
Identification and screening of entrepreneurial skills in education

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Entrepreneurship education should encourage students to look for creative and innovative ideas that may provide multiple solutions to problems, and develop their capacity to think independently. Education should provide an opportunity for students to learn, explore and implement ideas. One should not be punished for creative and innovative thinking (out of the mold). One should not be punished because his/ her idea was not successful but rather encouraged to continue in the search for new ideas. This will encourage learners to acquire knowledge, experience and willingness to examine problems in new ways.

Identification and screening of entrepreneurial skills in education

Africa is a continent rich in resources that are backed with neither technological nor organizational knowledge necessary to steer the continent to higher levels development. As we envision greater regional and continental cooperation as espoused by our leaders in promulgating the African Union, there is need to pull together all that we have so as to forge forward.

The resources available from the continent include immense deposits of mineral resources and human resources, which is the most valuable asset of any nation. Human resources is indeed the dynamic resource that makes all the other resources move. To quote from Namdeb's mission statement "Diamonds are our core business, but people are our most valuable Gems".

Africa should therefore explore ways and means of harnessing this resource for breakthrough in development. Breaking the underdevelopment chain in Africa, will therefore depend on effective management of its human resources. We require manpower to utilize natural resources. Lack of creative and developed human resources (manpower) causes stagnation. Poor management of the available human resources causes poor management of other resources. And so the continent is caught up in a vicious cycle of poverty, disease and ignorance that has to be broken for effective breakthrough.

Certain authors have inspired me in the writing of this paper. They are recognized in the bibliography, but I would like to acknowledge a few of them who have influenced my language used in communicating ideas. Some ideas were also gained from an online exchange in a course on Africa online sponsored by United States Agency for International Development Pretoria. The participants' contribution in the course was valuable in formulating some ideas in this paper¹.

This paper is written in an effort to shed light on some of the activities that educators can do in this direction and therefore examines the following activities:

Education system than encourages entrepreneurship and intrapreneurship

Currently students grow up being taught that most problems have only one right answer. Entrepreneurship education should encourage students to look for creative and innovative ideas that may provide multiple solutions to problems, and develop their capacity to think independently. Education should provide an opportunity for students to learn, explore and

¹ Raymond Noe, chapter 1 and 2

Sharon L. Hanna, chapter 3

Peter Lassey, chapter 1 and 6

implement ideas. One should not be punished for creative and innovative thinking (out of the mold). One should not be punished because his/ her idea was not successful but rather encouraged to continue in the search for new ideas. This will encourage learners to acquire knowledge, experience and willingness to examine problems in new ways.

Encouraging students to prepare and practice business plans is one way of encouraging entrepreneurship in students at all levels of learning. They also need to be taught that entrepreneurship including processes of thinking good ideas, recognizing successful opportunity, leadership skills, investigation of existing knowledge and providing life illustrations.

Entrepreneurship does not always have to be taught in classrooms but can also be taught in lifestyles and free exchange of ideas across diverse people groups. Successful businessmen and women should be used as role models. They should also be encouraged to share ideas and learn skills with others for succession planning and personal enrichment. Individuals succeed in undertakings that they like. The education system should be geared towards providing an opportunity to identify individual strengths and encourage them to be the best of what they can be. Multiskilling should be encouraged so that individuals who have two or more talents have opportunity to utilize them. Management skills should be taught at all levels so that individuals will learn how to manage first their individual careers and talents and later how to manage their own businesses. Career counseling can be used as an effective tool to identify and encourage different talents in individuals. Subject scores may not be the only criteria for identifying and channeling individuals to different professions.

Everyone can be productive if given the opportunity and support to:

- Express creativity where learning should be for all members of society who become co-creators of knowledge. School programs should be geared towards encouraging individuals to be creative and innovative.

- Choose activities and level of participation (learner centered approach) where learning should develop the organization or group and society. The society should reward, promote and support learning of different skills. This calls for a rethinking of remuneration for different talents and skills. Individual competencies plus job requirements should be weighed carefully to come up with job value. In evaluating jobs; emotional, psychological and exposure to bodily harm should be considered in remuneration. Society needs a different orientation towards non-white color jobs. Individuals from diverse groups are valued as the sources of new ideas. No individuals or groups of people are sole owners of knowledge, skills or ideas. Therefore, an integrated approach is necessary to incorporate all members of a society in knowledge acquisition and management of competencies. Studies have shown that even mentally retarded individuals can be empowered through learning and entrepreneurship to be productive members of society. Such activities can be viewed on the web site www.sbaonline.sba.gov. Education is a tool that should be used to enable individuals to explore and improve personal competencies. Communicate to create trust and commitment on the part of learners at all levels.

Self-determination is encouraged through training, work practices and experimentation. Self-efficacy is encouraged through learner-centered approach to learning and teaching. It is important for educators to appreciate individual from diverse background as people who have specific talents and skills that can be nurtured for the good of the society. The educator should act as a coach or mentor and not the sole owner of information. This will foster self-confidence that is needed for individuals to take initiative to be creative and innovative.

Curriculum should be student/ learner friendly or driven allowing them to learn practical skills and competencies needed to be successful in business, build self-confidence, set career goals and understand the importance of social responsibility and community ownership. The learning process should be learner driven so that individuals take responsibility of the process.

Organizations should provide opportunities for individuals to develop intrapreneurship skills through empowering work practices where employees learn through mistakes, coaching and mentoring programs. Individuals are empowered to make decisions that were formally management prerogative. Indeed the organizations that will survive competition cannot afford to have bureaucratic structures. For organizational survival every individual is valued a member. His/ her contribution is encouraged at all levels. Departments are run like small business within the organizations. Diversity is managed to include all and harness all skills and competencies individuals bring to the work place.

Multidisciplinary team approach to policy formulation and implementation

One of the key issues in globalization is management of diversity. Every individual comes to planet earth with specific skills and talents that can be used for the enrichment of society. Individuals are then guided to utilize the competencies in ways that are beneficial to society. A multidisciplinary team approach system should therefore allow for participative and integrative policy formulation. Individuals from diverse demographics come together and contribute to policies that meet diverse objectives. Society problems and solutions can best be articulated and dealt with in sustainable manner by the society itself. Sustainable development can only be achieved if development programs have commitment from the society within which they are taking place. Ownership and commitment comes when members of the society feel that the project meets or is relevant to community needs. The community members should participate in identifying needs and formulating

strategies of meeting those needs. In this way, the individuals will be committed to implementing that which they helped formulate. Outsiders can give intermediate measures but true sustainable development has to have commitment and ownership of the specific communities.

Education is one of the most important elements in development. In a world of advanced technology and science, basic literacy is very important for the success of development programs like health, farming and family planning. Agricultural techniques require farmers who are able to read and apply new farming methods that are more productive. Education provides individuals with skills necessary for self improvement and better quality of life. When quality of life improves productivity is higher and countries grow richer. It is therefore important for individuals to be educated at all levels so that they can take part in national development. Social factors that affect access to education must be addressed at community and national level. Literacy programs, vocational training must also be oriented to meeting individual and community needs. The curriculum must be market driven so that individuals can learn skills and competencies that are transferred to real life situations immediately and within the context of the society. Educators should involve businesses in formulating school curricula.

Philanthropic giving must be encouraged through community activities. High school students should be with local high schools and other community groups. Educators can encourage this by incorporating community participation in the learning process. Assignments and education projects should be based on community activities, so that learning outcomes are utilized to benefit members of the society. School exchange and excursion programs can be used as a forum for learners to learn about diversity and exchange ideas. Class group work, mentoring, buddy systems can be used for learners to exchange ideas and enrich one another. Self efficacy can also be improved through student group work and buddy systems.

Creating an empowering and enabling environment African countries do not have enough money to finance education effectively. Governments must make difficult decisions on what to fund in education in order to address immediate skills needed and developing manpower for future needs. The aim of leadership is access, equity, quality and democracy in the learning process. This includes making basic education accessible to all and provide adults with opportunity to improve qualifications. Programs include building of schools in all areas and distance education for adult learners. Shared distance centers will cut costs and ensure optimum utilization of resources. Equity goal is achieved through fair funding and provision of learning resources. Adoption of similar syllabuses ensures the same quality of education while maintaining high standards. Teachers and other educators should be retrained to offer appropriate standards of education. Educators are also responsible for developing curricula and suitable teaching materials. Democracy is achieved through participation of all interest groups in education and management of the learning process.

Culture of life long learning

To keep in touch with new developments and updating skills is essential. "Learning is a relatively permanent change in human capabilities that is not as a result of chronological growth. The capabilities must be related to specific learning outcomes." (Noe, R. pg. 107). Learning is the process of developing the self while coping with accompanying stress, making necessary changes and making self discovery an evolving process. This takes a holistic approach to self development. Gratification comes from satisfying individual need for discovery and meeting community needs. Learners should be encouraged to explore different approaches and logic to solutions. They should be encouraged to work in groups so that they can learn with and from each other. These experiences can then be shared through mentoring programs for different levels e.g. senior students can mentor junior students. This benefits the mentor and the one that is being mentored. Therefore learning that does not transfer experiences into change of behaviour is mere schooling. Educators should learn to enjoy learners and remind them of the joy of discovery.

People need to actively seek information and cultivate new skills and increasing self- efficacy. These requires leadership that is able to scan the horizon, envision what is coming next and translate the vision into imagined reality for those lead. For Africa the culture of learning is even more imperative where there is lack of basic skills among many employees. Information should be provided easily. This can be done through libraries that are managed by institutions, government and the private sector. Secondary schools and tertiary institutions can be organized for multi-purpose use. Mobile library services can be provided by the state to areas where such facilities are not available. Distance education is another tool for information dissemination. This can be for general education family improvement and occupational skills acquisition. Other technologies for mass communication include radio and television. Television Africa has had very good programs on teaching of secondary school Science and Mathematics among other subjects. Some of the information is available on the Internet and other sources. Some list of web sites lists shall be provided later.

Creativity and innovation through effective career management

Learning should provide for the development of the mental, physical and emotional self. Mental development is continuous improvement of abilities, thought processes, problem solving skills and positive attitudes. This should include life long cognitive development, multiple competencies, interpersonal skills and eagerness to learn. Curiosity and confusion leads to enquiry and learning. Ability to think critically produces new ideas and deeper examination of differing opinions.

Positive attitude is energizing, refreshing and motivating to academic excellence.

Physical development should be focused on those aspects an individual can change. This includes best possible appearance, mental activity, health nutrition, effective stress coping strategies and elimination of destructive habits. Establishing identity and purpose is helpful in dealing with destructive habits. Individuals are encouraged to accept themselves and then make decisions to follow a course of action that will help them achieve what they purpose to. Individuals should be encouraged and directed to be that best they can be. This means that individuals work towards achieving their potential in life.

Emotional development is conducive to good interpersonal skills. Emotions are feelings, awareness of feelings and behavior that is affected by the feelings. Appropriate expression of feelings can lead to emotional well-being. Individuals should be taught socially acceptable ways of controlling emotions in deciding whether, how and when to express. Appropriate outlets include, assertiveness, exercises, physical activity and writing out of thoughts and feelings. Assertiveness training as a method of controlling emotions is taught to students so that learn when and how to say yes or no. Assertiveness means also being able to say no and not feel guilty about what you do not like. Exercises are also used to let off emotions when individuals burn out energy. Physical activities include gardening and jogging where individuals also let off steam. One is in effect able to control emotions and communicate what is appropriate. Writing out thoughts and feelings helps individuals deal with resentment at a personal level. One is therefore able to communicate better with others when emotions are dealt with privately. Learners should therefore be taught how to deal with emotions so that they can focus on personal development in areas like interpersonal relations.

Empowerment through knowledge creation and information dissemination

Empowerment means giving learners responsibility and authority to make decisions regarding all aspects of the leaning experience. The emphasis is on individual control over the skills and competencies to be achieved by encouraging them to desire to be the best of themselves. Empowerment produces individuals who are enthusiastic and committed because they believe and enjoy what they are learning.

Leadership must foster civic programs so that nationals are educated to participate in decision making. The focus is to educate for general education, family improvement and occupational skills. The system must be flexible and adaptable to diverse society needs. Education is for self reliance and meetings society needs. Individuals are encouraged to be creative and take risks for competitive advantage in a fast changing environment. This means giving up control without abdicating responsibility.

Promoting understanding of diversity through mentoring requires educators to examine their own stereotypical thinking, know the social environment of their students and strive to engage learners as fully as possible. The process of managing multiculturalism and diversity provides opportunity where educators and learners impact one another.

Educators should act as coaches rather than dictators of what competencies to be learnt and how they should be learnt. With increased information creation and dissemination, educators are not sole owners of knowledge but facilitators in the learning process. There should be clear linkage between learning goals and reward systems. Good performance should be recognized. Educators should provide necessary resources and help identify practical objectives for learning.

Focus should be on competencies for learning rather than individuals to be empowered. Self-efficacy is improved when learners believe they have ability to gain the desired competencies. Self-determination can be enhanced by creating an enabling environment within which individuals choose what they learn and when they learn it. Teachers should use concrete examples and practical application to help learners connect knowledge and information. Promotion of integrative learning and risk taking aids development. Students also learn better when their cultural backgrounds are incorporated into their academic lives. This involves integrated curriculum development, participative implementation of skills and knowledge and learner centered approach to education. Integrated curriculum as discussed earlier means one that all parties concerned

participate. These parties include teachers, government, parents and industry. Then the subjects taught will be said to incorporate the needs of the society. Participative implementation of skills requires communities that connect with support groups and mentoring activities. Learner centered approach allows learner to self direct and self govern the learning process.

It includes arrangements in the classroom that are inviting and appropriate for the specific learners. This includes size, arrangement, ventilation and lighting. Educators should act as mentors and coaches as discussed previously; materials used for learning should be helpful in engaging learners in the process of discovery; the learner must be committed to academic achievement and peer teaching; and social integration with learning communities.

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- Small Business Online www.sbonline.sba.gov Online services provided to communities by the Government of the United States of America
- Entrepreneurship everywhere. <http://www.arc.gov>
- Internet Classroom Assistant. <http://www.nicenet.org/ICA/class>
- Collaboration through concept mapping. <http://ksi.cpsc.ucalgary.ca>
- Alternative Assessment. <http://www.teachervision.com>
- Clearinghouse on information and Technology. <http://www.ericit.org>
- Street Law programs. <http://www.csls.org.za>
- Stanford University programs. <http://www.sul.stanford.edu>
- Creative ways to encourage reading. <http://www.creative Teachingsite.com>
- Democracy Research Guide. <http://www.ned.org>
- Civic Education. <http://www.civiced.org>
- Business Startup Simulation. <http://www.entre-ed.org/simulatn.htm>
- Quia web site for educators. <http://www.quia.com>
- Population. <http://www.populationmedia.org>
- United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization. <http://www.unesco.org>