

## Entrepreneurship Education: Trends, Challenges and Possibilities in Nigerian Higher Education

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**Abstract:** This paper re-examines entrepreneurship education in terms of its relevance to functionality and solving problems of students and graduates alienation after several years of schooling. The key trends in entrepreneurship education were also highlighted and particularly stressing the need for humble beginning for entrepreneurial mindset. This paper also identifies various the ways in which entrepreneurial education can be made more useful to students and the nation at large. The kernel of advocacy here is that entrepreneurship education as the key driver of an economy and should be handled by entrepreneurs. The paper therefore, articulate the need for re-invention of the Nigerian higher education to pave way for mega institutions which will in turn create access while the curriculum is equally modify and made more relevant to the needs of the students and aspirations of the nation, thereby deemphasizing paper qualification and white collar jobs. The possibilities of the scheme attaining desired height lies in the faithful implementation of the recommendations and indexing compensation to productivity and entrepreneurship.

**Key words:** entrepreneurship education, trends, challenges, possibilities and higher education

### 1. Introduction

Education in its broadest sense is any act or experience that has a formative effect on the mind, character or physical ability of an individual. In its technical sense, education is the process by which society deliberately transmits its accumulated knowledge, skills and values from one generation to another-(Wikipedia). Education comprehends all that series of instruction and discipline which is intended to enlighten the understanding correct the temper, and forms the manners and habits of youth, and fit them for usefulness in their future stations. To give children a good education in manners, arts and science, is important, to give them a religious education is indispensable; and an immense responsibility rests on parents and guardians who neglect these duties. Education promotes healthy life styles given that such education has functionality element which is emphasized in entrepreneurial education.

“The only purpose of education is to teach a student how to live his life by developing his mind and equipping him to deal with reality. The training need is not only theoretical or conceptual but also functional. He has to be taught to think, to understand to integrate, to prove. He has to be taught the essentials of the knowledge

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discovered in the past-and he has to be equipped to acquire further knowledge by his own effort.” (Owhotu, 2009).

Section 1 of the National Policy on Education (2004) states that: Education fosters the worth and development of the individual, for each individual’s sake and for the general development of society There is need for functional education for the promotion of a progressive united Nigeria, to this end, school programmes need to be relevant, practical and comprehensive; while interest and ability should determine the individual’s direction in education

Nigeria’s ability to realize its vision of becoming one of the twenty largest economies in the world by the year 2020 is largely dependent on its capacity to transform its population into highly skilled and competent citizens capable of competing globally. The education sector is consequently pivotal to the actualization of current national and global government policy objectives (FME, 2009: p. 15). This takes us to that brand of education one sure way that can enhanced global competitiveness is to embraces entrepreneurial education.

## **2. The Problem**

Nigerian educational system was hitherto designed to produce a pool of graduates who depended on the government for employment. This is in contrast to a system that could equip its beneficiaries with entrepreneurial skills; make them self-reliant, self-confident and employers of labour. As a result of faulty educational system which failed to take cognizance of the dynamics of labour market, the system produced a large army of graduates who are confronted with unemployment. Even with its increasing emphasis on vocational education for acquisition of occupational skills and competencies, the unemployment rate has continued to soar. In order to contend with the soaring unemployment, the federal Government, in 1987 set up the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) which was charged with the following responsibilities:

- (1) To reduce unemployment among youths and university graduates in the country by creating employment opportunities.
- (2) To provide enabling atmosphere for self-reliance.
- (3) To foster entrepreneurship.
- (4) To encourage the culture of maintenance and repair.

The NDE has creditably discharged those responsibilities by providing the youths and young graduates the facilities to set up their own businesses. But one of the major problems confronting the youths is that they do not possess basic and sound knowledge of entrepreneurial education. As a result of this, entrepreneurship studies, therefore, became imperative in the Nigerian schools system. In this respect, the NDE mounted a programme called Entrepreneurship Development Programme (EDP). According to Paul (2005, p. 18), the aims of this programme among other things include:

- (1) Producing or training more entrepreneurs that are needed to accelerate industrial enterprise.
- (2) Stimulating self-employment for the unemployed.
- (3) Expansion of economic activities to rural and less developed areas.
- (4) Diversification of ownership of business.

Nwangwu (2006) maintained that, specifically, the entrepreneurship education is structured to achieve the following objectives:

- (1) Offer functional education for the youths so as to enable them to be self-employed and self-reliant.
- (2) Offer graduates with adequate training that will enable them to be creative and innovative in identifying

novel business opportunities.

(3) Provide universities/college graduates with adequate training in risk management, to make uncertainty bearing feasible and easy.

(4) Provide the young graduates with enough training and support that will establish a career in small and medium sized businesses.

(5) Offer graduates adequate training in the acquisition of skills that will enable them meet the manpower needs of society.

(6) To stimulate both individual and economic growth of rural and less developed areas.

(7) Provide both small and medium business enterprises the opportunity of recruiting graduates who will be trained and tutored in skills relevant to the management and operation of small business centre.

(8) To include the spirit of perseverance in the youths and adults which will enable them to persist in any business venture they embark on.

In appreciation of the objectives of the entrepreneurial development programmes of NDE and the need to launch a comprehensive attack on unemployment, tertiary institutions in Nigeria have introduced entrepreneurship education, hoping that the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills will help to reduce the unemployment problems in the country as well as make our youths self-reliant and self-independent.

### **3. Entrepreneurship Education**

Wikipedia states the purpose and nature of entrepreneurship education as an attempt to seek to provide students with the knowledge, skills and motivation to encourage entrepreneurial success in a variety of settings. Variations of entrepreneurship education are offered at all levels of schooling...What makes entrepreneurship education distinctive is its focus in realization of opportunity where management education is focused on the best way to operate existing hierarchies. An emerging positive trend in TVET and entrepreneurship education is the successful participation of Nigerian secondary schools in international exhibitions and competitions.

#### **3.1 Entrepreneurship at the Tertiary Level**

Whereas Nigerians are known as among the most enterprising people, entrepreneurial activities have been mainly in the hands of the private and large informal sector operators. The government's initiative known as the entrepreneurship education (EEd) aims is to inculcate in trainees the ability to:

- (1) Identify and solve problems using critical and creative thinking;
- (2) Work effectively with others as a proactive team member and cultivate the ability to resolve conflict;
- (3) Organize and manage one-self and one's activities;
- (4) Collect, analyze, organize and critically evaluate information (to make decisions that must be carried through;
- (5) Communicate and negotiate effectively;
- (6) Reflect on experiences and explore various strategies for effective learning... learning to learn at all times;

#### **3.2 Entrepreneurship for all Disciplines**

More importantly, entrepreneurship education is a cross curricular concept and the principles can be applied to almost all disciplines in the arts, humanities and technology. As Divine 88 (Owhotu, 2010) rightly observes: Entrepreneurship should be taught to students in all disciplines in the institution. 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.

### **3.3 Technical Vocational Education & Training**

As a way of making educational functional, technical and vocational education were introduced. The main purpose of technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is to provide skilled manpower in applied science, engineering, technology and commerce to operate, maintain and sustain the Nation's economic activities for rapid economic development. TVET is designed to impart necessary skills and competencies leading to the production of craftsmen, technicians and technologies who will be enterprising and self reliant, thus having the greatest potential to generate employment, reduce poverty and eliminate the "Area Boy Syndrome". Unfortunately, these objectives have, by far, not been realized due the long period of systemic neglect and discrimination of entrepreneurial education

### **3.4 Key Trends in Entrepreneurship Education**

From the analysis above it is obvious that entrepreneurship education has in recent times enjoyed unanimous acceptability by scholars, institutions and the organized private sector etc. as formidable way forward with respect to graduate unemployment by way of providing panacea to the accompanied students' alienation. Entrepreneurial education is also seen as an unemployment therapy for prospective job seekers. This is however so due principally to its ability to create in individuals self reliant culture and consequently becoming job creators (Entrepreneurs).

Entrepreneurship education has also enjoyed wide usage in most academic conferences as apt theme locally and internationally. Some of the communiqué raised at the end of such conferences, tends to uphold the very essence of entrepreneurship education of the key driver of an economy (Njoko, 2010). With this universal significance of entrepreneurship education, the researchers anticipate further movement to reality where institutions of learning will begin to effectively take advantage of the paradigm shift to change the students' mindsets so that the innate creative thinking of individuals will also begin to manifest in various trades and dexterity.

In spite of this development, it is rather sad that what is obtainable today in institutions of learning in Nigeria is still the bookish curriculum with less emphasis on practical entrepreneurial education even though the federal government of Nigeria has encourage the introduction of the scheme in schools (Nwandiani, 2010). The question is how? Is entrepreneurship education going to take off with the same caliber of teachers who have no form of entrepreneurial training at all? Will entrepreneurship Education commenced without entrepreneurial training centres? How can you teach entrepreneurial education when you are not an entrepreneur yourself? What effort has been made to create mega institutions as a panacea to access in education against the population desirous for higher education? Can the existing universities accommodate all those seeking admission? The answers to these questions will help us appreciate the trend in this direction.

Another cursory look at institutions with regards to entrepreneurship shows that there is no significant difference in approach to the teaching of entrepreneurial education. In fact it is taught like any other subjects, thus, affecting the desired result. Since the dawn of the 80's and 90's Nigeria as a nation has continued to witness astronomical increase in job search among youth and graduates. A work to major and capital cities in Nigeria will speak volumes in this respect. This is a clearer indication that the teaching of entrepreneurial education in schools leaves much to be desired.

### **3.5 Trends in Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)**

The small and medium scale enterprise as routinely advertised by Nigeria television authority (NTA) and sponsored by diamond bank in most cases are private individuals who on their own decided to go into such ventures. These individuals either have the innate ideas or are forced by the prevalent economic realities in the

country. We are yet to witness fantastic results in the development of entrepreneurial education from institutions of learning in Nigeria. One distinctive feature of entrepreneurship education is that it emphasized a small beginning and that entrepreneurship may not be necessarily being mountain-like (Ogbodo, 2009). The business history of one “Maduka” who is today the Managing director of Coscharis Motors, a giant in automobile industry revealed that he began business with less than one thousand naira as settlement from his master. This sum however small it is, was used judiciously by investing back into business and with relevant contacts, his business today has grown exponentially. He didn’t go to school to acquire the dexterity of managing his meager resources. This success story is also applicable to many more entrepreneurs in the world. What of Alhaji Alliko Dangote, the Dantatas, Chanchangi etc. On the foreign scene, we are also familiar with the story of Bill Gates, the giant in computer industry, the owner of Microsoft whose net worth as at March 2010 stood at \$53billion with enviable amenities like 66,000 square foot compound with 60 foot swimming pool with an underground music system. Visitors to his estate has the option of climbing 84 stairs to get to the ground or simply riding the personal elevator, and others like the IBM, HP DELL, CIBOX, ACER, TOSHIBA, SAMSUNG etc all have humble beginning, i.e., they started as small and medium scale enterprises (Ogbodo, 2009 and Igwe, 2009) and (The Nation, 2010)

The forex exchange market is another development that has added impetus to entrepreneurial thinking. Many individuals have benefitted from shares trading. The great story of Warren Buffet speaks for itself with a net worth of \$47 billion yet lives only in a five bed room bungalow. Many more are still involve not only in trading but teaching people how to trade in shares. This in recent times has become an austerity compensatory strategy.

On transportation, there are great stories of motor park conductors and chop passengers who became drivers and consequently money moguls in their businesses. The introduction of air fares bonanza by aero contractors has entrepreneurial nexus.

### **3.6 Trends from the International Perspective**

Today, many programs, from isolated courses on entrepreneurship to comprehensive practical programs, support the development of entrepreneurs. One web-based review of 66 universities in sub-Saharan Africa found that over 80% offered some courses in entrepreneurship, while four universities had specialized entrepreneurship centers. The Global entrepreneurship monitor, an international group of researchers who have been conducting an annual survey of entrepreneurship since 1999, introduced entrepreneurship training as a special topic in 2008. The findings generally involved positive relationships between entrepreneurship training and entrepreneurial attitude, aspirations, and activities. However, wide variation was found in the proportion of 18-to-16-year-olds who received voluntary entrepreneurship training at colleges and universities-from 1% in Turkey or 4% in Korea, 13% in Chile, 16% in Finland, to 20% in Columbia.

Altbach (2009), sees India as a world class country without a world class university. The reason is that Indian government is more focused in entrepreneurial education as it relates to information technology. There are plethoras of information technology centers in India which are not universities but geared towards entrepreneurial skills particularly in the development of software’s etc.

### **3.7 Challenges of Entrepreneurial Education**

Owhutu (2010), Njoku (2010) and Babalola (2006) have identified the following as challenges of entrepreneurial education in Nigerian Higher institution:

(1) This concern has been related to instability of the academic calendar, infrastructural decay and obsolescence of equipment in the face of population explosion and academic staff shortage among others. Other challenges identified include.

(2) Lack of Access to higher education especially university education.

Confusion related to 6+3 = Basic; – Disarticulation in this level of education.

Still over 9 million children & 17 million illiterate adults out of school.

(3) Standards & Quality assurance in tertiary institutions is low; what is the ranking of Nigerian universities globally by the Times in the United Kingdom, or Shanghai Jia Tong world ranking bodies?

(4) Absence of inadequate and functional Curriculum.

(5) Teacher number, quality & welfare still major problems, i.e., they are prevalent of large class sizes and less wages for teachers. No amount of money paid to teachers is too much.

(6) Limited school inspections by the superintending agency (NUC, NBTE and NCCE).

(7) ICT deployments are very poor in some universities one or two Federal Government intervention.

(8) Public – private partnership to foster functional linkage is very slow.

(9) Technical & Vocational Education & Training poorly emphasized in conventional universities.

(10) Teacher: Pupil ratio still very wide in many tertiary institutions while teaching facilities are extremely limited.

(11) Many schools have no school farms for agricultural purposes.

(12) Handiwork or local craft has been monetized.

(13) Funding, Resource Mobilization & Utilization is not yet a settled matter.

(14) Salaries paid in many institutions but late and it dampens morale.

(15) Vocational Schools & Open Apprenticeship centre's poorly equipped and Teachers limited.

(16) Mobilized resources from superintending agencies are re-channeled to other projects with direct bearing on teaching and research.

(17) Open University developments is rather slow in delivering results and Some Private Universities very expensive for deliverables

(18) Laboratory, Studio, Farm Facilities are in poor states in many institutions.

(19) Inadequate internal and external quality control mechanisms.

(20) Over stretching of existing facilities.

(21) Out dated legal framework.

(22) Illegal institution/satellite campuses/external campuses. Seven fake ones were clamp down last week.

(23) Weak support institute for students industrial work experience scheme (SIWES).

(24) Brain drain or human capital flight

(25) Divided interests by academics (moonlighting)

(26) Disruption in academic calendar due to strikes actions.

(27) Unethical behaviour in teaching and learning, extortion of monies by management, staff and students.

(28) Disruptions in learning activities, insecurity of life and property due to cultism

#### **4. Recommendations**

(1) Government must be consistent in policy and faithful implementation of Policies on entrepreneurship.

(2) Prioritization of his policies on entrepreneurship for implementation.

(3) Entrepreneurs should be used as instructors for entrepreneurship education.

(4) Public- private partnerships in education be encouraged. This connection will relates theory to practice as

in the gown going to town

(5) Government should establish a Quality Assurance Commission for ECCDE/Basic and Post Basic Education sub-sectors as this will serve as good foundational level for higher education.

(6) Government should institutionalize regular training and re-training of teachers along entrepreneurial lines

(7) Government should re-introduce the one-meal a day programme in all higher educational institutions

(8) Government should re-introduce boarding in JSS and SSS so that the students can be under control and have the opportunity under guidance to develop entrepreneurial mindset as spring board for higher education.

(9) Government should re-introduce/sustain the Direct Teaching and Lab Costs for tertiary institutions.

(10) Government should consciously drive entrepreneurship education as compulsory subject.

(11) Government should Re-focus application of ETF to entrepreneurial education.

(12) Government should re-introduce Scholarship and Students' Loan Programmes for students who have shown excellence entrepreneurial education.

(13) Government should establish quality assurance agencies to deal with emerging issues on entrepreneurial education.

(14) Local Government Councils should be made to commit certain percentage of their resources for further of entrepreneurship education in their councils.

## **5. Conclusion**

The researchers are convinced that the points have been made, that entrepreneurial education in Nigerian higher education is characterized with trends and challenges that more conferences on entrepreneurial education are likely to come up until the youths and graduates begin to show signs of self reliance and independence. The point has also been made that entrepreneurial education is a key driver of an economy and that only entrepreneurs should get involved in its pedagogy. Finally, Nigerians are good in policy articulation but poor in its execution. This notwithstanding, the researchers' hope that the recommendations advanced here will not join the already existing ones that lie prostrate in shelves.

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