Relevance of Sustainable Community Education for Entrepreneurship Development in Nigerian Rural Communities

*Adamu Isah¹ & Dr. Usman Da’u Aliyu²

School of Continuing Education (SCE)
Department of Education
Bayero University, Kano, Nigeria
adamisah77@gmail.com¹
udaliyu@yahoo.com²

Abstract: Community education is an education process that enables members of a community to identify their needs/problems and proffer solutions using locally available resources. Rural communities in Nigeria remain the central base of natural resources and producers of raw materials. Most of the necessary prerequisite needed to set up a vibrant entrepreneurial skill acquisition centre for a small scale business is available in the rural communities – land, labour, manpower, resources etc. but the problem lies in lack of awareness and inadequate knowledge or information on how to harness and mobilise these potentials to boost entrepreneurial skills. This paper is a theoretical highlight on the relevance of community education for entrepreneurship development in rural communities. The paper adopts the descriptive research method. Data used were mostly generated from secondary sources such as journals, conference papers, articles, books, websites and other texts etc. The paper highlights the nature of Nigerian rural communities, relevance of community education in entrepreneurship development and the strategies through which entrepreneurship can be enhanced in rural communities. The paper finally recommends among others that entrepreneurship development should be a component of any community education programme especially in rural areas.

Key Words: Relevance, Entrepreneurship, Development, Rural communities

Introduction
The social roles of education in every society are apparent in its contributions to human development. Education is very important in the training and development of human resources in any country through imparting the appropriate skills, capacities, values, knowledge and attitudes which can be used in the transformation of individuals, communities, nations and the world at large. According to Freire
(1973) put it that education...is the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their worlds”.

Despite the fact that Nigerian rural communities are bedeviled with high rate of illiteracy, poverty and rural-urban migration syndrome, there is still the existence of various indigenous skills, mostly inherited from generations. Each family or clan has been noted for particular traits transmitted from ancestors. The rural communities also provide lots of occupational opportunities to the local people, upon which they earn a living, support their families and contribute towards the development of the community at large. The urge to promote the living standard of the people has greatly inspired governments, institutions, organisations and private individuals to develop measures around entrepreneurship programmes to curb the high rate of unemployment and dependency syndrome among Nigerians. Shuman (1999) argues in this dimension that “a remarkable left-right consensus has emerged that one of the most promising ways to address poverty these days is through minority business development”. Politicians, policy makers, philanthropists, academics, corporate bodies and even activists are touting the virtues of entrepreneurship to improve the quality of life among Nigerians. (ibid)

Community members at the local level are endowed with several entrepreneurial skills needed for the establishment of small scale businesses that can provide job opportunities to other members. But the lack of knowledge and adequate information on how to mobilise and articulate these potentials for the benefit of others had limited the development and expansion of their skills and capacities. Community education is a means through which desired knowledge and information can be appropriately disseminated because it is an embodiment of educational programmes aimed at empowering the people to appreciate the value of their social existence to tackle the problems and challenges affecting their communities (Shuaibu, 2005).

Community education has been advocated as a way to respond to social exclusion and systemic inequalities…. The whole idea of community education and learning is rooted in a process of empowerment, social justice, change, challenge, respect and collective consciousness. It builds the capacity of local communities to engage in developing responses to educational and structural disadvantage and to take part in decision-making and policy formation within the community. It is distinct from general adult education provision, due to both its ethos and the methodologies it employs (AONTAS, 2000).

Community education can be appropriately adopted and applied in the entrepreneurship development processes because its model caters for variety of learners at different levels, as it incorporates and recognizes formal, non-formal and informal learning. In view of this, Esenjor (1992) opined that it is crucial to ensure in the course of designing development programmes, the active involvement and contributions of the entire people who should be educated to share responsibility along
with the benefits of entrepreneurship development.

Entrepreneurship is an emerging term that provides a comprehensive view to a wide range of occupational services available to certain potential individuals by engaging people to actively participate in order to improve their socio-economic standards. Entrepreneurship is seen as the vehicle for creating wealth, employment and economic growth. It is also a tool for fighting poverty, hunger and rising unemployment. (Acts and Audretsch, 2003; Aidis, 2005; Benzing et al, 2009; McMullen et al, 2008) in Mwatsika (2015).

In essence entrepreneurship development refers to the process of enhancing entrepreneurship skills and knowledge through structured training and institutional building of programmes focused on individuals who wish to start or expand a business. The aim of entrepreneurship development is to enlarge the base of entrepreneurs in an economy in order to accumulate the pace at which new ventures are created thereby speeding up the creation of jobs and economic development (ibid)).

Therefore, it is based on this background that the paper reviews the relevance community education to entrepreneurship development at the rural communities. The paper reviewed relevant literature, described the nature of the Nigerian rural communities and identified strategies through which community education fosters entrepreneurship development.

Nature of Nigerian Rural Communities

The nature of Nigerian rural communities can be clearly identified based on observation and the usual daily reports about rural communities on the media. Nevertheless the classic work of Sorokin & Zimmerman (1929) in Ezimah (2004) can still be slightly applicable to our current rural communities. They observed and analysed the rural communities in terms of occupation which is more of agrarian, agribusiness, extractive or primary activities and communalism. The environment is associated with nature, more natural than man-made, usually small communities, villages, countryside, with productive capacity and low population density, often a homogeneous group. High degree of poor education and political docility, bias against women, religious dogmatism, low rate of crime, nominal identity and pronounced reign of traditional rulers. They further added that the rural communities have low social differentiation and stratification, rural-urban migration is high, classified with high degree of primary contact, personal face to face contact, we-feeling (P. 303).

Ezimah (2004) further describes the rural community life (Gemeinschaft) in rating the different sectors of the national economy, the rural dwellers who are mainly farmers are at the continuum. Generally life revolves around low investment in agriculture, rural proletarianization leading to migration to cities. They are characterised by an aggregate of lineages exhibiting consanguineous we-feeling relationship with primary contacts. The poverty level in rural communities especially in developing countries makes it difficult to raise capital to invest in ventures that are lucrative and yield much of employment opportunities. Poor health facilities and the use of primitive technology in farming and processing culminate the
prominent features of rural communities. Baker (1995) also pointed out that the rural communities have few cultural attractions, limited public services and in most instances benefits little from the national wealth. On the other hand, Baker (1995) indicated that a rural community presents positive values, beliefs, traditions, wealth of natural resources, diverse rural activities, friendliness and relatively low crime rates.

Along the same line, Mondal (2016) supporting the above view highlighted ten characteristics of the rural communities to include: (a) size of the community is usually small (b) low population density (c) Agriculture is the main occupation (d) close contact with natural environment (e) homogeneity of population (f) social stratification (g) social interaction (h) social mobility is rigid (i) social solidarity and (j) joint family.

Nevertheless, the negative features of rural communities can be appropriately transformed through entrepreneurship education as to enable the people understand their condition and be able to solve their problems using available resources at their disposal to enhance their general well-being and living condition.

Relevance of Community Education in Entrepreneurship Development

Entrepreneurship education and training is becoming a global phenomenon due to the high rate of unemployment and poverty driven crimes and crises. This has made many countries of the world (developed, developing or underdeveloped) to be interested and making progress though at low pace (Anho, 2014), to extend entrepreneurship skills to the large population of people excluded from this development especially at the rural areas. Similar situation had already been described by Agboh (2009) stressing that, most developing countries like Nigeria are plagued with poverty, unemployment, underemployment, disease and lack of infrastructural facilities. He further stated that experts have suggested that graduates or even individuals should be job creators, self-employed or employers of labour and not only job seekers.

In this regard, Solomon (1989) lamented strongly over the traditional “mass production” educational system that has dominated our education system for decades, even in the United States, which tends to “to teach students how to become proficient employees instead of successful business person”. Even with the recent significant growth of entrepreneurship in higher education over the past 5-10 years in Nigeria, strong growth is expected to continue; researchers agreed that more needs to be done.

According to Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) 2010 expert survey report in Ruperto et al (2011) quoting (Corduras-Martinez, Levie, Kelley, Saemundson &Schott, 2011) laments that entrepreneurship education and training in school and outside school are inadequate in most countries. As supported by Twaalfhoven & Wilson (2004) that entrepreneurship in higher education needs to expand particularly in the areas of curriculum development, training and development of teachers, funding entrepreneurship, cross disciplinary research collaboration and facilitation of spin-outs from higher institutions.

It was in this dimension that Varela (2003) in Ruperto et al (2011) argues that our function as a nation is to
educate our citizens within the bounds of ethics and social responsibility to make human beings capable of acting independently, innovatively and with the capacity for achieving goals and taking risks to create new sources of wealth and employment. This assertion was subtly affirmed by Kirby (2003) that educational systems need to focus not simply on what is taught but how it is taught.

In this sense, the role of community education in the formation of strong entrepreneur base especially at the rural level is inestimable; it enables participants to emerge with more than new personal skills and knowledge. As maintained by Omoyibo (1998) that the involvement of the local people in educational process is being advocated for based on the fact that the people are more equipped with the indigenous knowledge through informal and non-formal education of their environment in terms of all the existing traditional resources in the area which are viewed as important ingredients of sustainable educational development. They also emerge with a strong capacity for social action, a sense of collective empowerment and an ability to tackle issues of social justice.

In this sense, the World Economic Forum (2009) highlighted the importance of entrepreneurship education and training on the development of entrepreneurship capabilities. Thus, while education is one of the most important foundations for economic development, entrepreneurship is a major driver of innovation and economic growth. Entrepreneurship skills, attitudes and behaviours can be learned and that exposure to entrepreneurship education throughout an individual lifelong learning path, starting from youth and continuing through adulthood into higher education as well as reaching out to those economically or socially excluded is imperative (The World Economic Forum (2009: 7-8)

Therefore in order to provide a levelling ground for effective introduction and mobilization of the rural communities into full participation in the entrepreneurship programme. The following key characteristics community education as outlined by the Green paper 1998 is crucial.

i. It should be a learning environment and located in the community
ii. It provides learning programmes based on identified needs
iii. Its control remains in the local community’s hands
iv. Its teaching and learning methodologies are rooted in emancipatory, humanistic values.

v. It maintains that people are capable of reaching their potentials through growth and development.
vi. Participants’ own experience is valued as the basis for learning
vii. Its intended outcomes are personal acquisition of skills, knowledge and further directions on social and community advancement.

Moreover, promoting entrepreneurship through community education needs practical and operational strategies that are objectively realistic.

Community education strategies for Promoting Entrepreneurship Education in Rural Communities

In a qualitative research report conducted in Donegell in 2007 exploring
community education and social change, discovered that community education has been successfully used to reach marginalised groups and developing relationships with people who are often excluded from society. For this reason, statutory agencies such as training bodies and employment agencies use some methods from community education. In this regard, Connoly (2007) argues that there is a fundamental difference between community education (delivered by community groups where people can opt to attend) and programmes where people are compelled to attend, “the fundamental condition for community education, the grassroots movement, where participants identify and self-direct their own learning stories, is completely missing when people are forced to attend… it is top down, not compulsory imposition on people who have little social power” (Cannoly, 2007:15)

The strategies and styles of community education are mostly differentiated from the mainstream of other forms of education by its ethos of empowerment and consciousness-raising; its group methodologies are also distinctive and purpose-oriented. Its model is deeply rooted in the process of active participation. Community education is a flexible educational process, and can be adopted and used by any group of learners or ‘community of interest’ to achieve its aims (ibid)

Community education provides local residents, community agencies and institutions the opportunity to become active partners in addressing community concerns. Its principles can be applied in implementing any form of programme meant for the community members. These principles according to Decker (1990) include the following:

i. Self-determination: since the local people are in the best position to identify their needs and wants. Any community entrepreneurship programme organized with this purpose in mind will help immensely towards achieving balanced community participation.

ii. Self-help: people are best served when their capacity to help themselves is encouraged and enhanced. When people assume ever-increasing responsibility for their own well-being, they acquire independence. Since entrepreneurship is aimed at producing a self-reliant people, this therefore creates a softer landing ground for community entrepreneurship education

iii. Leadership development: the identification, development and use of the leadership capacities of the local citizens are core prerequisite for an on-going self-help and community improvement efforts of all sorts.

iv. Localisation: this indicates that services, programmes, events and other community involvement opportunities that are brought closer to the people by organising it within their simplest reach have the optimum potential for a high level of public participation. Whenever possible, community education programmes should be decentralized to locations of easy access to the community members.

v. Integrated delivery of services: this is where organizations and agencies with the same purpose
collaborate for public good. Organizers of any entrepreneurship programme can collaborate with other agencies of like minds to provide the needed services for the benefit of the community members.

vi. Maximum use of resources: the physical, financial and human resources of every community should be interconnected and used to their fullest to satisfy the needs and interests of the community members. This is very important principle that would be welcome by entrepreneurs, because entrepreneurs need these resources to initiate their ventures.

vii. Inclusiveness: community education programme must be free from all sorts of segregation or discrimination based on age, gender, income, sex race, ethnicity, religion or other factors that might hinder the full development of the community. Therefore community entrepreneurship education programmes, activities, and services should involve the broadest possible cross section of all the community residents.

viii. Responsiveness: community education principles provide opportunity for public institutions the responsibility to develop programmes and services that respond to the continually changing needs and interest of their constituents

ix. Lifelong learning: learning begins from cradle to the grave. Formal and informal learning opportunities should be available to residents of all ages in a wide range of community settings. This makes the provision of any community entrepreneurship education programme sustainable and easy.

There are many areas of occupational engagements which could be used to engage the rural communities into different entrepreneurial skills as identified by Okekekiani (2008) cited by Akiri (2011), Anho (2013), which include the following:

i. Agricultural crop production
ii. Animal husbandry
iii. Barbing
iv. Beauty care
v. Coal production and sales
vi. Clothes dyeing
vii. Driving career
viii. Iron and steel production
ix. Car washing
x. Sewing and fashion designing
xi. Soap and detergent production
xii. Poultry farming e.t.c

Entrepreneurship education can be promoted in the rural communities through government resources (agencies) as it was done in Slovenia. Nwadiani (2011) reports that it was offered through different government resources, in which every year 4000 young people aged from 12-30 participate, which was approximately 30% of the secondary education population. That same year 2006, Slovenia adopted a new strategy into the regular school system to involve all levels of education.

**Conclusion**
The paper significantly justifies how relevant community education could be to the overall implementation of successful entrepreneurship programmes in the rural communities of Nigeria. In view of the importance of entrepreneurship to nation building,
Community entrepreneurship education becomes a timely intervention in boosting the entrepreneurial potentialities of rural communities. It is an important community diffusion mechanism of empowerment and fostering mind-sets, skills and behaviours on the rural communities. It is expected that a well-organized community education programme will go a long way in motivating rural dwellers into full participation in any entrepreneurship programme that will improve their economic and productive power.

**Recommendations**

By and large, the paper presents a guide to providers of entrepreneurship education to embrace community education principles to facilitate effective instructional delivery and elicit high degree of participation from the rural dwellers. It is based on this outcome that this paper recommends the followings:

1. Programme planners, initiators as well as institutions should restructure and reorganise the bulk of their educational programmes to produce self-dependent individuals and entrepreneurs.
2. Entrepreneurship development should be a component of community education programme

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