



Entrepreneurial Mentoring Application and Benchmarking in Out-of-School Vocational Training Centres.

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ABSTRACT

In the last decades, many concerns have been given on ways to develop a sustainable economy and measures to engender the enthronement of wealth for all through the acquisition of marketable skills for self-reliance. This paper presents a critical review of entrepreneurial mentoring and the benefits of entrepreneurship to economic development. It also examines the different views of who the entrepreneur is, its general principles for effective entrepreneurial mentoring and the determination of reliable benchmark for entrepreneurial mentoring in out-of-school vocational training Centre.

Keyword: Entrepreneurial, mentoring, Benchmarking, vocational, out-of-school

INTRODUCTION

The skill and development under taken by various out-of-school vocational training centres have far reaching impact on the individual and the economy in general. From the time of the socialist economy, when means of production were control by the state to the free enterprise economy where services, product and price are determined by the market forces. There has been the desire to grow the economy through youth empowerment programs in our communities. Entrepreneurial initiatives are being encouraged to achieve high efficiency and productivity by all and sundries, because it is seen as crucial measure to increase the empowerment continuum of the out-of-school youth in our communities.

Understanding the drivers of economic growth is crucial to entrepreneurial mentoring, planning, investment strategies, fending off recessions, and working out measures to be a producing nation rather than a consuming one. If we know how to raise long-term growth rate, open up more opportunities, it would be developing entrepreneurial mindset, to tackle poverty and improve the quality of life for everyone.

In this study, we will look at some of the skills needed to be a successful entrepreneur, key to successful entrepreneurial mentoring relationship, general principles and practices among others.

Why Entrepreneurial Mentoring Program?

Researchers have shown that without the encouragement of private entrepreneurs, the nation will be unable to cope with its enormous responsibilities; to ensure economic growth and development, build and maintain schools and universities, provide affordable health care, provide and maintain its infrastructural facilities etc. the present task of government and private sector is to put in place the mechanisms for the development of more Entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship programs to handle these outlined responsibilities. This paradigm shift from the traditional teaching of entrepreneurship courses or subjects in schools, help trainees to strengthen their entrepreneurial imagination, instillation, attitude and behavior and cultivation of innovative mindset (Ottih, 2014). Also, researchers have argued that entrepreneurship cannot be taught because entrepreneurship is closely associated with risk taking and that is rather a congenital trait than a learnt skill. What is been taught and learnt in any entrepreneurship training are the

skills that are necessary for an entrepreneur to have (Nigerian finder, 2018). Some of these skills are, but no limited to: problem breakdown, critical reasoning, problem identification and providing the right answers to problems. To instill that willingness in the Nigeria students, a number of programs that have been designed in and out of formal education in Nigeria is to get youths and students start thinking about entrepreneurship. Primarily, some of these programs are wheedled to show students and out-of-school-youth that they can create a future of their own rather than waiting on the government for the provision of employment opportunities (NF, 2018). As such the curriculum is designed to get the people taking the class to notice business opportunities around them and sometimes provide the starting capital for any proposed business idea.

Conceptual Issues

Some researchers' think of entrepreneurs as people who are willing to take risk that other people cannot take (Amaewhule, 2014; Osuala, 2004; Ottih, 2000). Others define them as people who start and build successful business. Reflecting on these definitions, entrepreneurship does not necessarily involve starting your own business. Many people who work for other people in different organisations are recognized within their organization as entrepreneurs (intrapreneurs) (Odili & Obayi in Obayi, 2015). Regardless how one define or see an entrepreneur, one thing is paramount, becoming an entrepreneur is not easy but require mentoring and acquisition of certain tools to sail specific vocational field. These are budding tools entrepreneurs need to succeed are known as the five pillars of entrepreneurship. They include; envision enlist embark, execute and evolve.

- i. **Envision:** the prefect entrepreneur has the ability to predict new opportunities based on human behavior. This is the trumps-up finger that closes the grip on the entire fist and touches on all the other fingers.
- ii. **Enlist:** whether it is family members, investors, employees, customers, partners or potential acquirers, these are all an integral part of the beginning stages of a start-up. Once the vision is in place, entrepreneurs need to enlist people around the start-up to support and grow the adventure. This is the index finger used to point at people to call on them and ask for help and guidance.
- iii. **Embark:** This is actually taking the step and starting a business. Embarking is what sets leaders apart from followers, and most entrepreneurs from employees. This is the time to put the middle finger up and just move on with it.
- iv. **Execute:** the fourth finger, the ring finger symbolizes commitment, hard work and resilience. For better or worse, for richer or poorer, until liquidation or an exit do part. With vision, enlisting team and start of something great it is time to execute.
- v. **Evolve:** An entrepreneur need to continuously evolve. The only constant thing in a startup is change, and to succeed, one needs to make a promise not to fall into the trap of comfort and complacency. When an entrepreneur has covered all five fingers, he can extend a hand, or at times a fist, and take things he want (Yekutieli, 2014).

Some of the Skills needed to be Successful Entrepreneur

To be a successful entrepreneur, there are some basic skills synonymous with entrepreneurs or the-would-be entrepreneur should possess. Patel (2015) highlighted some these skills as:

i. The ability to manage money.

Money invested into any business venture demands proper management as an essential commodity for the success of every business undertaken failure to manage money left the business with no option than bankruptcy.

ii. The ability to raise money.

When money is managed properly, more money is raised manage money and more investment will be made. This make the business well balanced and taking a good risk as well.

iii. The ability to relieve stress.

Stress is an inevitable part of life of an entrepreneurial undertaking because, it is impossible to eliminate completely, but it be managed. The entrepreneur does not get frustrated of stress and upset by setbacks in business.

iv. The ability to be productive.

Productivity is a measure of the efficiency of production. Therefore, is the responsibility of the entrepreneur to get things done, completed and accomplished them efficiently.

v. The ability to make entrepreneur friends.

The entrepreneur always improve on the odds of success by finding entrepreneur friends who will be able to understand the tenets and give you much needed insight to success of the business.

vi. The ability to identify strengths and weaknesses.

To be a business owner does not mean that is perfect at everything, but understands his strengths and area of weaknesses. Assessing this will form everything about the business' decisions on areas of partnership and who to hire.

vii. The ability to hire effective people.

Speaking of hiring, this is easily one of the most important skills any entrepreneur could have. Having great people on your team will give you access to new strengths, while also building a company culture that people want to be a part of that culture? Hiring the right people is essential to get the business grow.

viii. The ability to train new staff.

When you bring on someone new, a robust on boarding process will ensure that they know what to do and not do. Not only will this help keep your company moving the correct direction, it will increase the commitment level of good employees and give you grounds to follow up on misconduct.

ix. The ability to manage staff.

Once you have the right people, you need to manage them well. Early on in your business's growth, you'll be everyone's manager, so it pays to be effective. If you don't already know how to manage, take the time to learn how to motivate, encourage, and develop your staff.

Entrepreneurship

Considering of bulk of researches on entrepreneurship; there is no universal and acceptable definition of entrepreneurship, this plethora of reasons are based on the scholastic background, environment and career of the scholar. This conditions make scholars defined the subject "Entrepreneurship" in many different ways. Harvard Business School (2013) defined Entrepreneurship as the pursuit of opportunity beyond resources controlled. A definition formulated by Professor Howard Stevenson.

- i. Pursuit implies relentless focus;
- ii. Opportunity may entail
 - a. pioneering a truly innovative product;
 - b. devising a new business model;
 - c. creating a better or cheaper version of an existing product; and
 - d. targeting an existing product to new sets of customers.
- iii. Controlled resources implies resource constraints

According to Timmons (1994) Entrepreneurship is the process of creating or seizing an opportunity and pursuing it regardless of the resources currently controlled. These definitions evolved from work done by Stevenson and Eisenman at Harvard Business School are now generally accepted by authors. Therefore, entrepreneurship can be defined as a process by which individuals pursue opportunities without regard to the resources they currently control and as doing new things and departing from the customary to pursue opportunities. This suggest that entrepreneurship can also be conceptualized as involving the pursuit of creative or new solutions to challenges confronting the firm, including the development or enhancement

of old and new products and services, markets, and technologies for performing organizational functions. This is ability to create and build something from practically nothing. It has to do with doing, achieving, and building an enterprise or an organization, rather than just watching, analyzing or describing one. It refers to the willingness to take calculated risk, both personal and financial, and then doing everything possible to get the odds in your favour.

Benefits of Entrepreneurship

According to Ottih, the specific benefits of entrepreneurship to economic development are enumerated as follow:

- i. Employment generation;
- ii. Wealth Creation;
- iii. Competition and Better services;
- iv. Effective use of agricultural output by local firms;
- v. Social inclusiveness; and
- vi. Expansion of the business space.

Out-of-school learning as an educational concept first proposed by Lauren Resnick in her 1987, the out of school training is designed in such a way that it will encompasses both curricular and non-curricular learning experiences for trainees or mentees outside the school environment. The reason for out-of-school learning is to overcome learning disabilities, development of talents, strengthen communities and increase interest in education by creating extra learning opportunities in the real world.

Out-of-school learning is typically not coordinated by the entrepreneurs whose aim at closing the gap between formal and informal training. Based on their wealth of experience, Out-of-school training are organized in association with community partners in area of skill development, release of sport facilities, create charity initiatives, and more. Out-of-school experiences can range from service learning to skill acquisitions in various vocational areas. Some other examples of out-of-school learning are:

- homework and homework clubs
- study clubs – extending curriculum
- mentoring – by other mentee and by mentors, including parents
- learning about learning
- community service and citizenship

Especially if a professional organization develops a learning environment that guides groups of trainees/mentees in their co-operation in creating a professional and publicly visible product, presentation or performance. Companies, cultural institutions and non-governmental organizations can offer valuable out-of-school training. Organizations will see results accordingly to the quality of the experience, whether they aim to promote active and healthy lifestyles, increase community involvement and visitors/members, to an interest in a company's corporate responsibility projects and employment opportunities.

Mentoring is a form of apprenticeship whereby an inexperienced learner learns the ticks of the trade from an experienced colleague, backed up as in modern apprenticeship by offsite training (CIPD). Mentoring is a structured, sustain process for supporting professional learns through significant career transitions (Welsh, 2014). Therefore, can say that entrepreneurial mentoring is a learning partnership between mentee and mentor for the purpose of sharing technical information, institutional knowledge and insight with respect to a particular occupation, profession, organization or endeavor. Entrepreneurial mentoring is best described as a developmental process, dynamic and unique to each person which may informal or formal. Informal entrepreneurial mentoring exist in the work setting when amore seasonal employees takes a newly employees under his/her wing. White on the other hand formal entrepreneurial mentoring program allow organizations to create and nurtured those mentees by matching more experienced employees with less experienced employees to meet specific objective while helping those individual in the mentoring relationship to identify and develop their own talents (examples of such organizations are Songhai farm, Workmanship and Technical Training Centre of the Rivers State sustainable development

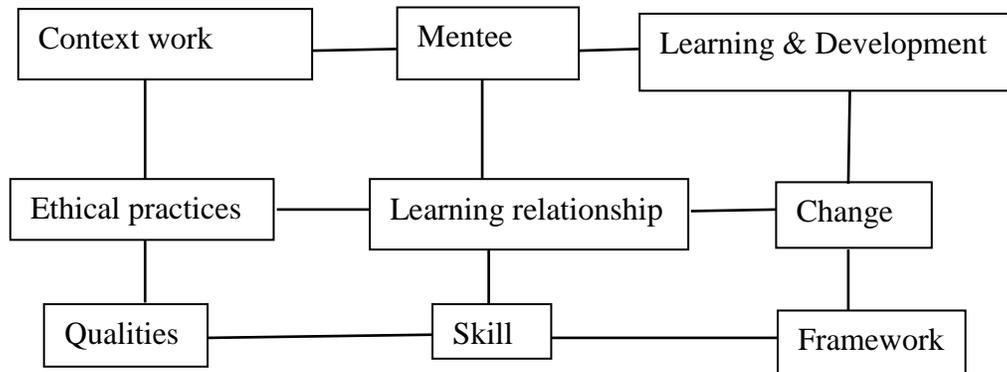
agency, TEEP-Tony Elumelu Entrepreneurial Program, HEMP-Herzberg Entrepreneurial Mentoring program etc.). Entrepreneurial mentoring has the following benefits as identified by (Byington, 2010).

- i. Mentees are able to learn and grow under the mentor's guidance.
- ii. Mentees are able to experiment with creative solution to problems within a safe and supportive environment.
- iii. Mentees become stronger and more intentional in their teaching.
- iv. Open up opportunities for mentors to hone their own mentoring, counselling and leadership skill and; the
- v. Development of new professional and organizational contacts (Podsen & Denmark, 2000).

The introduction of entrepreneurial mentoring program in the out-of-school vocational training is geared toward the acquisition and development of entrepreneurial skills. These skills centred around attitudes (soft skills) such as persistence, networking and self-confidence on the one hand and enabling skills (hard-skills) which include basic start-up knowledge, business planning, financial literacy and managerial skills (united nation conference on trade and development (UNCTAD). In Nigerian education system the introduction entrepreneurship studies, was part of strategies to implement effective entrepreneurship education policies and programs that focus on developing entrepreneurial competencies and skills, which are transferable and beneficial in many work context (Agricultural, industrial, commercial, entertainment, pharmaceutical etc.). The general aim of the policies is not only to strengthen the individual capacity to start up their own enterprises but to develop an entrepreneurial culture (FRN, 2004).

Principles for Effective Entrepreneurial Mentoring

Effective entrepreneurial mentoring underpinned the principles summarized in the chart below. These principles were derived from personal observations in visited training centres and literatures relating to the domesticating entrepreneurial practices in the out-of-school vocational training centres, which have informed and guided the practices of entrepreneurial mentoring.



Principles of effective practice developed by Kolb 1984

The principles are described as follows:

- The learning relationship is the heart of the change in the society.
- The context in work
- The mentor is the facilitator of learning and development
- The outcome is change and action.
- The client (mentee) sets the agenda and is resourceful
- The skill develops insight, release potential and devolve result.
- The framework (approach) model provides movement and direction.
- The Qualities of the mentor affirm and sustain the mentee.

- Ethical practice safeguards and enhances entrepreneurial mentoring. Such principles that may guide the mentee include respect for client autonomy; faithfulness to promises made, adopting in a way that are beneficial to both mentee and mentor (Zeus & Skiffington, 2008).

Kolb (1984) opined that learning stages and cycle could be used by mentors to critically evaluate the learning provision typically available to learners, and to develop more appropriate learning opportunities. Because it ensures that activities are designed and carried out in such a way that offer each learner the chance to engage in the manner that suits them best. Also, individuals can be helped to learn more effectively by the identification of their lesser preferred learning styles and the strengthening of these through the application of the experiential learning cycle. Ideally, activities and material used in the out of school training are developed in ways that draw on abilities from each stage of the learning cycle and take the mentees through the whole process in sequence.

Determine Benchmarks and Enhancements for Entrepreneurial Mentoring

In this study, benchmark is a practice that mentoring program for out-of-school mentee must follow in order to meet the standard while enhancement is a practice that is not required for carryout entrepreneurial mentoring program implementation in order for the program to be in compliance with the standard. The criteria used to determine the benchmark in out-of-school vocational training program must really sustain the practice associated with effective entrepreneurial mentoring; and such is designed to protect the safety of mentees (National mentoring partnership, 2015).

Establishing a benchmark for an entrepreneurial mentoring program, the following should be considered- the recruitment, screening, training process and matching and initiating.

Recruitment: Through recruitment the right mentors and mentees are gathered for selection on the basis of need, relevance and merit. The recruitment process is importance for the continuation and success of the program because it lends credibility to the program, provides consistency, helps to write up appropriate jobs description and ensures transparency in mentees enrolment and mentors' hiring process. The NMP recommends that mentoring programs should be able to give equal consideration for the implementation of entrepreneurial mentoring program. Such consideration in the recruitment process: enhances mentee and mentors' experience; facilitates collaboration and communication among mentee, mentor and the organization; supports mentee referral program; performs power searches; and be able to keep team on track by automating, streamlining administrative task and logical workflow.

Enhancement in this context is that, the designed program provides quality training to every mentee by facilitating effective partnership among various stakeholders. The enhancement program ought to be something that convey to coaches about how training can profit them, elucidate publicly accessible written statement outlining eligibility requirements for mentors in its program and urges mentees to enlist different companions to be mentored whose requirements match the services offered by the program as time demands (Spencer, 2007).

Screening: screen prospective mentors to determine whether they have the time, commitment and personal qualities to be safe as well an effective mentor to screen prospective mentees, to ascertain their readiness for the program, whether they have time, commitment and desire to be effectively mentored. Thorough screening helps program to:

- Establish criteria for accepting mentor into the program as well as criteria for disqualifying mentor applicants.
- Assess prospective mentors completed unwritten application that includes questions designed to help assess their safety and suitability for mentoring a youth.
- Conduct a comprehensive psychological and criminal background check on prospective mentors.
- Parent_(s)/guardians_(s) complete an application or referral form.

Monitoring programs should have a written screening plan that includes all of the policies and procedures used to implement the benchmark practices and relevant enhancement practices that sustain good entrepreneurial mentoring relationship training. To train prospective mentors and mentees in the basic

knowledge, attitudes and skills needed to build an effective and safe mentoring relationship using culturally appropriate language and tools.

- Program provides a minimum hours for mentoring training
- Program provides pre-match training for mentors on the following topics.
 - a. program requirements (eg match length, match frequency, duration of visits, protocols for missing, being late for training, and match termination
 - b. Mentors goal and expectations for the mentees, parent or guardian, and the mentoring relationship
 - c. Mentors obligations and appropriate roles
 - d. Relationship development and maintenance
 - e. Ethical and safety issue that may arise in the related mentoring relationship
 - f. Effective closure of mentoring relationship
- Program should provide pre-match training for the mentor on the following risk management policies
 - a. Appropriate physical contact
 - b. Contact with mentoring program (e.g. who to contact, when to contact).
 - c. Approved activities
 - d. Confidentiality and anonymity.
 - f. Digital and social media use.
 - g. Health and medical care.

Mentor training is a vital component of any successful mentoring program (NMP). It appears that most, but not all, mentors currently involved in an entrepreneurial mentoring program have received some type of pre-match training and orientation. Entrepreneurs who developed themselves tend to be more satisfied and fulfilled which in turn; can promote greater retention, a key component of effective entrepreneurial mentoring (Herrera, Sipe & Mcclanahan (2000).

CONCLUSION

We have drawn attention to the imperatives of entrepreneurial mentoring in accelerating economic development. In entrepreneurial thinking it has become an inextricable reality that entrepreneurial mentoring is the essential condition for sustainable economic growth. In this paper, we have:

- Explored conceptual issues surrounding who the entrepreneur is, mentoring, mentor and reviewed how they are described in the literature.
- Proposed a definition of entrepreneurial mentoring, learning relationships which help mentors and mentees to take charge of their own development, to discover hiding talent and to achieve valuable results
- Explored general principles for effective entrepreneurial mentoring and described approaches in benchmarking for prospective out-of-school program.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Following the revelations observed, suggestions are made to help develop a reliable entrepreneurial mentoring program to accelerate economic growth and reduce poverty.

1. An entrepreneurial mentoring program need a guiding mission statement that clearly describe why the program exists and the meaningful outcome it hopes to produce for the participant and community. Therefore, all entrepreneurial mentoring program should be check by their mission statement.
2. The government or its agencies should evaluate the program from time to time to see whether it matches with it polices.
3. Depending on the structure and setting of the entrepreneurial mentoring, there should be a formal board made of professionals or advisory committee that approves program, provides input and feedback.

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