

**PLATO AND THE TEACHING OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP STUDIES  
AS GENERAL STUDIES IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN NIGERIA:  
A PHILOSOPHICAL INVESTIGATION**

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**Abstract**

*Since the introduction of Entrepreneurial studies as compulsory general studies courses in tertiary institution by the Federal government, universities have developed curricular and started the teaching of Entrepreneurial studies. This paper seeks to critically analyze the teaching of the course vis a vis the aim of the introduction to see how they concur. Secondly to use Plato's model of education to stress the importance of the practical aspect of entrepreneurial studies so as to avoid the old syndrome of breeding certificate Laden, theory filled entrepreneurial studies. For Plato, education should be tailored to suit the learner specialization; that is a carpenter should be taught carpentry work and not just paper drawings. With the philosophical tool of critical analysis, we will question the teaching of the study in Universities and try to recommend solution drawing from Plato's Republic.*

**Introduction**

The second order function of philosophy and philosophers is to question the statuesque. Questioning through reason, questioning not necessarily to puncture but to give direction, to strengthen the path of any reality. So philosophy has done to disciplines like history, religion etc. same it wants to do to entrepreneurial studies in Universities General Studies. Such questions as what is, is it what ought to be? How do we translate ought to is? What actually is in the first place and what ought to be? Bridging this gap is the business of Philosophy. What constitutes the curriculum and teaching of entrepreneurial studies in Universities? What ought to be included? What principles can help bring about the right teaching of entrepreneurial studies in Nigerian Universities?

The worry is turning entrepreneurial studies, which is supposed to produce job providers into producing job seekers. The second worry is the growing global melt down and the increasing rate of unemployment of youths and graduates in the world and Nigeria in particular. Nigeria unemployment rate was recorded at 12.1 percent in March quarter of 2016, up from 10.4 percent in the fourth quarter of 2015, reaching the highest since December of 2009. The number of unemployed persons rose by 18 percent to 9.485 million, employment grew a meager 0.12 percent to 69 million and labour force went up 2 percent to 78.4 million. Meanwhile, youth unemployment increased to 21.5 percent from 19 percent. Unemployment Rate in Nigeria averaged 9.04 percent from 2006 until 2016, reaching an all time high of 19.70 percent in the fourth quarter of 2009 and a record low of 5.10 percent in the fourth quarter of 2010. Unemployment Rate in Nigeria is reported by the National Bureau of Statistics, Nigeria.<sup>1</sup>

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Actual	Previous	Highest	Lowest	Dates	Unit	Frequency
12.10	10.40	19.70	5.10	2006 - 2016	percent	Quarterly

In Nigeria, the unemployment rate measures the number of people actively looking for a job as a percentage of the labour force. This page provides the latest reported value for - Nigeria Unemployment Rate - plus previous releases, historical high and low, short-term forecast and long-term prediction, economic calendar, survey consensus and news. Nigeria Unemployment Rate - actual data, historical chart and calendar of release was last updated on June of 2016.

Calendar	GMT	Reference	Actual	Previous	Consensus	Forecast
2016-03-21	10:30 AM	Q4	10.4%	9.9%		10%
2016-05-20	03:30 PM	Q1	12.1%	10.4%		10.9%
2016-08-22	10:00 AM	Q2				13%
2016-11-20	10:00 AM	Q3				13.5%

Nigeria Labour	Last	Previous	Highest	Lowest	Unit	
Unemployment Rate	12.10	10.40	19.70	5.10	percent	[+]
Population	178.52	173.60	178.52	45.15	Million	[+]
Unemployed Persons	9485.30	8036.00	9485.30	4672.00	Thousand	[+]
Youth Unemployment Rate	21.50	19.00	21.50	11.70	percent	[+]
Employed Persons	69001.30	68922.00	69001.30	67903.00	Thousand	[+]

Employment Change	475180.00	141368.00	475180.00	141368.00	Jobs	[+]
Employment Rate	89.60	90.10	93.60	89.60	percent	[+]

Just this year, Skye-skye Bank Plc sent 175 of its employees into the labour market- Ecobank sacked more than 1040 employees- Diamond Bank fired 200 of its workers. The low oil prices, uncertainty in foreign exchange and the dwindling economy have taken its toll on the banking sector. Oil price has been at 30 dollars per barrel for many months now and only started coming up which has crippled many economies including Nigerians. Dollars to Nigeria is 355 - 1 dollar, which has further devalued the Naira and sent many traders home. The reality on ground in Nigeria speaks hardship, poverty and lack. The future of our youths and undergraduates seems obscure dark and bleak. The oil price has continued on a free fall and analysts are already forecasting \$60 per barrel as average for 2015. The implication for a Nigerian economy which runs mainly on a single commodity is dire and we foresee the following as challenges:

1. **EXCHANGE RATE VOLATILITY:** 95% of foreign exchange earning is tied to oil and with shortened revenue in dollars terms, the Naira will be under continuous pressure. The monetary policy committee has already devalued the Naira, shifting the band from N155 to N168 to \$1. Despite devaluation, Nigeria will earn less revenue from oil and gas exports and imports of household items will be more expensive, with the burden passed on to Nigerians.
2. **SAVINGS STAGNATION:** with the excess crude account at \$4.11bn, declining oil prices means that Nigeria might not be able to add additional revenue due to pressure from states who also run high recurrent expenditure. It might also be difficult for FG to save funds in the sovereign wealth fund, considering the austerity measures of the times. Accretion to the external reserve is expected to slow with falling crude oil.
3. **DEBT SPIKING:** debt servicing will possibly rise, especially foreign debts and Nigeria will need more fund to cover budget deficit (difference between accrued revenue and expenditure). With stagnated excess crude account savings, raising debts is the glaring alternative. The balance of the special accounts (ecology, stabilization and natural resources accounts)- which the FG borrowed N224bn from to augment a deficit- is currently unknown. We doubt the legality of this and also if this will be enough to close the gap between shrinking revenue and expenditure.
4. **CAPITAL EXPENDITURE UNDER THREAT:** The haste to spend on recurrent items will remain, as they are fixed charges, unless drastic reforms such as downsizing personnel sharp cuts in overhead costs occur. Capital expenditure performance might be threatened by lower oil prices as government strives to keep its deficit within the limits of the fiscal responsibility act whilst ensuring it meets its day-to day obligations.

5. **EMPLOYMENT:** the public sector is still the largest employer of formal labor and with cut government expenditure due to falling oil, prices, and with cuts to number of new jobs will actually continue on a decline, following recent trends from 22,644 in Q3 2012 to 5,735 in Q3 2014(NBS Estimates 2014). The private sector will have to lead the way for employment opportunities in Nigeria.

*From opportunity reforms by Budget<sup>2</sup>*

Introduction of Entrepreneurial studies as a compulsory course is part of government's diversification of our economy, it starts from the classroom, from our students mind, and their minds should also diversify from white collar to self-reliant graduates. In this paper, we will look at government's view on Entrepreneurial studies in Nigeria, and then look at the concept of Entrepreneur and Entrepreneurial studies in Nigeria. We will also see Plato's ideal society and the education suitable for the smooth running of the society; thereafter we will analyze these philosophically and then conclude.

### **Entrepreneurial studies in Nigeria**

The dwindling ratio of the so-called white-collar jobs when compared to the rate of turnout of graduates at all levels of education soon made it necessary for successive government to introduce palliative measures. The Federal Military Government in 1976 introduced the Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) Scheme, which faded out after sometimes. Successive Military Government in 1985 introduced Mass Mobilisation for Self Reliance and Economic Recovery (MAMSER) and National Directorate of Employment (NDE) to address the issue of graduate unemployment but recorded very minimal success. The erstwhile Civilian Governments retained the NDE and introduced the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP). These two programmes are still in operation in Nigeria<sup>3</sup> All these measures so far have proved to be grossly ineffective in solving the problem of graduate unemployment which have assumed critical dimension, especially due to the proliferation of both public and private tertiary institutions.

The need to ensure that the present effort at turning out graduates, who will not only be self reliant but employers of labour cannot be over emphasized. In order to achieve this, the Federal Government, through the National Universities Commission (NUC), introduced Entrepreneurship Education (E.E), which is aimed at equipping students with entrepreneurial skills, attitudes and competencies in order to be job providers and not job seekers. This is to improve the economic, technological and industrial development of the nation and reduce poverty.

At the end of the 1980<sup>s</sup> and beginning of 1990, the International Labour Organization (ILO) was strongly involved in development of Small and Medium Scale Enterprise (SMEs) and Vocational Education through a number of projects involving government institutions and private sector ILO recommendation No 89 adopted refers to entrepreneurship education, students get opportunity to analyze the changes that take place in their countries and are encouraged to consider self-employment and enterprise creation as career choice. A number of countries have adopted this "Know About Business (KAB) into their National Education Programme since year 2000. Nigeria has joined this crusade by way of Entrepreneurship education. NUC issued a directive in 2007/2008 that course on entrepreneurship should be included in the curriculum of Nigerian Universities. Pursuant to this, in Unizik today, effective from 2008/2009 academic

session, students at 200 level offer this course Entrepreneurship Education New Venture Creation ENT. 200 as a compulsory course to all students.

### **1) Entrepreneurship**

Entrepreneurship refers to the intentional creation or transformation of an organisation for the purpose of creating or adding value through organization of resources (Bird and Jelinek, 1988). As a dynamics process of vision, change and creation (Kuratko, 2005), it requires to be taught for the transfer of its skills and knowledge from an expert to someone else. It involves an application of energy and passion towards the creation of an enterprise and this includes the; willingness to take calculative risks; team work; the creative skill to marshal needed resources; fundamental skill of building solid business plan; and finally, the vision to recognize opportunity where others see chaos, contradiction, and confusion ((Walstad, and Kourilski, 1999; Arenius and Minniti, 2004; Kuratko and Hodgetts, 2004).<sup>4</sup>

### **Entrepreneurship Education**

Entrepreneurship education is that education which assists students to develop positive attitudes, innovation and skills for self-reliance, rather than depending on the government for employment. This will produce graduates with self-confidence and capacities for independent thought to discover new information leading to economic development (Emetaron and Obunadike 2008). Agu (2006) opined that entrepreneurship education is the type of education designed to change the orientation and attitude of the recipients, and in the process will equip him with the skills and knowledge to enable him start and manage a business enterprise. This type of education aims at developing the requisite entrepreneurial skills, attitudes competences and dispositions that will predispose the individual to be a driving force in managing a business. Emetaron and Obunadike (2008)<sup>5</sup> described Entrepreneurship education as that which deals with those attitudes and skills that are necessary for the individual to respond to his environment in the process of conserving, starting and managing a business enterprise. This is based on the fact that some basic attitudes and skills are essential for an individual to respond positively to his environment and explore its potentials. This implies that Entrepreneurship Education (E.E) prepares the individual to be properly equipped to acquire saleable skills which could be used to manage his own business or that of other person.

Entrepreneurship education on the other hand was defined by Lankard (2003) as education which provides the learners with basic knowledge, skills attitudes and ideas that will equip the individual for self-employment. Entrepreneurship education empowers the recipients to be self-reliant, enterprising and innovative. It brings to bear the innate ability and potentials of an individual to be creative and contribute meaningfully to the economic, social and political development as well as sustain the development of the host society. According to Aghenta (2006)<sup>6</sup> the education sector in Nigeria is far ahead of labour system which shows that it has not fail in producing high-level manpower, but the major problem is the lack of critical skills. The educational system focused more on basic theoretical experiences of the learners at the expense of those areas like technology and science that could invoke creativity, equip learner with entrepreneur skills and new innovations that will reduce unemployment rate in the nation. Considering America as an example of economic impact of education on sustainable development, the successful use of many factors and techniques of mass production and increased productivity per worker, efficient business

management and method of distributing profits was as a result of entrepreneurship educational programmes put in place. Manpower has been able to translate education into social, political and economic realities of the society.

The role of Entrepreneurship education is to identify potential entrepreneurs through the traits and characteristics they possessed and portrayed and with adequate and relevant training and education invoke in them their creativity and innovative abilities. Education helps the entrepreneur generate ideas to pursue, nurture and develop them successfully. In addition education is to help the entrepreneur to transform creative ideas into useful applications by combining resources in new and unusual ways to provide value to society through improved products, technology and/or services. Below is a model of creative process developed by McOliver and Nwagwu (2009) that can assist in the education and development of entrepreneurs.<sup>7</sup>

The concept of entrepreneurship is not new in the contemporary world, it's about being enterprise in any venture. The future of any nation depends on the entrepreneurial ventures founded by creative individuals. These are inspired people, risk takers who seized the available opportunities to harness and optimally use resources in an unusual manner to bring about a visible change. Oviawe (2009) defined entrepreneur as an individual who is willing and possess the ability to take risks, identify economic opportunities, mobilizes and organizes resources with a view to maximize profit. In other word, entrepreneurs are job and wealth creators, visionary, innovators and investors who undermining the risks lurch into the future with their money, time and other resources to achieve what others thought impossible. In essence, an entrepreneur is a person who creates or starts a new project, opportunity, or venture. In developing countries like Nigeria, the concept is increasingly gaining prominence among people in government and private sector. The need to ensure the actualization of Government's 7-point agenda for national development, especially in the area of HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT as well as to meet up with the increasing knowledge globalization and dire need to climb out of economic recession have brought the issue of entrepreneurship to bear. Entrepreneurship provides the required strategic skills for job creation and poverty eradication hence the concept has been adopted by Nigerian government to tackle the challenge of development in the nation. To realize its objective, education at all levels have been mandated to include entrepreneurship as part of their curriculum.

### **Entrepreneurship Studies at NAU**

Entrepreneurship studies in Nnamdi Azikiwe is today handled by lecturers at Entrepreneurship department but was formerly handled by Chike Okoli Centre for Entrepreneurial studies. A survey of the course content of ENT 200 titled Entrepreneurship Education and New Venture Creation reads thus;

Introduction to Entrepreneurship, concept of Entrepreneurship, Difference between Entrepreneurship and Entrepreneurship theories, types of Entrepreneur,

- B. The Entrepreneurial process
- C. Developing ideas and business opportunities
- D. Analyzing the market, customers and competition
- E. Preparing the feasibility study and Business plan
- F. Sources of Financing
- G. Setting up the business/company

Challenges you consider and study before starting any business

### **Factors that hinder business start up**

1. Business failure
2. Symptoms of Business failure
3. Causes of Business failure
4. How to prevent Business failure
5. Legal issues- Government policy concerning starting up a new business <sup>8</sup>
6. Lecturers who teach these courses are drawn from different departments like Food science,
7. Agricultural sciences, and the contact hours are 2 hrs per week.

### **Plato on Education**

In the Republic, Plato divided the society into three different classes. These classes represent the 3 parts of the soul. This is a way of saying the society is man writ large. I have argued elsewhere, that if the soul of man is the same with the society men find themselves, it therefore means that no society is intrinsically bad; it is the human beings living in that society that is bad. If we take it further, if Nigeria is corrupt, it is not Nigeria that is corrupt, it is the men living in Nigeria that is corrupt. This also means that if, for instance, you exchange Nigerians with Americans i.e. putting Americans into Nigeria and taking Nigerians to American, sooner or later Nigeria will turn again to America while America will become Nigeria.

For Plato, the specific function of an individual is not different from that of the society and so the life of a polity manifests the life of the individual that make it up. For him, the soul has three fundamental aspects which relates to some basic needs and the society is structured in such a way as to meet this need.

The first part of the soul is Reason which controls the rest of the parts. In the society, this represents the Guardians and rulers. This part of the soul has an education suitable for them as they are Philosopher Kings. They pursue intellectual satisfaction, knowledge and good counsel. The second part of the soul is the spirited part; this is the will. It is that part that feels anger, indignation, such character as cowardice, brevity is attributed to the spirited part of the soul. In the society, this represents the auxiliaries, armies, policies corps. They defend the society from external forces and also maintain civility in the state. They are educated in line with the will; to obey, and be strong. The third part of the soul and in which the paper wishes to focus on is the Appetitive part of the soul. For Plato, this is the lowest part of the soul which needs to always be checked to avoid its excesses. This part of the soul desires food, clothes, shelters, cars and material mundane things of life and it is insatiable. This part represents the craftsmen artisans, traders etc. These three parts according to Plato represents the administrative, defense and the production (commerce) in the society and they are aimed at the satisfaction of basic needs that stems from human nature.<sup>8</sup>

The third part of the soul which is the appetitive part represents the craftsmen, artisans, traders in the society. It also represents the production/commerce aspect of the society. For Plato, the original end of the city is an economic end, and from this follows the principle of the division and specialization of labour. Different people have different natural endowments and talents and are fitted to serve the community in different ways; moreover, a man's work will be superior in

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quality and also in quantity if he works at one occupation alone in accordance with his natural gift. Thus the existence of the state, which at present is being considered from the economic view point, will require the presence of husbandmen, weavers, shoemakers, carpenters, shepherds, merchants, retail warders, hired laborers, among others. If there is to be a luxurious city, something more will be required and musicians, poets tutors, nurses, barbers, cooks, confectioners, among others, will make their appearance

Besides music, gymnastics will play a part in the education of the young citizens of the state. This care of the body in the case of those who are to be guardians of the state and athletes of war, this will produce warrior athletes who should be like wakeful dogs and should see and hear with the utmost keenness. The auxiliaries too according to Plato should have the right education and mode of life.<sup>9</sup> From the foregoing, one discourse that for the three different classes of the society, there are different forms of curriculum of education that are allotted to them. This is true as according to him, the justice of the state is this that everyone attends to his own business without interfering with anyone else. As an individual is just when all the element of the soul function properly in harmony and with due subordination of the lower to the highest, so the state is just or righteous when all the classes, and the individuals of which they are composed, perform their due functions in the proper way. Political injustice, on the other hand, consists in a meddling and restless spirit, which leads to one class interfering with the business of another class.

There are four qualities that are necessary for the task of carrying out these functions properly in the society; knowledge, for Plato, everyone needs knowledge but the rulers need wisdom; a special kind of knowledge which is needed for good administration. This presupposes prudence, knowledge of good and evil, and the knowledge of the essence of things. Temperance that is self-mastery Harmony and concord are the result of temperance. This is the effect one gets when reason determines which desires to be satisfied and to what extent. Courage is another quality. It means persevering in all circumstances. The conviction about the sorts of things one should or should not fear. It is this type of education that should be given the auxiliaries to instill courage in them. The education the armies and police should have should be education of the will. It means, the more obedient an auxiliary is, the better function he does to the society. It also means the more rational; a philosopher is the more functional he/she will be in the society. Each, basing their education on their function in the society. Which education should then be for the artisans and craftsmen? Not the kind meant for the other two, but the type that will enhance its specialization in the society. The final quality is justice. This is that which make the other three qualities flourish in the state. It consists of pursuits of the principles of the division of labour. This goes to say, that a man should possess and concern himself with what properly belongs to him that is, one taking his rightful position and not going beyond it. This justice is very crucial to the orderly operation of the common wealth or the state.

What then is the education suitable for the craftsmen, the artisans, the traders? By implication, it is the education that enhances their functionality in the society. The education suitable therefore for the carpenter is carpentry education, the education suitable for a farmer therefore is farming education, the education suitable for a shoemaker (cobbler) is shoe making education. The education according to Plato's model becomes effective if it makes a carpenter use wood to provide the carpentry needs of the society, in that it is meeting the economic need of the society and also fulfilling his specialty. He is doing his part and he is therefore functional. This cannot go without saying that any education given to the carpenter which does not enhance



his carpentry skill is not effective. Theoretical steps and pictures of how to do carpentry works is good but not enough; it is the education that will produce a qualified carpenter, that is the education needed for the artisans. This education is far from just theoretical paper writing, certificate bagging, English speaking, and test passing exercise. It is practical, skill acquisition, so that a carpenter does carpentry works and not talk carpentry talks, a seamstress does sewing jobs and not talk or have just sewing certificate to PhD level. This researcher thinks is the real reason behind the introduction of entrepreneurial studies in the Universities of Nigeria. Let us do a philosophical analyse of these and recommend way forward and conclude from there.

### **Philosophical Evaluation, Recommendations and Conclusion**

Following Plato's concept of education for the artisans, entrepreneurial studies in Nigeria should be practical enough. Theory part of the course is inevitable but the practical aspect should not be neglected. For Plato artisans should be taught in line with their choice fields.

### **Recommendations**

- Every department in all the universities in Nigeria today should sharpen their cutting edge through the introduction of practical hands on education especially at final year. Theatre Arts department, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, has premiered its movie and by this introduced her talented and interested students into the movie world. Engineering faculty of Nnamdi Azikiwe University has also built her first automobile which should be harnessed to introduce talented and interested students into production.
- The teaching of Entrepreneurial Studies in Universities should be practical oriented. Students should be graded practically. A computer technician for instance, should be graded as he repairs computers. Outstanding students should be sponsored to start up a business on their specialty. Universities can partner with donor agencies that can sponsor extraordinary students into starting up businesses
- Universities and Entrepreneurial Units in Universities should have their own business outlets, companies. This will expose students to the out of class experience. Even though, this out of class experience can be learnt elsewhere, Entrepreneurial Studies Unit and Universities should practice what she preaches. Lecturers can be good in theory but practical experience balances knowledge. If this is done, it will avail the Units opportunity to make profits and also the financial flexibility to carry out its functions effectively.
- Entrepreneurial Studies in Universities should have laboratories and experts in different fields should come in once in a while to teach students. If same theories taught by lecturers in Management Sciences are taught in Entrepreneurial studies, the aim will be defeated. It requires experts.
- There should be University talent identification Program. This is in the form of search for extraordinary students in various fields. When these talents are rewarded and sponsored, it will go a long way to develop job providers and motivate other talents to sit up. Universities cannot do this alone; it therefore requires Entrepreneurial Unit Directors and other centers to attract sponsors for such program.

In conclusion, the future of a nation is dependent to a great extent on the youths of that nation. Today government is embarking on diversification of the economy; this also includes

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diversification of minds of Nigerian youths from white collar jobs to self-employment. Universities should make this possible by evolving education models that will produce entrepreneurs in all fields of life. Entrepreneurial Studies as a General Studies course should therefore be taught from a practical perspective by experts. This will go a long way to solving the unemployment problem of our great nation.

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