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Information Professionals as Agents for Promoting Entrepreneurship and Technology Education in Actualizing Vision 2020 for Nigeria

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Introduction

Education is a crucial tool for national development. The present revolution of technology-driven society has mandated the use of technology in all walks of life for a sustainable development. According to Esenjor (1992) “real development involves the capacity and creative capacity of a people to transform effectively natural resources of environment into goods and services through the imaginative and practical application of their creative talents and productive labour force” Hence, technology and entrepreneurship education are the bedrock for national development and are a roadmap for achieving the vision 2020 for Nigeria. For Nigeria to achieve the national goal of vision 2020, there should be a total restructuring and integration of skill-based educational system into the educational curriculum for self-reliance and capacity building.

Unemployment has been an economic quagmire and a social ill that has eaten deep into the economy of the nation. Graduates are mass-produced every year without job opportunities nor adequate entrepreneurial skills which vis-à-vis has affected the national economy. On this note, Bamkole (2007) pointed out that ntrepreneurship is a must now”

Entrepreneurship education is therefore a pragmatic and viable approach for stimulating national development and fostering rapid transformation for the nation. Entrepreneurship is therefore a programme that inculcates creative, innovative, productive and managerial skills needed in business enterprises for self-reliance and national development. According to Kuratko (2005), entrepreneurship has emerged over the last two decades as arguably the most potent economic force the world has every experienced. Technology education in the same vein is undisputedly recognized as a catalyst for national

development. It is a programme with practical knowledge and process related to technology. Section 1 of the Nigerian National Policy of Education (FGN, 2004) states that need for functional education to be relevant, practical and acquisition of appropriate skill and the development of competencies as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of competencies as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of his society. This implies that there is need for education to be geared towards inculcating practical skills, and competencies necessary for self-reliance, capacity-building and national development. Therefore, for effective educational development and for Nigeria to realize the vision 2020, it is very pertinent to keep people abreast with the latest developmental and changing technologies of which Information Professionals have a pivotal role to play.

An Overview of Technology Education

Often shortened to “tech ed”, technology education as defined in Wikipedia, is a study of technology, which provides an opportunity for students to learn about the processes and knowledge related to technology. It is a study aimed at technological literacy for students, which may involve laboratory activities. Technology education evolved through craft, or technical skills education from Industrial Arts and Manual Training and it is geared towards allowing learners explore a variety of activities related to many areas of human endeavor. One of the aims of technical education in Nigeria is “to provide people who can apply scientific technology to the improvement and solution of environmental problems for the use and convenience of man” (National Policy on Education (NPE), 1981). This led Nnenji (1992) to describe technology education as “the learning experience that equips individuals with the skills to manipulate their natural and man-made environment for the good of all the members of the society”. Technology in itself is a great tool for national development. According to Nworgu (1988), the worth and might of any nation is now determined by the level of her technological sophistication. In the same vein, Uzoagulu (1994) noted that:

> To enhance technology education in Nigeria, a new system of education known as the 6-3-3-4 was introduced with emphasis on technology and functional education. The ultimate aim of the new education system is to build up a technology culture among Nigerians, an indication that technology has become an instrument for national development (p.215).

At Ohio State University the major goal of technology education is to prepare students to be qualified technology education teachers who are able to provide leadership in this field. In 1989 the Australian Education Council (AEC) set out Common and Agreed National Goals for Schooling in Australia. These are technology education goals which are aimed at developing in students:

- skills of analysis and problem-solving;
- skills of information processing and computing;
- an understanding of the role of science and technology

In this study, entrepreneur takes the place of the student, in the sense that entrepreneurs are subjected to teaching and guidance by information professionals who take the lead in the journey of finding information resources that will enable these entrepreneurs improve their knowledge and find their feet in their areas of endeavor.

Technology Education and Information Professionals

As already stated, one of the aims of technology education is to

develop skills of information processing and computing. The role of information professionals in this context is very crucial in the sense that they are the key factors in enabling entrepreneurs gain access to the relevant information needed for enlightenment in their various fields of interest. There is need therefore, to define the personality of information professional and what roles they play in enhancing technology education. An information professional is regarded as an information specialist; a person who works with information science, libraries, museums, or archives (Wikipedia). An information professional can work in organizations like information centres, libraries, competitive-intelligent units, knowledge resource centers, content management organizations, and others.

Information professionals have the responsibility of educating and bringing information at the door step of researchers, students, readers, as well as entrepreneurs who are in search of information that will aid them in their pursuit. Technology education is the education of users on technology tools that will enhance their information search and how to make use of such tools. In the present digital age, there are tools that enhance information search and retrieval. And it is the duty of information professionals to appropriately teach the entrepreneurs how these materials are utilized for information retrieval. According to Nwoji (2002),

> These come as new generation audio-visual technologies such as live broadcast satellite video conferencing, narrowcast television, hypermedia, interactive television instruction, videotaped instruction, video discs, computer discs, interaction radio digital technology, wind-up radio technology, portable FM radio, web television and non-linear desktop video and audio-editing system…Live broadcast satellite video conferencing is a two-way communication process between the teacher and students through the air; digital radio technology is known as world space. It is broadcast directly from the satellite to all parts of the world. (p.85).

There are some technologies that support learners' reading development and the information professionals play a vital role in teaching these people how to make use of them. Such educational technologies are *Audio books, Electronic books and online texts, Electronic talking books, programmed reading instruction (Young, 2009).*

Entrepreneurship Education and Information Professionals

In the world of business today, entrepreneurship revolution has taken hold across the globe. Kuratko (2005) stated that entrepreneurship is more than the mere creation of business.

> Entrepreneurship is a dynamic process of vision, change, and creation. It requires an application of energy and passion towards the creation and implementation of new ideas and creative solutions. Essential ingredients include the willingness to take calculated risks-in terms of time, equity, or career; the ability to formulate an effective venture team; the creative skill to marshal needed resources; and fundamental skill of building solid business plan; and finally, the vision to recognize opportunity where others see chaos, contradiction, and confusion. (Kuratko & Hodgetts, 2004, p. 30).

Entrepreneurship education seeks to provide students with the knowledge, skills and motivation to encourage entrepreneurial success in a

variety of settings. It focuses o realization of opportunity, where management education is focused on the best way to operate existing hierarchies.

The role of information professionals in aiding entrepreneurship education cannot be over-emphasized, especially now that researchers are continually striving to learn more about the entire entrepreneurial process to better understand the driving forces within entrepreneurs (Bull & Willard, 1993; Bygrave & Hofer, 1991; Gartner, 2001). The major function of information professionals in entrepreneurship education is information provision. They act as information suppliers to entrepreneurs who wish to widen their horizon in relation to their business endeavors. Kuratko (2005) stated that three major sources of information supply the data related to the entrepreneurial process or perspective, namely: research- based source, direct observation of practicing entrepreneurs, and speeches and presentations (including seminars) by practicing entrepreneurs.

It therefore, becomes the duty of information professionals to provide these research-based sources both in print and non-print format to potential and prospective entrepreneurs. Examples of these resources are: Academic journals, textbooks on entrepreneurship, Books about entrepreneurship, biographies or autobiographies or entrepreneurs, compendiums about entrepreneurs, news periodicals, venture periodicals, newsletters, proceedings of conferences, government publications. As the name sounds, an information professional is someone who specializes in information collection, organization, storage and dissemination of such information. The stated tasks can be done free of charge or by fee, depending on the situation surround ding the information pursuit. For instance in public, special or academic library, an information professional provides information to users free of charge, but is paid indirectly for his services by the government or the employer in charge. In another case, an information professional is paid directly by the person receiving the services. This is done in business centres, whereby a person pays for services rendered immediately. In this case, the information professional becomes an *information broker.* Warner () refers to these set of people as *information entrepreneurs*. Warner further stated that:

> They operate enterprises that charge fees for information-related services and products; develop specialized libraries from scratch; clip newspapers; compile directories; consult on everything from computers to construction. They create archives and software, develop vocabularies, do chores (moving, bar coding, shelf reading), help libraries write RFPS. They index manuals and books and documents, they organize conferences and prepare alerting services, publish books and newsletters, retrive documents, search online, substitute for libraries who have babies. They teach. They travel as couriers. They write abstracts, they write computer instruction manuals (p.279)

All these efforts put together bring about individual and national development in the sense that information, being a crucial factor in national development, is acquired by entrepreneurs who gain access to these information by fee or otherwise. According to Noruzi (2006), “in the 21st century governments must recognize this need for information use and literacy as a means of development”. Hence, information professionals play a key role in national development. This is owing to the fact that they provide useful information in economic, cultural, social and political contexts.

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