

ENHANCING ENTREPRENEURSHIP FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS



O. F. Babatunde

Department of Business Administration,
Bamidele Olumilua University of Education Science and Technology Ikere, Ekiti State, Nigeria
Email: babatunde.olayinka@bouesti.edu.ng



W. A. Ogunleye

Department of Business Education,
Bamidele Olumilua University of Education Science and Technology Ikere, Ekiti State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Entrepreneurs are not born; rather, they are made through the experiences of their lives. Through entrepreneurship, people can acquire the knowledge and skills needed to start and grow a new business. This paper examined the various ways of enhancing entrepreneurship towards ensuring national development in Nigeria. The paper posited that enhancing entrepreneurship equips the students with the skills with which to be self-reliant and become job creators. Data for the study was sourced from secondary sources, such as journals, textbooks, and newspapers. The objectives of entrepreneurship education were discussed. Problems students encounter after acquiring an entrepreneurship certificate for national development in Nigeria and challenges related to teaching entrepreneurship for national development were also discussed. It was also suggested, among other things, that the government and other education stakeholders should make sure that educational programmes at all levels of education are made relevant to provide the youths and graduates with needed entrepreneurial skills.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, Strategy, National Development, Tertiary Institutions.

1. INTRODUCTION

The issue of unemployment has become a severe socio-economic problem in Nigeria, and the education system kept producing a surplus of graduates, yet they had an inability to contribute to the nation's economic growth as self-employed individuals. This situation led to the introduction of entrepreneurship programmes in tertiary institutions. The introduction of entrepreneurship programmes in tertiary institutions has been advocated as a means of economic empowerment and job creation in specific areas. What makes any educational program special is that it equips graduates with the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes to effectively contribute to their country's economic development.

One of the reasons for the introduction of entrepreneurship in Nigerian tertiary institutions is the development of a breed of achievers, innovators and entrepreneurs who will provide the leadership in the development of the Nigerian economy and shoulder the responsibility of transforming the mindset of Nigerian youths through teaching, training and consultancy for the development of a

national culture of enterprise and productivity (Handbook cited by Fayigbe & Ogunleye, 2021). Also, Adewumi and Cele (2023) believed that exposure to entrepreneurship will enhance students' confidence and willingness to pursue self-employment. Entrepreneurship is meant to teach students that they can be self-reliant after leaving school rather than searching for non-existing jobs. Offo (2010) asserted that reform deliberately desired to provide career information to enable the students relate interest needs and abilities to occupational opportunity with the aim of breaking the unemployment jinx and achieve self-sufficiency by individuals. Akpomi (2009) opined that Entrepreneurship instills in the learners, the ability to coordinate, make decisions, bear risks, being able to manage and become an innovator, organizer, initiator among others. It is axiomatic to posit that entrepreneurship is a major contributing factor to economic growth and development in any country and is capable of creating more jobs in the country and redirecting the focus of the unemployed graduates for sustainability of the economy. Ojule, and Oliobi, (2024) affirmed that Entrepreneurial in tertiary institutions focuses on developing a way of thinking, attitude, and mindset that frees an individual from being a burden to the society. It does not equate to coming up with ideas or making money. It provides students with the crossfunctional skills necessary to boost their employability rate in response to the pressing issue of unemployment that institutional managers need to address quickly (Ojule, & Oliobi, 2024). All these are assumed to be achieved in Nigeria through tertiary education.

The goals of tertiary education are to: contribute to national development through advanced manpower training; offer accessible and affordable quality educational opportunities in both formal and informal settings to meet the needs and interests of all Nigerians; deliver high-quality career training and lifelong learning programs that equip students with the knowledge and skills necessary for self-sufficiency and employment; mitigate skill shortages by producing skilled labour aligned with labour market demands; foster scholarship, entrepreneurship, and community service; strengthen national unity; and enhance national and international understanding and interaction (FRN, 2013). In views of Ogunode, Ukozor, and Ayoko (2023), the goals of tertiary education encompass the cultivation of human resources, the promotion of national cohesion, the advancement of technological progress, the encouragement of both national unity and international peace, the enhancement of production via research, the provision of post-secondary education, and the preparation of students with quality knowledge and dependable skills for autonomous living and the world of work.

Goals and Objectives of Teaching Entrepreneurship in Tertiary Institution

The overall objective of teaching Entrepreneurship is to continuously foster entrepreneurship culture amongst students and faculty with a view to, not only educating them but to also, supporting graduates of the system towards establishing and also maintaining sustainable business ventures. Chigbuson (2011) gave the following as the goals of teaching Entrepreneurship:

- To foster entrepreneurial mindsets, skills and behaviours among the recipients;
- To empower students with the competencies and skills necessary to prepare them to respond to their life needs, including running their own business, so that they become productive citizens;
- To develop innovation in youths and develop their skills to identify, create, initiate and successfully manage personal, community, business and work opportunities:

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- To increase the awareness and understanding of the process involved in initiating and managing a new venture as well as to enhance the public's perception of learners of small business ownership as serious career option; and
 - To identify and stimulate entrepreneurial drive, talent and skills to undo the risk-averse bias of several analytical techniques and to devise attitudes towards change.

Challenges Facing Entrepreneurship Development Towards National Development

Despite the laudable goals and objectives of teaching entrepreneurship in tertiary institutions in Nigeria, yet, Oriazowanlan, and Uko-Aviomoh, (2024) revealed that most of the graduates are still unemployed although they claimed to have acquired appropriate entrepreneurial skills from the school training experiences. The situation could be traced to various challenges render this initiative ineffective in addressing national development (Adekanmbi & Ogunleye, 2019). The study of Niyi and Musa (2024) revealed that inadequate funding, a shortage of lecturers, insufficient infrastructure facilities, corruption, an overemphasis on theoretical delivery, a lack of research support and linkages, and minimal support from private institutions and international organisations are problems hindering the development of entrepreneurial education programs in Nigeria's tertiary institutions. Similarly, Adekanmbi, and Ogunleye (2019) believed that inadequate working capital, absence of infrastructural facilities, lack of adequate security, lack of adequate training and low standard of education, multiplicity of taxation, high inflation, incessant cases of kidnapping, rampant political and bureaucratic corruption as challenges confronting entrepreneurship development in Nigeria.

Furthermore, Ojeifo (2013) identified several challenges, including rampant political and bureaucratic corruption and a lack of social consensus on important macroeconomic policy issues. Poor access to vocational and skills development training for rural and urban youths involved in the informal economy, and data for entrepreneurship education has been lacking, as there is little or limited programme design for entrepreneurship in the institutions. Also, Ekanem and Dimkpa, (2023) mentioned that the challenges include poor curriculum implementation across tertiary institutions, the teaching strategies, absence of infrastructure, low standard of education, insecurity, lack of political, insufficient funds, lack of proper planning, insufficient qualified manpower, and faulty foundation. Unachukwu (2009) also states various challenges of Entrepreneurship Education in Nigeria, these include finance, inadequate equipment and technology, economic pressure from parents, education, entrepreneurial attitude, inadequate infrastructural facilities, and cultural barriers.

Problems Students Encounter after Acquiring an Entrepreneurship Certificate for National Development in Nigeria

Nigeria has a lot of students who obtain entrepreneurship certificates, but they still face a lot of challenges that restrain their capacity to make any meaningful contribution to national development. Even after undergoing the necessary training, most of them do not have sufficient access to start-up capital, lack mentorship and connection to industry networks, and do not have practical settings to be able to use their skills. Moreover, poor economic climates, the bureaucracy and insufficient government assistance in most cases deter new entrepreneurs from converting ideas into a possible business. No wonder Balogun (2025) disclosed that despite the incorporation of entrepreneurship programmes into tertiary institution curricula, graduate unemployment rates

persist in escalating in Nigeria. Osei cited by Balogun (2025) observed that young Africans, including Nigerians, continue to face economic struggles such as inflation, job insecurity, and limited access to financial resources, making self-employment a less viable career option despite their entrepreneurial training. Similarly, Okonkwo in Balogun (2025) found that systemic barriers, including difficulties in accessing start-up capital and regulatory constraints, prevent many graduates from successfully transitioning into entrepreneurship. Eze cited in the study of Balogun (2025) mentioned that family pressure and societal norms often discourage students from pursuing self-employment, even when they have received entrepreneurial education. Akinwale quoted by Balogun (2025) opined that despite acquiring entrepreneurial knowledge, many students struggle to secure start-up capital due to stringent loan conditions, lack of financial literacy, and limited access to investor networks. This dilemma has led to a situation where the potential of certified student entrepreneurs to innovate, generate employment, and contribute to the economic development of Nigeria has not been exploited to the fullest extent, and, therefore, there is a gap between the teaching/training of entrepreneurship and the real results of national development.

Entrepreneurship Education: A strategy for National Development

The Nigerian government appears to have awakened to the realisation that the nation must get out of the poverty trap, infrastructural decay, corruption, and other forms of social vice. The rationale is that, after sixty-five years of independence, Nigeria has still not achieved its optimum level of development. According to Kolawole and Omolayo (2006), most people have been unable to convert their business ideals into realities and develop new business ventures due to their inability to access information and skills necessary to attain their targets. The university curriculum was designed in the past to prepare graduates for white-collar positions. This issue highlights the reason why millions of Nigerian youths and several university graduates are wandering around the streets of the major cities and towns seeking white-collar jobs. Nigerian universities must be structured to promote economic growth through a planned program aimed at creating entrepreneurial graduates.

High schools in most countries have entrepreneurship education in lifelong trades, and most of them have courses that allow students to fulfil their general academic needs as they learn a trade. Nonetheless, due to the recent problems in the world economy, a lot of schools have shifted their focus to computers, information technology, and other associated training. In conjunction with willing industries, public schools actively collaborate in setting curriculum and programs to respond to their demand requirements in terms of skills that are not available in Nigeria (Nwangwu, 2007). The failure to enhance entrepreneurship programs is costing the country the input that their graduates would bring to the economy; thus, it is not only socially harmful to ignore this vital field but also to frown upon the graduates. To work well, the society requires qualified mechanics and truck drivers, carpenters, plumbers, electricians, electronics and computer operators, database web experts and network technicians, bookkeepers and clerks, medical technicians and nursing assistants, etc. These skills are currently scarce in Nigeria.

The half-baked roadside mechanics in the society tend to create more dangers to the vehicles when offering their services, and due to inadequate training of some of the commercial drivers on the road and nurses' assistants in the hospitals, they have sent many people to their early graves. Ignoring the need to improve entrepreneurship education is an insult to society. The vocational and technical institutions in Nigeria produce graduates who are highly skilled in entrepreneurship,

but the society does not appear to urge the youth to assume this position. Sadly enough, the decision-makers in society believe that graduates of technical vocational schools are inferior to university graduates; therefore, productive strategies are necessary to enhance entrepreneurial education in Nigeria.

Moreover, no nation can advance technologically, industrially, and economically without establishing a robust public-private partnership program focused on generating prosperity, alleviating poverty, and creating necessary skills. These skills are managerial, comparative, communication, and technical and human, as well as special skills to cope with future challenges. As entrepreneurship is always required in sustainable transformation and development of any country, entrepreneurship is therefore learning and training in translation of dreams and ideas to successful ventures and in identification, establishment and exploitation of non-existent saving and self-fulfillment, prevention of drift between rural and urban regions, elimination of poverty, alleviation and self-fulfilment, eradication of unemployment, technological growth, more jobs per unit of invested capital and per unit of energy consumed, mobilisation of resources that would have otherwise stayed in the hands of the people and putting them to productive use and in that way encouraging creation of managerial, human.

The role of entrepreneurship in national development is felt in most countries of the world, and mostly the Asian continent, including Malaysia, Indonesia, Pakistan and India, reveals the fact that entrepreneurship plays a great role in the development of the country. This is a convincing factor in Nigeria, where the poverty is on the high side. To a large extent, the industrialisation strategy can be a means of inducing entrepreneurship development. Society is not a fixed entity, and it continues to evolve. Previously, graduates in Nigeria had the issue of deciding on the different opportunities that were available to them. Possession of a good certificate was then equivalent to securing a very desirable white-collar job, but currently, the situation has changed so much with a high number of unemployed and employable youths in Nigeria, which may be attributed to the government investing in the wrong kind of education. Although Nigeria has been an independent state since the year 1960, it is one of the countries that have the highest percentage of unemployed young people in the world (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 2006). The economy of Nigerians is crawling due to the failure of the education system to tackle the human capital development problem over the years. That is, Nigeria is still unfamiliar with the league of countries which have implemented entrepreneurship education to propel their economies and to eliminate mass poverty, as has been the case in other developing countries, including the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Scandinavian nations and even some African countries, including Egypt and Tunisia, which have been implementing entrepreneurship education in their school curricula and which all have produced specific and separate national entrepreneurship education strategic documents, as their programmes are dovetailed into their national development strategies (Chukwuma, 2006).

Why Enhancing Entrepreneurship for National Development?

The benefits of enhancing entrepreneurship cannot be overemphasized, according to Paul (2005), they include, but not limited to: inspiring and motivating students to achieve while in school and use their knowledge in a real world setting; improving school performance and helping to achieve No Child Left Behind (NCLB) goals and the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) measures; and building the pipeline that creates productive and thoughtful citizens who contribute to local, states

and national competitiveness.

In order to achieve viable improvement of the entrepreneurship programme that will enable national development in the nation of Nigeria, the following should be embarked upon, according to Abeng and Obinnaya (2012):

- Equipping youths and students with necessary skills, aptitudes and competencies in Vocational and Technical education, taught through skill-oriented courses by the master of the art and practically based.
- Entrepreneurial studies should be emphasized at all levels of education, be it secondary or tertiary as it has been seen as an indisputable means of reducing youth unemployment since it is skilled-oriented and employment motivated. Secondary school graduates that are unable to continue to tertiary institutions can be gainfully employed and be self-reliant.
- The government should furnish higher institutions with the needed basic and academic amenities to facilitate teaching and learning of entrepreneurship which cannot be taught theoretically but practically based. Government should furnish institutions with necessary and adequate facilities, to enhance its effective teaching and learning of entrepreneurship.
- The vice chancellors, the rector, and the provosts, who are responsible for the affairs of the universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education, respectively, must ensure that the instructors and lecturers allocated to teach entrepreneurship courses are professionals and masters of the art in the subject. They are supposed to be seasoned businessmen who have put into practice whatever is being instructed. Nevertheless, in the event of challenges in acquiring experts, non-specialist lecturers who have the appropriate background in the academic field are to be employed and dispatched to receive faster training both within and outside the country. Full- or part-time would also be an option for engaging experts with practical experience within the industry in entrepreneurship.
- To make the entrepreneurship curriculum rich, the tertiary institutions providing entrepreneurship ought to have periodical field trips, industrial visits to the developed countries, mentorship programmes, exhibitions/fairs, coaching/grooming, seminars/conferences/workshops and exchange programmes in a bid to motivate the undergraduate students and learners in acquiring the entrepreneurial characteristics. Through such activities, the students would not only be empowered with the corresponding skills required, but they will also acquire new knowledge with other nations that will assist in enhancing the learning of the entrepreneurship education.
- There is need for periodic review and assessment of the contents of the entrepreneurship education curricula: The school curriculum should be pragmatic, that is, inculcate in the undergraduate students practical enterprise building skills, which should be turned into viable business opportunities during and after graduations, thereby reducing youth unemployment in Nigeria. Educational stakeholders, especially curriculum planners should periodically review and assess the content of entrepreneurship education curriculum, to reflect the current educational and societal needs
- The federal governments should evolve a national culture of entrepreneurship by supporting, training and rewarding self-reliant graduates across the tertiary levels in Nigeria who have excelled in entrepreneurial programme as this approach would help foster among students offering entrepreneurship, innovation, invention and creativity. The government should set aside modalities to help students that have excelled in their entrepreneurial programme in

tertiary institutions, this will be a source of motivation to them and upcoming potential entrepreneurs.

- The government should direct the Education Trust Fund (ETF), Petroleum Development Trust Fund (PTDF) and Federal Ministry of Education (FME) into allocating a significant part of their budget towards public universities/polytechnics and colleges of education that teach entrepreneurship programmes: such funds are meant for research and development purpose and Entrepreneurship education has been observed to be one of the key tools to a country's development, thus the government should earmark substantial portion of that budget for this purpose. The funding should be to train, research, and develop infrastructures and programmes on entrepreneurship education for academic and administrative staff members in charge of entrepreneurship education in the three levels of tertiary institutions.
- The various microfinance banks must remain proactive by providing the necessary financial and advisory services to both graduates and non-graduates participating in entrepreneurship training, especially those with viable business plans and a strong desire to launch innovative small-scale businesses. The nation will be more developed with the nation.

Conclusion and Suggestions

Evidently, Nigeria is lagging behind in preparing her workforce for the challenges of the rapidly changing global economy. It is concluded that an improved and developed global economy depends on a strong entrepreneurship curriculum implementation and an enabling business environment for graduates to thrive. Therefore, the following suggestions are meant to help Nigeria realise the objectives of entrepreneurship in its national development.

- Tertiary institutions' curriculum should be enriched to incorporate more technical training, which will give new graduates some work skills and experiences.
- The school-based enterprises should be provided in which the students can identify the potential business, plan, create and operate small businesses using the school as mini-incubators.
- Funds should be released as incentives for graduates, which could motivate them to establish their businesses after school.
- Government and other education stakeholders ought to ensure that educational programmes at all levels of education are relevant to equip the youths and graduates with required entrepreneurial skills.
- The Nigerian government should pay nice attention to the development of entrepreneurship in the country by providing people with a conducive economic environment so that they could be motivated to engage in business.
- The Nigerian government should strengthen entrepreneurship support systems within tertiary institutions to position them as key drivers of national development and catalysts for a more diversified and resilient economy.

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