



## REBRANDING ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION IN NIGERIAN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS FOR NATIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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### **Abstract**

*Entrepreneurship education is an educational programme designed for the training of individual learners for the acquisition of skills. Nigeria as a developing country adopted this type of educational programme to enhance her economic development. But the question is whether the country's economy has actually benefited from this programme. Despite its inclusion in Nigerian educational curriculum at all levels for many years now the economy seems to be dwindling. The paper addressed the need to rebrand entrepreneurship education in Nigeria tertiary institutions for national economic development. The paper focused on the concept of entrepreneurship education, role of entrepreneurship education in economic development, objectives of entrepreneurship education, status of entrepreneurship education in tertiary institution, challenges of entrepreneurship education in tertiary institution, rebranding of the entrepreneurship education programme in Nigerian tertiary institution for national economic development, Conclusion and recommendations were drawn accordingly.*

**Keyword:** *Rebranding, Entrepreneurship Education, National Economic Development*

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### **Introduction**

To promote entrepreneurship education in Nigerian tertiary institutions and in order to make it meet up with the national economic development strategy, there is need to rebrand entrepreneurship education. Therebranding of entrepreneurship education in this context implies the creation of new look and re-orienting the minds of people towards the establishment of the programme in order to make entrepreneurship education look more attractive to the learners in tertiary institutions. In general context, entrepreneurship is often associated with starting and running a business. Entrepreneurship involves a way of thinking, reasoning, and acting that results in the creation, enhancement, realization, and renewal of value for an individual, group, organization, and society (Rwamitoga, 2011). At the heart of this process are the creation and/or recognition of opportunities followed by the will and initiative to seize these opportunities in order to make life worth living for people in the society. The behaviours associated with entrepreneurship include needs for achievement, calculated risk-taking, initiative, growth-seeking, a strong drive and determination, networking, opportunism, and the like (Manimala, 2006). With this broader view in mind, not all business start-ups constitute entrepreneurship because not all founders display these



behaviours which required additional training by an expert. At the same time, entrepreneurial individuals are found in all kinds of contexts and endeavours (Gibb, 2006).

The idea of infusing entrepreneurship into education has spurred much enthusiasm in the last few decades. A myriad of effects has been stated to result from this, such as economic growth, job creation and increased societal resilience, individual growth, increased school engagement and improved equality. Putting this idea into practice has however posed significant challenges alongside the stated positive effects. Lack of time and resources, fear of commercialism, impeding educational structures, assessment difficulties and lack of definitional clarity are some of the challenges practitioners have encountered when trying to infuse entrepreneurship into education.

### **The Concept of Entrepreneurship and Entrepreneurship Education**

Entrepreneurship plays a vital role in economic development through the creation of utilities and generation of employment within a short period (Onyemah, 2011). It is the act and art of being an entrepreneur or one who undertakes innovations or introducing new things, 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. Nwafor (2007) defined entrepreneurship as the willingness and ability of an individual to seek out investment opportunities in an environment, and being able to establish and run an enterprise successfully based on the identified opportunities. In this definition, the following words willingness, ability and investment opportunities are integral to the understanding of entrepreneurship. In other words, the entrepreneur must have the ability/technical know-how in addition to being willing to establish an enterprise. This definition further reveals that not all opportunities appear are worth investing in. So, the responsibility now falls on the individual or would-be entrepreneur to seek for an investment opportunity. Stallworth (2009) described entrepreneurship as the creation of a new economic entity centered on a novel product or service or at the very least, one which differs significantly from products or services offered elsewhere in the market. Ugiagbe in Owenvbiugie and Iyamu (2011) stressed that entrepreneurship is the process of bringing together creative and innovative ideas and coping with management and organizational skills in order to combine people, money, and resources to meet an identified need, thereby creating wealth.

There are various forms of entrepreneurship and the most obvious form of it is starting new businesses popularly referred to as startup companies. A start-up business has numerous advantages. There is joy and satisfaction of creating one's own dream business, choose a business name, a location, and site, a product or service, a target market, technology, employees and operating procedures. The main disadvantage of a start-up business is the mountain of unforeseen/unexpected problems generally associated with the business formation and often encountered in the process of building a business (Inegbenebor, 2006). These problems may take the form of the negative attitude of the



consumers towards the product or service, inadequate capital to finance operations and unexpected hitches in the performance of some of the fixed assets in the business. The need for education in the developmental effort of any nation cannot be underestimated. The development of education sector is a sine-qua non for the development of all other sectors. According to the European Union Commission in Ekankumo and Kemebaradikumo (2011), entrepreneurship education seeks to provide students (especially those in tertiary schools) with the knowledge, skills and motivation to encourage entrepreneurial studies in a variety of setting.

The Commission emphasized that different aspects of entrepreneurship education are offered at all levels of schooling. In a similar vein, the Consortium for Entrepreneurship Education (2004) maintained that it is a lifelong learning process, starting from elementary level to other levels of education and spanning to adult education. Akpomi (2009) also held the view that entrepreneurship education focuses on developing understanding and capacity for the pursuit of entrepreneurial behaviours, skills and attitudes in widely different context. According to Alain (2009), entrepreneurship education refers to all activities aimed at fostering entrepreneurial mindsets, attitudes and skills as well as covering a range of aspects such as idea generation, start-up, growth and innovation. Akudolu (2010) saw entrepreneurship education as the acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitude to enable the learner to apprehend life challenges in whatever form and take decisive steps to realize new trends and opportunities for meeting those challenges in all aspects of human life. Entrepreneurship education is a specialized training given to students of vocation and technical education to acquire the skills, ideas, and the managerial abilities and capabilities for self employment rather than being employed for pay (Osuala, 2009).

### **Objectives of Entrepreneurship Education**

Entrepreneurship education is a functional education centered on making graduates to be job producers rather than job seekers. Entrepreneurship education is oriented towards different ways of realizing opportunities. This is what makes entrepreneurship education distinctive in its focus on the realization of opportunity, whereas management education is focused on the best way to operate existing hierarchies. Furthermore, entrepreneurship education seeks to provide students with the knowledge, skills and motivation to encourage entrepreneurship success in a variety of settings.

Entrepreneurship education, according to Paul and Ojeifo (2013) is structured to achieve the following objectives:

1. To provide meaningful education for the youths, which could make them self-reliant and subsequently encourage them to derive profit and be self-dependent;
2. To provide small and medium-sized companies with the opportunities to receive qualified graduates who will receive training and tutoring in the skills relevant to the management of the small business centers;
3. To provide graduates with training in skills that will make them meet the manpower needs of the society;



4. To provide graduates with the training and support necessary to help them establish a career in small and medium-size businesses;
5. To provide graduates with enough training in risk management to make uncertainty almost possible and easy;
6. To provide graduates with enough training that will make them creative and innovative in identifying new business opportunities;
7. To stimulate the industrial and economic growth of rural and less developed areas.
8. To serve as a catalyst for economic growth and development; and
9. Reduction in rural-urban migration.

However, the essence of entrepreneurship education is to produce entrepreneurs who can make use of their initiative and innovative skill to invent businesses and manage same in order to escape the dangers of poverty and frustration of employment.

### **Status of Entrepreneurship Education in Tertiary Institution**

The introduction of entrepreneurship education in tertiary institutions in Nigeria has played a significant role in national economic development through the process of jobs creation. Chigbuson (2011) highlighted the following as the status of entrepreneurship education in the tertiary institution:

1. Entrepreneurship education has helped to foster entrepreneurial mindsets, skills and behaviours among the recipients' (students).
2. Entrepreneurship education has empowered students with the competencies and skills necessary to prepare them to respond to their life needs, including running their own business, so that they become productive citizens.
3. The programme has helped to develop innovation in youths and develop their skills to identify, create, initiate and successfully manage personal, community, business, and work opportunities.
4. Entrepreneurship education help to increase the awareness and understanding of the process involved in initiating and managing a new venture as well as to enhance the public's perception of learners of small business ownership as a serious career option.
5. The programmes identify and stimulate entrepreneurial drive, talent and skills to undo the risk-averse bias of several analytical techniques and to devise attitudes towards change.

### **Roles of Entrepreneurship Education in Economic Development in Nigeria**

The introduction of entrepreneurship education in Nigerian tertiary institutions is actually a direct response to the changing socio-economic and political conditions in the world and Nigeria in particular. According to Oborah (2010), entrepreneurship education programme can equip students with entrepreneurial skills that will enable them to create and develop enterprises in various areas. The emphasis here is that the programmes have a way of shifting



the focus of students from paid employment to self-employment. During the colonial era, people were trained to work for the colonial masters and as such, their education was patterned towards such. Immediately after independence, the emphasis of our education system was after paid employment (Akpomi, 2009). Another role of Entrepreneurship education is that it has the tendency of equipping and making students experts in the production of certain items. The curriculum framework of this programme has been designed such that individuals will be able to channel their creative abilities and skills to an area or areas of interest. The interest area may be barbing, soap making, farming and so on (Agoha, 2011).

The knowledge of entrepreneurship education helps the students to gain information that will help to boost teaching and learning (Agoha, 2011). Entrepreneurship education builds the spirit of being entrepreneurs in the minds of the students. Thus, entrepreneurship education has a way of discouraging laziness and idleness among our teeming population. Most people that are idle today or probably lazy are those that seem to know little or nothing about entrepreneurship. That is, what it takes to develop business plans, start and manage businesses.

Entrepreneurship education can greatly help in addressing the level of poverty in the country. The issue of poverty eradication has been a top priority of many governments and institutions, especially in developing countries where extreme poverty is conspicuous and has become pandemic (Akpomi, 2009; Kalirajan, 2009). The incidence of poverty in Nigeria is on the high side, where about 70% of the total population has been classified as poor (Ewhrudjakpor, 2008). This situation may be seen as a direct consequence of the absence of entrepreneurial spirit and culture which entrepreneurship education is supposed to foster. In other words, the relevance of entrepreneurship education is felt more in the area of checking or reducing poverty. Entrepreneurship education equally helps in checking high dependency ratios (That is, the ratio of dependent population to working population) in the country. Once the working population is adequately equipped with these entrepreneurial skills thereby leading to self-employment, burden arising from the dependent population will be reduced.

### **Challenges of Entrepreneurship Education**

Entrepreneurship education is widely conceived as one of the surest strategies for escaping the socio-economic problems of unemployment and poverty, but it is most often misconceived by scholars.

Nigeria like most developing nations of the world is faced with myriads of problems and harsh realities which include poverty, unemployment, conflicts, and disease (Baba, 2013). These situations pose great challenges to the very existence of individuals in most developing nations thereby calling for the training of educated man and women who can function effectively in the society in which they live in. In Nigeria, more than half of the Nigerian population is under the age of 30 according to the National Population Commission (2001). Therefore it can be asserted that the economy of Nigeria is a youth economy. This reality leaves them without any meaningful means of sustenance livelihood. To make ends



meet, they simply indulge in armed robbery, kidnapping and so on. 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.

Despite the profound benefits of entrepreneurship education it is still not full blown in Nigeria. The problems that militate against the development of entrepreneurship education in tertiary institutions in Nigeria include the following (Ojeifo, 2013):

1. Rampant political and bureaucratic corruption together with the absence of social consensus on important macroeconomic policy issues.
2. Poor access to vocational skills development training for rural and urban youths involved in the informal economy.
3. Data for entrepreneurship education has been lacking. There is little or limited programme design for entrepreneurship education.
4. The presence of administrative and trade barriers that curtail capacity building and inhibit access to technical support.
5. Significant infrastructural deficits (especially with regards to roads and electricity) and systematic irregularities inimical to small businesses.
6. The absence of a pro-active regulatory environment that encourages innovative enterprise development at the grassroots level.
7. The deplorable or complete absence of infrastructural facilities has contributed to the poor development of entrepreneurship education in tertiary institutions in Nigeria.
8. Young graduates may have brilliant ideas (creativity and innovation), but these entrepreneurial ideas would be stifled without enough funds to finance it at the start-up stage and sustaining it
9. Poor policy implementation, self-greed, and the private interest syndrome have marred most policy implementation effort in Nigeria.

No doubt, one of the biggest challenges of any entrepreneur is access to capital. There is a need for substantial funds for teaching in practical terms for entrepreneurship education; for financing start-ups and expansion of business ventures in order to produce successful entrepreneurs.

### **Ways Entrepreneurship Education can be Rebranded in Tertiary Institutions**

Entrepreneurship education in tertiary institutions offers the chance to develop knowledge-intensive high-growth enterprises for all academic disciplines, not only the



technical ones. Thus tertiary institutions should create an environment that fosters entrepreneurial mindset, skills, and behaviours across various disciplines. However, in order to achieve a viable entrepreneurship education in tertiary institutions in Nigeria the following strategies should be taken into consideration as subjected by Nwangu (2006):

1. There should be some form of genuine school- work-based learning incorporated in some studies as part of the national economic development strategies. This implies enriching the curriculum to incorporate more vocational and technical training. The development of apprenticeship scheme would give new graduates some work skills and experiences.
2. There should be school-based enterprises where students identify potential business plans, create and operate small businesses by using the school as mini-incubators.
3. The government should establish small business schools where interested students and community members can participate. This will make students to be self-reliant.
4. The government should develop entrepreneur internship programme by matching students with local successful entrepreneurs with clearly established education programmes.
5. The Government should establish an enterprise college aimed at fostering the specific skills required for entrepreneurship. This will serve as a skill-acquisition centre for the youths.
6. The government should create an economic friendly environment. These centers on the reduction of taxes on small-scale businesses.
7. There should be enough incentives for students of vocational and technical schools.
8. Sensitizing students that creating a new venture can be an alternative to employment
9. Develop entrepreneurship intensive programmes by attaching students to locally successful entrepreneurs with clearly established education programmes.

More so, the researchers equally identified the following ways in which Entrepreneurship Education can be rebranded in tertiary institution especially in a developing country like Nigeria.

1. Revisiting the curriculum
2. Training and retraining of teachers for quality delivery
3. Provision of equipment and infrastructural facilities
4. Collaboration/partnering with the industries
5. Exchange programmes with other developed countries.
6. Students should develop learning culture

### **Conclusion**

This paper has addressed key entrepreneurial issues and challenges in Nigeria. The issue of entrepreneurship education to any nation especially developing country like Nigeria is no doubt of paramount importance. Its role in economic growth cannot be underestimated in all ramifications. Entrepreneurship education is a central pillar of economic growth and



development, as well as employment generation and poverty alleviation. It is, therefore, necessary that aggressive efforts should be made to see to its full development. This is because; there is an increasing need for highly skilled and innovative workforce in the global economy. Professionals and non-professionals must have the skills to meet modern business needs and to be able to function in today's knowledge-based information economy. The government should also set the machinery in motion to provide an enabling environment characterized by adequate infrastructural facilities to facilitate the studying of entrepreneurship education in Nigeria tertiary institution.

### **Recommendation**

It is obvious that economic empowerment and development cannot take place if there is no proper implementation of entrepreneurship education programme. Based on this, the following recommendations are therefore necessary for ensuring economic empowerment and development:

1. Youths should be exposed to training in technology, especially new discoveries from time to time. This keeps them in tune with trends of the technological world and thus avoids the drudgery in their business.
2. All stakeholders must encourage the proposed introduction of entrepreneurship study across colleges and departments as general courses in Nigerian universities. The government should set the machinery in motion to provide an enabling environment for entrepreneurship.
3. Universities should start to commercialize their research findings instead of leaving them on the shelves.
4. The National Universities Commission (NUC) should as usual set the minimum benchmark of the courses in Nigerian universities. This development should not be politicized, rather, the entire policy frameworks needed for its sustainability and improvement should be provided so as to salvage Nigeria from the clutches of poverty.
5. To be effective, the educational system in Nigeria also must ensure that entrepreneurship training and knowledge transfer become an integral part of their culture, highly valued by National University Commission and Vice-Chancellors and their Senate.
6. Entrepreneurship teaching has to go beyond the traditional teachings in schools. This implies the need to involve students in experiential training.
7. There should also be openness and linkages with systems of other countries abroad. This encourages the exchange of ideas, and knowledge transfer through access to research endeavours.
8. Any new discovery with high potentials for entrepreneurship should be encouraged and fully funded.



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