

ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION AND POLICY
IMPLEMENTATION IN NIGERIA
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AKINYEMI F. O.

Institute for Entrepreneurship and Development Studies,
Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria**Abstract**

Policy makers and global leaders have been showing increasing interests in entrepreneurship and its connection with human development, economic growth and development. As a reflection of these interests, a handful of entrepreneurship policies and development programs have been established and implemented to promote entrepreneurship and harness the benefits therein. Little wonder, the Nigerian government has over the last three decades implemented some policies and programs aimed at promoting entrepreneurship education and boosting entrepreneurial activities in every sector of the economy. Sadly, controversies arise as most of the implemented policies and programs have proved futile and unable to achieve the anticipated results. Hence, this paper stabs to pinpoint the fundamental factors that hinder the efficacy of government efforts at promoting entrepreneurship education in Nigeria. The conceptualization and implementation of entrepreneurship education and development programs by the Nigerian government are examined to identify the inherent weaknesses. Drawing from theoretical literature, empirical and anecdotal sources, this paper affirms that conceptualization and implementation of entrepreneurship education and development programs in Nigeria need fine-tuning. It campaigns for a distinctive classification to distinguish entrepreneurship from skill acquisition programs, as well as the development and implementation of suitable policies and strategies for entrepreneurial activities. While every sector of the economy needs support and improvements, Nigerian students and prospective entrepreneurs need higher level of support to enable them stir up and rightly channel their entrepreneurial instincts into viable ventures, marketable products and services that would help generate employment and invariably, promote economic growth and development.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship Education, Policy Implementation, Nigerian Government

Introduction

In retrospect, entrepreneurship has been in existence since ancient times but were never actually recognized as such, and were never as complex and well developed as a concept until the 18th century when it appeared in Richard Cantillon's writings (Thornton & Brown, 2023; Arthur & Hisrich, 2011). After its recognition and development, various scholars and policy makers began to clamor for more of their activities to boost their economies. When the economies where their activities were promoted began to experience sporadic change and high level of industrialization, other countries decided to follow suit to attain similar feats and enjoy similar benefits. However, a cursory look at the extant literature, happenings around, and the disparity in the level of economic advancement among the nations of the world suggests that some are getting it right by vigorously promoting entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial activities (Hill *et al.*, 2023; Naude, 2011; Praag & Versloot, 2007; Schumpeter, 1942) while others are not.

The fundamental difference between the growth and development of entrepreneurship, in the advanced economies and emerging economies, stems from their orientation, implementation process, and the creation of enabling environment to mention but a few (Al Mamun, Kumar, Ibrahim & Bin, 2017; Mthanti & Ojah, 2017; Shane & Venkataraman 2000). Hence, in a bid to promote entrepreneurship in advanced economies, they looked inwards, drew their motivations from within, built their manpower from within (and sometimes from forced migration as a result of colonization), took note of little details, appreciated little efforts and they are still doing all can to move their economies forward. Whereas, in many African developing economies such as Nigeria, diverse sentimental and cultural biases kill entrepreneurship morale, frustrate entrepreneurial activities (Ukwueze, 2022; Igwe *et al.*, 2019; Salami, 2013; Oyelola *et al.*, 2013).

Having recognized entrepreneurship as an

effectual means not only of reducing unemployment, poverty and under-development in developing economies, but also as a tool for rapid economic development in both advanced and developing economies. Naude (2011) argued that global development was approaching a phase, where entrepreneurship would progressively play a more significant role. He presented three reasons for this advancement. Firstly, that the succeeding economies of the 1970s – 2000 in the West, depicted by dependence on big businesses and mass production, had given rise to the so-called entrepreneurial economies, where knowledge-driven goods and services were more compliantly provided by the smaller creative sect. Secondly, the remarkable growth in countries such as Russia, India and Brazil, were driven by innovative entrepreneurial revolution. And thirdly, in the least developed economies, where dependency was high, supporting agencies have been changing emphasis in development cooperations towards private sector improvement. Naude (2011) concluded that entrepreneurship would contribute to business growth and employment generation in advanced, emerging and least developed economies alike. And this has been the reality and trend observed in many economies over the years

Having acknowledged the view that entrepreneurship development is the key to solving many economic problems such as employment generation and poverty eradication, and also achieving rapid economic development, some educational policies and programs, aimed at promoting entrepreneurship at various levels of the educational sector. The questions therefore are: What are the effects of these policies on entrepreneurship education in Nigeria? Could it be that the implementation strategies and approaches adopted are faulty? These are the questions that this paper attempts to address.

In the literature review section, some conceptual viewpoints on significant entrepreneurship concepts and theories identified in the extant literature are drawn and discussed, followed by an examination of some selected government policies and programs aimed at promoting entrepreneurship education in Nigeria. The issues raised and the flaws identified are discussed, and

the article ends with a closing section on conclusion and recommendations.

Conceptualizing Entrepreneurship

Till date, there still is no universally accepted definition of entrepreneurship (Diandra & Azmy, 2020; Kao, 1993; Gartner, 1990) and yet the concept has gone through many phases in context and application (Wadhvani, 2016). Entrepreneurship has been variously defined and explained in terms of creativity, innovation, new venture creation, and problem-solving abilities to mention but a few (Akinyemi & Ojah, 2018; Gartner, 1990). Though the concept has been in existence throughout the ages, its nomenclature emanated from a renowned French economist and author named John Cantillon (1680-1734) before other authors started giving their views and definitions of the word and the people carrying out such activities (Ramoglou, Gartner & Tsang, 2020).

With the continuous recognition and appreciation of the concept, entrepreneurship became a relatively new topic and an independent field of study that blossomed within the management field. However, its tentacles have spread and found to exist and permeate to every discipline. Now, entrepreneurship serves as a cornerstone in almost every description of business activities and innovations. It is the bedrock of industrialization, the springboard of many highflying business organizations, an unbeatable source of employment, alleviator of poverty, and catalyst of economic growth and development.

Conceptual Viewpoints

Some of the fallouts from the snowballing interest of scholars, empirical pollsters and thinkers in entrepreneurship field are the assorted definitions and views found in the extant literature. One mutual denominator in most of the studies is the important role played by three central factors (innovation, risk-taking, and identification and use of opportunities) in entrepreneurship field, though with different levels of emphasis (Rusu, Isac, Cureteanu & Scorba, 2012). A development economist, Schumpeter (1934), describes entrepreneurship from the angle of value creation and defines an entrepreneur as a risk-taking innovator necessary for rapid economic

development, through the “creative destruction” process, by which outdated technologies and ideas are substituted by new ones. Schumpeter (1942 & 1934) argued that entrepreneurship has the latent for economic development, via the insertion of new innovative combinations that ultimately render old methods and industries archaic.

While Schumpeter (1942) sees entrepreneurs as an agent of change, who moves the market away from equilibrium, Drucker (1985) vies that the entrepreneurs are not necessarily agents of change, but rather that they search for change, respond to it and exploit it as economic opportunities. Drucker (1985) agrees with Knight (1921) who affirms that entrepreneur's endeavor to predict and act upon change, bearing the uncertainties of market dynamics. Audretsch and Belitski (2021) also share the same view with Knight. Shane and Venkataraman (2000) similarly expressed the strong views that the existence, nature and discovery of opportunities comprise the real center of entrepreneurship. They provided explanations why some people unearth these opportunities while others fail to.

Entrepreneurship, in the extant literature, is sometimes classified into opportunity-based and necessity-based groupings, depending on whether it is driven by the discovery and exploitation of opportunity or prompted by unemployment, or need for survival (Smallbone & Welter, 2019; Deveci, Peris-Ortiz & Rueda-Armengot, 2016; Baptista, Karaöz & Mendonça, 2014). In view of this, entrepreneurship is conceptualized and defined as the act of identifying and exploiting lucrative opportunities, through innovative process, under conditions of uncertainty, to either create new businesses, or restructure existing ones proficient to generate employment for people and additional value for stakeholders (Idam, 2014).

Entrepreneurship Education and Government Policies

A very crucial and well-known aspect of promoting entrepreneurship is through education and research (Atrup *et al.*, 2023; Obembe *et al.*, 2021; Zhou, Li & Shahzad, 2021; Cho & Lee, 2018) have that mis-educated and ill-educated

youths and graduates cannot revive business sectors and promote economic growth. And, for those who argued that most of the leading entrepreneurs in the world were not fully educated, findings have shown that they did lots of research, trials and errors, and had countless fact-finding activities before they discovered and arrived at their witty inventions. These all dovetail to emphasize the role of education (formal and informal learning) in entrepreneurship development.

The Nigerian government in 2006 introduced Entrepreneurial education course into the undergraduate curriculum (Nwambam, Nnennaya & Nwankpu, 2018; Sanusi, Olaleye & Atjonen, 2017; Agbonlahor, 2016; Sofoluwe, *et al.*, 2013). The emphasis was to provide Nigerian graduates with requisite skills for entrepreneurial success after school while the principal objective was to reduce youth unemployment; especially among school leavers, in Nigeria. However, prior to this, some efforts have been made to promote research activities in agriculture by establishing research organizations such as the Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research (NISER), Forestry Research Institute (FRI), Cocoa Research Institute of Nigeria (CRIN), Nigerian Cereal Research Institute (NCRI), Nigerian Institute of Horticultural Research (NIHR), and Institute of Agriculture, Research and Training (IAR&T) to mention but a few. Agriculture, being one of the major economic activities, gave rise to the establishment of farm settlements, agricultural education and business activities were promoted among Nigerian youths. Most of these farm settlements have been abandoned and agriculture have been replaced with motorbikes and tricycles popularly called 'keke Maruwa' by youths and school dropouts. Hence, the introduction of entrepreneurship education courses was anticipated to help remedy the situation.

Furthermore, Nigerian federal government has made several attempts and other programs and policies aimed at promoting entrepreneurship development in Nigeria (Idam, (2014)

Particularly after the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) in the mid-1980s, other major

programs established in order to increase employment generation, alleviate poverty and ensure rapid economic development include Small and Medium Industries Equity Investment Scheme (SMIEIS), Bank of Industry (BOI), Nigerian Agricultural Cooperative Rural Development Bank (NACRDB), The National Directorate of Employment (NDE), Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) and Microfinance Banks.

Entrepreneurship Development Centres (EDCs) were also established nationally and in tertiary institutions to provide institutional support for the development of and entrepreneurship became a compulsory course in Nigerian tertiary institutions. The Youth Enterprise with Innovation in Nigeria (YouWIN) was also one of the Federal Government's initiatives targeted towards developing entrepreneurship in Nigeria. It was defined as an innovative business plan competition targeted towards job creation by emboldening and assisting aspiring entrepreneurial Nigerian youths to develop and execute their business ideas (YouWIN, 2013). Youths aged 18 to 45 years competed for one to ten million-naira awards to implement their business ideas. The first competition took place in 2011, with 1200 successful businesses. The second was organized strictly for women while the third featured both male and female entrepreneurs within the age bracket (YouWIN, 2013). This initiative was adjudged the first to identify entrepreneurial firms, but the sustainability was in doubt because of the nature of the awards and the political undertone observed during the implementation.

Flaws in Entrepreneurship Education Policy Implementation In Nigeria

Findings from personal observations, anecdotal sources, theoretical and empirical Studies (Nwambam, Nnennaya & Nwankpu, 2018; Sanusi, Olaleye & Atjonen, 2017; Agbonlahor, 2016) affirm that these policies and especially the entrepreneurship education policy are fraught with many challenges.

For instance, since their implementation over a decade ago, graduates' unemployment has not declined (Akinyemi, 2021; Idam, 2014) and there

is an increasing national dissatisfaction on the socio-economic significance of the course in Nigeria tertiary education (Nwambam, Nnennaya & Nwankpu, 2018; Sanusi, Olaleye & Atjonen, 2017). The inability to meet its set objectives has led to many inept revisions and changes in the scholastic structure of the curricula over the years. Therefore, to move entrepreneurship education for impact, there is the dire need to critically and comprehensively review the flaws and implementation challenges as reported over time. Some of the major flaws and challenges inherent in the conceptualization and implementation of Nigeria's entrepreneurship education policies and programs are discussed as follows.

Entrepreneurship Concepts & Definitions

The first flaw identified is that the approach and implementation of entrepreneurship education was defective. Idam (2014) maintained that the treatment of all Small And Medium Enterprise (SME) business owners as entrepreneurs constrains the development of entrepreneurship in Nigeria, when compared with other developing countries. Nigeria's government policies and programs focused mainly on the development of SMEs and practically, no effort was made, until recently, to differentiate entrepreneurial firms from non-entrepreneurial small businesses, as crusaded by some scholars (Arthur & Hisrich, 2011; Bosma & Levie, 2010; Praag & Versloot 2007; Lugar and Koo, 2005). Though it is undeniable that the development of SMEs is pivotal for socio-economic growth, the unique roles of entrepreneurs in job creation and in accelerating economic growth cum development must not be downplayed. Additionally, small non-entrepreneurial businesses need to be cheered and braced to keep the youths suitably engaged in self-employment and thus reduce the frequency of youths' unrest and involvement in felonious activities. Economic doles are likewise derivable as the self-employed become economically self-reliant and provide for their immediate families.

In Nigeria, entrepreneurship is often construed and described in terms of SMEs and trading activities such as buying and selling (Jelilove & Onder, 2016; Inyang & Enuoh, 2009), which also reflected in their educational policies. It is also

sometimes construed as business activities such as handcrafts, product manufacturing and skill acquisition whereas in advanced economies, entrepreneurship is often distinct and described in terms of innovation, creativity, and intellectual properties such as patents and copyrights. Entrepreneurship in advanced economies is construed as comprising all forms of economic, technological, and scientific discoveries and inventions targeted towards improving the quality of life and must ultimately be beneficial to mankind (Shane, 2012; Schumpeter, 1934). In other words, the fundamental crux and bedrock on which entrepreneurship is built in advanced countries is constructive creativity and problem solving while in emerging economies, it is basically about business enterprise.

The effect or implication of this is that Nigerian citizens are not often motivated and geared towards stimulating their creativity but rather made to focus on acquiring skills in areas such as tailoring, shoe making and other trades. And by extension, excited to rely on the innovative products from advanced economies and eventually continue to import foreign goods (Agri, Mailafia & Umejiaku, 2017; Taiwo, 2016).

Institution – Industry Nexus

Another constraint observed in the implementation of entrepreneurship education and development programs is the massive void between the educational institutions and the industrial sector. Thus, most research outcomes end up on the library shelves and are not followed through to become marketable products and services. The effectiveness of the academic programs are further constrained by a disconnect between the Entrepreneurship Development Centres (EDCs) and the industries that ought to provide practical trainings and experiences for students.

Innovations and Patents

In advanced economies, there are high levels of innovations from the grassroots, which are then harvested to advance their markets. The innovators are often encouraged, held in high esteem, and seen as self-reliant and patriotic individuals. They are often protected by their patent policies and further encouraged by the

enabling environments. In essence, the consumers are lead users and they innovate but in emerging economies such as Nigeria, where innovation is often downplayed and ignored, innovation is left in the producers/manufacturers' hands, who more often than not, copy or import goods from advanced economies. Furthermore, the users of such innovations grow on their own, develop their products on their own, and the people or the community request for the products before they are taken to organizations for large scale production (Luo, 2015; Galindo & Méndez, 2014; Schumpeter, 2000). In many fields, firms do not innovate for users and they do not produce just one product on trial. Except if requested to produce large amounts when they are sure there's market for it.

Innovations in fields such as medicine (Robinson & Toledo, 2012), baby products (Koh, Nirmal & Yuhazri, 2019; Hradecky et al., 2017) and sports (Ratten, 2019; Ringuet-Riot, Hahn & James, 2013) where products developments are reflections of educational trainings, patents are given and the innovators are often well compensated. For instance, one of the major landmarks and accomplishments in medicine is alleviating pain during surgeries (Robinson & Toledo, 2012). Several degrees of discomforts continued to exist until in 1846 when the pain of surgery was exterminated. Several constituents of anesthesiology (laryngoscopes, gasses, endotracheal tubes, intravenous medications, delivery systems, and masks) were discovered. Credits to the exceptionally brilliant physicians and entrepreneurs, especially, William T.G. Morton (1819-1868), who made this a reality for humanity. The young Boston Dentist explored a better agent than what had been previously used by many dentists (nitrous oxide) and was able to help patients experience hitch-free surgeries. Now numerous types of anesthetics exist and anesthesia has moved from mere injections to being inhaled (Robinson & Toledo, 2012).

Many similar innovations and creative products should be encouraged in Nigeria. Innovations and creativity should be encouraged and promoted in the educational sector, and the innovators should be given patents and well remunerated.

Other categories of challenges recognized from empirical studies (Nwambam, Nnennaya & Nwankpu, 2018; Sanusi, Olaleye, & Atjonen, 2017; Sofoluwe, Shokunbi, Raimi & Ajewole, 2013), which militate against the effective implementation of entrepreneurship education in Nigeria include infrastructural shortcomings, environmental threats, wide-spread corruption, and high level of insecurity. As the saying goes “abuse is inevitable when the purpose of a thing is unknown”, the misconstrued concept of entrepreneurship, the limited scope and level of acceptance of its roots and trends, has made it difficult for some people to gainfully explore, harness, and enjoy its full benefits.

Moreover, in settings where gender bias prevails, the students are not open minded enough to embrace the various avenues and options from which entrepreneurship could emerge. Some limit the scope of operation and expansion by dictating how they want things to be done in their environment and who does what. Healthy rules are good for mankind, to sustain the environment, and for posterity but setting unhealthy rules, regulations, customs and principles do hinder the effective implementation of entrepreneurship education and programs as they constrict creativity, innovation, progress, and advancement.

Conclusion

Emphatically, there can be no effective entrepreneurship education and healthy entrepreneurship growth if some fundamental things are out of place. Entrepreneurship would thrive and grow well if an enabling environment is ensured. Nigeria stands the chance of becoming very great if things are put in their right perspectives. Starting with having the right mindset, doing what is right and needful, the. If entrepreneurship education programs and policies are adequately promoted and implemented, the outcomes would not only transform the nation but would also move Nigeria to become a good export zone.

Recommendations

The way forward, therefore, is to assign the right set of people in the educational sector to develop entrepreneurship programs and policies, improve

people's orientation, and perspectives towards entrepreneurship, emphasize and promote innovation and creativity. And embrace a wider scope and constructs of entrepreneurship concepts. In addition to empowering Nigerian youths, scholars, and prospective entrepreneurs, reliable platforms for information dissemination should be established, and industrial links should be established to actualize the products creativity and innovative thinking from the educational institutions.

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