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CERAMIC STUDIO PRACTICE: A SKILL NECESSARY FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA.

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Introduction

Nigeria's poverty rate since 1980 to date suggests that the more Nigeria earns from oil the larger the population of poor citizens. According to World Bank (2019), Nigeria remains a country with high levels of poverty. The last official estimate in 2009 was that 46% of Nigerians live below the national poverty line of \$1.90 per person per day. In 2017, an estimated value of 49.1 percent of Nigeria's population lived below that poverty line. Ezekwesili (2013) describes Nigeria as paradox of the kind of wealth that breeds penury. Entrepreneurship is one of the keys to getting out of this economic and development quagmire as it contributes to the economic and social development through creation of employment opportunities. Entrepreneurs are significant because they have important effect on world economy (Wickham, 2004). Entrepreneurship in Nigeria needs attention from different sectors to help in every angle of its operation as it is one of the contributors of economic and social development.

Following the oil price collapse in 2014-2016, the gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate dropped to 2.7% in 2015 from 6.3% in 2014. Oil price volatility continues to influence Nigeria's growth performance in the negative. There is therefore a need to diversify the economy. Despite expansion in other sectors, especially the agricultural sector, Agricultural growth remains below potential due to continued insurgency in the Northeast and on-going farmer-herdsmen conflict. Job creation remains weak and insufficient to absorb the fast-growing labour force, resulting in high rate of unemployment (23% in 2018), with another 20% of the labour force under employed (World Bank 2019). Since 2015, economic growth remains muted. Growth averaged 1.9 % in 2018 and remained stable at 2% in the first half of 2019. Growth in 2019 was primarily driven by services, particularly telecoms. This is an indication that there is still more to be done in other sectors if the country is to enjoy economic growth. One of such ways to improve the economy is to empower the youths with skills that make entrepreneurs out them. This will get them self-employed and in the long run they can be employers too.

Brief History of Entrepreneurship in Nigeria

History very often has a direct impact on what a nation is facing at present. Entrepreneurship in Nigeria today is not what it used to be. Majority of Nigerians used to be entrepreneurs. Before the colonization era, a lot of Nigerians were majorly involved in trading. In fact, the wealthiest at the time were the traders. Even before money was generally accepted as the legal tender, people exchanged what they had in surplus for what they did not have in a trade by barter system. Nigerians were a people with a business mindset who exhibited high moral standard when doing business. The colonial era, brought the death of the entrepreneurship spirit. The colonial masters brought their goods and made Nigerians their middlemen. Then came the formal system of education and the companies established by the colonial masters. A lot of young Nigerians were employed by these companies. This formal education trained Nigerians to join the labour force and

not to be entrepreneurs. The entrepreneurial mindset began to fade away. Today we have so many trained graduates but insufficient companies to absorb them all. This is the one of the reasons why we have a high unemployment rate within the country.

Several scholarly studies have shown that most developing countries are faced with this problem of unemployment as a result of graduates being dependent on government instead of being employers of labour. The solution to this problem is to go back to entrepreneurship and develop strategies for job and wealth creation. It is high time that higher institutions stop churning out graduates who will keep waiting on government to provide jobs for them.

Entrepreneurship in Ceramics

Entrepreneurship is widely understood as the process of starting and owning a business that provides goods or services to people in exchange for money. A person who has created and owns a business is known as an entrepreneur. Entrepreneurship is more than just starting a business. It is a mindset, a way of thinking and acting. Entrepreneurship in this modern age involves thinking of new ways to solve problems and adding value to existing businesses. An entrepreneurial spirit is said to be characterized by innovation and risk-taking.

According to Baron and Henry (2010) entrepreneurs not only identify, but also create opportunities, because their actions produce effects, which in turn, produce opportunities that did not previously exist. Amsami (2014) states thus, whether visual artists can undertake entrepreneurship is underscored by Fasua's (2006) opinion which holds that a person can be qualified to be an entrepreneur if the person has the willingness to seek out investment opportunities in an environment, and be able to establish and run an enterprise successfully. Going by his opinion, ceramists can be entrepreneurs if they are willing and seek investment opportunities, possess required professional skills to establish and run ceramic enterprises. It is rather unfortunate that most ceramic graduate abandon their training upon graduation, they go into banking and other fields because there are very few ceramic industries to absorb them. Another reason is the lack of entrepreneurial mind-set even though they have the required skill to set up private studios and be self-employed and possibly become employers of labour.

In developed economies, entrepreneurship has been brought to the front burners of their national development at the critical phase of their respective developments. This too can be replicated in Nigeria by harnessing ceramic studio practice for development. Harbinson (1973), states that any country which is unable to develop the skills and knowledge of its people and to utilize them effectively in the national economy will be unable to develop anything else. This is because human beings are active agents who accumulate capital, explore and exploit materials resources build social, economic and political organizations and carry forward national development.

Nigeria has a high potential of becoming a great entrepreneurial nation in the 21st millennium if only it will empower its youth to be entrepreneurs in the ceramic industry. According to Muyideen (2018) pottery activities were the 2nd largest contributors to the Nigerian economy after agriculture in the 1960's. Clay which is the primary raw material of the ceramic industry is readily available in almost all localities in Nigeria. It is relatively cheap and easy to work with. Clay is widely used and finds application in various areas like automobile, electrical engineering, building, dentistry and orthopaedic medicine etc. The federal government in recent times have made commendable effort to diversify the economy and reducing unemployment by developing the agricultural sector, as commendable as it may be, there are other areas like ceramics which has not been given adequate

attention even though it has the potential of reducing unemployment too as it is a labour intensive area.

Clay is extensively used today to produce objects of utility. Gukas (2012) affirms that ceramics contribute significantly to the providing solution to the socioeconomic needs of families and communities because clay products are made to serve a wide range of domestic and industrial needs like cooking, storage, decoration, construction, etc. The ceramic industry is versatile and can exist on its own but it also has a significant influence on other industries that rely on its products for successful operation.

Through the development of the ceramic studios and industries, our dependence on a few sectors for economic development will be history. The identification, mining and processing of indigenous clay could be a possible alternative for increased revenue generation for the country. As rightly observed by Manzuche (2017), the utilization of local ceramic raw materials will certainly bring about promotion of indigenous man power development which will pave way and cause a decline on dependence on developed economies of the world in terms of trade, finance and technology.

Ceramic Studio

A ceramic studio is the work room where ceramic activities take place. There are many private ceramic studios where ceramics are produced examples include Maraba pottery in Kaduna, Dajo pottery in Markudi, Buhari pottery and Ushafa pottery both at the Federal Capital Territory, Heritage ceramics established in Lagos etc. There are also higher institutions like Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, University of Maiduguri, Federal University of Technology, Akure, and Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University, Bauchi, Federal University of Lafia etc. within Nigeria where Ceramic art and design are specialized option within their applied art/industrial design programme. These institutions train students in ceramic art/design and graduate professionals. Traditional pottery inspired the formal training in these higher institutions. According to Kasim and Adelabu (2013), school-based training for contemporary ceramics kicked off in 1953 at Zaria Art School (now Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria) following an inspiration of the pottery training initiative anchored by Michael Cardew at Ladi Kwali Pottery Centre in 1950.

Other tertiary institutions took a leaf from it and began to establish ceramics as course of studies. With each passing year many more students enrol into higher institution to study ceramics which means that every year, the numbers of graduates are increasing. A critical look at ceramics shows that it is labour intensive, with many levels of operations that requires skill, creativity, patience, time, money which are akin to entrepreneurship. Each level of production requires different skills from clay preparation, to shaping, to packaging. This is a pointer to the varying job opportunities that ceramics can induce.

Limitations of Ceramic Studio Practice

There are limitations as to why ceramic studios are not thriving within Nigeria. Poor infrastructural facilities, epileptic power supply, poor road network and inadequate water supply, lack of funds and equipment have devastating effects on studio practice. Related to these are environmental factors like the incessant cases of kidnapping and the insurgence of "Boko Haram" sect, which create unhealthy and insecure environment for teaching and production of ceramics. Multiple taxation and levies in different forms at federal, state and local government levels constitute militating forces for ceramic entrepreneurs in the private sector.

Johnson (2014), stressed that the need for entrepreneurship development in Nigeria has never been so high in the history of the country. He highlighted lack of capital, lack of quality education,

lack of infrastructure, unstable economy, inconsistent government policies, lack of entrepreneurial mindset etc. as some of the problems bedevilling entrepreneurship. With specific reference to the ceramic studio, the following are reasons why studio practice is not necessarily birthing entrepreneurs in the ceramic industry.

Poor Education

By definition, education is an organized process of learning where experience and excellence are attained. It is a process of also gaining moral, physiological, mental and moral development whether it is in a formal or informal environment. When ceramic students are poorly equipped educationally, it will reflect negatively on their studio practice. Poor quality teachers/students, lack of commitment of some teachers/students, non-improvement in the educational curriculum, misconceived educational policies are some reasons why ceramic education seems to be downgraded in the nation's educational system.

According to Layiwola (2018), from about the 1980's, it appears that art is no longer given its proper place in Nigeria, as it is not adequately taught in many primary and post-primary schools. Although art is usually in the curriculum, art teachers are either too few or they are often diverted to teach other courses. This has not only succeeded in destroying a vital aspect of education for our young people, but has also truncated the creative ability, vision and aspiration of generations of Nigerians who have passed through the Nigerian educational system in the past 30 years without art as an effective part of their curriculum.

The creative instinct that art hatches at the formative stage of people goes a long way in fertilising their development in later years. Sometimes the way art/ designs courses are taught without business or entrepreneurial component gave birth to graduates who cannot survive as entrepreneurs. It is imperative that entrepreneurship be included in educational curriculum so that ceramic graduates can now have that wherewithal to survive the business world having acquired both professional and entrepreneurial skills during their training.

Equipment/Facilities Availability

Establishing an art school or ceramic studios requires a whole lot of equipment and facilities. It is a capital intensive project which requires funding. Some equipment like throwing wheels and kilns are expensive. Even though there are locally fabricated ones, there is still much to be desired in terms of efficiency. This poses a challenge to anybody who wants to set up a studio. According to Layiwola (2018), there are very poor facilities and equipment for teaching art in almost all art schools in Nigeria, there are no technical staff for studio operations or basic furniture in many art schools. What we have is either nonfunctional or obsolete, and even if we have the equipment there is the challenge of powering them. A perfect example is the electric kiln; epileptic power supply hampers the use of electric kilns within Nigeria.

Lack of Capital and Difficulty in Securing Loans from Financial Institutions

There are thousands of young Nigerians with wonderful skills and ideas that could be turned into avenues for entrepreneurial development. However, most of them lack the capital to make their ideas into reality. Lack of capital is the number one reason why the development of ceramic entrepreneurship has not improved over the years. Setting up ceramic studio is capital intensive even though the raw materials are abundant in nature. Raising such capital as an individual is not easy and securing loans from financial institutions is difficult too. The reason for this is that the banks and financial institution feel it is a huge risk lending money to them. Financial institutions are not sure if entrepreneurs will be able to pay back the loan. Another major reason why securing a

loan is so difficult is the requirements needed for securing these loans. Most of the financial institutions demand huge collateral and high-interest rate that small business owners or start-ups cannot afford. This discourages young Nigerian graduates and kills many promising ideas.

Economic Instability

The state of the Nigerian economy is also a major challenge for emerging ceramic entrepreneurs in Nigeria. The state of a country and its economy plays a significant impact on the level of entrepreneurship in any country. The socio-economic problems and the unstable economy of Nigeria have killed a lot of businesses in the last couple of years. The inconsistent government policies only help in discouraging entrepreneurs. If the borders were to be closed on foreign ceramics, an increasing number of local ceramist will then see the need to become entrepreneurs.

High Risk Involved in Starting a New Business.

Many are afraid of the risks and give up the idea to start their own business. According to Abiola (2013), the International Finance Corporation (IFC) reported in 2002 that only 2 out of every 10 newly established businesses survive up to the fifth year in Nigeria. International Finance Corporation (IFC) reported in 2002 that only 2 out of every 10 newly established businesses survive up to the fifth year in Nigeria. However, it is important to understand that a business and risk go hand in hand. There is a price to pay for growth and development. There is no gain without pain therefore those who want to start up ceramic studios should bear in mind that there are risk involved but that should not stop them from pursuing their goals. Every entrepreneur should bear in mind that the path to success, failure is often encountered.

Lack of Entrepreneurial Mindset

The mentality instilled in us is from the era of colonialism. The colonial era influenced the mindset of many Nigerians. As highlighted earlier, most people were taught how to be civil servants or how to work for other people and not to be entrepreneurs. An entrepreneurial mindset calls for patience and contentment and risk taking. Many new business owners and young entrepreneurs are looking to make money quickly forgetting that it will take some time for a ceramic studio to grow and start getting returns from investment. A lot of young graduates would rather work for other people or venture into other illegal things in search of quick money.

Ceramics Entrepreneurship Development and the Future of Nigeria.

1. Entrepreneurship will promote Nigeria's economic development. The role entrepreneurship development has to play in the economic development of Nigeria cannot be over emphasized. The wide application of ceramics in various aspects of life makes it clear that it is a gold mine waiting to be harnessed.

2. Ceramic studio practice can create employment opportunities and help to reduce the level of unemployment in the country. Entrepreneurship creates new opportunities of employment for many unemployed Nigerians. Programs like YouWin (youth enterprise with innovation in Nigeria), TraderMoney and many others are being laid out to encourage and facilitate development of entrepreneurship in Nigeria. In most developed countries, the existence of Science Mathematics and Engineering (SME's) has provided more jobs for their citizens. And so, if entrepreneurship continues to develop in Nigeria, more SME's will arise and in turn reduce unemployment in Nigeria.

3. Development of entrepreneurship will also improve the standard of living of Nigerians. When more jobs are created and these jobs generate income, it is only natural that there will be improved standard of living.

Recommendations

1. Entrepreneurship courses should become unlimited in all universities in Nigeria. It should be incorporated into general studies course content across the levels of undergraduate degree programmes.
2. Policy makers should be experts whose education and experience are both broad and deep in basic political, economic trends. They should possess the requisite skills for identifying and exploiting opportunities for entrepreneurial development.
3. Government should also assist Universities especially those that are involved in running entrepreneurship degree programme in the areas of acquiring tools, equipment and workshops.
4. Introducing early business and vocational education training right from the primary school through the secondary school to the tertiary would expose the youths to productive and useful activities that will lead to increase in national productivity, that in turn will enhance development efforts of the government, create employment and accelerated the nation economic growth.

Conclusion

Ceramics entrepreneurship will help reduce the problem of high unemployment rate, high level of poverty and slow economic growth rate will be cushioned. Ceramic studio practice is one key area that will induce the growth and development much needed in the country. Both the government and the institutions of learning have a role to play in seeing that ceramic studios function optimally. Basic amenities like power and water should be made available by the government. While institutions of learning should ensure that they produce graduates who are skilful.

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