

# Entrepreneurial Education in Nigeria Universities: A Recipe for National Development in the 21st Century

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## Abstract

This paper focused on entrepreneurship education in Nigerian Universities as a recipe for national development in the 21st century. The sole aim of this paper was to highlight the place of entrepreneurial education in directing national development and possible challenges of entrepreneurial education. Entrepreneurial education was considered in this paper as the inculcation in the citizenry appropriate skills, habits and competences necessary for self and paid employments. Inadequate funding, man power shortage, among others was identified as the challenges of entrepreneurship education in Nigerian Universities. It was recommended that apart from improving the funding policy of the government, the Universities should strictly embrace and follow the entrepreneurship education policy of the federal government.

**Keywords:** Education, Entrepreneurship, and National Development.

## Introduction

Education is a public good that has assumed variegated meaning from society to society over the years. This notwithstanding, education is a lifelong process and perhaps an instrument of change, a potent channel for ensuring the welfare of the people and equalization of life chances. Infact, Okeke in Odiba(2008) explained that education is a process of learning which helps in the provision of suitable skills, training the youths for economics and cultural structures from generation to generation.

One might sincerely doubt the above stipulation concerning education in the face of gross unemployment of graduates at all levels of education. The youths in Nigeria have occupied themselves by stealing, armed robbery, kidnapping, youth restiveness and cultism. When these children are engaged in their own entrepreneurship, these crimes will be reduced to the barest minimum (Mgbor & Mgbor2011). In spite of the challenges facing the Nigerian economy, the federal government sees education as a veritable tool for individual and National Development (Federal Government of Nigeria, FRN, 2004).

The National policy on education according to Odiba (2004) is purpose driven by stipulating the overall objectives of education as building a free and democratic society; a just and egalitarian society; a united, strong and self-reliant nation; a great and dynamic economic opportunities for all citizens. It is only functional education that can qualify a child to be self-reliant. This is where entrepreneurial education becomes relevant.

## Conceptual framework

The conceptualization of entrepreneurship is fret with ambiguities. In fact there is no dearth of definitions of entrepreneurship. For instance, Koyede (2006) saw entrepreneurship as the willingness and ability of an individual to seek investment opportunities in an environment and be able to establish and run an enterprise successfully, based on identifiable opportunities. Stevenson (2007) posited that entrepreneurship is the pursuit of opportunities through innovative leverages of resources that for the most part are not controlled internally. Entrepreneurial education according to Bassey (2005) is the inculcating in the citizenry appropriate skills, habits and competences necessary for self and paid employments. Colins & Jack cited by Akinseinde (2011) is the process of providing individuals with the ability to recognize business opportunities and the insight, self esteem, knowledge and skills to act on them.

Suffice one to say that entrepreneurship is all about transforming ideas into realities. These ideas are inbuilt in every individual and requires little motivation and activation. The term development according to Okeke (2004) conjures different meanings to different people, economist, sociologist, political scientist, psychologists, biologists, technologists, educationists to mention a few. The specialists dominate the discussion and theories of development and land to confuse realities of their approaches to the study. Odiba (2008) posited that development refers to growth plus change. This then defines a complete process in which not a single aspect of human life, education, health and aspiration can be ignored. Odiba (2008) further contended that development suggests a genuine break with tradition or or a perceptible disruptions of the static equilibrium. This again means the acceleration of income inequality, reduction in unemployment and eradication of absolute poverty.

National development therefore is a concerted effort to bring about an improvement in the social, economic, political, technology and cultural spheres of the economy. Izeren cited by Odiba (2005) posited that national development means urbanization, socio-cultural transformation, mass literacy, vertical and horizontal mobility of

labour, employment opportunities and the emergence of specialized and independent occupational roles. National development therefore involves a gamut of spheres like social, political, cultural, scientific and technological domains. In fact, Todaro and Smith in Odiba (2008) contended that “the question about a country's development are – what has been happening to poverty? What has been happening to employment? What has been happening to inequality? If all these have declined from high levels, beyond doubt this has been a period of development for the country concerned: If one or two of these central problems have been growing worse, especially if all these three have, it would be strange to call the result 'development' even if per capita income doubled.

A systematic consideration of the meaning of development given above suggests that the entrepreneurial education in the universities will provide the graduates opportunity for self reliance and employment. The products of the university system would become employers of labour and benefit from the possibility of multiplier effect in the entire economy. For sure there would be a reduction in the poverty level in the economy and unemployment thereby improving the income level in the economy.

#### **Historical antecedents of entrepreneurship education in Nigerian universities**

It is vital to consider the historical background of entrepreneurial climate in our Universities both private and public because present realities are rooted in the past. In fact an understanding of the country's entrepreneurial education or climate provides an insight into current challenges on the same issue. The discussions in their sphere will dove-tail the contentions of Babalola (2011). According to Babalola (2011), since 2004 efforts at integrating entrepreneurship into the curriculum of Nigerian public Universities seem to be inept. All public Universities have been trying their best as to building entrepreneurship education into their regular curriculum; for instance University of Ibadan, the programme of entrepreneurship and innovation began in 2003/2004 with the organization of two workshops which transformed into the Centre of Entrepreneurship and Innovation (Adejimola & Tayo, 2009). In fact Adejimola and Tayo cited by Babalola (2011) assured that the programme had the following mandates:

1. To develop curriculum in entrepreneurship and innovation.
2. Coordinate teaching and research in entrepreneurship and innovation.
3. Promote links with the private sector through research, consultancy training, as building networks and alliances.
4. Develop appropriate approaches for promoting innovations among entrepreneurs particularly small business and students.
5. Develop modalities for promoting linkage with government including building appropriate institutional and legal framework for enhancing university – private sector collaboration in the country
6. Develop appropriate network with relevant entities, national and internationally.
7. Assist in bringing to life the University of Ibadan, School of Business.
8. Provide real-life experience in teaching and research to the proposed University of Ibadan once it comes on stream
9. Coordinate university – private sector collaboration activities generally.

The University of Nigeria Nsukka, University of Ilorin, Kogi State University Anyigba, and University of Benin among others have since started the programme of entrepreneurship under varied names. The National Universities Commission, according to Babalola (2011) has made it a policy to encourage Nigerian Universities to provide entrepreneurship education to under-graduates so that they can be self-employable after graduation. This has possibly accounted for the entrepreneurship courses offered at the under graduate levels of the Nigerian Universities.

It is interesting to posit that the private Universities are not left out in the programme of entrepreneurship. Salem University, Lokoja, Covenant University Otta to mention but a few examples are deeply involved in the development of entrepreneurship education as the various levels of the student programme. For instance in Covenant University, Otta, students from 100 to 400 levels compulsorily register for and pass Entrepreneurial Development Study (EDS). According to Babalola (2011) EDS courses such as EDS 111, 211, 311 and 411 exist at all levels, and the first lower courses concentrate on the theory while the last two upper courses concentrates more on practical.

The development of entrepreneurship education in the afore mentioned Universities both public and private are geared towards the realization of the national goals of building a free and democratic society; a just and egalitarian society; a united, strong, and self reliant nation; a great and dynamic economy; and a land full of bright opportunities for all citizens (Federal Republic of Nigeria, FRN, 2004). Again the Universities that are so far involved in entrepreneurship education are doing so in strict adherence to the national policy on education. For instance, (FRN, 2004) stipulates that entrepreneurship education will be effectively managed when students are trained to be literate, be able to count, have manipulative skills, trained in trades and craft of the community at the primary level and also prepare for higher education by being provided with technical –vocational and other

relevant skills for employment of the secondary school level. The idea of entrepreneurial education is a recipe to national development. Reduction in the gap between the rich and the poor is possible and a systematic growth in the economy is guaranteed.

### **Challenges to entrepreneurial education in Nigerian Universities**

The following are the challenges to entrepreneurial education in Nigeria Universities:

#### *The challenge of finance and funding:*

Apart from entrepreneurship education, finance and funding are the major twin hurdles that educational development in Nigeria has to cross. Educational programmes generally and University education programmes specifically has been facing underfunding. The university lecturers need enough seminars and workshops to cope with the subject matter, at the nations that are also successfully in entrepreneurship education the visit will require finance. Odiba (2011) posited that poor funded has resulted in inadequate infrastructural facilities. In fact poor funding and inadequate provision of resources to cope with the ever increasing demand for education have led to inadequate provision of facilities for effective teaching and learning.

#### *Unfriendly business environment:*

A major challenge to entrepreneurial education in Nigerian is the unfriendly condition of business environment. This ranges from delay in business registration to difficulties in accessing bank loans. Gaining sponsorship in the area of entrepreneurial development is difficult to navigate in Nigeria. Starting up business ventures in Nigeria is beset with a battalion of huddles. New entrants into the business market may not have all it takes to start in terms of tax certificates for three years, tin number and collaterals for bank loans.

#### *Political and social instability:*

Instability in Nigeria is witnessed majorly in the spheres of social and political domains. Cases of incessant strike actions, violence and religious crisis abound in Nigeria thus, posing a threat to meaningful entrepreneurship education development. Nigerians in most parts of the country live in fear due to the activities of Boko-haram sect in the northern parts of the country. Inter tribal violence is prevalent in the middle belt states of the country. In the eastern part of the country it is kidnapping while the militant occupy the south-south states. These and other forms of civil vices pose serious threat to entrepreneurial education in the economy. What else can one say about the strike actions by the varied unions in our campuses that have paralyzed academic and administrative activities?

### **Recommendations**

- a) The following recommendations might assist the Universities in the bid to ensure entrepreneurial education development in Nigeria.
- b) The Universities should strictly embrace and follow the entrepreneurial education policy of the federal government. The Nigerian Universities both public and private should as a matter of commitment be totally focused in sustaining the entrepreneurship education policy of the Nigerian government. This should also include the development of a viable curriculum for entrepreneurship education at all levels.
- c) Improve finance and funding policy of the government. The federal government should be alive to its responsibility of funding education generally and entrepreneurship education specifically. The federal Government should to the 36per cent budgetary allocation recommended by Unesco to all nations.
- d) Provide professional training for faculty members to develop the skills needed to implement and facilitate entrepreneurship education. Training might be in the form of on the job training, in-service training, seminars and workshops within and outside the country.
- e) Educate business establishment on the need to foster and support entrepreneurial education in academic institutions. The essence of private sector participation in the development of entrepreneurial education should be stressed.
- f) Reduce the bottlenecks in business registration and increase support for entrepreneurship spirit and skill development.
- g) The development of a viable consultancy services unit in both the public and private universities in Nigerian by the university management. A viable consultancy outfit in the university would other things being equal improve and increase the internally generated revenue (igr). Finance from this sector could be invested in entrepreneurship education.

### **Conclusion**

Entrepreneurship education is a good option for the production of graduate that would be self employed and creating a reduction in unemployment in the Nigeria economy. Development has a link. In unemployment reduction, thus universities should strategically entrance and development the entrepreneurship education component of the entire university programmes. The entrepreneurship courses should be well developed to sum 100 level to 400 level thus producing a barigrade of self -employment conscious grades in the economy.

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