# Framework for Entrepreneurship Education in Nigerian Higher Institutions of Learning

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#### **ABSTRACT**

It seems fair to argue that opinions from Nigeria's government and its policy makers, and the management of various Nigerian higher institutions of learning concerning the mandatory introduction of entrepreneurship education in all disciplines so far have lacked a common framework. This lack of framework is responsible for the unending debates as to what way should the old curriculum be change to integrate entrepreneurship education? What should constitute the scheme of the entrepreneurship course if a change in curriculum is indeed needed? Whose responsibility the entrepreneurship course teaching should be? And many questions regarding the integration of entrepreneurial theoretical and vocational education still remain unanswered. Hence, this study seeks to give a clue to the aforementioned unending debates and unanswered questions; and advance the need for entrepreneurial education in Nigerian higher institutions of learning by reviewing and synthesizing available entrepreneurship education literature. The paper concludes that entrepreneurship education initiative is ideal for Nigeria, be a country that have been in economic stagnation since early 1980s; and that the right and competent teaching staff of various higher institutions that are knowledgeable in entrepreneurship studies should be saddled with the entrepreneurship theoretical teaching responsibility and the vocational aspect should be the responsibility of staff in those disciplines that have bearing to the vocational entrepreneurship education activities structured.

#### INTRODUCTION

Many governments around the world that are plague into unemployment and poverty, in a bid to confront these challenges are looking into ways of alleviating unemployment, reducing poverty and generate rapid economic growth and they have come to realize that entrepreneurship education is the right step in the right direction in getting more people to become

entrepreneurs and start their own business. Entrepreneurship is gaining new recognition as an engine for economic growth (Omoankhanlen & Ighalo 2009:291). The economic growth of countries will hinge on the ability to create new jobs through entrepreneurship. Although, the factor contributing to economic development are labour, technology, natural resources, capital and entrepreneurship, the key factor in this development process is the entrepreneurs (Omoankhanlen & Ighalo 2009:288).

All over the globe, adequate attention is been given to entrepreneurship education, because entrepreneurship has been emphasized in many countries as a way of boosting economic growth and job creation. Entrepreneurship education that affords a person the opportunity to develop entrepreneurial potential forms a critical component of entrepreneurship development. If appropriately packaged therefore, entrepreneurship education has the potential to promote economic development through training for employability, where learners acquire skills, knowledge and values, to enable them to create employment for themselves and other (Mafela 2009:1). This is particularly relevant in Nigeria context where there have been incessant rising levels of graduate unemployment. The growing graduates' unemployment rate and the various economic stagnation witnessed over the years, are responsible for the growing interest of entrepreneurship education. Since 2008, Nigeria federal government is interested in introducing entrepreneurship educations in all discipline/courses in all institutions of higher learning; with the intention that the programme will prepare undergraduates to start their own business, rather than depending on payoff of making a meager income or work for gainful employment in a productive way (i.e. twenty-first century organization are increasingly recognizing the value of having individuals with entrepreneurial profiles on their staff). In Nigeria, the educational system functioning curriculum has not contributed to the development of entrepreneurial skills or competencies that encourage entrepreneurial spirit. Hence, graduates lack entrepreneurial mentality, given that the education systems they receive as well as social expectations are oriented towards employment and promotion. Nevertheless, since 2008 this tendency has begun to change from government perspective and this necessitates the clamoring for higher institutions of learning curriculum review to integrate entrepreneurial education to all disciplines/courses.

The concept of entrepreneurship has evolved over more than two centuries (Omoankhanlen & Ighalo 2009:291), Richard Cantillion – a French economist of Irish descent in 1775 is credited with giving the concept of entrepreneurship a central role in business world. But as a field of study, entrepreneurship education started in 1945 – entrepreneurial education from a start of one college with one course in 1945 in United States of America. It was the Harvard Business School that was the first higher institution of learning to introduce an entrepreneurship course in 1945 in United States of America, apparently in response to students who were returning from World War II military service to an economy that was in transition due to the collapse of the weapons industries. The course took hold and grew in

popularity. However, the subject of entrepreneurship was not generally fashionable in the decades that followed (i.e. 1950s and 1960s). This, in part, is reflected in the measure of the entrepreneurial activity in the United States economy during this time (Gartner and Shane 1995). But by 1970, the number of business schools in United States of America offering courses in entrepreneurship had begun to change dramatically. Suddenly, there were 16 universities with such courses, of which 12 had started in the preceding years. From base of 16 universities and colleges offering entrepreneurship courses in 1970, the number of schools offering entrepreneurship courses had grown to over 400 by 1995 (Vesper & Gartner 1996), over 800 colleges and universities with entrepreneurship classes, programmes and initiatives in 1997 (Fiet 1997). As the number of schools offering entrepreneurship courses grew, so did the number of schools offering more than one course in entrepreneurship (Vesper & Gartner 1997:407).

Entrepreneurship education that started as a humble beginning in United States of America in 1945 has been embraced by many countries of the world with little modification, in terms of structuring it according to each country's unique cultural context. In Nigeria, entrepreneurship education course were offered in higher institutions of learning and clustered in business courses. It implies that entrepreneurial education is not new and strange to Business Administration/Management disciplines in Nigeria higher institution of learning. But today, the emphasis is on making entrepreneurship education a higher institution wide course in Nigeria and this new trend started in 2008 – when the Nigeria federal government openly declared that its policy thrusts is the mandatory introduction of entrepreneurship education in all institutions of higher learning and it is seen by her as a *sine qua non* for the actualization of the objective of the vision 20 – 2020.

## **Background to the Problem**

Nigeria federal government in a National Sensitization Workshop on Entrepreneurship Development in Nigerian Universities organized by the National Universities Commission (NUC), in Collaboration with the National Board for Technology Incubation (NBTI) from 21<sup>st</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2008 echoed the need to re-orientate and modify education system with the mandatory introduction of entrepreneurship education in all institutions of higher learning. This reflect worldwide acknowledgement that the education system should be re-oriented in order to foster entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurial skills are teachable and entrepreneurship education in institutions of higher learning is concern about teaching undergraduates to become entrepreneurs, as one way of discouraging students from total reliance on gainful employment that often make youth dwell in the syndrome of unemployed and unemployable scenario.

It is observed that thousands of youth of higher institutions enter the labour market each year in Nigeria without the benefit of acquiring entrepreneurship knowledge and skills that serve as alternative to labour market rush. This

federal government initiatives has come as a sobering reality to those who are euphoric about using entrepreneurship education in curbing youth unemployment problem in Nigeria; since institutions of higher learning previous curriculum have tended to prepare students not for entrepreneurship but for employment – training for the world of work only as employee. That is, the preparation of students for gainful employment but not for self employment as well. Hence, from the onset, undergraduate's mindset is to become employee and not employer – working for somebody i.e. either government or entrepreneurs, which is different from teaching students to become employers of labour/entrepreneurs.

Now that the global trend of frequent economic stagnation has worsen unemployment situation – a situation where graduates get their degrees but have unfavourable chance of getting a job and that the government recognized the need to alleviate unemployment, reduce poverty and generate rapid economic growth through the mandatory introduction of entrepreneurship education in institutions of higher learning, there is need to ensure that entrepreneurship education curriculum is properly structure in terms of theoretical and vocational aspect; ensure that the people teaching the entrepreneurial education are the right, competent and knowledgeable people in the entrepreneurship field; and to ensure that all institutions of higher learning are teaching entrepreneurship education.

## The Objectives of the Study

The study was undertaken to provide a framework for entrepreneurship education in Nigerian higher institutions of learning. Specifically, the study sought to achieve the following objectives:

- 1. To establish that entrepreneurial education requires both theoretical and vocational framework.
- 2. To stretch out where entrepreneurial education theoretical and vocational teaching responsibility are rooted.
- 3. To enlighten Nigeria government, public and policy makers about the importance of teaching entrepreneurial education in all higher institutions of learning.

#### Literature Review

Many academic institutions now believe that the training of entrepreneurs can help in revitalizing both the local and national economy by creating jobs. This growing interest is a reflection of the need to offer entrepreneurship course in all disciplines in Nigeria higher institutions of learning. The rationale is that education is one of the many ways by which the entrepreneurial spirit can be fostered, and there is increased consensus that it is important to incorporate entrepreneurship course to higher institutions of learning programmes.

Entrepreneurship is now widely accepted as a field of study as it provides students with motivation knowledge and skills, which are essential for launching a successful venture company (Cho 1998). Indeed, such is the spread in popularity of entrepreneurship that some commentators believe it will be the business discipline of twenty-first century across the globe. However, the extent of entrepreneurship education and training in each country is different depending on its unique cultural context and it has been noted that the prevailing culture within a country can impact upon the level of acceptance of entrepreneurship education (Van Barneveld 2002). Therefore, while entrepreneurship programmes across different countries may have a common focus in terms of new business creation and the development of business plan (Hisrich & Peters 2002), or entrepreneurship as a discovery process (Fiet, 1997); there may be differences in emphasis depending upon the particular needs of participants, the country or the resources available (Aman, 1996).

## Why Teaching Entrepreneurship at Higher Institution of Learning?

Since early 1980s, Nigeria has a history of economic stagnation that led to decline job opportunities; and teaching of entrepreneurship course in all disciplines in higher institution of learning will assist in curbing high rate of unemployment. Entrepreneurship education is recognized as a key driver in encouraging business start up potential among graduates (Wilson, Llewellyn & Robertson 2003:9, cited by Mafela 2009:3). Although entrepreneurial competency cannot be attributed to any one single factor, education and training are necessary components for the development of entrepreneurship. This therefore means that deliberate measures need to be undertaken to provide education and training that are specifically geared towards development of entrepreneurship (Mafela 2009:3). However, some people believe that entrepreneurial capabilities are not inborn (i.e. entrepreneurship is a behavioural not a personality trait) but can be learned (i.e. attempts to stimulate entrepreneurial activities through formal training and education), and therefore assume that they may be enhanced or developed by a guided entrepreneurial education; while some also believes that entrepreneurship is inborn i.e. personality trait not behavioural. Some also believe that 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 experience take place. In all, whatever divide we support, entrepreneurs can be develop and exploit to the fullness with the help of entrepreneurship education.

Education is essential in order to expose students to business opportunities that exist in all disciplines of higher learning. Entrepreneurship education creates the ability and awareness for recognizing and audaciously exploiting business opportunities that exixt in every discipline. Entrepreneurship education is the ultimate key to tackling youth unemployment problem, since effective entrepreneurship education teaches more than just business skills—

it also increases self-awareness and self-confidence. Purposeful entrepreneurship education enables the individual to understand and study the real life situation of problem of unemployment and to develop an opportunity to seek avenue for self-employment and self-fulfillment, and creating confidence in the minds of younger generation.

On a general note, people often ask: what are the implicit purposes of entrepreneurship education? The purposes are: to legitimate entrepreneurship and develop an entrepreneurial culture with the purpose of fostering economic growth; to change attitude towards the entrepreneurship function, the entrepreneur, and the entrepreneurs image among students; acesss to the 'make a job' option; to develop and stimulate the entrepreneurial skills, producing in the mid and long term, a generation of new and better trained entrepreneur, well informed about when, where, with whom and how to start a new business; to prepare students for a dynamic labour market; to contribute to the development of intrapreneurs and; to produce knowledge by research in this field of study.

## Factors Responsible in the Emergence of the need for Entrepreneurship Education in Nigeria

In Nigeria higher institution of learning, prior to this time, it was only business courses that are engaged in some activity related to entrepreneurship in two areas: education 'about' entrepreneurship and 'for' entrepreneurship. But today, an important change is on-going in restructuring the old education curriculum that neglects entrepreneurship course outside business related disciplines to pave way for new education curriculum that will recognize entrepreneurship course for all disciplines in higher institutions.

Now it will be interesting to determine the variables involved in the emergence of the need for entrepreneurship education in Nigeria, in order to understand the ongoing changes. Among the most relevant factors, the growing incessant high rate of unemployment and the frequent economic downturn have increased the demand for entrepreneurship education. Secondly, the global trend of encouraging the creation of new ventures that began in 1980's has been present in Nigeria as well. Thirdly, increasingly recognition by reputable organizations on the value of having individuals with entrepreneurial profiles on their staff lists. Fourthly, the need to ensure that education system responds to national and social-economic imperatives. Lastly, the emergence of new economy and the traditional process of reproducing what developed nations and leading international higher institution do in terms of entrepreneurship; at the domestic level have probably been of great importance.

## **Entrepreneurship Education and the Entrepreneur**

It is a welcome development to infuse or consider the possibility of infusing entrepreneurship course into all higher institutions programmes, to ensures that all graduates understand entrepreneurial skills, business skills, basic

business principles, which they can apply to set up and operate enterprises that are linked to their own disciplines. According to previous studies, education is one of the critical factors that distinguish entrepreneurs from non-entrepreneurs (Lee, Chang & Lim 2005). Cho's (1998) study revealed that entrepreneurship education promotes the intention of venture creation because entrepreneurship related knowledge and skills simulate an individual's motivation to create a new venture. The school and the education system play a pivotal role in predicting and developing entrepreneurial traits and school's curriculum should focus on encouraging autonomy and independence, innovation and creativity as well as risk taking (Lee, Lim, Pathak, Chang, & Li 2006). The ability to predict entrepreneurial traits draws attention to the significant role of entrepreneurship training and development, including the mentorship and the grooming process (Ibraham & Ellis 2002). It is well-known fact that entrepreneurial skills and business skills training improves the likelihood of an entrepreneur's success and creates maximum economic impact. The benefits of entrepreneurial education includes: to develop personal qualities and attitudes as well as knowledge and skills; address all phases of starting a business - business startup process covers seven phases – aspiring to start a venture, finding an idea, identifying the opportunity within the idea, creating a plan (including a financial plan), preparing to start operations, starting the business, and growing the business; respond specifically to local needs.

## **Business School Entrepreneurial Education Track Record**

Studies indicate that students studying entrepreneurship have a higher likelihood of starting a business (Brown 1995; Vesper & Gartner 1996). Before now, business school integrated entrepreneurship in Master of Business Administration (MBA) and Master of Science (M.Sc) in Business Administration/Management programme, in an effort to boast increasing numbers of graduates starting successful new ventures. However, a key component in this programme over the years is the acceptance of students with poor experience. Experience has long been known to be an important factor in education for the success of new ventures (Chambers, Hart & Dennison 1988; Krueger & Brazeal 1994; Stuart & Abetti 1988). It would be difficult to argue that most academics believe that the purpose of education is to provide experience. Rather, most college instructors see the purpose of education as a means of preparing students to confront unknown business situations by presenting broadly-applicable theories and frameworks. To address the problem of gaining experience, current business school curriculum goes beyond textbooks entrepreneurship information by using case studies, field studies and traditional new venture business plans in trying to bring reality to the entrepreneurship education field. Case studies attempt to bring reality into the classroom by providing students with enough information about a company to diagnose and propose solutions to specific problem. The comprehensive field study enables students to observe

managerial processes in a going concern. Like the comprehensive field study, the traditional business plan examines the total enterprise – the business is largely a theoretical exercise, since it rarely contains verifiable financial or market information.

In Nigeria, since the 80s, finding job for graduates has been a mirage. This may explain the phenomena why Master of Business Administration (MBA) in Business Administration/Management department in universities were mushroom to provide entrepreneurship track MBA students, by moving in the same direction with other Schools of Business across the globe in piloting entrepreneurship education in higher degree programme. This entrepreneurship education also involved the undergraduate course in business. But for the higher degree and undergraduate programme in other disciplines, the students where not prepared in any way to embrace entrepreneurial skills and business skills, and tackle practical, daily business problems. However, the government is taking a giant step to bridge this gap.

## **Entrepreneurial Education: Theoretical and Vocational Framework**

Considering the objective that necessitated the proposal for the mandatory introduction of entrepreneurship education in higher institutions, the entrepreneurship education initiatives can only achieve its aim if structure in line with theoretical and vocational entrepreneurship education. Hence, the process of entrepreneurship education is suggested to consist of two perspectives: the theoretical and vocational entrepreneurship education. Entrepreneurship theoretical education is based on teaching entrepreneurial skills, aptitudes and values, while vocational focuses on the practicability of entrepreneurial knowledge based on learning experience. Therefore the teaching methods used in each of these areas are not the same.

## **Entrepreneurship Theoretical Education**

Generally, entrepreneurship education as a programme that prepares individuals to undertake the formation and/or operation of small scale enterprise (Akinola 2001), Entrepreneurship education is essential in order to expose students to business opportunities that exist in all disciplines of higher learning, since the opportunity to learn entrepreneurship will focus on attracting and developing students who will develop the culture of self-employment and self-fulfillment and abandon the long-term promise of self-improvement for the immediate payoff of making a meager income. Entrepreneurship education creates the ability and awareness for recognizing and audaciously exploiting business opportunities that exist in every discipline. Entrepreneurship is the process through which entrepreneurs create and grow enterprise – this process includes four critical elements: opportunity recognition, idea creation, venture creation and operation, and creative thinking (Omoankhanlen & Ighalo 2009:290).

Entrepreneurship theoretical education is the teaching that focuses on "business opportunity seeking mentality" or "way of thinking

entrepreneurial". Entrepreneurship theoretical education equipped students with the teaching of competence and skills for possible self-reliance and employment in entrepreneurship area. It also create the awareness for students involvement in entrepreneurial activities that will enable them to be aware of their vocational preference and attitudes towards certain business opportunities that exist in their discipline as they exhibits different abilities, interest, needs, values and attitudes. The aim of entrepreneurship theoretical education is to acquire entrepreneurial skill and educate thousands of youth (students) on how to start their own business related to their discipline either right from school or after graduation.

## **Vocational Entrepreneurship Education**

The vocational entrepreneurship education which is the practical component is seen as a key component of entrepreneurship education. In this case entrepreneurship education goes beyond the mere teaching of entrepreneurial skills and traditional business subjects, to include projects and experiential learning activities, with the overall objective of developing entrepreneurial competencies.

Entrepreneurial education of students goes beyond teaching the discipline but also the essence of entrepreneurship. Obviously, the unemployment and poverty problem in Nigeria forms the basis for advocacy for a broad-based entrepreneurship vocational education. Entrepreneurship vocational education is not completely the same with technical and vocational education (TVE). Entrepreneurship vocational education is multi-discipline, unlike technical and vocational education. Entrepreneurship vocational education is the acquisition of entrepreneurial practical skills and knowledge that is sufficient for a student to discover the business opportunities that exist in his/her discipline and exploit it with the aim of becoming self-reliance and self employed.

Technical and vocational education (TVE) involve general education and the study of technologies and related sciences, geared towards the idea of producing graduates that are sufficiently equipped to work in industries. business, government and also be self employed (Oviawe & Ehkovbiye 2009:69). Technical and vocational education (TVE) is a means of preparing individuals for particular occupations i.e. particularly skilled trades and semiprofessional careers. Technical activities constitutes jobs like carpentry, woodwork/furniture work, welding, baking, mending, tailoring/sewing and painting etc; while vocation activities constitutes jobs such as gardening, fishing, animal rearing, trade and craft which weaving, smiting, leather working, dyeing, soap making, osusu collection (traditional banking), food and wine selling, trading in all kinds of merchandise (both agricultural products and manufactured goods), activities in arts and domestic science etc.

#### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Entrepreneurship is gaining new recognition as an engine for economic growth and development. Entrepreneurial activities can thrive in Nigeria if infuse into higher institutions of learning curriculum in all disciplines. Since 2008, this process is on-going but there is a need for Nigeria's government and its policy makers, and the management of various Nigerian higher institutions of learning to jump-start the process of entrepreneurship education, since students from all disciplines will benefit from exposure to entrepreneurial thinking and analysis. Entrepreneurship education system is crucial to the inculcation of a spirit of entrepreneurship, and to the preparation of students not only for gainful employment, but for selfemployment as well (Mafela 2009:2). However, the need for entrepreneurship education in Nigeria higher institutions of learning is a welcome development but it is not solely for higher institutions of learning alone. Hence, it should be extended to junior secondary schools and senior secondary schools curriculum. Entrepreneurship education should be infused into subjects such as home economics and business studies at junior secondary schools and commerce at senior secondary schools. Also, career guidance and counseling should be offered as a compulsory subject at junior and senior secondary schools to develop career awareness and skills and attitudes of self-presentation.

Entrepreneurship education in higher institutions of learning should be purposeful – this can only be achieve when the right and competent teaching staff of various higher institutions that are knowledgeable in entrepreneurship studies are allow to saddled the teaching responsibility.

Finally, this study attempted to advance the need for entrepreneurship education in all disciplines in Nigeria's higher institutions of learning.

## Implications and Limitation of the study

This research has demonstrated once again the importance and impact of entrepreneurial activities on economy development, but for Nigeria's government and its policy makers, and the management of various Nigerian higher institutions of learning, there are multitudes of interesting questions to ask in entrepreneurship education and this study has already preemptive the answers to such questions.

The review and synthesis of literature suggest that entrepreneurial education is essential in solving problem of unemployment and poverty. Hence, failure to implement the idea of incorporating entrepreneurship education in higher institutions of learning will worsen the current situation of unemployment and poverty problem. If the teaching of entrepreneurship course is allow to be politicize in the on-going mandatory introduction of entrepreneurship education programmes in Nigeria's higher institutions of learning, by not allowing staff in business discipline to take the lead, students might face the

consequences of acquiring knowledge that is exactly the opposite of entrepreneurship, if those who are not suited to teach the course are given the responsibility.

The study suggest that future research should focus on way to compliment entrepreneurship education with funding, by doing so, government will be able to offer meaning guidance and assistant to students wishing to lunch out in entrepreneurial activities while in school.

The limitation of the study is based on the fact that the study findings were exclusively based on literature without field work and empirical testing. Hence, future research by entrepreneurship scholars that will utilize information in available literature and empirical testing is indeed needed and recommended.

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