

## ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: ISSUES, CHALLENGES, AND STRATEGIES

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### ABSTRACT

*To date, the socio-economic base of developed countries is small business, reason even in the world's number one economy, the United States of America (USA), the agency that supervises small businesses, the Small Business Administration (SBA), is a Department of the Federal Government with the Director appointed by, and directly responsible to the President of the country. Small businesses, which could grow to become big businesses, are products of entrepreneurship, where the entrepreneur is the person or organization or group that conceives or identifies business ideas, develops, and manages same for profit. Entrepreneurship education is expected to provide the skills required for entrepreneurs, reason it is important and growing all over the world. This paper reviews the issues involved in this critical academic discipline, the challenges current and expected, and strategies for the way forward, all in the Nigerian, nay, and developing country context. The paper submits that in Nigeria, academicians should assist in taking the country beyond definitions to the level of developing theory and practice and interweaving them, from primary level of education to the tertiary. Practicum as praxis should also be our current focus.*

**Keywords:** *Entrepreneur, Entrepreneurship, Education, Business, Practicum, Youths.*

### INTRODUCTION

The Ewing Marian Kauffman Foundation in the USA has been identified with entrepreneurship training and development effort since 1966. The Foundation defines entrepreneurship education (EE) as "the teaching of skills and cultivation of talents that students need to start businesses, identify opportunities, manage work, and innovate in the course of their careers." It is pertinent to note the last few words, "in the course of their careers," because it is our strong position that all careers in institutions of higher learning have potentials for business development. Thus entrepreneurship should be integrated into every course of study just like English Language and Mathematics in the National Policy on Education (NPE) in both theory and in practice. Entrepreneurship, if successful, is not just good for the individual; it is critical for every nation particularly in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The importance of entrepreneurship in nations can be deduced from the position of the European Commission. This agency that runs the Pan-European body notes that "The ability of the European Union to successfully meet the challenges of competitiveness and growth depends on dynamic entrepreneurship." The European Commission (2006) sees entrepreneurship education as an activity that aims at providing to students, "The knowledge, skills, and motivation to encourage entrepreneurial success in a variety of settings." The emphasis of the Commission is on youths and it states:

*As attitudes and cultural references take shape at early age, education can play a major part in successfully addressing the entrepreneurial challenge. Education should therefore develop awareness of entrepreneurship from an early age. Introducing young people to entrepreneurship develops their initiative and helps them to be*

*more creative and self-confident in whatever they undertake and to act in a socially responsible way.*

To actualize the dream, the Commission encourages EE from primary level to universities. The Commission also notes that "the benefits of EE are not limited to more start-ups. Entrepreneurship is a skill that is also useful in both personal and social aspects." The approaches adopted by the Commission include:

1. A coherent framework, for example, development of school curricula to focus on entrepreneurship as an objective of education.
2. Support for schools by way of teaching materials, partnership with businesses, and training for teachers among other things.
3. Fostering entrepreneurship in higher education by incorporating it in various studies particularly science and technology studies. This was confirmed in Nigeria in an empirical work by Ubong (2002).
4. Support for teachers as in in-service training for practical experience.
5. Participation by external actors and businesses. This is regarded as part of the corporate social responsibility (CSR) of businesses. This includes motivational speeches, which one comes across even in religious broadcasting.
6. Practical, hands-on training by giving students the opportunity to serve in business organizations. The Commission notes that almost 20% of participants in mini-company activities in secondary schools create their businesses after graduation. In Nigeria, this is handled under Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) while Centers for Entrepreneurship Development in institutions of higher learning are expected to cause this to be true for their students.

Entrepreneurship as a distinct intellectual focus started about the 19<sup>th</sup> century and entrepreneurship education a while later in the twentieth century both in developed countries. In developing countries including Nigeria, it has more or less been used as a synonym for business management for decades while EE has a more recent history. To date, it can be said that effort has been concentrated on what EE is and why it is necessary particularly in developing countries.

It is about time teachers involved in Entrepreneurship Education (EE) programmes should focus more attention on the outcomes - the teleology - and how to get there. This is where the European Commission position above is germane. In this new focus, issues such as EE for who (age, gender groups, institutions, organizations); how to identify entrepreneurship qualities in individuals; how best to identify business opportunities; and how to develop both entrepreneurship qualities and nascent business opportunities for both individuals and the nation should occupy entrepreneurship thought and practice. While efforts at skills training in institutions and by companies and agencies such as National Directorate for Employment are helpful, more poignant strategies are needed so as to entrench the concept in the mindset of individuals, policy makers, groups, and communities.

Rasmussen and Oørheim (2006) reason along this same line. They note that EE has traditionally focused on teaching individuals the theory of entrepreneurship. They also note that there are new initiatives towards more action-oriented programmes that emphasize

learning for doing. Using five Swedish universities, they discuss cases that show that EE should focus less on teaching individuals in a classroom setting and more on learning-by-doing activities in a group setting and network context. Goals of such paradigm include teaching for start-ups and commercializing institution-generated research findings.

Does EE *inevitably* lead to good entrepreneurship? Osterbeek, Praag, and Ijsselstein (2010) do not think so. In a quantitative research, they found out that the impact of a leading EE programme on skills of college students with respect to motivation could not be established. In essence, the study showed that there was no impact on skills as well as intention of participants to become entrepreneurs. The researchers did however note that the outcome might be due to the fact that the study was on secondary school students.

Another research led to a slightly different outcome. Farhangmerh, Goncalves, Sarmiento (2016) did an empirical work to see if there is a correlation between EE and entrepreneurial motivation among university students. The two findings were:

- i. Entrepreneurship competencies are predictors of entrepreneurship motivation while knowledge base is not.
- ii. EE does not improve the motivation of university students to become entrepreneurs.

The study submits that to increase entrepreneurship motivation, pedagogy should emphasize the development of student entrepreneurship skills. These negative findings need not dissuade us from pushing forward with entrepreneurship education as a basis for development of strong, well-motivated, and successful entrepreneurs. We need to be reminded that the European Commission has established that at least 20% of college students that were involved in on-the-job exposure in industries went into private business after leaving school.

The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) is a project aimed at data collection and analysis to determine why some countries are more entrepreneurial than others. It was established in 1999 as a joint project between the Babson College, USA and the London Business School. In 17 years of effort, GEM, with diversified range of activities, remains the richest source of data and information on the subject of entrepreneurship, publishing data on global, national, and special topics on an annual basis. Such data are used by the United Nations, the World Economic Forum, the World Bank, and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) for purposes of planning and coordination of entrepreneurship programmes. GEM has concluded, based on statistics and research, that entrepreneurship has a positive correlation with economic growth and that entrepreneurship education plays a positive role in the development of entrepreneurs.

### **Focal Groups**

Even with the need to reach a wide array of persons in any society, there is need for focus because human beings in different groups and strata have diversities with respect to needs, capabilities (including cognition), and useful and useable resources including time. Thus, in any given society, there is need to focus on groups for effective and efficient outcomes. It would for instance be unrealistic to expect that potential entrepreneurs in their early twenties would have the same level of excitement and risk attraction as persons in the middle age. Some demographic groups are therefore discussed below.

**Youths** – Using conventional wisdom, the first thing that crosses the mind when education, particularly in the formal (school) setting is mentioned, is that it relates to

activities that develop the intellect and skills of young people. Entrepreneurship education should, in our context, aim primarily at young people in a formal setting. The same emphasis on youths is placed internationally as Chan (2005) notes:

*...some governments are rethinking the way the young are educated by infusing creative thinking and innovation in their nation's educational curriculum. In the same vein, they are putting much emphasis on the need to train future entrepreneurs through infusing entrepreneurship components within the educational option especially at the tertiary level. Some countries have taken this initiative to a higher level by introducing entrepreneurship education at elementary school and encouraging them to be future entrepreneurs when they are of age.*

Chan (2005) is saying that the better approach is to 'catch them young,' to be done at the tertiary level and even earlier at the primary school level. Ubong (2012) has argued that all courses of study at the tertiary level have the potential for entrepreneurship development including arts courses such as religion. Entrepreneurship related courses in accounting and management can position a young entrepreneur in any specialization to 'snuff out' potential business ideas and develop them. This is part of entrepreneurship development which includes developing ability for opportunity recognition, training and retraining, provision of support facilities, periodic monitoring, evaluation, and mentoring (Ubong, 2001).

**Women in Business** - There is a serious need to develop women entrepreneurs. Not only will they develop themselves and their businesses, they are supposed to develop or act as role models and mentors to their children and girls in particular. The problem of women in business in the developing countries is well known with culture as the prime suspect in the case against education of women generally (Wokocha, 1995) and in entrepreneurship development in particular (Ubong, 2001) including girls in school as a study by Ubong (2002) has shown.

Should men not be trained? They should; however the assumption is that a majority of entrepreneurs are men and thus even as youths or as adults, they fall into the general group.

**Engineers, Technologists, Technicians** - As earlier indicated, every course of study has a potential for business development. Thus, persons in science and technology as well as arts and humanities can find business ideas in their areas of specialization. When this happens, they should be positioned to run such businesses successfully if they are equipped intellectually to be able to navigate the mine field that is the world of business. Ubong (2002) has for instance noted that it is more reasonable to employ an engineer to head a technical organization than a graduate in the humanities and arts (in Nigeria, this obtains, as in the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), Power Holdings Company of Nigeria (PHCN), radio and television networks among others) provided they have the requisite entrepreneurial skills. Engineers and technologists surveyed in Ubong (2002) agreed that there is need for education of engineers and technologists on management functions, accounting, marketing, banking and finance and the rudiments of auditing and tax laws cum practice.

**Niger Delta Region** - Would entrepreneurship have a salutary effect in the restiveness of youths in Nigeria? As there is no empirical study that can be cited here, a definite conclusion cannot be made. However, based on the penchant of crude oil prospecting and development companies to sponsor skills acquisition projects in the Niger Delta Region (NDR), it can be argued that engagement of youths in profitable business operations can reduce the level of restiveness currently being experienced. The Federal College of Education (Technical), Omoku has been in the fore-front of skills training for entrepreneurship for more than two decades. On completion of training, the youths are usually given 'starter packs' which include equipment relevant in the specialist area such as deep freezer, generator and so on for those in catering; welding equipment and generators for those in metal work/fabrication; computer sets for those in computer training along with cash for working capital. This is a typical case of entrepreneurship development. What obtains in the NDR can be applied to other parts of Nigeria where restiveness has to date defied regular actions towards a solution.

**Institutions of Higher Learning** - For institutions of higher learning, entrepreneurship should be worked into the curriculum both the theory and the practice. One is aware of compulsory entrepreneurship programmes for every student of the University of Uyo. The Nassarawa State University, Nassarawa State places considerable emphasis on entrepreneurship. In the Federal College of Education, all students are expected to be involved in entrepreneurship theory and practice. This is reflected in the time table such that every Thursday, students have three hours to go for training in any skill of their choice.

Institutions themselves are also expected to run businesses for internally generated revenue. Such businesses can also engage students on industrial training. Ubong and Wokocha (2000) have discussed types of businesses that institutions of higher learning can run within the limits of their resources.

### Challenges

As in any human activity, there are challenges to realization of the goals of EE as expected. Some of these are:

- 1) Acceptance of EE as a distinct course of study below the graduate level. This would entail development of a curriculum, teaching cum learning facilities, and specialist teachers. Until these are done, EE will remain an appendage in the school system with confusion as to who should and how it should be taught. In the College of Education system, Schools (Faculties) insist on teaching the course in their specific programmes, claiming that the Minimum Standard defines the course code and content to reflect each programme. This makes EE to be an allcomers affair.
- 2) Because of the fluidity and lack of definition, facilities are not made available for proper teaching and learning. Each institution is left to determine teaching method, facilities, and the teachers.
- 3) The experience that the Federal College of Education (Technical), Omoku has is that students who form micro companies or groups to carry out entrepreneurial activities stop their foray into entrepreneurship activities at the conclusion of their studies in the College. The basic reasons for not sustaining effort include further studies and lack of funds cum related facilities to enable them continue. It is also pertinent to mention two problems with entrepreneurship development that do not seem to be going away. The

first is the tradition or culture. Certain businesses cannot be carried out by certain groups based on tradition while women are not traditionally favoured as business persons. The second is the legal framework which is cumbersome and costly. Added to this are the issues of multiple taxation, political instability, and insecurity that negatively affect businesses particularly start-ups.

### Strategies

Based on above issues and challenges, some strategies that can be pursued particularly in a developing country framework include but are not limited to:

1. Entrepreneurship Development - training, retraining, provision of support facilities including finance, marketing, transport and other logistics, mentoring, and making the legal framework easier to navigate.
2. National Policy on Education/Entrepreneurship: there is a National Policy on Entrepreneurship in Nigeria just as there is a National Policy on Education. The former should be interwoven in the latter. The latest National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013) recognizes the place entrepreneurship in the future of youths by noting in Section 2 sub section 13(a) that one of the goals of basic education is to "provide the child with diverse basic knowledge and skills for entrepreneurs, wealth generation, and educational advancement" (p. 18). How this shall be actualized at that level is not stated. At the primary school level, provision for pre-vocational studies in home economics and agriculture come close to being a focus on entrepreneurship. This continues at the junior secondary level except that business studies is added. It is however at the senior secondary level that subsection 38.2.4 and 38.2.5 provide for business studies and trade/entrepreneurship subjects. These are however for children interested in such areas; for those in science and humanities, they are not expected to be involved in entrepreneurship education. This is not appropriate and requires review. The concept of Vocational Enterprise Institutions (VEI) remains unclear and on the drawing boards on pages of the National Policy on Education.

At the tertiary level, sub-section 86(d) notes that "making entrepreneurial skills acquisition a requirement for all Nigerian universities" (p.55) is government's dream. Not much is however said beyond that. There is also a provision for "Innovation Enterprise Institutions" (IEI) which is also not clear. Will these be distinct institutions of higher learning? Probably sub-section 113 answers the question, as it is stated that government shall "approve, accredit, and regulate all innovation enterprise institutions as well as the certificates awarded, thereby creating a national branding and identity" (p. 62). Sub-section 109 notes that the IEI shall be post-basic education; nothing is however said about the equivalence of the certificates to be obtained and the duration of the programmes. Probably the next edition will provide more details on the plans.

3. Entrepreneurship Development Centres (EDCs) - several institutions of higher learning in Nigeria have established EDCs, but it appears the focus is either blurred or skewed towards private business development for internally generated revenue (IGR). What is required is proper definition of philosophy and goals. It is possible to use same for IGR but as a secondary focus. The primary focus should be on development of entrepreneurship consciousness and skills in students and staff that are interested. Such centres should also establish and run periodic bulletins to publicize the work of students



and staff, mentoring programmes, and entrepreneurial research outputs. Academic journals with bias to entrepreneurship would also be appropriate. Such centres should also periodically mount exhibitions by students and staff, an activity which is in its fifth year in the Federal College of Education (Technical), Omoku.

4. Academic Department of Entrepreneurship - marketing came out of the womb of economics to become a distinct academic discipline. In 1905, the University of Pennsylvania, United States of America (USA) offered a course in "The Marketing of Products." Entrepreneurship is from the wombs of economics and marketing. While universities in developed countries have been developing this subject area since 1947 when it is said to have started in Harvard University, one is not aware of an independent Department of Entrepreneurship that awards a certificate, Diploma, or Degree in entrepreneurship at the immediate post-secondary level in Nigeria. It is about time this should be done by way of developing curricula that also recognize the developing country situation and marrying it with what obtains globally. For instance, how do we get Nigerian communities to drop their reluctance to accept women entrepreneurs beyond the micro level?

#### **Determining the Entrepreneurial Breed**

Are entrepreneurs born or made? Do some human beings enter the world with entrepreneurial genes in them? This philosophical poser is important when considering the issue of determination of who should be selected for training for the life of entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurs need to have certain characteristics such as creativity, innovativeness, ability to organize resources, having the profit drive (Hisrich & Peters, 1998) and very importantly, the staying power. This last characteristic is important because lack of patience and endurance even when a business has reached the level of maturity can lead to someone giving up. This is because businesses operate in societies and the critical logic of society is change; every human society is in a state of flux and the components therefore have to change constantly not just to stay relevant but even on existential level. It would for instance have been impossible to have conceived in the 1970s to the 1980s that the flour milling sector in Nigeria would one day be a lame duck rather than a cash cow. A simple government policy banning the importation of wheat sent flour mills crashing with the stronger ones struggling to retool to be able to mill maize into useable flour for the baking and related industries.

Conventional wisdom dictates that because, for much of the life span of the nation of Nigeria, the outstanding entrepreneurs were not products of business schools (famous or not so famous) and therefore entrepreneurship education is not a *sine qua non* for success in business. The studies quoted above in Europe, one of them as recent as six years ago indicate that entrepreneurship education could not be proved to have convinced learners to adopt business as a vocation. These arguments, and even the mere 20% uptake recorded by the European Commission for participants on entrepreneurship training and adoption of entrepreneurship post school, should inform the poser as to whether entrepreneurs are born or made and the usefulness of the argument.

In Ubong (2013) I started with two propositions: "Entrepreneurs are born, not made," and the alternate, "Entrepreneurs are made, not born." These, I regarded as contradictory propositions. Using the Kantian model, I submitted that the two propositions are synthetic *a posteriori* because the predicate concept in both cases is not contained in the subject

concept and thus, justification of the propositions must rely on experience. I went further to introduce the ternary model to come up with a third proposition: "Entrepreneurs are born, and made," also a synthetic *a posteriori* proposition, with the role of the conjunction well noted. The third proposition was also based on the position of Nicholelis (2011) that human beings at birth appear to start life with some learned behaviours (this is against *thetabula rasa* argument of philosopher John Locke) and the Socratic argument that man can be made good by education. In essence, entrepreneurs can be born; where not so, people can be made entrepreneurs by education or training. This second argument is a critical justification for entrepreneurship education although it is still necessary to design templates to select people for purposes of training and motivation.

The implication of both propositions if taken individually or as the ternary version is an endorsement of the relevance and need for structured entrepreneurship education. If someone is innately entrepreneurial, he or she can be made better by structured entrepreneurship education. This is the rationale for short and long courses, workshops and seminars, as well as bulletins and related business publications.

If someone is thought not to have innate capabilities expected of entrepreneurs, entrepreneurship education can develop such capabilities. For instance, an individual who had never demonstrated inclination for the life of entrepreneurship but who suddenly loses a job and has little prospects for a new one in the short term and is confronted with the realities of economic survival could decide to use own business-related resources to start a business. Necessity becomes the catalyst for invention which in this case is a business idea. Such person should be expected to do better if entrepreneurship education comes into play. Such training or exposure would first of all minimize fear of the unknown world of business before introducing and guiding the neophyte in the rarefied world of business. Success is more certain with a cultivated brain assisted by a practiced hand. Entrepreneurship education should therefore be available wherever and whenever needed by new and existing business persons.

## CONCLUSION

There is no gainsaying that the great strides in economic development witnessed in countries in Europe and the Americas can be traced to the doors of entrepreneurship and as Joseph Schumpeter noted, large corporations. Developing countries need not reinvent the wheel; they can simply join the entrepreneurship train, just as China did and today, she is the world's second largest economy. The people behind businesses are entrepreneurs and they can best perform if they adopt best practices which entrepreneurship education can offer. In spite of daunting challenges on the path of enterprise and the practicers thereof in developing countries, there is need to soldier on for the good of individuals and the developing societies. Individuals, societies, and policy makers should be made to know that man can be made good by education as Socrates said millennia ago, and that includes entrepreneurship education, which is better offered in structured settings such as schools.

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