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THE RELEVANCE OF GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING IN ENTREPRENEURIAL EMPOWERMENT

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Abstract

More recent than ever, it is becoming more evident that entrepreneurial development is a necessary ingredient for economic development of any nation in this modern world. Accordingly, government at all levels in Nigeria has vested a significant interest in the development of the entrepreneurial sector by initiating various entrepreneurial empowerment policies in order to eradicate poverty and to enhance economic development of the Nigerian society. Despite all the efforts, entrepreneurship development in Nigeria is still a mystery. Various factors are responsible for the failure of entrepreneurial policies in Nigeria. Lack of entrepreneurial guidance and counselling services is seen as one of the major factors responsible for the failure of entrepreneurial empowerment policies in Nigeria. The study recommends that entrepreneurial guidance and counselling should be given utmost priority in any entrepreneurial empowerment programme in Nigeria in order to achieve the desired purpose.

KEYWORDS: *Counselling; Development; Entrepreneurship; Empowerment; Guidance*

Introduction

Entrepreneurship has been one of the fundamental human activities from time immemorial. The age-long practice of entrepreneurial activities in human societies is evident in ancient history of Jews, Arabs, English and even African societies. In fact, if closely observed, one would realise that the history of all hitherto existing societies contains a history of entrepreneurship. Although, the study of entrepreneurship does not begin formally until the 18th century, the term was introduced into economic theory in the works of Richard Cantillon and Adam Smith in 17th and early 18th centuries but was ignored theoretically until the late 19th and early 20th centuries and was first accorded prominence by Say (1816). It was variously translated into English as 'merchant', 'adventurer' or 'employer' (Herbert and Link, 1989; International Encyclopedia of Economics, 1997; Adunola, 2009).

More recent than ever, it is becoming more evident that entrepreneurial development is a veritable tool for economic development. According to Abimbola (2007), entrepreneurship occupies an important place in the process of development. In other words, entrepreneurship and development are inseparable bed fellows. Through the process of entrepreneurship, it is possible to augment the scope of capital formation, employment generation and facilitates industrialization. On the other hand, entrepreneurship acts as a tool for income generation, raising productivity through innovation, facilitating transfer of technology, playing key role in commercialising new products, redistribution of wealth and income, earning foreign exchanges, and promoting social welfare (Olagunju, 2004; Ikechi and Edward 2009 and Afolabi, 2009).

As a result, various levels of government, international agencies and non-governmental organisations in Nigeria instituted measures that are meant to enhance entrepreneurial activities. Such measures according to Abimbola (2007) are categorised into two broad categories: policies and programmes aimed at empowering, stimulating, developing and enhancing the productive capacities of real entrepreneurs and would-be entrepreneur, and the second category consists of measures aimed at providing stress-free credit facilities for entrepreneurs.

On the whole, the aggregate goals of these policies and programmes include, among others, stimulation of economic development, empowerment of the dis-advantaged portion of the population, employment generation and invariably, poverty reduction (Abimbola, 2007). However, despite all the efforts to enhance entrepreneurial development to combat the problems of unemployment and poverty among the teeming population in Nigeria, one will, however, observe that entrepreneurship has not fared well in serving all of these functions. Generally, there are numerous factors militating against these policies. One of the fundamental factors responsible for failure of entrepreneurial empowerment policies include lack of guidance and counselling (G&C) to the empowered individuals and groups (Ikechi and Edward, 2009). Therefore constitute the major focus of this study. This is however, preceeded clarification of important of the term entrepreneurship.

What is Entrepreneurship and who is an Entrepreneur?

There has not been a universally accepted definition of the concept of entrepreneur and entrepreneurship. There have only been variants of definitions depending on the field and the area and angle at which individual researchers sees it (Bamiduro, 1999; Wale-Awe, 2010). Schumpeter, (1951) laments that there is no good English

word equivalent to encompass the specific meaning of the French term 'Entrepreneur'. A glance at the numerous researches on entrepreneurs indicates that there is still no standard generally acceptable definition of the concept. The definition used in a particular study is dependent on what one's intent is, or what one hopes to accomplish. Kilby compares entrepreneurship to the imaginary animal, 'the Heffalump'. The animal according to Kilby (1971:1)

> is a large and important animal which has been hunted by many individuals using various ingenious trapping devices; all who claim to have caught sight of it report that it is enormous, but they disagree on his particularities. Not having explored his current habitat with sufficient care, some hunters have used as bait, their own favorite dishes and have then tried to persuade people that what they caught was a Heffalump. However, very few are convinced, and the search goes on ...

Entrepreneur is derived from the French verb "entrepende" which means to undertake; to attempt; to try in hand; to contract for, or to adventure, to try (Sarkin-Daji, 2009; Abimbola, 2007). According to Bygrave and Hofer (1991), the simplest definition of entrepreneurship is an individual that organizes, operates, and takes on the risks of a business venture. The earliest definition of entrepreneurship, dating from the eighteenth century, used it as an economic term describing the process of bearing the risk of buying at certain prices and selling at uncertain prices (Morris and Lewis, 1991). Later, researchers such as Cole (1946) broadened the definition to include the concept of bringing together the factors of production. This definition led others to question whether there was any unique entrepreneurial function or whether it was simply a form of management.

Other definitions described entrepreneurship as involving the creation of new enterprises and that the entrepreneur is the founder (Kilby, 1971). In their own view, Hisrich and Peters (1998) see entrepreneur as someone who creates something different with value by devoting the necessary time and effort, assuming the accompanying financial, psychic and social risks, and receiving the resulting rewards of monetary and personal satisfaction. Some researchers (Chung and Gibbons, 1997; Birley, 1989) have defined an entrepreneur as someone who recognizes an opportunity and marshals the resources to take advantage of, or act on that opportunity.

Olagunju (2004) asserts that, an entrepreneur is a person, organisation or government that establishes an organisation for profit or other personal aims (social, welfare, growth, etc.). Sarkin-Daji (2004) defines an entrepreneur as an individual who is willing to and has ability to seek investment opportunities in an environment and be able to establish and run a business outfit successfully based on identified opportunities. Another entrepreneurial definition sees the

meaning of entrepreneur as synonymous to innovative behavior and strategic management practices (Gartner 1988; Sexton and Smilor, 1986; Schumpeter, 1951).

Incidence of Poverty and the Necessity of Entrepreneurial Development in Nigeria

Oladunni (1999) opines that, since the collapse of the oil prices in the 1980s, there has been a dramatic increase in the incidence and depth of poverty in Nigeria. This is prevalent in both urban and rural areas (NPC and UNICEF, 2001). Although, poverty is a universal phenomenon, it has been observed that Nigeria is one of the poorest countries in the world (Oladunni, 1999). The incidence of poverty was 65.5 per cent in 1996; this percentage rate represents in absolute term 67 million people out of an estimated population of about 102 million people (F.O.S., 1999). Similarly, Nigeria's rank in the Human Development Index remained low at about 0.462, being the 137th out of 174 countries (Human Development Bureau, 2003). According to a 2004 survey by the Federal Office of Statistics (FOS), 54% of Nigerians live in poverty. More recently, an international organisation called Fund for Peace ranked Nigeria 8th most failed state in Africa and 14th in the world (*The Nigerian Tribune* June 30th 2012). Rise in poverty level has been the main indicator for their rating.

In the area of employment generation, unemployment situation is worrisome. Between year 2000 and the year 2011, unemployment rate in Nigeria averaged 15.3%, with the highest being 23.9% for 2011 and the lowest 11.9% for 2005 (FOS, 2011). The table below expatiate this further:

Table 1: Unemployment Rate in Nigeria

Year	Unemployment Rates %
2000	13.1
2001	13.6
2002	12.6
2003	14.8
2004	13.4
2005	11.9
2006	12.3
2007	12.7
2008	14.9
2009	19.7
2010	21.1
2011	23.9

Source: Federal Office of Statistics, Nigeria (2011)

Going by the above data, one would realise that the Nigerian economy is plagued by the crisis of unemployment. Infact, some observers are of the opinion that the 23.9% for 2011 is misleading and the rate should be well over 50% (*The Nation*, 2012). In a report from *The Guardian*, 25th June 2012, unemployment rate in Nigeria is put at 37% noting that over 40 million Nigerians are jobless and the poverty index is put at 60.9%. According to Aganga (2009), reducing unemployment

and enhancing productivity are top priorities for the National Economic Management Team. In other words, unemployment is a serious social problem which needs urgent and serious attention in Nigeria in which entrepreneurial development among the teeming population of the country remains the most viable option for the bailout. Fasua (2006) states that, one of the solutions to the challenges of poverty in the developing countries, such as Nigeria, is the encouragement of entrepreneurial development schemes.

In other words, it is important to note that entrepreneurship development is very necessary to achieving national development in Nigeria because it would eradicate poverty and generate employment and it could be the bedrock of the nation's industrialisation. Based on this understanding, successive governments in Nigeria from federal to local government level have introduced series of policies to boost entrepreneurship. This is done through empowerment of individuals in series of policies and programmes aimed at improving the economy through entrepreneurial development. The table below shows this further.

Table 2: Selected Economic Policies Geared Towards Entrepreneurial Empowerment in Nigeria

	Programme	Objective
1	Agricultural Development Project (ADP)	The main purpose of the ADP is to stimulate increased food production and enhance the income of the rural population.
2	National Directorates of Employment (NDE)	Responsible for vocational skills development and small scale enterprises programmes designed to combat unemployment
3	National Economic Reconstruction Fund (NERFUND)	Provides long-term loans at concessionaire interest rates to promote small and medium scale industrial projects.
4	Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP)	Established to provide micro-credit facilities for entrepreneurs.
5	People's Bank and Community Bank Programmes	Designed to make banking services more accessible and extend credit to the poor.
6	Better Life Programmes/Family Support Programme (BLP/FSP)	Aimed at providing micro-credit facilities for women entrepreneurs.
7	National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP)	Aimed at providing vocational skills development and small scale enterprises programmes designed to combat unemployment
8	National Empowerment and Economic Development Strategy (NEEDS)	To eradicate poverty and unemployment
9	*Youth Enterprise with Innovation (YOUWIN)	Business plan competition aimed at job creation by encouraging and supporting aspiring entrepreneurial youth in Nigeria to develop and execute business plans.

Source: Abimbola (2007)

*YOUWIN is added to the table as an update.

However, it is worrisome to discover that despite all the efforts that involve billions of Naira; the sector has not improved considerably and this is posing a serious threat to the socio-economic well-being of the mass of the Nigerian people. As a result of this, there is need to shift attention from pure economic oriented implementation to more practical oriented implementation procedures. One of such methods that can be use in achieving this is by providing guidance and counselling services to the empowered individuals prior and after the empowerment programmes.

What is Guidance and Counselling in Entrepreneurship?

In order to get a clearer picture of the meaning of entrepreneurial guidance and counselling, there is the need to give a brief explanation of the general meaning of guidance and counselling. Guidance and Counselling is a field of human endeavour with the pertinent focus on assisting an individual to explore and understand better, his needs, feelings, values, attitudes, strengths and weaknesses (Adeoye 1998; Yahaya, 2002). Guidance and Counselling is universal and an age long practice (Makinde, 1983; Okon, 1984) useful in all human endeavors (education, family, religion, politics and even economy). Yahaya (2002) opines that, counselling is an important activity that basically assists people to understand themselves and the environment they found themselves and help them to take effective decisions necessary for their personal growth and development. Okon (1984) defines the concept as collaborative intimate relationship between a counsellor and a client which allows the counsellee to freely express himself and the problem which he experienced. Seeing the concept from a more dynamic perspective, Makinde in Idowu (2004:1) observes that guidance and

counselling is based on the assumption that every individual in any society, is having and will have a problem that he alone could not solve.

What could be inferred from the definitions and explanations above is that, guidance and counselling in entrepreneurship could be defined as a process that caters for the need of the individual entrepreneur with the focus on assisting an entrepreneur to discover him or herself, to explore and understand better, his/her needs, feelings, values, attitudes, strengths and weaknesses, especially in the business realm. Such counselling services should be designed to guide participants through the exploration and evaluation of entrepreneurial options, the type of business or industries which might fit the individual interest, skill and needs; the business plan and marketing skills; who, when and how to hire. Moreso, entrepreneurial counselling should also cover such area as establishing person to person relationship with the entrepreneur who has problem which he or she cannot solve alone in which the service of an experienced counsellor is needed to solve such problems. Making inference from the work of Yahaya (2002), an entrepreneurial counselor is therefore, a person with special entrepreneurial skills and experiences who give assistance to entrepreneurs in making decisions that would lead to the efficiency and personal development of such entrepreneur. Thus, the ultimate goal of entrepreneurial counselling should be to assist entrepreneurs to overcome challenges and difficulties involved in becoming a successful entrepreneur.

Relevance of Guidance and Counselling in Entrepreneurial Empowerment

It is evident from the foregoing that entrepreneurial development is *sin-qua-non* to economic development. This has made the Nigeria government over the years to establish policies to enhance entrepreneurial development among the populace in the society. One of the methods used in achieving this goal is through entrepreneurial empowerment of the people. However, a closer look at the private sector of the Nigerian economy reveals a weak sector that virtually has no significant influence on the national economy (Omobolaji, 2010).

In other words, most if not all the empowerment programmes have not been yielding positive results. And one of the fundamental factors that causes this failure is lack of entrepreneurial orientation and training of the empowered individuals most often. Even after the empowerment, the empowered individuals are usually left on their own without monitoring and evaluation and with no progress report. For instance, in the organised sector of the economy such as banking, telecommunication and most larger corporations; people are often trained in the specific tasks they are employed for, this is what brought about the

concept of human resource management and this has been seen overtime to contribute positively to organisational performance (Adetayo and Salawu, 2000; Aluko, 2003 Ogunbameru, 2008). However, in many small scale entrepreneurial organisations, this practice is often lacking.

A personal observation of the system of empowerment in some developing countries of the world such as China revealed that entrepreneurs are often trained before empowerment and are often assisted with necessary needs (such as guidance and counselling services) that will assist them to develop entrepreneurial and the development of small scale entrepreneurship has been the background on which most developing economies of the world are growing (Soludo, 2005; Okoroafor, 2009). In the United States, the Small Business Association (SBA) gives counselling supports to entrepreneurs, especially the starters. However, in Nigeria, the reverse is the case. For instance, the Nigerian government established the Small and Medium Scale Industries Development Agency (SMEDAN), but this agency has limited scope and reach. The agency is no way near providing the kind of support the United States Small Business Administration (SBA) gives to small businesses. The SBA provides financial aid, counselling, and other forms of assistance and protection to entrepreneurs and small business startups (Ikechi and Edward, 2009).

In this regard, there is the need to take entrepreneurial training, guidance and counselling of empowered individuals very serious not only to develop the empowered individuals but more importantly to enhance socio-economic development of the country. This is necessary as appropriate entrepreneurial guidance and counselling such as (vibrant business education, financial enlightenment, involving in business practically and so on) all have the tendency to give the openness and space the entrepreneur needs to grow and develop both the business and him/herself. Entrepreneurial counselling is simply a tool to raise an entrepreneur above average (Mamarou, 2012). Entrepreneurial counselling is highly necessary in any entrepreneurial empowerment programmes, be it at the local, state and especially at the federal level. Without entrepreneurial counselling, the whole purpose of empowerment is often jeopardised. This is so because it is necessary to counsel the would-be entrepreneur or the existing entrepreneur on how to manage entrepreneurial resources at their disposal; to charge them to develop an entrepreneurial mindset and to give them orientation to uncover the tricks and the dynamics of entrepreneurship. This process will enable the empowered individual to compete favourably with their counterparts anywhere all over the world. No matter how good or interesting an entrepreneurial policy is, if entrepreneurial guidance and counselling is not given adequate priority and attention by making it an integral part of the empowerment process, the whole

empowerment exercise is most likely to be an exercise in futility. This is because empowerment comes with enlightenment (Trump and Donald, 2006).

According to Sanja (2012), though, the idea of giving (economic) power is the root of empowerment, intellectual power should also be considered an important factor in any economic empowerment policy. Oakeley (2001) asserts that implementation of empowerment policies should start by creating greater confidence in the individual personality. In other words, counselling service is itself an empowerment just that the empowerment proper is financial while entrepreneurial counselling is in the position of intellectual empowerment which if not properly taken care of, the empowerment proper might not yield the desired result. This counselling service will provide a platform whereby the would-be entrepreneur will be equipped with appropriate entrepreneurial education that will enhance their financial literacy. In other words, entrepreneurial guidance and counselling should be part and parcel of empowerment process in order to make empowerment programmes relevant for socio-economic emancipation of the Nigeria society. In a nutshell, entrepreneurial guidance and counselling could be structured to follow the following process in order to make it yielding the intended results.

Stages of Entrepeneurial G & C

Call for Participation: In Nigeria, most empowerment policies are often politicised. Most often, the empowerment officials are often the ruling party representatives with virtually no entrepreneurial experience. This fundamental problem often leads to a situation whereby such individuals put interest in empowering the party loyalists even if such individuals have no entrepreneurial intention. This background failure often leads to general failure of the empowerment programmes. In order to overcome this problem, the whole empowerment process should be objectively made open by making a public call to all and sundry that has interest in entrepreneurship. After getting such interested individuals, the next step should be induction service.

Induction Service: Observing from management perspective, Yahaya (2002), defined induction as an organised activity designed to assist newly recruited employees to adjust to the organisational environment. Applying this logic to the entrepreneurial empowerment process, induction service should be organised for such interested participants in order to introduce and make them familiar with the intents and contents of the empowerment programme. This medium will be used to introduce the interested applicants to entrepreneurship generally and get them familiarised with the environmental conditions and make them know the potential hindrances they are likely to

come across when they get to the business field. Similarly, this medium should also be used to make them know the basic benefits of being one's own boss.

Similarly, during induction, guardian & counsellors with proven practical entrepreneurial experience will test the ability and potential of the individual participants in order to know the area of entrepreneurship that will be appropriate and the possible financial commitments that will be necessarily involved. This is very necessary because a closer look at the empowerment process in Nigeria will reveal a situation whereby the government will empower a carpenter with motorcycle thereby making him to abandon his previous job to become a commercial motorcycler popularly called *Okadaman*. Such situations have made lots of craftsmen and women and artisans to abandon their original significant vocation to become an ordinary unskilled labourer such as taxi drivers.

Entrepreneurial Training, Guidance and Counselling: After the interested applicants have been inducted to the programme and the potentials have been discovered, there should be empowerment of the mind before monetary empowerment. This could be achieved by inviting entrepreneurial motivational speakers to charge and ignite the entrepreneurial spirits in the individuals and motivate them for entrepreneurial action, make them know the importance of being a self-employed person, make them develop an entrepreneurial mindset and prepare them for the challenges ahead of them in the entrepreneurial world. In an instance, where the would-be entrepreneurs are literate, the counsellor should be able to introduce them to entrepreneurial motivational textbooks and entrepreneurial journals in order to develop their entrepreneurial intellect. In addition to this, they should be updated with adequate information about the area in which they are interested in investing in. According to Denga (1988), the role of the counsellor is not only to feed client with information but also to guide client to evaluate the available resources critically before taking decision.

Follow-up guidance services: After the empowerment proper, the empowered individuals should not be left on their own. One, they should be attached to an experienced person in the field to serve as guard for such individual or individuals when taking decision. Two, the government should endeavour to assign credible supervisors to the empowered individuals so as to make sure that they use the money for the purpose it was meant for and counselled them on how to use it wisely. Three, there should be periodic evaluation and progress report analysis of every individual in order to know the problems or progress of the empowered individuals. Okon (1984) describe individual analyses as a developmental and longitudinal process aimed at enabling the individual to develop

rational decision-making capabilities and self-direction.

As noted by Falua (1992) cited in Yahaya (2002) some of the reasons for individual analysis appraisal are: to minimise a person to company mismatch: this will enable the supervisor to know how much the individual is improving in the business; to capitalize on the strengths and minimise the effects of the weaknesses of a person on the business and help the individual entrepreneur realise their maximum potential. Lastly, there should be periodic entrepreneurial seminars, talk shows and symposiums organised to the educational level of the affected entrepreneurs. For example, symposium or seminars organised for local artisans such as carpenters, iron fabricators, or local farmers should be organised in local languages so as to avoid language barriers in the communication process.

Conclusion

The basic thrust of this study is that guidance and counselling is not often recognised in empowerment policies in Nigeria and this has been one of the reasons for the failure of entrepreneurial empowerment policies in the country. In other words, entrepreneurial guidance and counselling services is relevant in all entrepreneurial activities ranging from agriculture, industrial production, craftwork, entrepreneurial marketing, retail services, etc. However, it is important to note that guidance and counselling in empowerment programmes should start from the stakeholders, i.e. the government or the organisation involved, this is necessary because it is observed that most government officials in Nigeria lacks the financial literacy necessary to enhance entrepreneurial thinking. After the stakeholders have gotten the necessary guidance about the formulation and implementation of the policy, the guidance and counselling service should now be given to the empowered individuals as has been observed from the foregoing explanations. It could be deduced from the foregoing that entrepreneurial guidance and counselling is important for the effective workability of empowerment policies.

This is so because the exercise will serve as means of socialising the empowered individuals into the entrepreneurial world and at the same time serve as guidance for them after entering into business as it will also aid in the discovery of talented individuals that will serve as catalyst for entrepreneurial development in the country. Furthermore, it is equally important to note that entrepreneurial guidance and counselling strategies as noted above are not applicable to the government alone, even some private individuals with no previous business experience could also borrow leaf from the strategies listed above.

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