



Framework for Developing Responsive Curriculum for Exploring 21st Century Entrepreneurship Opportunities in Sub-Saharan Africa

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ABSTRACT

This paper attempted to highlight what is needed to be done in order to develop a responsive curriculum that could facilitate the exploration of the 21st century Entrepreneurship opportunities in sub-Saharan Africa. The paper was conceived in wake of the growing concern of the increasing rise in unemployment rate amongst the populace in sub-Saharan Africa. The presenter strived to elucidate what Entrepreneurship opportunities are there in sub-Saharan Africa in the 21st century era that can be taking advantage of and provided a schema that could aid in the development of a responsive curriculum that can facilitate the exploration of such Entrepreneurship opportunities. It is the prayer of the presenter that the paper may provide an avenue for health discourse and dialogue amongst educational and curriculum planners and developers towards promoting the ideals of self-reliance and regional cohesion.

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INTRODUCTION

Africa, a continent endowed with immense natural and human resources as well as great cultural, ecological and economic diversity, remains underdeveloped. According to Globalpolicy.org (2019) most African nations suffer from poor leadership and governance, corruption, civil unrest and war, underdevelopment and deep poverty. Of the majority of the countries classified by the UN as least developed are in Africa. Numerous development strategies have failed to yield the expected results. Although some believe that the continent is doomed to perpetual poverty and economic slavery, Africa has immense potential.

In a climate of concern around global economic growth and productivity, unemployment is on the rise, with young people in emerging economies particularly badly affected. Indeed, in Sub-Saharan Africa, wiltonpark.org.uk (2019) asserted that the African Development Bank estimates that without concerted action, nearly 50% of youth will be unemployed or economically inactive by 2025.

An estimated 18 million new jobs will be needed each year until 2035 to absorb the growing labour force in the region.

However, the problem is not only unemployment, but underemployment and a lack of secure and decent work. The informal economy, where many young people find a livelihood, may not absorb all jobless youth and offers largely insecure work. This is particularly challenging in agriculture, where work is highly unstable and low paid, putting off potential young recruits to the sector. Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest migration rate in the world and the evidence suggests that a lack of decent work opportunities is driving this. The region continues to suffer the highest youth working poverty rates globally, at almost 70 per cent. Research report had shown that 36 (i.e. up to 66% of) countries in Sub-Saharan Africa region falls a long way behind the bottom line of prospecting nations (prosperity.com/feed/, 2019).

Achieving decent work for all is key not only to promoting the wellbeing of African youth and driving economic prosperity in the region, but

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also in achieving the sustainable development goals as highlighted by Goal 8, which aims to “promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all”. This also means ensuring that women and girls, minorities, disabled people and those affected by HIV/AIDS are not excluded from meaningful participation in the economy.

From the foregoing, it has become pertinent that concerted efforts are needed from all and sundry for diversification of thoughts and actions that will promote functionality and self-reliance in the teeming youths in Africa. One sure bet is through providing increased access to quality education that will look inwardly. Quality education that will allow for positive and reflective, applicable thinking is what is needed to salvage Sub Saharan Africans, particularly its young and energetic, school going population. Such education can be made available through the development and implementation of responsive curriculum that would address African peculiarities for the benefit of Africans, including Entrepreneurial opportunities

This presentation attempts to provide some insights on what needs to be done to develop a responsive curriculum that would not only provide requisite knowledge to the young ones, but make them versatile and resourceful in thoughts and functionality, with a view to be able to explore the Entrepreneurial opportunities in Sub Saharan Africa in the 21st century. To do this attempt was made to provide a conceptual understanding of key variables, a situation analysis of what obtains as far as unemployment, and poverty levels are concern in sub-Saharan Africa.

Conceptualisation of Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship is the transformation of an innovation into a sustainable enterprise that generates value. An entrepreneur is “any entity, new or existing, that provides a new product or service or that develops and uses new methods to produce or deliver existing goods and services at lower cost. According to William, Robert and Carl (2007), “Entrepreneurs innovate new ways of manipulating nature, and new ways of assembling and coordinating people....The

innovator shows that a product, a process, or a mode of organization can be efficient and profitable, and that elevates the entire economy. Bradford, (2007) affirmed that” Entrepreneurs take risks to develop a novel, sustainable enterprise—a new or improved product, service, or mode of organization that can exist independent of its originator—that benefits the economy and society. Though entrepreneurship can involve—and thus often is mistaken for— invention, creativity, management, starting a small business, or becoming self-employed, it is neither identical with nor reducible to any of them. The defining trait of entrepreneurship is the creation of a novel enterprise that the market is willing to adopt. Hence, entrepreneurship entails the commercialization (or its functional equivalent) of an innovation. New ideas, products, or organizational schemes matter little until they achieve concrete reality in the marketplace—that is, until they are actually used. The market judges utility and need along with excellence. It does not value—and does not need to value—every good idea. The entrepreneur’s risk, therefore, is not a gamble but an informed calculation about the viability of the new enterprise in the market, about its capacity to meet a demand or need of others. Entrepreneurship emerges from the realm of commerce, but it cannot be restricted there. Business is part of society. Cultural and social values and economic policies and behaviors shape and validate one another. For entrepreneurship to be a mainstream and routine business practice, it must reflect its society’s view of how the world should work and how human beings should behave. Social attitudes, political practices, economic policies, and the legal system must support creativity, risk-taking, and the implementation of new enterprises. Entrepreneurship cannot thrive if its society’s values undermine it. Entrepreneurship is a process of fundamental transformation: from innovative idea to enterprise and from enterprise to value. The very ordinariness of entrepreneurship in American commerce points to a society that prizes originality and improvement and the human traits that enable both. Thus, entrepreneurship

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21st Century Entrepreneurship Opportunities in Sub-Saharan Africa

Africa is one of the richest continents when it comes to natural resources. We're not only talking about mines here. Nate (2018) asserted that the Sub-Saharan region is known for its fertile land and clean water resources. There's also more sunny days than anywhere else on the planet. Apart from big corporations that have been sucking African mines dry for more than a century, today there are plenty of businesses founded by local entrepreneurs that use sustainable resources to equip inaccessible African villages with electricity and make them more prosperous and comfortable for everyday living.

In addition to all of the advantages that we've listed in this article, many African countries are actively trying to attract foreign investors. They are doing this by granting them a free land for building their office headquarters and production facilities and by providing them with tax exemptions in the first few years of their business development.

Many digital entrepreneurs choose to live in African countries because the money they earn online is much more valuable there. A freelancer who does one-time gigs on websites like Upwork or Freelancer and earns from \$500 to \$1,000 per month can afford many different luxuries that would be inaccessible in the Western world. On top of that, expats and digital nomads also tend to travel a lot around the region, which allows them to get to know this wonderful continent and discover many great business opportunities.

Although many big companies have already invested huge funds in African countries, these markets still offer plenty of affordable workforces. This trend is primarily influenced by the low standard of living and affordable prices, but also by the fact that population in African countries is incredibly young on average. Official figures say that more than 40% of the African population is below thirty. Still, many African countries are facing a fast rise in GDP, but in spite of this, the labour markets in Africa still offer high expertise at a very affordable price.

African middle class is growing at a very fast pace, and they are looking for a good-

quality and reasonably priced products. Although most entrepreneurs who build their production centres in Africa sell their goods on American and European markets, there are companies that have recognized the growth of African middle class and started offering products and services that they might like. One of these is Onyx-Connect, a South African company that is planning to produce a \$30 Smartphone and offer it to African consumers.

SITUATION ANALYSIS

Many Westerners consider African schools and universities to be mediocre. This is the first prejudice we need to ditch if you are planning to start a business in Sub-Saharan Africa. Countries like Kenya, Nigeria, and Tanzania have great universities, both state and private ones. African students often receive grants from their government and various non-governmental organizations. They also take part in student exchange programmes and make use of online learning resources.

To cut the story short, Africans who attend colleges and universities are not doing it because of fraternity parties or spring breaks, but because they want to improve their knowledge and business career. This tendency has been recognized by many software companies that employ experts in various Sub-Saharan countries. Crowd source tester jobs have also been popular among the African tech students in the last couple of years because they allow them to earn additional income and practice their front-end UI design skills (Nate, 2018).

Indeed, all across the continent, a growing wave of grassroots self-starters are taking risks and defying obstacles to bring their money-making ideas to life. Armed with a can-do attitude and hopes of striking it big, they're navigating a conundrum of challenges to pursue opportunities at a time when many African countries enjoy unprecedented levels of economic growth.

"The entrepreneurial landscape in sub-Saharan Africa is absolutely excellent," says Mike Herrington, executive director of Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) and professor at the University of Cape Town in South Africa. "It's on the increase because Africa, at last, has

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been emerging and the economies are booming, as several countries are starting to really increase entrepreneurial activity and move to opportunity entrepreneurship, rather than necessity entrepreneurship," he adds. "Opportunities abound and a positive spirit is emerging amongst the population of these countries."

So, Africa's entrepreneurial spirit is alive and thriving -- but how does it compare to the rest of the world? Earlier in (2014), GEM published its annual report looking at the state of entrepreneurship globally. It found that sub-Saharan Africa is the region with by far the highest number of people involved in early-stage entrepreneurial activity (TEA), with Zambia and Nigeria leading the world rankings (Teo & Milena, 2014).

The unfortunate situation is that not all that are aware of this phenomena, calling for a realistic measure that could bring into fore these heart warming opportunities particularly the young minds who are expectedly supposed to be in their schooling/ prime periods. At the school level what is desired is increasing the changes of providing quality education through the development of a more responsive curriculum for live-long education that could enhance reflective and functional thinking.

FRAMEWORK FOR DEVELOPING RESPONSIVE CURRICULUM FOR EXPLORING ENTREPRENEURSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

To develop entrepreneurs, curriculum needs to facilitate experiences and provide feedback and support for students to gain as much learning as they can from these experiences in a safe but real environment. The curriculum needs to be responsive to students' needs, student centred in its design, and supported by a plethora of resources that students can draw on as and when they need them. In addition the students need to apply the learning from the facilitated experiences to their own value proposition/entrepreneurial idea to work through how sustainable their venture idea is as a future proposition. As they build their tolerance to risk they will understand where the tipping points are that they should not venture

past with their own ideas; as they develop a resilient mindset they will recover from setbacks, adapt and continue; as they define who they are and what their measure of success is going to be, they will develop their business venture idea in a manner that will fill an opportunity gap rather than reduce a risk; and as they put all this into action, they will develop in themselves and learn through and with others. This is not a standard business school curriculum. There are no lectures as such. There are no exams or quizzes--because there are no right or wrong answers. This is a journey for people to go on where they will undertake transformational learning experiences and emerge at a different location to where they started. Equally, this would not be the choice of every teacher or academic to teach. This requires individuals who are happy to walk into a space and facilitate, with no idea what the group will bring, and will happily allow the group to co-facilitate and concrete the outcomes. In clear terms is of the view that the curriculum should help the prospective Entrepreneur to among others:

Understand Self and What to Achieve

Every entrepreneur ultimately wants to succeed--nobody sets out to fail, and yet Peirus (2015) notes that more entrepreneurs fail than succeed. He attributes success to six building blocks: our social embeddedness and individual characteristics (i.e. who we are); desire (passion for the venture); experiences (from formal and informal learning); expertise (through resourcefulness); execution (combination of perseverance, self-efficacy and communication); and value creation (for yourself and for others). While these may seem somewhat obvious, to be able to engage with them fully is actually very demanding. Who are we, for example? To answer this fully we need to understand our epistemology and how this is impacting on our ontology. What value do we want to create? This might require a shift in our ontology--with all that that encompasses. **Tolerance for Risk**

Risk is an unavoidable construct for entrepreneurs and yet it does not appear in the traditional curriculum in anything other than a "risk management" format, which assumes that risk can be managed like any other process can

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be managed, and ignores both the human elements of how we cope with risk and how it impacts our behaviour, and also the specific nature of entrepreneurial risk and the ability of the startup to pivot as new risks arise. Miles (2014), in his economic theory approach to risk focusses on the actual business enterprise assessment. The economic theory of risk provides two variables: endogenous variables which are within the control of the firm such as operations decisions, pricing, marketing; and exogenous variables which are outside the control of the firm such as GDP, weather (Hirschey and Pappas, 1992). Miles (2014) found that the two combined to reveal eight risk factors for entrepreneurial businesses:

1. Industry and economic forces (such as equipment risk, capital investment risk, government regulation risk).
2. Terrorism and security dynamics.
3. Government and market forces (such as diseconomies of scale, globalisation risk).
4. Market forces (such as intellectual capital risk, time intensity risk, customer turnover risk).
5. Global economic forces (such as expertise industry risk, protection devices risk, business entity risk).
6. Internal forces (such as velocity of profit risk, inflation energy risk).
7. Business Enterprise Intangibles (such as competitive risk, market entry risk).
8. Profit and inflation forces (business climate risk, labour risk).

Despite his being a study which stands alone in its approach to researching risk factors, the elements that Miles (2014) found do form the basis of most traditional entrepreneurship curriculums. Business schools teach about capital investment, government regulation, intellectual property protection, marketing and market entry, competitor analysis, etc.

The Need for Emotional Intelligence

While entrepreneurial personalities can be celebrated in many ways, such as for their energy, drive, self-confidence, etc., they can also have a dark side which is often overlooked,

including narcissism, aggression, ruthlessness and irresponsibility (Miller, 2014). While it may not be at top of every entrepreneurs personality profile, Ghosh and Rajaram (2015) found that emotional intelligence can be developed through entrepreneurship development programs, and this in turn also improved the success rate of the entrepreneurial endeavours. Rather than forming part of a formal curriculum, this area has previously been left to the “school of hard knocks” publications by successful entrepreneurs and consultants. Some have even started their own short courses, such as Evan Kimbrall on Udemy, with some such as B-School and The Entourage having sought qualification accreditation, which they then unfortunately lost through lack of successful completions¹. Their evidence base is largely anecdotal and style of writing is popularist rather than peer-reviewed, and hence the mismatch with academic qualifications is not surprising. Examples of such popularist curriculum include Tracey (2007), who notes seven secrets to success: clarity (being absolutely clear on who you are and what you want to achieve); competence (being very good at what you do); constraints (identify them and spend energy addressing those that matter most); creativity (innovation in finding solutions not problems); concentration (single-mindedness); courage (to take risks); and continuous action (keep moving forwards). Sprake (2013) notes the “Entrepreneur Success Recipe” as:

1. Take one person.
2. Add a massive HUNGER for success.
3. Add a vivid vision and laser focus.
4. Turn up the heat to maximum discomfort.
5. Void the environment of toxic influences.
6. Find a setting with consistent and unwavering support. • Be extremely tenacious until goal is achieved.
7. Progress until perfect growth and profit is obtained.
8. Avoid costly distractions.
9. Understand all costs.
10. Add powerful resources.
11. Relinquish control.

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12. Maximize income and time off.

Sprake puts all the emphasis on the individual, their abilities, focus and tenacity, while Tracey is more externally focused, including customers and external constraints as considerations that can impact on success. The question arises as to which point this crosses the tipping point of becoming narcissism.

Surviving Beyond Launch

Launching a new business venture is one thing; surviving beyond the launch surge is quite another. Owens et al. (2013) studied 147 small business owners and found the four personality factors that correlated most highly with success were goal setting, social networking, emotional resilience and work drive. The top three personality factors predicting satisfaction were optimism, work-based locus of control, and work drive. Interestingly, the two personality factors they found that were not related to business performance were competitiveness and dependability (ibid). Dependability might be a red herring here as it could signal a lack of adaptability, i.e. once you make a decision, people can depend on you to stick to it, whereas an entrepreneur may need to adapt more on the spur of the moment and pivot until they find their beach head market. Competitiveness, however, is counter intuitive in the dominant white male paradigm where competition is everything and "winning" is the measure of success.

Developing Resilience

If you were to draw a set of scales with risk on one end, and success as the tipping point in the middle, the other end would seat resilience in order to keep the scales in balance. Schumpeter's leading text in entrepreneur's characteristics written in 1911 (in German) noted three key characteristics: first, an entrepreneur has intuition, which is the "view" to do the right things without over analyzing the situation; second they have the power and ability to create something new; and third they have the strength of character to conquer doubt and hostility from their surroundings (Schumpeter, 1993).

CONCLUSION

From what had transpired thus far, it can be asserted that entrepreneurship opportunities abound in Sub-Saharan Africa, waiting to be harnessed. This is attainable through the development of a responsive Curriculum that can facilitate the inculcation of entrepreneurship skills and unveil such opportunities to be taking advantage of. To be able to develop a responsive Curriculum it would be desirable to follow a frame which should focus on exploring and/or espousing the 21st century entrepreneurship opportunities that are available globally and are in abundance in Sub-Saharan Africa

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