



EXPLORING ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION AS A CATALYST FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN KOGI STATE

Omolegbe Leah Tinuola¹
&
Comfort Nwuchola²

¹ [Kogi State Polytechnic, Lokoja](#)

Abstract

Entrepreneurship education is increasingly recognized as a critical driver of economic growth and social transformation, particularly in developing regions like Kogi State, Nigeria. With a rapidly growing population and a high number of graduates entering the labor market annually, the demand for employment in both government and private sectors significantly exceeds available opportunities. The predominantly theoretical education acquired by these graduates primarily prepares them for paid employment, which is often scarce. This study examines the role of entrepreneurship education as a solution for sustainable development in Kogi State, with the objective of assessing its potential to reduce unemployment, alleviate poverty, and foster innovation. The research employs a descriptive analysis approach, utilizing secondary data from reputable journals, textbooks, newspapers, and online sources. Findings reveal that the large number of graduates entering the workforce annually contributes to rising unemployment due to the theoretical nature of their education, underscoring the need for entrepreneurship education to promote creativity, skills acquisition, and self-reliance. However, challenges such as inadequate funding, limited trained educators, and a lack of equipment hinder the effective implementation of entrepreneurship education. The study concludes that integrating an entrepreneurship-based curriculum across all educational levels, supported by government policies and stakeholder collaboration to create an enabling environment, can significantly enhance socio-economic development and sustainability in Kogi State.

Keywords: *Entrepreneurship Education, Skills Acquisition, Sustainable Development, Unemployment, Kogi State.*

Introduction

Nigeria, with a population estimated at 170 million (NBS, 2013), is endowed with abundant human and natural resources, a favorable climate, and a strategic global location. Despite these advantages, the nation's education system, modeled on the British framework, prioritizes preparing individuals for white-collar employment rather than fostering skills for self-employment and entrepreneurship. This focus on academic credentials has contributed significantly to high youth unemployment rates, limiting economic contributions and exacerbating poverty. Similarly, Kogi State, rich in mineral resources, faces challenges with an education system that produces graduates ill-equipped to meet workforce demands, resulting in a surplus of job seekers relative to available opportunities.

This misalignment has created significant challenges for both the government and its citizens. Nigeria, like many developing nations, grapples with persistent issues, including youth and graduate unemployment, widespread poverty, insecurity, disease, and over-reliance on foreign goods, all of which hinder economic growth and development. The lack of practical skills and capacity to drive national progress further compounds these problems. Unemployment, in particular, has led to frustration, dependency, and heightened insecurity among Nigerian youths,



as noted by Ajufu (2013). The 2015 General Elections underscored the government's limited success in addressing these challenges, leaving many, particularly Kogi State youths, in a state of hopelessness. This despair has driven some to pursue undesirable means of livelihood due to insufficient government support for entrepreneurial initiatives by public and private investors. This situation poses a critical barrier to individual and national development. To address these challenges, there is an urgent need to train individuals to function effectively within society through self-reliance and entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurial education offers a viable solution by equipping individuals with creative problem-solving, innovation, and practical skills for self-employment. As defined by Abrauje (2010), entrepreneurial education involves programs that provide marketable skills, enabling gainful employment. Similarly, Sanda (2010) describes it as specialized training that fosters skills, ideas, and managerial abilities essential for self-development.

By fostering innovative thinking and financial independence, entrepreneurial education empowers learners to envision sustainable career paths. This paper examines entrepreneurial education as a potential catalyst for sustainable development in Nigeria, highlighting its role in addressing unemployment and fostering economic resilience.

Problem Statement

Kogi State, Nigeria, grapples with high youth unemployment, widespread poverty, and an education system that prioritizes theoretical knowledge over practical skills. Rooted in a British-inspired model, this system produces graduates unprepared for the labor market or self-employment, leading to an oversupply of job seekers, economic stagnation, and increased insecurity. The absence of robust entrepreneurship education limits innovation and self-reliance, hindering sustainable development.

Scope of Study

This study examines entrepreneurship education's role in fostering sustainable socio-economic development in Kogi State. It focuses on its potential to reduce unemployment, alleviate poverty, and promote innovation through skills acquisition. Using descriptive analysis of secondary data from journals, textbooks, and online sources, the research explores implementation challenges and opportunities within Kogi State's educational and economic context.

Purpose of Study

The study aims to evaluate entrepreneurship education as a driver of sustainable development in Kogi State by:

1. Assessing its capacity to foster job creation and self-reliance.
 2. Investigating its role in poverty reduction through skill development and innovation.
 3. Identifying barriers, such as funding shortages and inadequate facilities.
 4. Recommending curriculum integration and stakeholder collaboration to strengthen its impact.
- The study seeks to provide actionable insights for policymakers and educators to build an entrepreneurial ecosystem for economic resilience and social progress.

Conceptual Classification



The need for entrepreneurship education emerged in the mid-1980s due to political instability, inconsistent socio-economic policies, high unemployment, large-scale layoffs, and poor economic trends. Given these global economic challenges, promoting entrepreneurial activity has become a key goal for many governments.

Entrepreneurship education means different things to different people. According to Ebele (2008), it's about teaching students the knowledge and skills to plan, start, and run their own businesses. Swarland (2008) views entrepreneurship education as a way to stimulate creativity, identify opportunities for innovation, and motivate students to turn ideas into practical activities. Olawale and Kaegon (2012) agree that entrepreneurial education prepares youths to be responsible individuals who think entrepreneurial by exposing them to real-life learning experiences. Eneme (2010) adds that entrepreneurship education enables youth to seek success through their own efforts. Atakpa (2011) defines entrepreneurship education as an aspect of education that equips individuals with the mindset to take risks and venture into new endeavors using the knowledge and skills acquired in school.

Entrepreneurship is a way of thinking, reasoning, and acting that creates, enhances, and realizes value for individuals, groups, organizations, or society (Ezeani & Osita, 2012). It involves the willingness and ability to seek out investment opportunities, establish, and successfully run an enterprise. To succeed, entrepreneurs need to be genuinely interested in the business they're venturing into.

According to Nwaokolo (2013), entrepreneurship is about setting up and effectively managing enterprises, distinct from being employed in paid work. It's a continuous process that aims to drive innovation and creativity, turning ideas into value-producing enterprises.

The value of entrepreneurial skills lies in their ability to instill in students the potential to start new business ventures, creating jobs, increasing the supply of goods and services, reducing inflation, and ultimately alleviating poverty through wealth creation and employment.

Entrepreneurship education embodies a philosophy of self-reliance, promoting a new cultural and productive environment, attitudes, and culture to tackle future challenges (Ogundele, Akingbade, & Akinlabi, 2012).

Sustainable Development

This refers to development that can be maintained over time. This requires a balance between transforming production forces and social relations of production. According to the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development (1987), sustainable development meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It's about creating lasting improvements in the quality of life for all people through increased real income per-capita and better environmental resource management. Sustainable development is closely tied to economic growth and integration into the global trade system. Fostering entrepreneurial activity is crucial for poverty reduction. Moreover, entrepreneurial activity, which can be shaped by observational learning, is essential for sustainable development and poverty reduction, as influenced by reinforcement and punishment (Bandera, 1997).



Review of Related Literature

Entrepreneurship development occurs through the creation and adoption of new goods and services, skills, and knowledge. This involves mobilizing factors of production, such as land, labor, capital, and technology, which are imperfectly marketed to produce and market goods and services.

According to Olawale (2004), entrepreneurship development helps train entrepreneurs, enabling them to acquire traits like boldness, confidence, and leadership skills essential for running a business. Entrepreneurship education, therefore, fosters entrepreneurship development in any country.

In Kogi State, the justification for entrepreneurship education lies in the need to survive economic challenges. According to Ogun (2020), there are two key reasons for taking interest in entrepreneurship in developing economies: Firstly, entrepreneurship plays a vital role in market orientation, and secondly, the level of entrepreneurship is higher in developing countries due to fewer barriers to entry and the necessity for people to find alternative employment.

Objectives of Entrepreneurship Education in Kogi State

Entrepreneurship education is undoubtedly a key to lifting people out of poverty and unemployment, enabling them to start their own businesses and employ others. According to Paul (2005), as cited in Ossai and Nwalado (2012), entrepreneurship education aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. Provide functional education to youth, enabling them to be self-reliant and gainfully employed.
2. Equip young graduates with training that fosters creativity and innovation in identifying novel business opportunities.
3. Serve as a catalyst for economic growth and development.
4. Offer tertiary institution graduates training in risk management, making entrepreneurial ventures feasible.
5. Reduce the high rate of poverty.
6. Create employment opportunities.
7. Reduce rural-urban migration.
8. Provide young graduates with training and support to establish careers in small and medium-sized businesses.
9. Inculcate the spirit of perseverance in youth and adults, enabling them to persist in business ventures.
10. Facilitate a smooth transition from a traditional to a modern industrial economy.

The Role of Entrepreneurship Education

Entrepreneurship education can have a profoundly positive impact on learners at all levels and in various contexts. This may explain the proliferation of entrepreneurship education programs, each providing valuable outcomes at different stages of a learner's life. Entrepreneurship education is a key driver of economic wealth, and a significant majority of jobs are created by small businesses



founded by entrepreneurial minded individuals. By acquiring entrepreneurial skills, learners become more relevant in today's economy.

Entrepreneurship education equips people with essential traits like creativity, innovation, independence, and foresight, particularly in promoting local technology. In Nigeria, various organizations, such as the National Directorate of Employment (NDE), Industrial Development Centre (IDC), National Association of Small-Scale Industrialists (NASSI), National Association of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (NASME), and the Manufacturing Association of Nigeria (MAN), provide platforms for appreciating and promoting local technology.

For example, training in entrepreneurship has been used by many nations, such as Germany, to establish unique engineering-oriented business programs in universities, where potential engineers are encouraged to seek out ideas and develop promising ones from the invention phase to commercialization. Norway has also utilized entrepreneurship education to inculcate an innovation spirit, deliberately targeting youth (Oviare,2010).

Entrepreneurial activities serve as a real-life vehicle for developing academic skills. Trained entrepreneurs are empowered to tap into local resources in their immediate environment, a phenomenon demonstrated in countries like China, Japan, India, and other emerging economies. Entrepreneurship education enables employees to be more successful by understanding the operations of small businesses and the challenges faced by their employers.

Moreover, entrepreneurship education instills in learners the mentality of hard work, a key factor in unlocking poverty doors in developing areas. Entrepreneurs are trained to work diligently to run businesses profitably and successfully. By empowering youth, entrepreneurship education provides a guide for promoting self-development, based on the belief that young people are the best resources for meeting challenges and solving problems in today's world and beyond.

Techniques of Acquiring Entrepreneurship Education

1. Teaching Method

(Fayoll, 2009 and Lonappan and Davaraj, 2011) classify the teaching method into the following categories: case study, group discussion, individual presentation. individual written report, group project, formal lecture, guest speakers, action learning, seminar. web based learning and video recorded. Teaching methods are effective in terms of sending the relevant information to a boarder population in a relative short time period.

2. Industrial Training Exercise

Skills does not depend solely upon a person fundamental inmate capacities but must be developed through training practice and experience. If the objective of entrepreneurship education is to equip individuals with entrepreneurship skills, which are applicable directly to work, then the best techniques are industrial training exercise which would provide education and training that enable individuals to involve directly in the entrepreneurial process.

3. Experimental/ Practical Techniques

One of the objectives of entrepreneurship education is to prepare individual to act as entrepreneurs, one of the most effort are way techniques is to facilitate experiment by training



entrepreneurship out in a controlled environment, e.g. through business simulation or role playing (Ahmad, Baharua and Rahman, 2004).

4. Excursion Techniques

Excursion techniques will facilitate firsthand information on a particular field of study. This will enable young entrepreneurs to equip themselves with the various skills needed to achieve their dreams and aspirations as future business leaders.

5. Co-operation or group learning technique

This is a process of organizing young entrepreneurs into small groups to enable them to collaborate and maximize both their individual and collective learning. This technique will prompt a sense of mutual responsibility among the entrepreneurs to boost their self-esteem, comprehension of the subject matters.

Entrepreneurial Enterprise Programmes Initiated by the Government

Unemployment, particularly educated unemployment, is a significant problem in Nigeria, with existing employment opportunities insufficient to cater to the unemployed. To address this challenge, the government has established institutions designed to equip Nigerians with employable skills. Some of these institutions play vital roles in promoting and stimulating the growth of entrepreneurs, including:

- Nigeria Association of Small Scale Industrialists (NASSI)
- Industrial Development Centre (IDC)
- Centre for Management Development (CMD)
- Nigerian Industrial Development Bank (NIDB)
- Nigerian Bank for Commerce and Industry (NBCI)
- National Economic Reconstruction Fund (NERFUND)

The National Directorate of Employment (NDE) is a more comprehensive initiative, established in 1986 with a legal mandate to design and implement programs to combat mass unemployment. To achieve its objectives, NDE has articulated the following programs:

- Vocational Skills Development (VSD)
- Rural Employment Promotion Programme (REPP)
- Special Public Works Programme (SPWP)
- Small-Scale Enterprise Programme (SSEP)

The table below shows available trades/skills for acquisition under the Small-Scale Enterprise Programme (NDE).

Available Trade/Skill for Acquisition

There are different types of available trade/skill for acquisition in Nigeria. These include: computer operation, furniture making, fashion designing, soft furnishing, electrical installation, electronic installation, Electronic Repair (RTV), Auto Mechanic, printing, rewinding, vulcanizing, Ref, and AC Repairs, Upholstery/ Carpentry, Alum fabrication, GSM repairs, spray painting, hair dressing/ manicure, barbing, welding, metal fabrication, wood work /carving and plumbing. Others are soap making, driving, interior designing/decoration, masonry, brick making, catering, generator maintenance, music composing writing, boat making, knitting, baking / confectionery and black smiting



Challenges of Entrepreneurship Education

Entrepreneurship education is increasingly attracting attention as a source of job creation, employment for unemployed and economic dynamism in a rapidly globalizing world.

However there are several factors that hinder entrepreneurship education in Nigeria, they include:

1. Poor enterprising culture
2. Inadequacy of entrepreneurship teachers, materials and equipment
3. Unavailability of fund
4. Poor knowledge base on low spirit of competition
5. Inadequate facilities and equipment
6. Insensitivity of government to enterprise creation and expansion strategy
7. Poor plan and execution of process of action
8. Poor societal attitude to technical and vocation education development
9. Isolated or pocket of ineffective programme and management incompetence (Orkwe and Echoubiye, 2008).

Conclusion

Entrepreneurship education has been identified in this paper as a panacea for sustainable development and a solution to the scourge of poverty, hunger, and unemployment. Developing entrepreneurship education will significantly contribute to creating employment opportunities, enabling young people to develop their enterprising skills, and empowering them to become job creators rather than job seekers. By providing necessary skills and knowledge, entrepreneurship education can increase output, income, and wealth.

The goals of wealth creation, employment generation, poverty reduction, and value reorientation can only be effectively pursued, attained, and sustained through an efficient, relevant, and functional education system. Therefore, governments should provide improved skills acquisition centers equipped with modern facilities to enhance adequate training for Nigerian youth nationwide. Enduring societal empowerment must be centered on entrepreneurship education, as it is the key to self-employment and sustainable development.

Recommendations

The development of any country rests on the shoulders of its youth's productivity and creativity. Therefore, governments, parents, and non-governmental organizations have an obligation to empower youth to contribute their quota and improve their lives. The following recommendations are proffered:

1. Funding of entrepreneurship education should be a priority for the government, achievable through increased budgetary allocation to the education sector.
2. An appropriate curriculum for entrepreneurship development should be prepared. The Federal Ministry of Education, in conjunction with the National Universities Commission (NUC), National Board for Technical Education (NBTE), and Colleges of Education Commission, should develop curriculum modules for various levels of education, focusing on skills-oriented and employment-motivated programs.
3. All school programs should be geared toward providing entrepreneurship skills.



4. There is an urgent need to reorient and change the Nigerian youth mindset from seeking government-paid employment to self-employment.
 5. Strong linkages should be built with entrepreneurship agencies, private partners, and non-governmental agencies, encouraging them to participate in entrepreneurship education through funding.
 6. Every tertiary institution should have a department of entrepreneurship studies, making it compulsory for students to attend classes on entrepreneurship skills development.
 7. Adequate incentives should be provided for students of vocational and technical schools to boost their morale and motivate them to establish their businesses after school.
 8. School-based enterprises should be established, where students identify potential businesses, plan, create, and operate small businesses using the school as a mini-incubator.
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