



## ABSTRACT

*This study examines the impact of entrepreneurship education in Nigeria geared towards enhancing sustainable economic development in the country. Since entrepreneurship skills remain vital in the real sector and the sustenance of economic development, it has become imperative for government to pay attention to this sub-sector. The problem facing the country ranging from acute poverty, youth and graduate unemployment, dependency on foreign goods and technology, to very low economic growth and development among others has*

**V**OCATIONAL EDUCATION,  
SUPPORTABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH  
AND YOUTH EMPOWERMENT  
THROUGH VSESC OKE-OGUN POLYTECHNIC  
SAKI, NIGERIA.

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## Introduction

**M**any Nigerians are becoming worried about high rate of youth unemployment and therefore the need for government to provide employment means for its youths to meet the global challenges of wealth creation. Entrepreneurship education seeks to provide students with the knowledge, skills and motivation to encourage entrepreneurial success in a variety of settings. Variations of entrepreneurship education are offered at all levels of schooling from primary or secondary schools through graduate university programmes. What makes entrepreneurship education distinctive is its focus on realization of opportunity, where management education is focused on the best way to operate existing hierarchies. Both approaches share an interest in achieving "profit" in some form which in non-profit organizations or government can take the form of increased services or decreased cost or increased responsiveness to the customer/citizen/client (Ajao, 2004). The need for entrepreneurship education started emerging in the mid 1980s. This is because before this period, unemployment and poverty were not a national concern as they are currently. However, political instability and inconsistencies in the social economic policies of successive government led to the emergence of high level unemployment in Nigeria. In mid 1980s, the Nigerian economic collapsed while youth and graduate unemployment hit the roof.



*prompted government to introduce entrepreneurship studies in tertiary institutions. The study investigates importance of entrepreneurship education for sustainable economic development in Nigeria; identify challenges of entrepreneurship education in Nigeria and assess the challenges for promoting entrepreneurship education among Nigerian youth at the Oke-ogun Polytechnic, Saki. The study relies on documentary method which is qualitative and finds out that entrepreneurship education is important for sustainable economic development and a life skills that will enhance the potential of an individual, reinforces self-sufficient and improve the quality of education and life. The paper concludes that entrepreneurship education has been recognized as a key driver in sustaining economic development. It recommends that Nigeria youths be trained in various skills including: creativity and innovation, entrepreneurship skills, managerial experience and record keeping are indispensable.*

**Keywords:** *Entrepreneurship, Education, Sustainable, Economic and Development.*

There was large-scale layoff of workers and early retirements as a result of structural adjustment policies and bad economic trends in the country (Arogundade, 2011). In the face of this situation, entrepreneurship, which would have salvaged the situation, was not encouraged. It has been observed that higher education has not properly included the philosophy of self-reliance such as creating a new cultural and productive environment that will promote pride in primitive work and self-discipline, encouraging people to take part actively and freely in discussions and decisions affecting their general welfare, promoting new sets of attitudes and culture for the attainment of future challenges (Arogundade, 2011).

Therefore, the move by the government through the Federal Ministry of Education to make entrepreneurship education one of the compulsory general studies for students in universities across the country should be seen as a positive step in the right direction. This is to inculcate in the youths the spirit of self reliance. This development will not only address the problem of unemployment and underemployment but will also ensure an entrepreneurial human capacity for national development. It is the hope that with the introduction of entrepreneurial education in our tertiary institutions the universities will better be repositioned to become centers of excellence with the equipping of technical laboratories both at secondary and tertiary levels. This will put the country on the path to join communities of nations that have fought poverty through strengthening of small scale businesses.

Nigeria like the most developing nations of the world is faced with myriad of problems and harsh realities which include poverty, unemployment, conflicts and diseases. These situations pose great challenges to the very existence of individuals in most developing nations thereby calling for the training of educated men and women who can function effectively in the society in which they live in. Available information by National Universities Commission (NUC, (2004) reiterated the massive unemployment of Nigerian universities graduates in the country. This problem is said to be traceable to the disequilibrium between labour market requirements and lack of essential employable skills by the graduates.



The objective of this study is to examine the importance of entrepreneurship education for sustainable economic development in Nigeria

### **Literature review**

Meredith (1983) as cited in Babalola, (2010) defined an entrepreneur as a person or persons who possess the ability to recognize and evaluate business opportunities, assemble the necessary resources to take advantage of them and take appropriate action to ensure success. Entrepreneurs are people who constantly discover new markets and try to figure out how to supply those markets efficiently and make a profit. He is a person that searches for change, responds to change, and exploits change by converting change into business opportunity.

Ojeifo (2010) in his book, a Handbook on Entrepreneurial Development in Nigeria defined an entrepreneur as the owner or the manager of business enterprise who through risks and initiative, attempts to make a profit.

The word entrepreneur was coined from a French word called 'entrepredre' which means a person who voluntarily head the military expedition. It was first used during the French military history in the seventeenth century

### **Entrepreneurship Education**

Entrepreneurship education is oriented towards different ways of realizing opportunities. This is what makes entrepreneurship education distinctive in its focus on realization of opportunity, whereas management education is focused on the best way to operate existing hierarchies.

According to Omolayo (2006) as cited in Arogundade (2011) Entrepreneurship is the act of starting a company, arranging business deals and taking risks in order to make a profit through the skills acquired through education. Another view of entrepreneurship education by Omolayo is the term given to someone who has innovative ideas and transforms them to profitable activities. To Omolayo, entrepreneurship can be described as "the process of bringing together creative and innovative ideas and coupling these with management and organizational skills in order to combine people, money and resources to meet an identified need and create wealth.

In the same vein, Nwangwu (2007) opined that entrepreneurship education is a process of bringing together the factors of production, which include land, labour and capital so as to provide a product or service for public consumption. However, the operational definition of entrepreneurship education is the willingness and ability of a person or persons to acquire educational skills to explore and exploit investment opportunities, establish and manage a successful business enterprise.

Entrepreneurship education according to Paul (2005) is structured to achieve the following objectives.

1. To offer functional education for the youth that will enable them to be self-employed and self-reliant.
2. Provide the youth graduates with adequate training that will enable them to be creative and innovative in identifying novel business opportunities.
3. To serve as a catalyst for economic growth and development.



4. Offer tertiary institution graduates with adequate training in risk management, to make certain bearing feasible.
5. To reduce high rule of poverty.
6. Create employment generation.
7. Reduction in rural – urban migration.
8. Provide the young graduates with enough training and support that will enable them to establish a career in small and medium sized businesses.
9. To inculcate the spirit of perseverance in the youths and adults which will enable them to persist in any business venture they embark on.
10. Create smooth transition from traditional to a modern industrial economy.

### **Concept of Development**

Development in its simplest term is synonymous with growth. In the context of society, it is the sustained elevation of an entire society and social system toward a “better” or “more humane” life.

Ikwuako (2001) referring to Smelser (1966) stated that when the term “development” is employed, four distinct but interrelated processes are usually borne in mind, namely:

1. A developing society is changing from simple and traditional techniques towards the application of scientific knowledge at the realm of technology;
2. The developing society evolves from subsistence farming towards commercial production of agricultural goods;
3. The developing society undergoes a transition from the use of human and animal power to industrialization; and
4. The developing society moves from the farm and village towards urban concentrations.

In the words of Pearson (1970), “development is partly a process whereby a country achieves reasonable self-sustaining growth, process which facilitates and enhances industrial and technological process in the interest of its people”.

Todaro and Smith (2006) quoting Seers (1969) on basic questions about the meaning of development stated that:

*“The questions to ask about a country’s development are-what has been happening to poverty? What has been happening to unemployment? What has been happening to inequality? If all these have declined from high levels, then beyond doubt, this has been a period of development for the country concerned. If one or two of these central problems have been growing worse, especially if all three have, it would be strange to call the result “development” even if per capita income doubled”.*

The World Bank, which during the 1980s championed economic growth as the goal of development, joined the chorus of observers taking a broader perspective when in its 1991 World Development Report, asserted:



*“The challenge of development ... is to improve the quality of life. Especially in the world’s poor countries, a better quality of life generally calls for higher incomes-but it involves more. It encompasses as ends in themselves, better education, higher standards of health and nutrition, less poverty, a cleaner environment, more equality of opportunity, greater individual freedom, and richer cultural life”.*

### **Concept of Sustainable Development**

The concept of sustainable development requires balancing environmental, societal and economic considerations in the pursuit of development and an improved quality of life. Sustainability includes intergenerational equity, gender equity, just and peaceful societies, social tolerance, environmental preservation and restoration, poverty alleviation and natural resource conservation.

Arogundade (2011) gave the major essential tool for achieving sustainable development which includes the following areas:

1. Improve the quality of basic education;
2. Reorientate existing education programmed to address sustainable development;
3. Develop public awareness and understanding; and
4. Provide training for all sectors of private and civil society.

### **Education for Sustainable Development**

Education for Sustainable Development is the focus or projection of education that seeks to equip people towards creating a sustainable future. Stakeholders such as government, businesses, educational institutions, media, and organizations play important roles in achieving sustainable development. Each of these sectors has a different vision of sustainable development. Some are interested in environmental preservation and protection; some have economic development interests while other may be more interested in social development.

According to UNESCO (2000), the way each nation, cultural group and individual views sustainable development depends on its own values.

In many European nations, universities and technical colleges trained students of science, economics and business management in skills that helps to build more sustainable societies. Programmes such as Peace Education, Human Right Education, Environmental Education and “Youth Entrepreneur” schemes are carried out in many schools. Hence, such initiatives help students and teachers to gain an understanding of the inter-linkages needed for sustainable development. The emphasis has been on education that will provide life and occupational skills that will enhance the potentials of individual, reinforcing self-sufficiency and improving quality of life.

### **Importance of Entrepreneurship Education in Nigeria**

Entrepreneurship is a key driver of our economy; wealth and a high majority of jobs are created by small businesses started by entrepreneurially minded individuals, many of whom go on to create big businesses. There is more creative freedom for people who are exposed to entrepreneurship



education. There is higher self-esteem, and an overall greater sense of control over their own lives. It is the believe of many experience business people, political leaders, economists and educators that fostering a robust entrepreneurial culture will maximize individual and collective economic and social success on a local, national, and global scale. It is with this in mind that the National Standards for Entrepreneurship Education were developed – to prepare youth and adults to succeed in an entrepreneurial economy.

Entrepreneurship Education is a lifelong 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 a framework for teachers to use in building appropriate objectives, learning activities, and assessments for their target audience. Using this framework, students will have progressively more challenging educational activities; experience that will enable them to develop the insight needed to discover and create entrepreneurial opportunities; and the expertise to successfully start and manage their own businesses to take advantage of these opportunities.

The importance of entrepreneurship to any economy is like that of entrepreneurship in any community: entrepreneurship activity and the resultant financial gain are always of benefit to a country. If you have entrepreneurial skills then you will recognize a genuine opportunity when you come across one. WSI an international marketing consultant has franchise opportunities available globally for the all inclusive fee of \$29,700. The company, who has been awarded the accolade of being rated the number 1 internet consultant business for six consecutive years, has franchises operating in 87 countries worldwide.

Entrepreneurship education focuses on developing understanding and capacity for pursuit of entrepreneurial behaviors, skills and attributes in widely different context. It can be portrayed as open to all. The propensity to behave entrepreneurially is not exclusive to certain individuals. Different individuals will have a different mix of capabilities for demonstrating and acquiring entrepreneurial behaviors, skills and attributes. These behaviors can be practiced, developed and learned; hence it is important to expose all students to entrepreneurship education.

Entrepreneurial skills and attributes provide benefits to society, even beyond their application to business activity. Obviously, personal qualities that are relevant to entrepreneurship such as creativity and a spirit of initiative can be useful to everyone in their working responsibilities and in their day-to-day existence. Also the relevant technical and business skills need to be provided to those who choose to be self employed and or to start their own venture or might do so in the future.

The economic importance of the entrepreneur has been recognized for several decades. Welber (1930) put forward the thesis that the protestant ethic is spirit of capitalism (Green, 1959). Other writers have discussed from different perspectives, the importance of entrepreneurship to different countries in the industrial era.

Schumpeter (1947), who is, perhaps, believed to be the first major economist to analyze the role of entrepreneurship in economic development, attributed innovation to the entrepreneur. He described entrepreneurship as the engine of economic development. He argued that “to study the entrepreneur is to study the central figure in modern economic history”.



In the theory of distribution put forward by Say (1824), a neoclassical economist, the entrepreneur plays a crucial role, though he or she is not a production factor. Unlike the capitalist, the entrepreneur directs the application of acquired knowledge to the production of goods for human consumption.

From the above advantages/benefits Entrepreneurship should be taught to students in all disciplines in institutions of higher learning. It is not out of place to say that many business ideas emerge from non-business disciplines but are often waved aside or ignored because students are not sufficiently educated in the knowledge and skills required.

### **Strategies for Effective Entrepreneurship Education**

Human talent is the single most important productive factor in today's knowledge economy (Ekpudu, J.E., 2012). Focusing on the development of a skilled workforce and the expansion of human capacities through high-quality systems of entrepreneurship education, training, skills acquisition and lifelong learning is important for helping youths and graduates find good jobs and enterprises to find the skilled workers they need. This will put the entrepreneur at a very competitive advantage.

In order to achieve viable entrepreneurship education that will enhance sustainable development in Nigeria the following strategies according to Ayodele (2006) will help to alleviate the problem of entrepreneurship education in the country.

1. There should be some form of genuine school work based learning incorporated in some studies as part of the national economic development strategies. The development of apprenticeship scheme would give new graduates some work skills and experience.
2. Pool local public and private funds to create a small venture capital fund.
3. School based enterprises where students identify potential business, plan, create and operate small business using the school as mini-incubators.
4. Provide small business schools where interested students and community members can participate.
5. Develop entrepreneurship internship programmers matching students with locally successful entrepreneurs with clearly established education programmers.
6. Establishing an enterprise college aimed at fostering the specific skills sets required for entrepreneurship to serve as skill acquisition centers for the youths.
7. Creating an economic friendly political environment.
8. Improving on the government taxation on small scale businesses.

### **Entrepreneurship Education in Nigeria**

Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes is one of the six goals of the "Education for All" (EFA) established at the World Education Forum in Dakar, 2000 (UNESCO, 2000). In this regard, the provision of vocational skills training constitutes an important component in Nigerian strategies for achieving EFA. Unfortunately, the unemployment situation among Nigerian school leavers and graduates as at 2000 was alarming (Ijaiya, 2007). By the time the military left office in 1999, high unemployment has



already led to increasing poverty and serious social problems in Nigeria. Coincidentally, there has been a decline in Technical and Vocational Education (TVET) enrolments. The need to revitalize TVET as the best means to improve economic opportunities for the Nigerian youth was evident (Babalola, 2010).

The UNESCO's Section for Technical and Vocational Education, in cooperation with the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) in Nigeria, anchored the project that aimed at better equipping large numbers of young Nigerians for the world of work (UNESCO, 2000 in Babalola, 2010). In February 2001, NBTE started the implementation with a radical review of the curricula for 28 disciplines in electrical, mechanical and civil areas of specialization at secondary and post-secondary levels. National experts and UNESCO international consultants from Australia, Iraq, Kenya and the United Kingdom participated in the final review of the curricula at a workshop held in August 2001. At the same time, seven Staff Development Centres (SDCs) were established in Federal Polytechnics located in each of the six geopolitical zones at Auchi, Bauchi, Bida, Kaduna, Lagos, Nekede and one at NBTE Headquarters. Core teams of trainers were prepared in a special course organized by UNESCO and NBTE in Kaduna in August 2001 to train technical teachers, Principals and Heads of Departments in the usage of the new curricula in Nigeria.

In spite of all the efforts made by the UNESCO and Nigerian government to enhance the skills of youths, EFA Reports (2000) later showed that all these did not pay sufficient attention to skill training for youth and adults. Even though these initiatives focused on providing education and training people from marginalized groups, they were small in scale and were not recognized as part of a comprehensive national education strategy (UNESCO, 2004). Consequently, as an offshoot of the goal of the then Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo to make the country to become one of the world's top 20 economies by year 2020, he mandated that all university students in Nigeria, regardless of their course of studies, be exposed to entrepreneurship development study. This is because Nigeria realized that she would need to increasingly globalize education in two key areas, 'namely: Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and entrepreneurship.

### **Theoretical Framework**

#### **Innovation Theory of Schumpeter:**

A dynamic theory of entrepreneurship was first advocated by Schumpeter (1949) who considered entrepreneurship as the catalyst that disrupts the stationary circular flow of the economy and thereby initiates and sustains the process of development. Embarking upon 'new combinations' of the factors of production - which he succinctly terms, innovation - the entrepreneur activates the economy to a new level of development.

Schumpeter introduced a concept of innovation as key factor in entrepreneurship in addition to assuming risks and organizing factors of production. Schumpeter defines entrepreneurship as "a creative activity". An innovator who brings new products or services into economy is given the status of an entrepreneur. He regards innovation as a tool of entrepreneur, The entrepreneur is viewed as the 'engine of growth', He sees the opportunity for introducing new products, new



markets, new sources of supply, new forms of industrial organization or for the development of newly discovered resources.

Schumpeter is the first major theorist to put the human agent at the centre of the process of economic development. He is very explicit about the economic function of the entrepreneur. The entrepreneur is the prime mover in economic development; his function, to innovate or carry out new combinations.

Wilken had added the concept of the changes that an entrepreneur brings:

1. Expansion of goods, products.
2. Productivity of factors of production such as finance, labour, material.
3. Innovation in production such as, technology, process changes and increase in human resource productivity.
4. Innovation in marketing area such as the composition of the market, size of the market and new markets.

To Schumpeter, entrepreneurs are individuals motivated by a will for power; their special characteristic being an inherent capacity to select correct answers, energy, will and mind to overcome fixed talents of thoughts, and a capacity to withstand social opposition. The factors that contribute to the development of entrepreneurship would essentially be a suitable environment in grasping the essential facts.

It can be noted that this theory's main figure, the "innovating entrepreneur" has played an important role in the rise of modern capitalism. The entrepreneur has been the prime mover – for economic development process. On the criticism side, this theory seems one-sided as it puts too much emphasis on innovative functions. It ignores the risk taking and organizing aspects of entrepreneurship. An entrepreneur has not only to innovate but also assemble the resources and put them to optimum use.

### **Conclusion**

Since early 1980's, Nigeria has a history of economic stagnation that has led to decline in white collar jobs. The inclusion of entrepreneurship course in all disciplines will to a great extent, assist in solving this problems of high unemployment and underemployment. Entrepreneurship education in this research has been recognized as a key driver in encouraging business start up potentials among graduates.

Some argue that entrepreneurial capabilities are not inborn and as such entrepreneurship is a behavioural not a personality trait but can be learned. All the same, the attempts at stimulating entrepreneurial activities through formal training and education and therefore assume that they may be enhanced or developed by a guided entrepreneurial education. Others believe that entrepreneurship is inborn, that is, personality trait not behavioral. There are yet others who believe that entrepreneurship is primarily learned by experience and discovery and that entrepreneurial learning should be conceived as a life long process, where knowledge is continuously shaped and revised as new experience take place.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study the following recommendations are proffered for effective entrepreneurship education in Nigeria



All stakeholders must encourage the introduction of entrepreneurship studies across all facilities and department as general courses in the country. The Federal government in collaboration with state governments should provide scholarships/bursaries for performing students by way of encouragement.

Universities/polytechnic should start to commercialize their research findings instead of leaving them in the shelves

Nigerian teachers on entrepreneurship at the university/polytechnic level needs to visit successful countries that have adopted the programme

The National University Commission (NUC) should as usual set the minimum benchmark of the courses in Nigeria universities. This development should not be politicized, rather the entire policy framework needed for its sustainability and improvement should be provided so as to salvage Nigeria from clutches of poverty.

Government should sensitize the people through the re-branding campaign program on the use of locally made goods as a matter of urgency.

Entrepreneurship and creativity should be taught at an early stage.

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