

Diversifying Towards Effective Entrepreneurship Education in Public Universities in Rivers State: Challenges and Prospect

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Abstract

The current curriculum and design of entrepreneurship education programme call for diversification to birth an interest in students toward self-employment and the emergence of young entrepreneurs. This paper discusses the concept of diversity and entrepreneurship and the challenges of entrepreneurship education in Nigeria. The following concepts were clarified in this paper: entrepreneurship, entrepreneurs, and entrepreneurship education. The paper carefully x-rays the prospects and benefits of diversity and issues and challenges of entrepreneurship education in Nigeria. The strategies for achieving effective entrepreneurial education were discussed, which include: incorporation of school-work-base learning; adequate funding; development of internship programmes; establishment of vocational centres; and competency-based recruitment of teachers. Entrepreneurship is primarily learned by experience and discovery, and that entrepreneurial learning should be conceived as a lifelong process, where knowledge is continuously shaped and revised as new experiences take place. It is against this background that the following suggestions were proffered for effective entrepreneurship education in Nigeria. The government should provide enough funds by increasing allocation. Proprietors of private institutions should also seek alternative means of funding through sponsorship and partnership with industries, NGOs, and philanthropists.

Keywords: Effective entrepreneurship, Entrepreneurship education, Challenges, Prospects, Diversity.

INTRODUCTION

In our increasingly diverse and multicultural society, it is more important than ever for lecturers to incorporate culturally responsive instruction into the classroom— whether teaching elementary

school, middle school, or high school students. And the increase in diversity does not only relate to race and ethnicity; it can include students of different religions, economic status, sexual orientation, gender identity, and language background.

Fostering inclusion and awareness of entrepreneurship education is taking a culturally responsive approach to teaching, for the benefits of all students. Not only does creating greater multicultural awareness and inclusion help students with different backgrounds and needs succeed, but it also encourages acceptance and helps prepare students to thrive in an exponentially diverse world. This is a great opportunity for lecturers to learn how to create positive classroom environments and can serve as a foundation for understanding how to promote effective entrepreneurship education in university classrooms. Diversity in and out of university classrooms will continue to grow, so it is essential that institutions prepare students to adapt to an evolving world and embrace those different from themselves.

Diversity at the workplace vis-à-vis the global environment being the onus of this lecture a pertinent issue in the world that is facing the challenges of globalization. Tamunomiebi and John-Eke (2020) identified two sets of issues concerning diversity social justice and business cases. The social justice case placed the moral burden on the managers to treat employees fairly and with dignity, while the business case solicits fair treatment of employees as a better way of harnessing human resource and to create wider customer base and pool of labour for recruitment, thereby fostering positive company image in recognizance of these issues (cases) that many organizations were compelled to Explore ways of gainfully exploiting the growing differences in order to remain in business and possibly gain a competitive advantage.

The purpose of every teaching is to prepare every member to perform effectively within it. This indicates that as long as there are societal problems that pose a threat to the existence of man, education is necessary to fix these problems by appeasing such forces. It serves as a mechanism for achieving these objectives. In Nigeria, for instance, unemployment and underemployment are serious issues. This circumstance indicates an unrealized educational objective. In the Nigerian National Policy on Education (2013), the commitment to provide relevant education to enable citizens to contribute to their community's growth is enshrined as follows: the acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities, and competencies both mentally and physically as equipment for individuals to live and contribute to the development of society. In Nigeria, however, the issue of integrating youths into the social and economic institutions of the country remains unresolved. Unemployment, job dissatisfaction, and unhappiness are on the rise, which is scary. This is especially true for recent university graduates, who lack the needed entrepreneurial skills for sustainability.

Entrepreneurship has been recognized as one of the human factors of production that coordinates other factors like land, labour, and capital. This implies that the entrepreneur is saddled with the responsibility of managing and converting raw materials into semi-finished and finished products, which is the most vigorous activity of man in creating goods and services to satisfy human wants. It depends on the entrepreneurial skills and values of the entrepreneur, who serves as the engine room for future production. It is a critical component for the effective mobilization of any industry's human and other material resources, as well as for the

advancement of society as a whole. Entrepreneurship is a term that is used to talk about new concepts and creativity in business.

The Concept of Diversity

Diversity is all about acceptance and respect for the overall human characteristics in the Socio-economic, cultural and historical contexts, as well as to understand that every Individual, group, family and community is unique and different from the other. The differences include age, ethnicity, class, gender disability, physical abilities and qualities ace, sexual orientation, parental status, work experiences among others. Patrick and Kumar in Cletus et al (2013) in Nnodim (2022) defined diversity as a collection of conscious practices that require comprehensive understanding and appreciation of humanity, cultures and the national environment. Diversity also entails commitment to mutual respect for qualities and experiences of individuals who have different characteristics. The hallmark of diversity is acceptance and respect among different people. It denotes a mutual understanding of the unique attributes inherent in individuals and refusal to accept the peculiar differences, such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation and others of the people. Diversity promotes tolerance of people regardless of the differences. To study diversity is to beam light on the challenges individual, cultural and institutional discrimination pose in the world, and most importantly to highlight the disadvantages discrimination presents in the workplace and build alliance that would enable people with varied attributes work together.

Prospects/Benefits of Diversity

Billie (2021) interpreted the phrase "diversify or die" as a warning to corpora organization of the danger of staying in the same place too long. A reminder that to avoid stagnation, companies must innovate. In today's global environment, diversity is the bedrock of innovation. Diverse and inclusive team is the engine room within which entrepreneurship develop through the combination of desperate ideas and disciplines in ways that look weird in the first instance, but culminate into emergence of job creation.

1. Improves Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving Skills: The existence of workplace diversity can improve critical thinking and solving skills of workers from different background and experiences. This could provoke critical thinking that provides alternative approaches to finding solutions to identified problems. Diversity provides the edge to succeed in a competitive business environment. It permits sharing the views, experiences and approaches to the workplace culture and the system that promotes local talent development

2. Enhances Employees Growth and Development: The exposure of employees to diverse environment can stimulate personal growth as well as skill development. Individuals with diverse characteristics can provide a platform for creativity and innovation through socialization, communication and collaboration. Diversity encourages troubleshooting and problem solving within multiple perspective and approaches provided by the diverse workforce.

3. Unification of Diverse Strength: Diversity presents the prospect for an organization to exploit the divergent characteristics of its workforce to achieve goals. It has the potential to unify the collective strength and inherent weaknesses of worker to its advantage. The different skills and strength of workers of varied background can be harnessed for better performance and productivity (Dhuppar, 2015). Promote Corporate Attractiveness Workplace diversity can increase the perspective of a company been attracted to potential business partners, collaborators, and even the larger society. The tendency to hire and retain staff from diverse background attracts positive attention from media, society and government worldwide.

4. Encourages Innovation: The ability to innovate, adapt and evolve along with the changing trends in business climate determines the success of companies and businesses Globalization reflects also at the workplace of any organization that desires prominence. Therefore, it is a wise decision for companies to draw from the diverse pool of talents available in a diverse workplace to remain relevant, competitive and maintain best practices. Diversity presents a huge opportunity for innovation as employees of varied background would arrive with diverse skill sets that grooms innovative ideas and critical thinking.

Concept of Entrepreneurship Education and Its Historical Development

Entrepreneurship education is concerned with the acquisition of skills in local crafts and proper technological training for self-reliance. It is the basic education that prepares people to organize, own, and manage a business and become self-reliant. Vocational and technical education in entrepreneurship education focuses on the establishment of a business and new business ventures, thus bridging the unemployment gap in society. Ezeugbor (2010) stated that entrepreneurs are people with entrepreneurial spirit.

Educational psychologists have shown that entrepreneurs are people who exhibit the knowledge, skills, and attitude (KSA) acronym within a definite environment (Kraiger, Ford, and Salas, 2003). They are thus job creators and self-employed rather than job seekers in an overburdened public sector society. Entrepreneurship education deals with the process of undertaking a business initiative as an application of knowledge acquired competently for the purpose of self-reliance, self-sustenance, and the overall individual and society's development. In a nutshell, entrepreneurship education eradicates poverty and unemployment while enhancing self-determination, capacity-building, motivational skills, and greater business opportunities for citizens of the state. Entrepreneurship education can be traced all the way back to the beginning of Nigeria, when traditional and indigenous education were used to prepare people for the world of work.

Entrepreneurship training in the areas of woodcarving, cloth-making and selling, goldsmithing, farming, etc., was frequently passed down to the first child, the family's heir apparent, who more or less has to bear them. It is compulsory to learn the business or craft of the lineage (Okey, Ayang, & Ndum, 2012).

However, with the introduction of western education in the 18th century to produce teachers, interpreters, clerks, messengers, and cleaners for the existing church and schools, the

philosophy and system of education became rather titular to that of the British. Nzekwe (2012) observed that the criticisms against the British system of education in Nigeria included, among others, the following:

- a. It placed a premium on academic subjects.
- b. It laid emphasis on religion, with the Bible and catechism forming the major substances of reading, writing, and scripture;
- c. The system encouraged rote learning, which does not produce a critical mind;
- d. No consideration was given to the culture, environment, labour market, needs and aspirations of Nigeria as a country.

Fortunately, with the birth of the National Policy on Education in 1977 based on the outcome of the Curriculum Conference of 1969, the 6-3-3-4 System of education replaced that of the British System. This once again heralded the discourse on Entrepreneurship Education.

On the basis of the aforementioned objectives, Nigerian tertiary institutions of higher education are the most essential locations for accumulating human capital in the form of relevant manpower training for abilities, skills, attitudes, and knowledge. Despite the fact that one of the primary goals of education at postsecondary institutions is to prepare students for the workforce, this objective has not been met, as evidenced by the high number of unemployed graduates. If education is to meet the challenges of preparing youths and adults for self-employment and self-sufficiency for sustainable development, then entrepreneurship education must be infused into the curricula of our higher education institutions immediately.

According to Ogeifo (2012), universities, polytechnics, and other tertiary institutions in Nigeria may be utilized effectively for entrepreneurial development. Consequently, Nigerian colleges and universities should prioritize the development of individuals, businesses, and economies. Additionally, they should teach students how to be entrepreneurs and establish the appropriate atmosphere and incentives for both domestic and international investments.

As a result, the National Universities Commission has recently added an entrepreneurship course to university curricula in an effort to challenge and equip undergraduates with entrepreneurial skills that might serve as a basis for self-employment after graduation. This commendable action should be backed with implementation and adequate resources for the achievement of this objective. Fundamentally, what is required is enhanced education based on suitable skills, the use of data to support instruction, and the enhancement of students' capacity to assist themselves and society.

Entrepreneurship education focuses on the learning of local craft skills and appropriate technical training for self-sufficiency. It is the basic education that prepares individuals to organize, operate, and manage a business and to become independent. Technical and vocational education in entrepreneurship focuses on the establishment of a firm. Thus, new company endeavors bridge the unemployment gap in society. According to Falkang and Albert (2000), entrepreneurs are individuals with an entrepreneurial spirit.

Educational psychologists have demonstrated that entrepreneurs are individuals who exhibit the KSA acronym (knowledge, skills, and attitude) within a specific environment

(Owhondah, 2018). They are therefore employment producers and self-employed as opposed to job seekers in an overwhelmed public sector. Entrepreneurship education focuses on the process of undertaking a business initiative as a competent application of learned information for the sake of self-reliance, self-sufficiency, and the overall growth of the individual and society. In a nutshell, entrepreneurship education gets rid of poverty and unemployment while improving self-determination, capacity-building, motivational skills, and entrepreneurial opportunities for state residents.

Nigeria's entrepreneurial education can be traced back to our traditional and indigenous ways of teaching, which helped people get ready for the working world.

Entrepreneurial training in the areas of woodcarving, cloth-making and selling, goldsmithing, farming, etc. was commonly passed down to the family's heir apparent, the first-born child, who was essentially obligated to carry them out. It is mandatory to learn the trade or profession of the lineage.

Entrepreneurial education is one of the fastest -growing discipline across the globe. This has led to its representation in institution of higher learning including those in Rivers State. However, higher education institution is responsible for the construction of a knowledge economy and society in all nations yet higher education in Nigeria has contained to battle with some challenges emanating from the society, student, government, and our educational system which has hinder the development of skills for self-reliance and in biting the entrepreneurial culture Venter (2015).

Entrepreneurship education seeks to provide students with the knowledge, skills and motivation to encourage entrepreneurial success in a variety of settings of entrepreneurship education is a lifelong learning process, starting as early as elementary school and progressing through all levels of education, including adult education.

The standards and their supporting performance indicators are frameworks for teachers to use in building appropriate objective learning activities, and assessment for their target audience. Using this framework, students will have more progressive challenging educational activities, experiences that will give them the insight needed to discover and create entrepreneurial activities and the expertise to successfully start and manage their own business to take advantage of these (Wikipedia, 2021).

Arvanites (2009) view entrepreneur education as method needed to develop the entrepreneurial spirit and talents that are necessary to function effectively in an environment of strong market forces and complex people issues. He added that for entrepreneurship education to be most useful, it must address and develop in students, the skill necessary as an entrepreneur. It must stimulate and challenge the students into creative and innovative ideas and concepts that result into setting-up and sustaining business venture and other investment opportunities. Entrepreneurship education is designed to develop entrepreneur attitudes for future entrepreneur, it stimulates young people to think about entrepreneurship and the role of the business community in economic and social development.

Oswal (2010) sees entrepreneurship education as education given to a set of people to be able to instill in them the principles, skills and practices required to see and evaluate business

opportunity together the necessary resource they desire to take advantage of them as well as initiating appropriate action to ensure successes in any choice profession.

Importance of Entrepreneurship Education

The importance of entrepreneurship education in a nation's economy cannot be over emphasized. Entrepreneurs have led and will continue to lead the economic revolution that has proved effective in the improvement of the standard of living for people anywhere. Owah (2010) opines that people's political independence is incomplete without economic independence and this can only be achieved through a well-planned and coordinated development of small business and entrepreneurial education.

Therefore, the importance of entrepreneurship education to the nation's economy could be stated as follows:

- Promotion of effective domestic resource utilization, entrepreneurship education will contribute significantly in the use of local resources. Entrepreneurship encourages the use of local raw materials especially in the agricultural (Agro-Allied) and manufacturing business entrepreneurs in SME's also encourage traditional craftsmanship and reduce excessive dependence on imported raw materials.
- Interdependence of business entrepreneurship education will contribute to the economic development of a nation by propagating interdependence among businesses. No business firm can succeed without depending on other firms. It must buy its raw materials from other firms and sells it, finished goods to other business.
- Reduction in rural-urban drifts, entrepreneurship will mitigate rural-urban, drift syndrome especially in developing countries. The migration of rural dwellers to cities in search of white-collar jobs has resulted in congestion, high cost of living and high incidence of crime etc.
- Employment generation, entrepreneurship education plays very important roles in employment generation especially in developing economics. It serves as a foundation for the supply of potential entrepreneurs who are always ready to explore new ideas at the slightest opportunity.

Effective Entrepreneurship Education

Effective Entrepreneurship Education measures the extent at which entrepreneurship programmes introduced in the university system have achieve its stated objective interms of human capital development capable of providing small and medium enterprise to enhance economy growth and development (Ogeifo, 2013). Effective entrepreneurship education can equally be view in area of allocation, subvention grants, aids on entrepreneurial programmes, whether or not the output is equivalent to the input this can be expressed in terms of how the students (input) trained on entrepreneurial programmes demonstrate the skills, knowledge and innovation (output) acquired in developing self-reliance and for the betterment of the society by

way of establishing small and medium scale businesses in order to address the societal problems such as unemployment, poverty among others.

However, the effective entrepreneurship education is determined by the availability and accessibility of funds, budgeted to the educational system. In practical terms if the so budget to the educational sector is less proportional as it has always been in Nigeria, all things being equal, there will be ineffectiveness of entrepreneurship programmes, implies that the cycle of poverty, unemployment and social vices will be on the increase as it is currently experienced in modern day Nigeria.

Issues and Challenges of Entrepreneurship Education

Inadequate Instructional Materials: Instructional materials are all forms of information carriers that can be used in recording, storing, transmitting or retrieving information for purposes of teaching and learning. Adewole, (2015) instructional materials are those instruments teachers use in classroom for teaching. Uguoke (2011) noted that instructional materials are one of the factors influencing functional education in Nigeria. Regrettably, instructional materials used in teaching entrepreneurship education in Nigeria are not adequate to address modern trends of skill acquisition in the society. There are lacks of quality entrepreneurial test books in Nigerians schools even the teaching methods in use does not suit the practical aspect of entrepreneurial education.

Incompetence of Teachers: Entrepreneurial education is expected to prepare learners to be creative and productive citizens and nation builders, therefore; teachers implementing the curriculum in the classroom are supposed to be competent in different skills and delivery methods. A learner can only be creative and productive when guided by experts who possess practical skills. Though there is need for entrepreneurship education, Nigeria is lacking the manpower in the system that can effectively implement the curricula at various level of education in the country.

Poor Attitude to Vocational and Technical Education: Entrepreneurship education cut across different technical and vocational areas. Poor societal attitude to vocational and technical education pose a big problem to entrepreneurial education. Despite government efforts in enhancing technical and vocational education, it is still perceived as the form of education for under privileged children. Though high level of unemployment cum insecurity should have changed this attitude, but Nigerians still prefer general education.

Inadequate Facilities and Equipment for Teaching and Learning: One of the greatest problems facing entrepreneurial education in Nigeria is inadequacy of facilities and equipment for teaching and learning of the subject. Business and every aspect of education in the world is technology-driven with most critical changes occurring in the area of information and communication technology (ICT). Unfortunately, this facilities and equipment are absent in our institutions, even some that are in our school are obsolescence. One of the basic principles that

should guide entrepreneurial education is that teachers of entrepreneurial courses/subjects should be experts in the use of modern day business equipment but where are these facilities.

Strategies for Achieving Effective Entrepreneurial Education

The neglect of functional entrepreneurial education in Nigeria is robbing the nations of the contributions these unemployed youths who are now perpetuating evil in the society would make on the economy. Though suffering many problems, but neglect of this aspect of education could be said to be responsible in the increasing rate of insecurity in the country. Youth that should have been utilized as competent auto mechanics, truck drivers, carpenters, plumbers, electricians, data base electrician, medical technicians etc. are not utilizing their creative energy in these directions, rather causing havoc to the country. But all hope is not yet lost as there are different strategies which could assist them in achieving a functional entrepreneurship education in Nigeria. Some of the strategies as outlined by Kulo Agbogo, and Okudarie, (2017) include:

Incorporation of School-work base Learning: Entrepreneurial education differs from other curriculum in that it encompasses an individual's total lifestyle which is relevant to the nation building and sustainable security. Consequently, school-work base learning should be integrated into the entire curriculum from basic school through graduate level rather than viewed as an isolated unit of instruction studied at a particular time and level. According to Baba (2013), for functional entrepreneurial education to be achieved there should be some form of genuine school-work based learning incorporated in some studies as part of national economy development strategies.

Adequate Funding: Availability of fund in every educational programme is a critical factor in achieving functionality of such programme. The unavailability of fund to our schools makes the cry for entrepreneurial education to be on paper than practices. Well-founded entrepreneurial education program will no doubt equip the schools with adequate facilities needed for efficiency of the subject and achieving the stipulated objectives of entrepreneurial education thereby eradicating insurgence of insecurity. (Ekoh, 2016, Mawolo, & Aliyu, 2010). Government alone cannot fund functional entrepreneurial education as it demands for incorporation of different experts from varying skills. Therefore, both public and private funds should be pulled to finance the high cost of inviting artisans into formal teaching process.

Development of Internship Programmes: Skill learning is more of practical than theory; students from time to time should be marched with local successful entrepreneurs with sound educational background who will mentor them. To enhance economic efficiency, self-empowerment and acquisition of useful skills, learners should be made to pass through an expert who will mentor him/her under the supervision of the school (Nzekwe, 2012; Ogeifo. 2012). There are many problems in learning vocational skills, which cannot be found in books but through internship programmes, a learner can gain solution to such problems through the help of an experienced entrepreneur.

Establishment of Vocational Centre: There is need to shift the focus of our education from certificate base to skill oriented. This could be achieved by establishing vocational centers for the youth. School students should be mandated to engage in practical during holiday in such centers with the help of teachers offering supervision services to the centers, students should be encouraged to carry out some activities like writing business plan, feasibility study, seek for credit facilities etc under a typical entrepreneurial condition as in the society. They should be taught how to form cooperative society and start theirs in the centers.

Competency based Recruitment for Lecturers: Functional entrepreneurial education in our schools is expected to produce high quality graduate who are competent in different skills. It is therefore important to consider caliber of teacher that should handle the subject in different levels of education assigning of the subject to people who are not vocational and technically trained like a blind leading another blind man. Vocational and technical education which entrepreneurial education is part of should be handled by quality teachers with skill oriented educational background. Baba (2013) explained that quality of education provided in any society and nature of change effected is determined by the quality of teachers and effectiveness of their teaching methods. Therefore, recruitment and assigning of this subject to anybody should be based on performance not certificate, to achieve this interviewers and management should base their judgment on pedagogical skills, occupational skills, knowledge and attitudinal competencies needed for effective teaching of entrepreneurship in schools.

CONCLUSION

Since most of what is learnt about entrepreneurship comes from experience and discovery, learning about entrepreneurship should be viewed as a lifetime process in which information is constantly modified and revised as new experiences are had. In light of this, the following suggestions are made for efficient entrepreneurship education in Nigeria.

The intended adoption of entrepreneurial studies across institutions and departments as common courses must be supported by all parties involved. For the purpose of encouraging good students, the federal government should work with state governments to offer scholarships and bursaries to entrepreneurial students.

The government should increase funding by allocating more to education owners of private institutions could look for alternate sources of funding by partnering with businesses, non-profit organizations, and philanthropists and seeking sponsorship from these groups. Instead of putting their research discoveries on the shelves, universities should begin to market them.

As per usual, the National University Commission should establish the minimal standard for the programs offered at Nigerian universities. To get Nigeria out of poverty level, all the policies that are needed to make this development last and get better should be put in place instead of being politicized.

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