



**ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA:
CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS**

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ABSTRACT

Entrepreneurship education is a lifelong process starting as early as elementary school and progressing through all levels of education, including adult education. It is also a key driver for a nation's economy with tertiary institution teaching assistance and support. The paper discusses the introduction and some key elements that are relevant to the study. It also deals with importance of entrepreneurship education, emboldening entrepreneurship education in Nigeria. The paper adopted a descriptive design with secondary method of data collection. It reveals that despite the integration of entrepreneurship curriculum into higher schools in Nigeria, government still neglects its financial responsibility in providing necessary tools that are needed for entrepreneurship lecturing at various higher institutions of learning in the country. therefore the paper concludes that economic development can only be achieved in most tertiary institutions', entrepreneurship teaching with constant government support in Nigeria.

Keywords: *entrepreneurship, entrepreneurship education, economic growth, economic development, Nigeria*

Introduction

Entrepreneurship education has continued to feature as a captivating theme in local summits and international conferences because of its potency as tool for mitigating unemployment and other social-economic challenges inhibiting sustainable development in all parts of the globe. Inclusion of entrepreneurship education into curricula of tertiary institutions started in the United States of America as far back as 1947(Kuratko, 2003) unlike Nigeria where it is a recent development that dated back to 2006 (Yahya, 2011; Gabadeen and Raimi, 2012). Within a few decades (1947-1980s), over 300 universities had introduced entrepreneurship education into their

array of courses. By early 1990s the number of tertiary institutions running entrepreneurship programmes increased to 1,050 schools (Solomon, et al., 1994; Kuratko, 2003). Nigeria adopted entrepreneurship education to accelerate economic growth and development. This reflect in Nigeria's national policy on education which states that education is the most important instrument for propelling change, as no fundamental change can occur in any society except through educational revolution that impact on the intellects (Federal Government of Nigeria, 1998).

As a result of this Entrepreneurship education in Nigeria amongst other things seeks to provide students in tertiary institutions with the knowledge, skills and motivation to encourage entrepreneurial success in a variety of ventures. Variations of entrepreneurship education are offered at all levels of schooling in Nigeria, from primary to secondary schools through the graduate university programs. It is a life long learning process. The concept of lifelong learning is essential to the competitiveness of the knowledge economy. It applies to all levels of education and training and concerns all stages of life as well as the different forms of apprenticeship.

Therefore, the move by the government through the Federal Ministry of Education to make entrepreneurship education one of the compulsory general studies for students in universities across the country should be seen as a positive step in the right direction. This is to inculcate in the youths the spirit of self reliance. This development will not only address the problem of unemployment and underemployment but will also ensure an entrepreneurial human capacity for national development. It is the hope that with the introduction of entrepreneurial education in our tertiary institutions the universities will better be repositioned to become centres of excellence with the equipping of technical laboratories both at secondary and tertiary levels. This will put the country on the path to join communities of nations that have fought poverty through strengthening of small scale businesses (Ojeifor, 2012).

The three ethnic nationalities prior to colonialism provided informal entrepreneurship education to their able-bodied youth early in life through communal socialisation, village engagements and social services. Ananaba (1969, cited by Fajana 2000:19) describes the informal entrepreneurship education in Nigeria thus: "The economy of the various states which make-up modern Nigeria was basically a subsistence economy and customs had established the practice that people serve their parents, village heads and the community... On a given day, people went and work for a particular individual. Through the day, the man they serve was responsible for their food and drink. On another day, the man returned the service and it went on until everybody in the group was served." During the period of colonialism that lasted for several decades, Nigeria lost the culture of self reliant and self-employment enunciated by Ananaba (1969 cited by Akhuemonkhan, Raimi &

Sofoluwe 2013), as it adopted without option the western-style of formal education. It paid off initially as the few privileged Nigerians who went through the colonial system of education regarded and more importantly absorbed into enviable positions in the colonial administration and civil service as public servants, because in those days, the Nigerian economy was large enough to absorb the educated into the prestigious “white collar jobs” (Raimi and Gabadeen, 2012). It is apt to mention however that, the age-long formal education inherited from the imperialist turned out graduates with job-seeking mindsets as opposed to job creation; they thus lack entrepreneurial traits like self-motivation, drive and innovation needed by the world of work and employers of labour (Towobola and Raimi, 2011; Raimi et al., 2011; Simkovic, 2012). Aladekomo (2004:75) asserts: “...The colonial educational policy centered on the production of literate nationals who were required to man positions, which would strengthen the colonial administration. Thus our educational institutions, few as they were remained factories for producing clerks, interpreters, forest guards and sanitary inspectors as no special professional nor entrepreneurial skill was envisaged in the educational system.”

Furthermore, with rising population growing at geometric proportion relative to job placement that is growing at arithmetic progression, it became obvious that the nation’s formal education is fuelling unemployment, crime and cycle of poverty as graduates could not be absorbed. It then dawned on government that there is dire need to redress the socio-economic implications of idleness and hopelessness.

Conceptual Consideration

Entrepreneur: An entrepreneur is an enterprising individual who builds capital through risk and for initiative. The term was originally a loan word from French and was first defined by the Irish – French economist Richard Cantillon. Entrepreneur in English is a term applied to a person who is willing to help launch a new venture or enterprise and accept full responsibility for the outcomes. The word entrepreneur was coined from a French word called ‘entrepredre’ which means a person who voluntarily head the military expedition. It was first used during the French military history in the seventeenth century. Ojeifo (2010) in his book, a Handbook on Entrepreneurial Development in Nigeria defined an entrepreneur as the owner or the manager of business enterprise who through risks and initiative, attempts to make a profit.

Entrepreneurship

According to wikipedia, “is the act of being an entrepreneur” or “one who undertakes innovations, finance and business acumen in an effort to transform innovations into economic goods”. This may result in new organizations or may be part of revitalizing mature organizations in response to a perceived opportunity. The most obvious form

of entrepreneurship is that of starting new business which is referred to as start up company.

Entrepreneurship has been simply captured as the use of human courage to seek investment opportunities and establish a profit-oriented enterprise (Ikeme & Onu, 2007). Entrepreneurship is generally viewed as a process of creating something new. Doing this involves a lot of time and effort devoted to ensure the tasks at hand and the resultant effects include monetary and personal satisfaction as well as independence. Entrepreneurship involves creation process, conscious devotion of time and effort, involves risk and has some rewards. Gana (2001), defined it as willingness and ability of an individual to seek out investment opportunities in an environment and be able to establish and run an enterprise successfully based on identified opportunities. Hisrich and Peters (2002), simply captured the term as the dynamic process of creating incremental wealth. They went further to explain that entrepreneurship is the personalized version of actualizing one's desire, ambition, and expression.

Economic Growth and Development

Economic growth includes changes in material production and during a relative short period of time, usually one year. In economic theory, under the concept of economic growth implies an annual increase of material production expressed in value, the rate of growth of GDP or national income. Growth can be achieved, for it does not achieve the developmental course of the economy. So economic development amounts involves not only an increase in material production, but also all the other socioeconomic processes and changes caused by the influence of economic and beyond economic factors.

Economic development is therefore expressed in a longer period of time. Economic development of an economy consists of a series of structural changes.

The economic development of the country will be achieved through greater participation of the processing capacity of industrial production (secondary sector), and at higher levels is increasingly dominated by service sector (tertiary sector) Iviv, (2015).

For the economic development of any country is also of great importance and changes in production structure and introduction of new products, new products, new techniques and technologies, new processes of production, raw materials, new energy sources. Changes in the distribution of factors of production, ie in their new location, and not only labor, but of the entire technical potential. As for the operating assets, reallocation of technical potential is done through the engagement of cash accumulation, in order to build new generating capacity. Economic development means greater and more effective involvement of the economy of a country in the international economy (Ivic, 2015). The development includes the ever growing

share of accumulation in the national income. Thus, economic development represents a very complex process and phenomenon. Economic growth, measured by the percentage increase in national income per capita, can not really be realistic indication of the achieved level of economic development (Peru, 1986). Economic development is not just an increase in GDP and national income, but all the long-term socio-economic changes in the economy of a country. It is very important that, above all, political economy, deals with the problems of economic development. First of all, the purpose of creating and managing development and economic policy.

Challenges of Entrepreneurship Education in Nigeria

The Nigerian economy, historically, has depended significantly on oil revenues. However in the recent years, the country has been trying to diversify away from dependence on oil by setting an ambitious goal. The country wants to increasingly globalize education through information and communication technology, and entrepreneurship. This is why the former President, Obasanjo, mandated that all students in Nigeria, regardless of their major, will need to study entrepreneurship. Different meanings are ascribed to entrepreneurship education in different tertiary institutions in the country. Some of these programmes commonly present entrepreneurship education programmes in the context of vocational and technical education rather than developing the spirit of entrepreneurship, which is the stimulation of entrepreneurship activities and performance in various disciplines. The following are the most important obstacles facing rapid entrepreneurial development.

- a) Rampant political and bureaucratic corruption together with the absence of social consensus on important macroeconomic policy issues.
- b) Poor access to vocational and skills – development training for rural and urban youths involved in the informal economy.
- c) Absence of regulatory mechanisms for effective oversight of enterprise development initiatives, especially those in the MSME space.
- d) The presence of administrative and trade barriers that curtail capacity building and inhibit access to technical support.
- e) Significant infrastructural deficits (especially with regards to roads and electricity) and systematic irregularities inimical to small businesses.
- f) Absence of a pro-active regulatory environment that encourages innovative enterprise development at the grassroots level and
- g) No doubt, one of the biggest challenge of any entrepreneur is access to capital (Ojeifor, 2012:81)

Entrepreneurship Education in Nigeria and Challenges

A critical element slowing the progress of entrepreneurship education in Nigeria as enunciated in the introductory part of the paper is delay in starting entrepreneurship

education in Nigeria. While the United States of America commenced formal teaching of entrepreneurship in its tertiary institutions in 1947 (Kuratko, 2003), Nigeria started her own in 2006 (Yahya, 2011). It is therefore normal for a novel initiative like entrepreneurship education to have some teething problems and operational challenges.

The first challenge affecting entrepreneurship education is poor curriculum implementation across tertiary institutions. This unpleasant state of affairs has made the goal of the entrepreneurship intervention in Nigeria very elusive (Garba, 2004). It is common in the Nigerian education landscape that objectives of specialised education are not often translated into practical realities during the process of policy implementation (Okebukola, 2004, Onyeachu, 2008). Besides, the style of teaching of entrepreneurship education across the tertiary institutions in Nigeria has particularly been flawed because of too much emphasis on rudiments of writing of business plan in groups of 10-15 students (Ifedili and Ofoegbu, 2011). Entrepreneurship education is better imparted through industrial tours, professional talks from successful business owners and real execution of business projects while in schools. Presently, the focus is more on theoretical instructions and mentoring (Gabadeen and Raimi, 2012). Related to the point above is absence of standard text-books and other useful learning materials on entrepreneurship education (Ifedili and Ofoegbu, 2011). Most available text-books around are deficient and do not address the peculiar nature of the Nigerian business environment.

Another challenge is inadequate funding of entrepreneurship education, which has negatively affected the implementation of entrepreneurship education curricula, a fact attested to by National Universities Commission (NUC), National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) and National and sister supervisory agencies in Nigeria (Gabadeen and Raimi, 2012). A bigger headache slowing down the progress of entrepreneurship education in Nigeria is students' erroneous perception that entrepreneurship education as an elective or general courses forced on them by government just to increase their academic workloads (Ifedili and Ofoegbu, 2011; Gabadeen and Raimi, 2012). Their preconceived mindset, discourages many learners from showing the necessary zeal and enthusiasm to all entrepreneurship activities in the classrooms and outside the classrooms (Ifedili and Ofoegbu, 2011).

More importantly, an indirect challenge facing entrepreneurship is personal experiences of graduates who have taken up self-employment based on the entrepreneurship instructions they had while in schools. The experiences have not been palatable, as they live and cope with the problems of multiple taxes, poor government patronage, difficulty in getting registered/incorporate, headache of accessing funds in banks, harsh government regulations, high rate of inflation incidences of harassment/extortion by government officials, infrastructural decay,

exorbitant cost of raw materials et cetera (Kisunko, Brunetti and Weder, 1999; Mambula, 2002; Ariyo, 2005; Chu et al., 2008; Gabadeen and Raimi, 2012).

Importance of Entrepreneurship Education in Nigeria

Entrepreneurship is a key driver of our economy; wealth and a high majority of jobs are created by small businesses started by entrepreneurially minded individuals, many of whom go on to create big businesses. There is more creative freedom for people who are exposed to entrepreneurship education. There is higher self-esteem, and an overall greater sense of control over their own lives. It is the believe of many experience business people, political leaders, economists and educators that fostering a robust entrepreneurial culture will maximize individual and collective economic and social success on a local, national, and global scale. It is with this in mind that the National Standards for Entrepreneurship Education were developed – to prepare youth and adults to succeed in an entrepreneurial economy (Ojeifor, 2012).

As mentioned earlier, Entrepreneurship Education is a lifelong process; starting as early as elementary school and progressing through all levels of education, including adult education. The standards and their supporting performance indicators are a framework for teachers to use in building appropriate objectives, learning activities, and assessments for their target audience. Using this framework, students will have progressively more challenging educational activities; experience that will enable them to develop the insight needed to discover and create entrepreneurial opportunities; and the expertise to successfully start and manage their own businesses to take advantage of these opportunities.

Entrepreneurship education focuses on developing understanding and capacity for pursuit of entrepreneurial behaviors, skills and attributes in widely different context. It can be portrayed as open to all. The propensity to behave entrepreneurially is not exclusive to certain individuals. Different individuals will have a different mix of capabilities for demonstrating and acquiring entrepreneurial behaviors, skills and attributes. These behaviors can be practiced, developed and learned; hence it is important to expose all students to entrepreneurship education.

Entrepreneurial skills and attributes provide benefits to society, even beyond their application to business activity. Obviously, personal qualities that are relevant to entrepreneurship such as creativity and a spirit of initiative can be useful to everyone in their working responsibilities and in their day-to-day existence. Also the relevant technical and business skills need to be provided to those who choose to be self employed and or to start their own venture or might do so in the future.

The economic importance of the entrepreneur has been recognized for several decades. Welber (1930 cited in Ojeifor, 2012) put forward the thesis that the protestant ethic is spirit of capitalism (Green, 1959 cited in Ojeifor, 2012). Other writers have discussed from different perspectives, the importance of

entrepreneurship to different countries in the industrial era. Schumpeter (1947), who is, perhaps, believed to be the first major economist to analyze the role of entrepreneurship in economic development, attributed innovation to the entrepreneur. He described entrepreneurship as the engine of economic development. He argued that “to study the entrepreneur is to study the central figure in modern economic history”.

From the above advantages/benefits Entrepreneurship should be taught to students in all disciplines in institutions of higher learning. It is not out of place to say that many business ideas emerge from non-business disciplines but are often waved aside or ignored because students are not sufficiently educated in the knowledge and skills required.

Strategies for Effective Entrepreneurship Education

Human talent is the single most important productive factor in today’s knowledge economy (Ekpudu, J.E., 2012). Focusing on the development of a skilled workforce and the expansion of human capacities through highquality systems of entrepreneurship education, training, skills acquisition and lifelong learning is important for helping youths and graduates find good jobs and enterprises to find the skilled workers they need. This will put the entrepreneur at a very competitive advantage.

In order to achieve viable entrepreneurship education that will enhance sustainable development in Nigeria the following strategies according to Ayodele (2006:81) will help to alleviate the problem of entrepreneurship education in the country.

1. There should be some form of genuine school work based learning incorporated in some studies as part of the national economic development strategies. The development of apprenticeship scheme would give new graduates some work skills and experience.
2. Pool local public and private funds to create a small venture capital fund.
3. School based enterprises where students identify potential business, plan, create and operate small business using the school as mini-incubators.
4. Provide small business schools where interested students and community members can participate.
5. Develop entrepreneurship internship programmes matching students with locally successful entrepreneurs with clearly established education programmes.
6. Establishing an enterprise college aimed at fostering the specific skills sets required for entrepreneurship to serve as skill acquisition centres for the youths.
7. Creating an economic friendly political environment.
8. Improving on the government taxation on small scale businesses.

Conclusion

There is a realization that Nigeria’s tertiary institutions are producing graduate on yearly basis with no available job after the completion of their degree programmes.

In recent time, Nigeria government have come up with an education policy to mitigate the rate at which Nigeria graduates press for white-collar job. The introduction of entrepreneurship education into high school curriculum whereby students of the universities, polytechnics and colleges will be able to acquire additional skills aside from their entry degree programmes so that they can be self reliant and self employed upon graduation. Apart from the problems facing by the students in acquiring the training, most of the tertiary institution in Nigeria lack the necessary equipment and tools for propelling the smooth operation for the constant institution training of the students due to inability of both the federal and state governments to financially support the scheme/programme in Nigeria, and whereas the continuous acquisition of entrepreneurship skills will go along way in combating the rampant incident or menace of social and cyber crime amongst the students of the tertiary institution as well as reducing the annually demand of unavailable governments white-collar job and it will also promote economic development in Nigeria.

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