ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION: A VEHICLE FOR EMPOWERMENT AND EMPLOYMENT GENERATION

UDEGBUNAM, EMMANUEL O. (M.Sc Ed)  
Department of Vocational Education,  
nnamdi Azikiwe University, P.M.B. 5025,  
Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria  
uemmanuelobi@yahoo.com

GAIUS-OKEH, HAPPINESS A.  
(maben, fpam, mnim)  
Dept. of Office Tech. and Mngt. (OTM),  
Abia State Polytechnic, Aba.

ANIH, COMFORT NWUKA  
School of Bus. Education,  
Enugu State College of Education (Technical) Enugu.  
anihcomfort69@yahoo.com

Abstract  
This study focused on entrepreneurship education as a vehicle for empowerment and employment generation in Nigeria. Three research questions guided the study and two null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. A descriptive survey research method was adopted. The population consisted of 216 business educators. A structured questionnaire was used for the data collection. The instrument was validated by three experts in business education from Department of Vocational Education all in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The reliability of the instrument was ensured using test re-test technique. Data collected were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient formula which yielded reliability co-efficient of 0.78. Data related to the research questions were analyzed using mean and standard deviation, while ANOVA was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Findings arising from the study revealed that the increasing global phenomenon and awareness on entrepreneurship education will enhance the acquisition of the necessary skills for empowerment and self-employment. It was concluded that entrepreneurship education contributes to the development and growth of the national economy, empowerment, and generation of employment opportunities for the teaming school leavers. It was recommended that people should develop the belief that one can succeed in, and have the ability deal efficiently and effectively with unemployment situations through the acquisition of requisite entrepreneurial skills and knowledge. That adequate funding of entrepreneurship education should be made available by both to the government and private sectors to help in the production of skilled youths who will drive the employment wheel in the society.  
KEYWORDS: Education, entrepreneurship, entrepreneurship education, empowerment, employment and Nigeria.

Introduction  
Education is the key to national development. This is because it unlocks the economic potentials of the people, empowers and equips individuals in the society to participate in and benefit from their national economy. It facilitates economic development and provides the basis for transformation. Education therefore, remains a vital transformational tool and formidable instrument for socio-economic empowerment,
wealth creation, and employment generation, poverty alleviation and value orientation which government has clamoured for so long now. Education is the essential tool for sustainability. The present global economic crises suggest that the entire world is struggling for qualitative education (Aluwong, 2010). Suffice it to be mentioned that education, training and experience can increase the supply of entrepreneurs by making available more skills which are suitable for entrepreneurial endeavours. Entrepreneurship generates growth because it serves as a vehicle for innovation, change, and a conduit for knowledge spillovers. Thus, in a regime of increased globalization, the comparative advantages of modern economies are shifting towards knowledge based economic activities. Not only does entrepreneurship play a more important role here, it is recommended for economic growth.

Entrepreneurship education involves the willingness of persons to persistently pursue opportunities to create wealth. This is done through innovative creation of products or services that will meet customers’ needs, using scarce resources judiciously in a way that results in the growth of enterprises which satisfy the expectations of stakeholders. According to Owenvbiugie and Iyamu (2011), entrepreneurship education is the kind of education given to people with a view to developing entrepreneurship qualities properly followed up with support services for smooth take off and successful running of businesses. In a similar vein, Ekankumo and Kemebaradikumo (2011) stressed that entrepreneurship education seeks to provide student (especially those in tertiary institutions) with the knowledge, skills and motivation to encourage entrepreneurial studies in a variety of settings. From these assertions, it is obvious that a well implemented entrepreneurship education programme will climax in economic empowerment and development. The essence of entrepreneurship education is to build in the individual’s entrepreneurship spirit and culture (Akpomi, 2009; Adejimola & Olufunmilayo, 2009).

The term empowerment refers to the act of increasing the spiritual, political, social, educational, gender, or economic strength of individuals and communities. It is believed that a well planned and implemented entrepreneurship education is capable of creating more jobs in the country and redirecting the focus of the unemployed graduates. Economic empowerment involves empowering the previously disadvantaged sections of the population. It is this act that translates to economic development which is the quantitative and qualitative changes in the economy (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economic_Development). Education in Nigeria, therefore, should emphasize entrepreneurship consciousness for it to be relevant in achieving the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the citizens and the Nigerian society. Having been successfully equipped with entrepreneurial skills through requisite
education, one is ready to contribute positively in reducing unemployment by being self-employed.

Similarly, employment is defined as what one do as a praying job (Abdulkarim, 2012). Therefore one can neither be employed or self-employed. Self-employment refers to a situation where an individual creates, begins and takes control of the business decision rather than working for an employer. Abdulkarim (2012) defined self-employment as the act of working for oneself. According to Nwachukwu (2012), self-employment is the act of generating one’s income directly from customers, clients or other organizations as opposed to being an employee of a business or person. When one is self-employed, it means one is carrying on one’s own business rather than working for an employer (Citizens Information, 2014). This implies that self-employment is a situation in which an individual works for one instead of working for an employer that pays salary or wages.

However, entrepreneurship education stands out to be an antidote to unemployment having worked in line with today’s educational policies that highlight self-reliance, self-employment, gainful employment and also consistent with the global awareness. The sector nevertheless has had its own fair share of neglect with concomitant unpleasant impacts on the economy. Hence, the need to incorporate and fully integrate entrepreneurial education in schools to ameliorate persistent socio-economic problems of graduates unemployment. It is against this background that the study sought to examine entrepreneurship education as a vehicle for empowerment and employment generation in Nigeria.

**Statement of the Problem**

Entrepreneurship education enhances the acquisition of necessary skills for empowerment and self-employment. It is a specialized training given to individuals to acquire skills, ideas and managerial abilities and capabilities for self-employment and stands as a solution to the unemployment saga in Nigeria. According to Ossal and Nwalado (2012), the need for entrepreneurship education started emerging in the mid 1980s, when there were political instability and inconsistencies in the socio-economic policies of successive governments, high level of unemployment, large scale lay off of workers and early retirements as a result of structural adjustment policies and bad economic trends. In the face of these challenges there was no encouragement from the government for public and private investors to embark on entrepreneurial activities. These situations posed great challenges to the very existence of individuals and national development. To salvage these situations there is need for the training of educated man and woman who can function effectively in the society in which they live in terms of self-employment and self-reliance which only entrepreneurship education can provide. Based
upon this premise, the paper examined entrepreneurship education as a vehicle for empowerment and employment generation in Nigeria.

**Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of this study was to examine entrepreneurship education as a vehicle for empowerment and employment generation in Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1) Determine positive contributions of entrepreneurship education towards empowerment and employment generation in Nigeria.
2) Identify constraints that hinder sound entrepreneurship education towards empowerment and employment generation in Nigeria.
3) Proffer possible solutions to the identified constraints in the implementation of sound entrepreneurship education programmes empowerment and employment generation in Nigerian schools.

**Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study:

1) What are the positive contributions of entrepreneurship education towards empowerment and employment generation in Nigeria?
2) What are the constraints that hinder sound entrepreneurship education towards empowerment and employment generation in Nigeria?
3) What are the possible solutions to the identified constraints in the implementation of sound entrepreneurship education programmes towards empowerment and employment generation in Nigerian schools?

**Hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance

1) There is no significance difference in the mean responses of business educators as regarding the positive contributions of entrepreneurship education towards empowerment and employment generation in Nigeria on the basis of area of specialization.
2) There is no significance difference in the mean responses of business educators as regarding the constraints that hinder sound entrepreneurship education towards empowerment and employment generation in Nigeria on the basis of area of specialization.

**Method**

Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The researchers considered this design appropriate for this study since it intended to collect data from practicing
business educators on entrepreneurship education as a vehicle for empowerment and employment generation in Nigeria. The population for the study consisted of 216 business educators from eight colleges of education and seven universities that offer business education programmes in south-east Nigeria. The researchers believed that business educators are in a better position to understand and appreciate the extent of entrepreneurship education as a vehicle for empowerment and employment generation in Nigeria. The entire population was studied because of its manageable size.

A 28-item structured questionnaire was used for gathering data for the study. The questionnaire was validated by three experts: two in business education and one expert in measurement and evaluation all in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Cronbach Alpha reliability technique was used to ascertain the internal consistency of the questionnaire items and the computation yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.78. The questionnaire was structured on a five-point rating scale with response categories as “Strongly Agree”; “Agree”; undecided, “Disagree” “Strongly Disagree”. A total of 213 copies of the questionnaire were administered to the respondents by the researchers with the help of three research assistants. Out of this number, 203 copies of the questionnaire were retrieved and used for data analysis. The research questions were answered using mean and standard derivation while ANOVA statistic was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The analyzed data for the study were interpreted using the real limit of numbers. The null hypothesis was rejected where the F-cal value was equal to or greater than the F-crit value; otherwise the null hypothesis was retained.

Results

Research Question 1:
What are the positive contributions of entrepreneurship education towards empowerment and employment generation in Nigeria?

Table 1:
Mean responses on the positive contributions of entrepreneurship education towards empowerment and employment generation in Nigeria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Positive Contribution of Entrepreneurship Education</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Remark</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Entrepreneurship education provides important outcomes at various stages of a learner’s life</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Entrepreneurship education helps learners to be relevant in today’s economy</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Entrepreneurship education equips people with traits of creativity, innovation, independence and foresight or promoting local technology</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Entrepreneurship education provides the platform to appreciate local technology

Entrepreneurship education creates avenues for people and potential entrepreneurs to manage innovation, manage entrepreneurial process, among others

Entrepreneurship education inculcates innovation spirit, deliberately targeted on the youths

Entrepreneurship education inculcates in learners the mentality of hard work

Trained entrepreneurs are always empowered to tap from local resources in their immediate environment

Entrepreneurship education enables employee to be more successful as a result of understanding the operators of small businesses

Entrepreneurship education provides individuals with adequate training that will enable creativity, and innovative relevance which encourage self-employment and self-reliance

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Entrepreneurship education inculcates in learners the mentality of hard work

Trained entrepreneurs are always empowered to tap from local resources in their immediate environment

Entrepreneurship education enables employee to be more successful as a result of understanding the operators of small businesses

Entrepreneurship education provides individuals with adequate training that will enable creativity, and innovative relevance which encourage self-employment and self-reliance

Mean of Means

Data in Table 1 show that the respondents agreed on all of the items as positive contributions of entrepreneurship education towards empowerment and employment generation in Nigeria.

Research Question 2:

What are the constraints that hinder sound entrepreneurship education towards empowerment and employment generation in Nigeria?

Table 2:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constraints that hinder sound entrepreneurship education</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Remark</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate funding of entrepreneurship education programmes</td>
<td>4.43</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor knowledge based economy and low spirit of competition</td>
<td>4.51</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>Strongly Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor enterprising culture</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insufficient entrepreneurship teachers, materials and equipment</td>
<td>4.02</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data in Table 2 show that the respondents strongly agreed in one of the items, and simply agreed with all the remaining nine items as constraints that hinder sound entrepreneurship education towards empowerment and employment generation in Nigeria.

Research Question 3:
What are the possible solutions to the identified constraints in the implementation of sound entrepreneurship education programmes towards empowerment and employment generation in Nigerian schools?

Table 3:
Mean responses on the possible solutions to the identified constraints in the implementation of sound entrepreneurship education towards empowerment and employment generation in Nigeria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Possible solutions to the identified constraints of sound entrepreneurship education</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Remark</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Adequate funding of entrepreneurship education by both the government and private sectors</td>
<td>4.43</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Inculcation of high spirit of competition in citizens</td>
<td>4.41</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Deployment of sufficient teachers, materials and equipment for entrepreneurship programmes in schools</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Synergy between government policies and</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
entrepreneurship programmes 4.47 0.74 Agree
5. Self confidence in the youths 4.41 0.74 Agree
6. Provision of financial aids incentive to entrepreneurs by government 4.21 0.76 Agree
7. Ensuring that all school programmes are geared towards imparting entrepreneurial skills 3.89 0.91 Agree
8. Provision of enabling environment with all the necessary equipment and materials for entrepreneurship education growth in the country 4.48 0.71 Agree

Mean of Means 4.46 Agree

Data in Table 3 show that the respondents agreed on all the items as possible solutions to the identified constraints in the implementation of sound entrepreneurship education programmes towards empowerment and employment generation in Nigerian schools.

Testing the Hypotheses

Null Hypothesis 1

There is no significance difference in the mean responses of business educators regarding the positive contributions of entrepreneurship education towards empowerment and employment generation in Nigeria on the basis of area of specialization.

Table 4:
ANOVA result of business educators regarding the positive contributions of entrepreneurship education towards empowerment and employment generation in Nigeria.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F-cal</th>
<th>F-crit</th>
<th>α</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>99.76</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>1894.22161</td>
<td>11.77</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.59</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1993.98203</td>
<td></td>
<td>14.15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The result of data used to test the first null hypothesis reveal that the sum of squares between groups is 99.76 with a mean square of 2.38. Similarly, the sum of squares within groups is 1894.22 with a mean square of 11.77. The degrees of freedom are 42 and 161 respectively. The F-cal value was 1.59 < 2.60 F-crit. The result shows that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of respondents regardless of their area of specialization. Hence the analysis shows that all the respondents regardless of the area of specialization share the same opinion regarding positive contributions of entrepreneurship education towards empowerment and employment generation in Nigeria. Thus the null hypothesis is retained.

Null Hypothesis 2

There is no significance difference in the mean responses of business educators regarding the constraints that hinder sound entrepreneurship education towards empowerment and employment generation in Nigeria on the basis of area of specialization.

Table 5:
ANOVA result of business educators regarding the constraints that hinder sound entrepreneurship education towards empowerment and employment generation in Nigeria.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F-cal</th>
<th>F-crit</th>
<th>α</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>79.562</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>1.89</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>1984.21161</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>12.32</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2063.77203</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>14.21</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data used to test the second null hypothesis reveal that the sum of squares between groups is 79.56 with a mean square of 1.89. Similarly, the sum of squares within groups is 1984.21 with a mean square of 1.89. The degrees of freedom are 42 and 161 respectively. The F-cal value was 1.43 < 2.40 F-crit. The result shows that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of respondents regardless of their area of specialization. Hence the analysis shows that all the respondents regardless of the area of study share the same opinion regarding the constraints that hinder sound entrepreneurship education towards empowerment and employment generation in Nigeria. Thus the null hypothesis is retained.
Discussion of Findings

The findings presented in Table 1 show the positive contributions of entrepreneurship education towards empowerment and employment generation in Nigeria. Individuals need to be educated on entrepreneurship skills and empowered in order to go into self-employment.

The first hypothesis revealed that there was no significant difference in the mean responses of respondents regardless of their area of specialization on the positive contributions of entrepreneurship education towards empowerment and employment generation in Nigeria.

Table 2 also revealed that respondents agreed on the entire item as the constraints that hinder sound entrepreneurship education for empowerment and employment generation in Nigeria.

The second hypotheses also revealed that there was no significant difference in the mean responses of respondents regardless of their area of specialization on the constraints that hinder sound entrepreneurship education towards empowerment and employment generation in Nigeria.

Finally, Table 3 revealed some of the possible solutions to the identified constraints in the implementation of sound entrepreneurship education programmes towards empowerment and employment generation in Nigerian schools, and were all agreed by the respondents.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that entrepreneurship education contributes to the development and growth of the economy, ensures empowerment, and generation of employment opportunities for the teeming school leavers, production of high quality goods and services, and the provision of the much needed skills for the management of business enterprises. Entrepreneurship education if vigorously pursued is capable of catalyzing productivity empowerment and self-employment in Nigeria. There are quite a number of constrains facing entrepreneurship education in Nigeria. Some of them are: inadequate funding of entrepreneurship education programmes, poor knowledge based economy and low spirit of competition among others.

Recommendations

In the view of findings and conclusion of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1) That people should develop the belief that one can succeed in, and have the ability to deal efficiently and effectively with difficult situation.
2) That adequate funding of entrepreneurship education should be made by both the government and private sectors.
3) That provision of enabling environment with all the necessary equipment and materials for entrepreneurship education growth should be made available in every tertiary institution in the country.
4) Government should adopt a policy that will allow graduates of entrepreneurship education programme to have access to soft loans from financial institutions with little or no interest at all, so that they can establish their business enterprises without ease.

REFERENCES