

The Contemporary Issues, Challenges and Technological gap in Entrepreneurship Education in Nigerian Higher Institutions

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Abstract: *The study investigates the contemporary issues, challenges and technological gap in entrepreneurship education in Nigerian higher institutions. Entrepreneurship education has emphasis on economics and covers business disciplines like management, marketing and finance with links to psychology, sociology, and teacher education as well as business education. It prepares and builds persons to be responsible and enterprising individuals capable of deep entrepreneurial thinking that contribute to economic and sustainable development. It focuses on expertise that is needed and used to conceive and commercialise business opportunities. Nigeria especially in the face of the global economic crisis and its energy crisis requires graduates who will be job “creators” and not job “seekers”. This paper addresses contemporary issues, challenges, technological gap and strategies in the development of entrepreneurship education in Nigerian higher institutions. It therefore concluded that entrepreneurship is more than being smart. It is the ability of a person to collaborate with others and to act in the face of new opportunities. Recommendations were made that entrepreneurial teachings have to go beyond the traditional teachings in the classroom. This implies the need to involve students in experiential training. The government should set machinery in motion to provide an enabling environment for entrepreneurship education in Nigerian higher institutions.*

Keywords: contemporary issues, technological gap, entrepreneurship education, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Ocho (2015) defines entrepreneurship education as the process by which people become engaged members of their community. It helps them to become capable of assimilating into society and making economic contributions. This demonstrates how a functioning education system recognizes the demands of the labor market and gives its graduates the proficiencies and

occupational skills need to be self-sufficient. The Nigerian education system underwent a number of adjustments at various points in time in order to achieve this goal and address issues that were found. For example, the system at one point faced a skyrocketing unemployment rate because of its original focus on preparing graduates for government jobs rather than turning to the labor market.

Nwangwu (2016) asserted that graduates lacked solid understanding of entrepreneurial education. As a result, entrepreneurial education was introduced and given special attention. The idea behind this was that by incorporating it into postsecondary education, students would learn skills that would make them independent and, as a result, lessen the issue of unemployment (Nwangwu, 2016). According to Suleiman (2016) entrepreneurship is the willingness and capacity of a person to look for investment possibilities, launch, and successfully manage a business. An entrepreneurial society and culture are prerequisites to having an entrepreneurial mentality. Any country's overall economic growth—especially developing ones like Nigeria—requires this spirit. This is consistent with Nwangwu's (2016) assertion that entrepreneurship is the readiness and capacity of a person, business, or organization to recognize a shift in the environment and take advantage of it to create goods and services intended for the general public. Entrepreneurship is based on vision, attention, and determination, according to Odjegba (2015). It is based on finance access, enabling environments, and standards management procedures.

Entrepreneurship education, which has recently gained prominence, means many things to different educators. According to Kourilsky (2023), entrepreneurship education consists of identifying opportunities, marshaling resources in the face of danger, and establishing a commercial endeavor. Bechard and Toulouse (2018) define it as a set of codified teachings that informs, trains, and educates everyone interested in small business establishment or development. It also has diverse meanings at various levels of schooling. At the primary and secondary school levels, the goal is primarily to raise awareness of a career path, and so it acts as a vehicle for the development of academic abilities and emphasis on the value of school subjects. As a result, they acquire mastery of several topics, particularly English and Mathematics.

Entrepreneurship education is seen at the postsecondary level of education as a means of improving a person's skills to succeed in both the workforce and as an entrepreneur, in addition to being a career possibility. Thus, it follows that the development of entrepreneurial competence is the main goal of entrepreneurship education. It is the process of giving people the insight, zeal, expertise, courage, and abilities to act on business possibilities that they identify. Thus, the goal of entrepreneurship is to educate people, particularly young people, to be responsible and enterprising people, to think deeply about entrepreneurship, and to subsequently contribute to the sustainable and economic development of their communities. It fosters original thought as well as a strong sense of accountability and self-worth. Graduates with an entrepreneurial mindset, particularly

those with postsecondary degrees, are more able to innovate and become self-employed job "creators" rather than just "seekers" of employment.

The academic field of entrepreneurship education is very new. Its multidisciplinary aspect stems from its heavy emphasis on economics, which it applies to business disciplines like finance, marketing, and management. It also has tight ties to other academic fields including anthropology, psychology, sociology, and business education. Beyond the lessons found in textbooks, it covers a broad range of concepts derived from real-world experiences. Despite being relatively new, the phenomena has been identified as a critical component of any country's economic success (Balogun, 2023).

Concept of Entrepreneurship Education

Entrepreneurship education is define as the process of teaching individuals the skills, knowledge and mindset needed to launch and grow a successful business or venture. The term "entrepreneurship" refers to a variety of endeavors, such as the following:

- a. The capacity to invent and construct something from nothing;
- b. The capacity to combine a clear vision with the attention and tenacity needed to launch a business.
- c. The ability to recognize an opportunity when others are unable to.
- d. The capacity to assemble an effective team that will support your own abilities and endeavors
- e. The capacity to gather, organize, and manage resources wisely The aptitude and willingness for innovation and creativity
- f. The readiness to take on risks, both financial and Personal
- g. The capacity to persevere through challenges and even overcome them, potentially even turning them to your advantage.

The Benefits of Entrepreneurship Education in Nigerian Higher Institutions

With the globe facing enormous issues that go far beyond the global economy, the study of entrepreneurial education has never been more crucial than it is now (King, 2023). The realization of how important the phenomena is to economic progress has also served as a catalyst for it. The following are a few significant advantages of entrepreneurship education at Nigerian higher education institutions:

1. **Enhancing Student Academic Performance:** As previously mentioned, entrepreneurship education encompasses more than just learning how to run a business; it also fosters innovative thinking and a positive sense of accountability and self-worth. This demonstrates how the phenomena keeps people dedicated to their profession, especially young people who, for whatever reason, have no interest in formal schooling. These people

include individuals who are talented or gifted, physically or financially disadvantaged. Through entrepreneurial education, which places an emphasis on other academic subjects like self-worth, such people are inspired and given the tools they need to strive toward their goals. With this kind of drive, students excel academically and complete their education. Charney and Libecap (2013) made the following argument: they noted that entrepreneurship is a significant educational innovation that encourages learning about learning.

2. **Improving Student Performance and School Quality:** Students' better performance boosts school quality as well as students' overall performance. This is based on the idea that students who choose to attend class as opposed to skipping class or dropping out might succeed through entrepreneurship. As they gained the ability to benefit themselves, they also had an effect on the schools' quality and rating.
3. **Aids the Realisation of Goals of Education:** The target of education across nations today is the programme of inclusive education. The place of entrepreneurship education in the realization of this programme cannot be over-emphasized. As established earlier, entrepreneurship education motivates students and sustains their interest, their individual problems and challenges notwithstanding. As a result, they develop great interest in school subjects and consequently benefit from education.
4. **Increasing Economic Competitiveness:** The development of sectors that can generate income and jobs has become a key indicator and pillar of any country's future economic progress, particularly in the wake of the global economic crisis. The only people who can start and maintain such industries are those with exceptional entrepreneurial skills. Therefore, it is impossible to overstate the advantages of entrepreneurship in this field. This is due to research demonstrating that, despite popular belief that entrepreneurs are born, this is not the case. According to Gottleib and Ross (2017), certain aspects of entrepreneurship may be taught and learned, and entrepreneurs are created, not born. Therefore, expanding training and educational options benefits those who aspire to be entrepreneurs.
5. **New Study Program:** Since entrepreneurship education offers a fresh curriculum for both teaching and research, it is also advantageous to humanity. Additionally, entrepreneurship education provides greater hands-on instruction in the development of skills pertinent to the demands of a changing world. This contrasts with traditional business studies, which, despite being well-attended, only emphasize big corporations over startups or small businesses (Oluwafunmilola, 2024). These factors have led to an increase in young people's demand for entrepreneurship education. Cooper, Bottomley, and Gordon (2014) wrote on this and claimed that students' unprecedented need for a business education that will

provide them with transferable skills has fueled the growth of programs in entrepreneurship education. This supports Porter's (2014) earlier conclusion that, whereas traditional business schools tend to overemphasize corporate and quantitative procedures at the expense of more creative talents, entrepreneurial education stresses imagination, innovation, and risk-taking in business

6. **Poverty Reduction and Economic Growth:** Through entrepreneurship, people can take advantage of chances to create wealth and establish a system of incentives that encourage, denounce, and penalize corruption in addition to rewarding hard effort. People, especially young people, are able to generate prospects for work and, as a result, cash by doing this. Income creation encourages saving and investing, as well as the formation of businesses and industries that serve as important drivers or indicators of economic expansion.

The Challenges of Entrepreneurship Education in Nigerian Higher Institutions

Even though entrepreneurship education has many advantages, it is still in its infancy in Nigeria. The following issues prevent entrepreneurial education from developing in Nigerian higher education institutions:

1. **Finances:** A significant amount of money is required for practical entrepreneurship education instruction. In Nigeria, financing for entrepreneurship education is lacking. Inadequate attempts are being made by the Nigerian government to advance entrepreneurial education (Charney & Libecap, 2013).
2. **Education and Manpower:** There is a dearth of qualified teachers to teach entrepreneurship. Students are not given the skills necessary for success in business by the curriculum (Oluwafunmilola, 2024).
3. **Inadequate Technology and Equipment:** Most Nigerians, especially recent graduates, cannot afford the expensive equipment. Given how closely technology and entrepreneurship are intertwined, this makes it harder for entrepreneurship to grow. As a result, it highlights the necessity of having accessible technology.
4. **Financial Pressure from Parents:** Some Nigerian parents frequently exert a lot of pressure on their children, favoring short-term financial gain over the long-term advantages of education. This makes it challenging for young people to dedicate the necessary time for entrepreneurship training. Nigeria also has a high percentage of underage laborers who lack entrepreneurial skills as a result of these pressures.
5. **Education:** Skilled labor is essential for entrepreneurship. Our educational system falls short in laying the groundwork required to produce such a workforce. There is currently a lack of a well-developed curriculum in our higher education institutions that prioritizes measures to boost accountability (Charney & Libecap, 2013)..
6. **Entrepreneurial Attitude:** Nigeria's abundant natural riches and affluence have significantly contributed to the complacency of the country's people and government. The

vast majority of Nigerians have idealistic beliefs and, in certain situations, live in wealth that is more imagined than real. Furthermore, there is little to no concern regarding entrepreneurship education because it is thought that there is a strong climate for entrepreneurs. Poor performance in business is caused by a lack of the necessary drive for an entrepreneur. The claim made by Akpa (2017) that the typical entrepreneur is tough and aggressive lends credence to this viewpoint.

7. **Data:** There has been a dearth of data for entrepreneurial education. The design of programs for entrepreneurial education is either nonexistent or very limited.
8. **Insufficient Infrastructure:** There are more issues preventing the advancement of entrepreneurial education as a result of inadequate infrastructure, which includes things like good roads, energy, information access, water supply, etc. Ideas and goods are tough to communicate with other locations. Entrepreneurship cannot reach its full potential without sales (King, 2023).
9. **Cultural Barriers:** A culture that values taking risks is necessary for entrepreneurship. Value creation from information is impossible without a risk-taking mindset. Given Nigeria's unique cultural heritage, which frequently acts as a barrier to investment, it is imperative that the country's risk-taking culture be appropriately addressed (King, 2023).

Technological gap

The term "technological gap" describes the discrepancy between the knowledge and abilities of entrepreneurship instructors in Nigeria and the needs of students and industry in terms of technology in the classroom. According to King (2023) among the particular technology shortcomings are:

1. Teachers' low level of digital literacy
2. Outdated curricula and instructional strategies
3. Insufficient resources and infrastructure for technology
4. Limited access to technology for students, especially in rural areas; lack of incorporation of technology in entrepreneurship education
5. Inadequate training and assistance for teachers to use technology in an efficient manner
6. Inadequate use of digital resources and platforms for instruction less attention paid to cutting-edge technologies like data analytics, blockchain, and artificial intelligence.
7. Online business skills and digital entrepreneurship are not given enough attention absence of cooperation in entrepreneurship education between industry and technical professionals.

Addressing these technological gaps can enhance the quality and relevance of entrepreneurship education in Nigerian higher institutions, preparing students for success in today's digital economy.

Strategies to Promote Entrepreneurship Education in Nigerian Higher Institutions

To encourage entrepreneurial education in Nigerian higher education institutions, the following strategies can be used (Balogun, 2023):

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1. **Include entrepreneurship in the curriculum of the schools:** To foster an entrepreneurial mindset at a young age, include entrepreneurship education into the curricula of elementary, secondary, and university education (King, 2023).
2. **Entrepreneurship clubs and organization:** Establish groups and organizations focused on entrepreneurship in schools and communities to give business owners a place to connect, exchange ideas, and gain knowledge from one another.
3. **Workshops and training programs:** To give students real-world experience and expertise, regularly schedule workshops, seminars, and training programs.
4. **Mentorship program:** Assist young business owners by matching them with seasoned business owners and mentors who may offer advice and assistance.
5. **Program for incubation and acceleration:** Create a program for incubation and acceleration to offer resources, capital, and assistance to new and early-stage enterprises.
6. **Entrepreneurship competitions:** To promote creativity and entrepreneurship among students, set up contests and pitch sessions.
7. **Collaboration with industry experts:** Working together with industry professionals: asks successful businesspeople and industry experts to share their knowledge and offer insights into the road of becoming an entrepreneur.
8. **Access to funding and resources:** Grants, capital, and resources should be made available to entrepreneurs in order to help them launch and expand their enterprises (Suleiman, 2016).
9. **Entrepreneurship education:** Provide educators with entrepreneurship education training to make sure they are prepared to guide and instruct pupils in an efficient manner.
10. **Partnership and cooperation:** to advance entrepreneurship education and assist entrepreneurs, encourage cooperation between educational institutions, governmental bodies, and private groups.
11. **Digital resources and online platforms:** make use of these to give a larger audience access to entrepreneurial materials, education, and assistance.
12. **Success stories and role models:** To encourage and inspire others to pursue entrepreneurship, showcase and honor accomplished businesspeople and role models (Suleiman, 2016).

CONCLUSION

Based on the review, it therefore conclude that being an entrepreneur involves more than just intelligence. It is the capacity of an individual to work with others and take initiative when presented with fresh opportunities. It involves having essential abilities and skills, being creative, and combining and applying all of these with an entrepreneurial competence.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made:

1. The government should put in place mechanisms to foster entrepreneurial education in Nigerian higher education institutions.
2. Entrepreneurial education must extend beyond typical classroom instruction. This suggests that students should be included in experiential training. This could be accomplished by placing students in internships in industries and training seasoned entrepreneurs. These seasoned entrepreneurs will supplement the efforts of the instructors by serving as mentors and role models.
3. Opportunities for students to generate money are necessary in order to help them launch and grow their businesses in ways that will matter to them. This can be done by giving students grants upon graduation or by offering bursaries and other forms of in-school help that allow them to save money before they leave school.
4. Financial organizations, such as commercial banks, ought to be required by law to create and provide more loans that are age-appropriate. These loans would have lengthy repayment terms and cheap interest rates.
5. Periodically, students should be exposed to instruction in technology, particularly in relation to recent findings. This helps companies stay up to date with technology advancements and keeps their firm from becoming drab.
6. It is important to make an attempt to instill in kids the value of taking calculated risks and being patient when building wealth. This fosters a constructive shift in an entrepreneurial mindset. As a result, they would form the habit of succeeding through failure, which is the only long-term strategy for financial gain.
7. Openness and connections to other nations' systems should also be present. This promotes knowledge and idea sharing by providing access to research projects.
8. Both openness in the handling of innovations and measures for protecting intellectual property should be in place. Any fresh finding with strong.

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