.

### **Getting Started as a Successful Entrepreneur**

To get started involves courage and ambition. It involves self-instruction and advice from confidants who are of good will and level minded (Twain, 2000). This implies that to become an entrepreneur starts in ones gut, and not necessarily in school setting or classroom. The ambitious type who also is courageous feels the impulse. And being thus courageous gets started overcoming all obstacles between him and success.

No one is born entrepreneur. Neither is entrepreneurship the business of the highly educated people. Anybody could become an entrepreneur. It all depends on ones ambition and courage not to leave his future to the

bureaucratic corporate managers with their own corporate agenda (Franken, 2007). The single truth is that the desire to become an entrepreneur demands that one has to be passionate on his own. This implies that, if one develops the desire to accomplish something, he should go ahead to achieve his heart desire. No one should persuade such individual to do something he has not already desired to do (Hisrich & Peters, 2002).

For instance, one who gets to market to buy some things should have made a list of his needs. As Hofer (1996) put it, if such person gets to the market to purchase outside his immediate needs, it means he is not guided by burning desire. And hence cannot manage properly.

Thus to manage properly and subsequently become a successful entrepreneur appears to emphasize that the individual should be desperate and prompt avoiding distraction. He should be decisive about certain things in his life. He must be motivated. There is no mastery about it. Just be passionate about the business, love it, put uplifting thoughts in it, be inspired by it, and then there will be success and the money will come. Any intending entrepreneur, who cannot be passionate about his business, should re-evaluate the purpose for success, because, success does not just happen (Fayolle & Kyro, 2008).

Many factors contribute to success. Whether one is involved in a business venture or in making his way through academics, such individual will leave many people behind if he works hard. That is what success takes. No special skills or smartness are needed, just work hard. Only hard-working people can beat out their competition. No matter how smart one is, success is much more perspiration than inspiration (Twain, 2000). However, there is no easy means in business or in life in general to achieve success. It takes commitment, hardwork, and sacrifice.

### **Traits Need for Entrepreneurship**

Two unique traits, *humility and creativity*, have been identified as indispensable and phenomenally essential if one should develop entrepreneurial spirit necessary for successful practical enterprise and wealth creation.

***Humility:*** Many a times, people feel too big to bend low to get committed and workhard even when they look out for success in a business. There is no big man in real business venture. Those who bend low and put their statutory positions aside and who put twice the effort of a typical servant or attendant in

managing their business will most often accomplish four times as much (Twain, 2000).

In this awareness, it is therefore noted that entrepreneurship pertains ethics and dealings based on morals and values ([www.sasked.gov.sk.ca](http://www.sasked.gov.sk.ca), 2007). The moral instincts in the person who seeks for success in a business encourages discipline while the value system of the individual directs the person on accepted standards to adopt in order to determine what to do based on scale of preference ([www.turnerlearning.com](http://www.turnerlearning.com), 2007). It is the value attached to certain activities that helps the individual develop the ability to identify business opportunities and hence negotiate prices ([www.wikibooks.org](http://www.wikibooks.org), 2007). One who consciously recognizes these factors will to a very great extent develop qualities that are needed to function effectively in a business and profit making context ([www.wikibooks.org](http://www.wikibooks.org), 2007). This goes to say that a successful entrepreneur is that person who knows how small he is not and who uses his innate and personal initiatives to uncover new opportunities to earn profit in a business (Okoye, 2007). In discovering these opportunities, it is cost effective to avoid under capitalization and poor financial management. *Some of the factors that promote financial crisis in a business include; lack of proper planning, poor execution of profitable concepts (Agbaeze, 2007) and adoption of plain old but bad financial management* (Twain, 2000). Any inspired entrepreneur must always realize that as days go by, things therein also change including managerial styles. Hence, any inspired entrepreneur must learn to accept and improve upon the past. One who is not guided by these policies may not be entrepreneurial or vocationally endowed. Vocational education is that form of education that permits one to know, accept and improve upon the past (Mukuni, 2002). To know about the present, prepares the individual to arrange the future and make amends on the past. According to Onstenk (2003), the knowledge of the present and the ability to arrange the future, helps one to be specific pursuing his objective with caution and ingenuity. This is one of the main thrusts of vocational education. It emphasizes specificity, practicality, applicability and immediate usefulness in the development of a competent individual (Ugwuja, 2010). And anyone who applies these qualities in the management of his business is said to be a good entrepreneur.

**Creativity:** Every individual is specially endowed. In the biblical point of view, everyone is created to specifically accomplish a mission on earth. The problem is that while some people act on their ideas, some others ignore them. The ignorance to ones ideas degenerates to poor application of skills and abuse of

talent. Those who ideally exhibit their mastery in a given vocation are recognized to be creative. Creativity is, therefore, the ability to generate novel response to problems and challenges as well as the ability to generate and implement new ideas ([www.members.optusnet.com.au](http://www.members.optusnet.com.au), 2002). That is to say, anybody can be creative if he wants to be. Creativity is nobody's property. *Those who express their creativity, in most cases have traits like manual dexterity, good-eye co-ordination and other skills that enable them to more fully express their creative ideas and thoughts.* This set of people who possess the extraordinary talents in fields that have been recognized as creative and who could combine these extraordinary talents with the determination and persistence that it takes to achieve skill mastery, are recognized to be gifted individuals (Eze, 2002). Therefore, anybody could be creative if such person could recognize his unique talents and develop mastery in those areas. This goes to say that, creativity is found in every individual and that creative talents can be increased or improved with study and repetitive practice ([www.members.optusnet.com.au](http://www.members.optusnet.com.au), 2002). It is the authors' belief that individuals who thus increase their creativity will be meaningfully engaged which could result in poverty reduction.

### **Measures for Enhancing Creativity**

Increasing creativity involves the ability to assign a set standard and addressing the mind towards accomplishing the set goal amidst road blocks in the course of actualization (Twain, 2000). This implies that to increase creativity, one must address his mind from on-set to avoid distractions and must stop at nothing to let his creative natures work. The meaning of this is that one who wished to improve on his creative art must not listen to criticisms and cajole. He must be courageous to overcome shame at steps-attempt and also withstand flattering and jests of his creative attempts. Therefore, the task in becoming more creative according to internet sourced data, [www.members.optusnet.com.au](http://www.members.optusnet.com.au) (2002) is as follows: (1) An individual should give himself the permission to do things creatively as he pays deaf ears to mockery and mimicry. (2) The individual should overcome his personal blocks to creativity. That is, one must not be embarrassed by his own ideas and must also be aware that things cannot be done in one way. Since things can be done in many different ways, therefore, he should not be embarrassed by his own methods. If one becomes embarrassed by his own ideas and methods, the obvious outcome is to hide them. (3) If one should improve on his creativity he must develop confidence enough to have fewer inhibitions and also have the strong belief in his own intuition and creative abilities. However, Okoye

(2007) posited that creativity requires patience and a willingness to work for a creative outcome rather than simply wait for enlightenment. No one makes a walk if such person kept his legs together. More importantly, anyone who wished to increase his creativity must try to get himself associated with people who cherish and support him and who do not have jealous attitude against his efforts but have respect for him (Franken, 2007).

In addition to the tasks for enhancing creativity, the following points should be noted. Individual should

1. spend time to meditate on oneself worthiness.
2. read about other creative people and study books on creative thinking techniques. Then try to put them into practice.
3. endeavour to participate in sport activities and other relaxation activities that will help to give the brain rest and time to enable the subconscious mind to sieve out lucrative measures from many of the gathered ideas and techniques.
4. never over labour oneself. One needs some time off to be creative after moments of intense concentration on challenging problems. The mind is relaxed when a creative thinker gets himself engaged in reading newspapers, magazines, or novels he wouldn't have ordinarily get. To perfectly do this, one could deliberately expose himself to information outside his area of specialization (Csikszentmihalyi, 2007).

These tasks notwithstanding, people must be aware that creativity is not a gift *per se*, it is a state of being (Weisberg, 2007). Creativity is, therefore, enhanced if individual acknowledged that it exists and thus could be nurtured (Franken, 2007). An individual could nature creativity by flooding oneself with information in a chosen area of creativity and deliberately attempt to integrate opposites at every opportunity within the person's mind. Another way to nature creativity according to Csikszentmihalyi (2007) is the ability of the individual to develop the attitude to show that his creative work is important even if others do not share his belief. One who succeeds in developing this judgmental attitude should then surround that identity with beliefs about his creative abilities but, however, should not allow his beliefs to distort his perceptions and alternatives. Sharing the same view, Franken (2007) noted that the test of creativity measure does not depend only on the number of alternatives individuals can generate but also on the uniqueness of those alternatives. The

ideas, act or any alternatives that can change or transform an existing domain into a new one is said to be a creative measure.

The characteristics of a creative individual are enunciated by Csikszentmihalyi (2007) as follows:

1. Creative individuals have a great deal of energy, but they are also often quiet and at rest.
2. Creative individuals tend to be smart, yet also naive at the same time.
3. Creative people have a combination of playfulness and discipline, or responsibility and irresponsibility.
4. Creative individuals alternate between imagination and fantasy at one end, and rooted sense of reality at the other.
5. Creative individuals seem to harbour opposite tendencies on the continuum between extroversion and introversion.
6. Creative individuals are also remarkable, humble and proved at the same time.
7. Creative individuals to a certain extent escape rigid gender role stereotyping and have a tendency toward androgyny.
8. Generally, creative people are thought to be rebellious and independent.
9. Most creative individuals are very passionate about their work, yet they can be extremely objective about it as well.
10. The openness and sensitivity of creative individuals often expose them to suffering pain, yet also a great deal of enjoyment. (Csikszentmihalyi, 2007: 58 - 73).

The individual who peruses through these characteristic points of a creative person would be able to establish if he is by nature created with creative ingenuity and possibilities.

### **Conclusion**

The failure of past attempts to enhance Third World development through transfer of advanced technology from developed nations has prompted the current emphasis on encouraging creativity and entrepreneurship skills in

indigenous people. Besides, it has also been acknowledged that traditional ideas and primitive techniques that had served well for decades are currently relegated and downgraded by foreigners and indigenous people alike in anticipation of the fancy and assumed superior ideas and hardware brought in by the colonial masters and merchants (Eze & Okoye, 2007). There is today little concern by the indigenous people to build local capabilities to learn the new technology, master it, and adapt it to local environment (Ahmad & Wilke, 1986). Sadly too, even the goods and hardwares produced by the indigenous people are less regarded and nick-named **Igbo made** - meaning, inferior goods (Okoye, 1998). Again, most surprising is that many Nigerian students prefer taking instruction on foreign ideas, imaginations and innovations. As a result, the Nigerian youths who are regularly exposed to, in most cases, the abstract theories and principles on technological innovations become equipped with minimal knowledge on the workability of the foreign practices. Consequently, most Nigerian students graduate without meaningful engagement on vocations that should offer them a means of livelihood. Worse still, the educational programs in the country also tend to produce no solution because most students appear not to be encouraged to generate and nature their ideas into reality due to so much formalized system of education that offers little or no challenges. It is in this awareness that the authors have presented this paper, giving every available guide, to their knowledge, to generating and increasing creativity in individuals and encouraging entrepreneurial spirit in individuals too.

### **Recommendations**

1. Enabling study conditions should be made available within academic environment by providing teaching materials and educational experiences that should orientate students toward intuitive thinking and imagination.
2. Any entrepreneur may prefer an action-oriented approach to learning, while traditional but conventional education system encourages a formalized and structured approach (Maysami & Goby, 2007). Action-oriented learning connotes theoretical and practical features and thus offers an advantage for the education of an entrepreneur. This form of education demands that the course contents of educational programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels should be designed to cover a particular discipline. Course contents programmed and delivered with specific objectives makes for successful entrepreneurs and successful business managers. It is, therefore, recommended that academic

activities at both the undergraduate and graduate levels should be stuffed with contents that enhance skill acquisition and in the interim permit the learner to ask questions about a situation, penetrate the situation, gain insight on the nature of the matter, and devise a workable solution.

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