

Functional Business and Entrepreneurship Education in Nigeria Universities: A Panacea for Entrepreneurship Development in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This paper posits that functional business and entrepreneurship education in Nigeria universities is a panacea for entrepreneurship development in Nigeria. The paper took a cursory look on the concept of functional education, business education, entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurship development. The paper reviewed the business and entrepreneurship education programmes as reflected in the National Universities Commission Core Curriculum minimum Academic Standards (NUC CCMAS). The paper highlighted the nexus between the philosophies, objectives, unique features, employability and 21st century skills of the programmes. The paper discussed that functional Business and entrepreneurship education has the potentials of promoting entrepreneurship development in Nigeria since it could lead to the acquisition of skills for identifying viable investment opportunities, proper marketing, financial management, proper management and avoidance of business failure. It could also enable individuals to become capable of living in the society and to contribute towards its economic development. Challenges of business and entrepreneurship education were discussed and the paper concluded that for Nigeria to achieve sustainable economy and become one of the most developed nations of the world, entrepreneurship development through functional business and entrepreneurship education is a must. The paper recommended among others that qualified business and entrepreneurship educators should be recruited, trained and re-trained in the area of entrepreneurship development, and the management of Universities should partner with industries to enable lecturers and students acquire practical experience to bridge the gap between theory and practice.

Keywords: Functional Education, Business Education, Entrepreneurship Education, Entrepreneurship Development

INTRODUCTION

Education is the transmission of knowledge, skills and values from one generation to another. The goal of education is to help individuals navigate life and contribute to national development. Nigeria's national policy on education in recognition of the significance of education stated that no nation can rise beyond the quality of its educational system. Therefore, education is seen as a catalyst for national development. For education to achieve the desired effect of development and transformation, it has to be functional in order to enable those who receive it to come with life skills. The success of many nations in tackling major security and development problems such as poverty, unemployment, insecurity, infrastructural deficiencies, inequality among others can be traced to their educational system that is functional.

The word functional means having practical application or serving a utilitarian purpose. A functional education is capable of serving the purpose for which it was designed. That is, it can enable individuals to become capable of living in the society and to contribute towards its economic development. Functional education is a holistic training of individuals to be useful to themselves, the community and the nation as a whole. According

to Orakwe (2023) functional education is the total process of bringing up individuals to develop their potentials to the fullest and consequently be able to contribute maximally to the development of the society. Similarly, Undie et al. (2021) stated that functional education refers to educational expectations or training that have positive and relevant impact on the trainee and by extension the community. In other words, an educational system is said to be functional where it is practically providing support to enable the learner to be useful to himself in terms of livelihood and the society he belongs. It is a type of education that is devoid of alienation and possibly frustration after schooling. It is the education in which the ability to perform productive tasks is more emphasized than education that aim at producing ideological conformity (Oguru & Amie-Ogan, 2023). It is a kind of education that emphasizes practice more than theory.

Functional education will produce graduates who are entrepreneurs and self-dependent and ready to practice what they have learned in the school. These entrepreneurs will also become employers of labour. More jobs will be created and income will be generated. The end result is that many will be lifted from their problems of unemployment and poverty. Functional education will lead to reduction or elimination of other developmental challenges and social ills presently experienced in the country (Orakwe, 2023). Functional education promotes the welfare of its citizenry, advances science and technology and economic growth. It is befitting for the needs and aspirations of the society. It prepares the individual to face his social goals, economic realities and future life challenges positively.

It is education that is alive, active and works for the benefit of all. It stimulates and empowers an individual with saleable skills and values to; live an ordered and disciplined life; understand his interest and vocation; and have the zeal to succeed amidst all odds. Functional education can translate into establishment and improvement of infrastructure' such as electricity, roads, health, education, water supply, integrated rural development, poverty reduction, improvement in people's standard of living, reduction in crime and increase in economic growth, positive attitude to work especially government work, political stability and patriotism. In fact, if education is intended to promote economic sufficiency for the beneficiaries, then there is a positive relationship between functional education and national development (Fuandai et al. in Oguru & Amie-Ogan, 2023).

The essence of functional education is to bring out the best in the individual. For Nigeria Universities to achieve its purpose of being functional, it must possess some features. Fuandai et al. in Oguru and Amie-Ogan (2023) came up with some of the features of functional education such as the following: relevance, accessibility, empowerment, self-reliance, involvement of stakeholders in its design; equipping recipients to harness their potentials, emphasizing the acquisition of practical skills and knowledge for gainful self-employment. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014) also believes that there is need for functional education for the promotion of a progressive, united Nigeria. To this end, school programmes need to be relevant, practical and comprehensive while interest and ability should determined the individuals direction in education for the acquisition of appropriate skills and development of mental, physical and social abilities and competences as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of the society.

The Concept of Business Education

Business education is an integral part of vocational education programme that provides individuals with appropriate knowledge, skills, attitude and competencies needed to fit into a chosen occupation(s) and perform in the business world as a producer or consumer of goods and services that business offers. Ajoma (2021) stated that business education is that education which provides its graduates with training in business skills and economic competencies necessary for them to advance a business career or establish a business enterprise. It is an aspect of vocational education that focuses on skills and knowledge acquisition for the recipients towards national development (Okolocha et al., 2024). It is often referred to as education for and about business. It is a skill oriented programme geared towards producing graduates who will not only go out to be job seekers but who can become entrepreneurs. It prepares students to be productive workers and successful entrepreneurs (Aluwong, 2020). Business education provides the learners both intellectual and occupational skills. These are skills that are intended to make them function effectively not only as employees but also as self reliant persons and wealth creators (Ekpenyong, 2010).

According to National Universities Commission Core Curriculum minimum Academic Standards (NUC CCMAS, 2023) Business Education is a specialized profession designed to provide students with knowledge, skills and competence leading to employability and advancement in office occupations, pedagogical skills in teaching business subjects at different levels of educational system as well as self employment or being an employer of labour. As an aspect of Vocational Education and Training, Business Education is designed to fill the gap between knowledge and practice by exposing students to General Education as well as specialized areas in Accounting, Entrepreneurship, Marketing and Office Management (NUC CCMAS, 2023).

Philosophy of Business Education

Business Education programme is to provide individuals with relevant knowledge, skills and competencies to be self-reliant and economically self-sufficient for gainful employment, meaningful living, and to contribute to the development of the society. The programme is designed in consonance with the needs of the business community to ensure that education and training offered are consistent with the competencies for the present and emerging job requirements and opportunities (NUC CCMAS, 2023).

Objectives of Business Education

The objectives of Business Education according to the NUC are to:

1. provide opportunity for practical job preparation or vocational studies in order to make students render effective and efficient services in office, distributive and service occupations.
2. prepare students, based on interest and aptitudes needed to enter into a business occupation, advance and profit in it.
3. provide opportunities for students to develop an understanding of business and economic system of the nation so as to enable them to participate actively as producers and consumers of goods and services
4. develop in students the basic awareness of the contribution which business and office employee makes to the nations economy.
5. develop and improve personal qualities and attitude of students as required in personal and employment situation
6. serve as a guide for individual student for suitable placement in business and office employment
7. enable students to have career consciousness and economic understanding of the free enterprise system
8. prepare student to assume the role of building a future generation through teaching and knowledge impartation.
9. prepare students for leadership position in both public and private life (NUC CCMAS, 2023).

Unique Features of Business Education Programme

1. emphases are placed on civic and social learning development
2. core practical and cognitive skills development for effective teaching of Business Education is intensified.
3. financial literacy skills development has been up-scaled
4. theoretical bases for entrepreneurial development is emphasized
5. students are equipped with knowledge in career development and professional business ethics
6. innovative and pragmatic skills that will enable students to operate and transact in a digital environment in both domestic and global marketing practices are developed
7. emphases are now placed on professional accounting courses that will expose Business Education students to industry requirements thereby filling the gap between knowledge and practice in the accounting profession.

Employability Skills in Business Education Programme

Business Education offers entrepreneurial/employability skills such as:

1. leadership skills

2. communication skills
3. customer service skills
4. financial literacy skills
5. business analytical skills
6. problem-solving skills
7. teaching skills
8. adaptability skills
9. capacity building skills
10. research skills

21st Century Skills in Business Education Programme

Business Education will afford its students the opportunity to learn and develop 21st Century skills that will enable them to fit into and take up contemporary business opportunities, employment opportunities and be self employed or employers of labour. These skills include the following, among others:

1. team work skills
2. digital literacy skills
3. creative and innovative skills
4. information literacy skills
5. media literacy skills
6. digital citizenship skills
7. flexibility skills
8. critical thinking skills
9. multitasking skills

In order to achieve the objectives of business education and for the acquisition of employability and 21st century skills stated above, courses such as Financial Accounting, office administration and management, principles of marketing, business mathematics, principles of business finance, business communication and report writing, cost accounting, office information technology, financial reporting, management accounting, public sector accounting, management information system, theories of entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation in business, Nigerian business environment, Nigerian marketing system, sales management, marketing management, fundamentals of data processing, digital skills, word processing, business law, vocational guidance, career developments and professional ethics, taxation, auditing and assurance, financial management, risk management in small business, industrial relations, international marketing, digital marketing, business to business marketing, organizational behaviour, and human resource management are offered, taught and learnt. Business education students are also expected to take courses in education and general studies in order to be prepared for the teaching career.

The Concept of Entrepreneurship Education

Entrepreneurship is a French word which is derived from the root word, “entreprendre”, meaning to undertake or to do something. The concept was first introduced in the 13th century and the meaning has evolved since then (Hillary et al., 2023). In business context, it means to start a business, identify a business opportunity, organise resources, manage and assume the risk of a business or an enterprise with the aim of making profits. Hisrich in Adebayo (2021) defines entrepreneurship as the process of creating something different with value by devoting the necessary time and efforts, assuming the accompanying financial, psychological and social risks, and receiving the resulting rewards of monetary and personal satisfaction. According to Ekpenyong (2010) entrepreneurship is the process of using creative and innovative ideas to create value by an individual, group or organization based on the opportunities and risks in the use of resources to start a venture, to modify or change the venture concept and strategy in the expectation of profit. Therefore, considering all the works cited, entrepreneurship education generally provides creative skills and knowledge needed to start and grow a business. In other words, it prepares individuals to create and successfully operate a business enterprise. It plays an important role in the creation and growth of businesses, as well as in the growth and prosperity of regions and nation (Hisrich et al., 2020).

From the aforesaid, one can conclude that entrepreneurship is more than being smart. It is the ability of a person to collaborate with others and to act in the face of new opportunities. It entails the possession of key skills and talents; innovativeness and the combination and usage of all these together with an entrepreneurship skill. The concept of entrepreneurship is however associated with a number of activities as it does not occur in a vacuum. For it to occur it demands the presence of an entrepreneur and an enabling environment. The Entrepreneurship Education programme is aimed at producing teachers for the teaching profession and for other disciplines. The new programme is tailored towards the Nigerian curriculum and policy guidelines for entrepreneurship education and covers areas such as entrepreneurship – rationale, scope and benefits; business formation – economics and legal considerations; issues in developing a business plan and feasibility; investment opportunities; kick- starting small businesses in Nigeria (NUC CCMAS, 2023).

Philosophy of Entrepreneurship Education

The philosophy of the programme according to NUC CCMAS (2023) is the production of entrepreneurship graduates, achievers, innovators and entrepreneurs/intrapreneurs who will take the lead to reposition Nigeria's human capital and productive sector as well as shoulder the responsibility of transforming the mindset of Nigerian youths through teaching, training/mentoring and consultancy for the development of entrepreneurial culture.

Objectives of Entrepreneurship Education

The objectives of degree programme in entrepreneurship education are as follows:

1. develop a group of competent professionals in the field of entrepreneurship;
2. motivate our youths through the psychological based entrepreneurial orientations obtainable from entrepreneurship training;
3. produce graduates for competence and self-employment by focussing on skills acquisition and entrepreneurship; and
4. encourage the spirit of enquiry, creativity and entrepreneurship through leadership by example (NUC CCMAS, 2023).

Unique Features of the Entrepreneurship Education Programme

1. the promotion and inculcation of self-worth in our graduates;
2. the development of core skills such as innovation and creativity for effective teaching;
3. the production of graduates in Entrepreneurship Education;
4. it promotes of self-esteem and self-reliance in our graduates;
5. it stresses on creation of job opportunities; and
6. it is practical oriented through practicum and workshop demonstration.

Employability Skills in Entrepreneurship Education Programme

The programme will help to:

1. produce a new generation of graduates with creative and innovative skills;
2. establish stronger business/entrepreneurial mindset;
3. setup new business ventures;
4. develop ability to apply ICT skills in business operations;
5. create employment and job opportunities; and
6. provide best managerial skills and practices (NUC CCMAS, 2023).

21st Century Skills in Entrepreneurship Education Programme

The programme will lead to the production of graduates who are expected to develop and acquire skills for the 21st century such as:

1. planning skills;

2. self-efficacy;
3. decision making skills;
4. ability to set goals;
5. self-management skills;
6. problem solving skills;
7. team solving;
8. job creation;
9. application of innovative ideas;
10. digital literacy and application of IT in management; and
11. critical thinking (NUC CCMAS, 2023).

A cursory look at business and entrepreneurship education curriculum in Nigeria universities revealed that both programmes are very related in terms of objectives, philosophy, employability skills, 21st century skills and unique features. In view of the aforementioned similarities or relatedness, business and entrepreneurship education serves as a means of behaviour modification, by individual and the society, it serves as a means of meeting the needs of individual and the society, it is a formalized and institutionalized medium of instruction to individual or people within any given society to enable them acquire useful skills and knowledge that will enable them to be useful to themselves and contribute to the development of his/her immediate society, and the world at large. This presupposes that when business and entrepreneurship education programmes are carefully taught, their impact in meeting personal and national economic aspiration cannot be in doubt.

However, the author suggests that it is more suitable to retain entrepreneurship education as an option in business education. Business education is a skill-based course which inculcates entrepreneurial skills in the recipient. Entrepreneurship on the other hand, deals with creative identification and utilization of business opportunities. Business and Entrepreneurship education must be emphasized and used as the tool for fighting the war against poverty and unemployment; it must be emphasized in all our educational attempts (Hillary et al. 2023). This paper establishes that Business and entrepreneurship education has the potentials of promoting entrepreneurship development in Nigeria since it could lead to the acquisition of skills for identifying viable investment opportunities, proper marketing, financial management, proper management and avoidance of business failure. The implication of this is that, for Nigeria to encourage entrepreneurship, reduce unemployment and help the practicing entrepreneurs to be successful and achieve the aim of making their ventures to be going-concerns, Business and Entrepreneurship Education should be taken serious and highly encouraged; otherwise, the desire of Nigeria to encourage self-employment through entrepreneurship may end up as a mirage.

Therefore, the importance of a functional business and entrepreneurship education programme in Nigerian Universities that will develop individuals that will contribute meaningfully to entrepreneurship development and bring about economic growth and development of the nation cannot be under estimated. The uncontrolled rate of unemployment and poverty has brought about the dire need of functional business and entrepreneurship education programme in Nigerian universities so that the students will not only be exposed to a particular skill but also to creatively think sufficient enough to establish and run a business at least at the small scale level.

Entrepreneurship Development

An Entrepreneur has been defined as a creative person who readily bears all forms of risks associated with an enterprise while entrepreneurship is the act of being an entrepreneur. Development is the process of growth, progress and improvement within a physical setting. It is the gradual growth of something so that it becomes more advanced and stronger. Relating all the earlier three definitions of an entrepreneur, entrepreneurship and development, Hisrich et al., (2017) defined entrepreneurship development as the process of enhancing entrepreneurial skills, knowledge and mindset to enable individuals to start, manage, and grow successful businesses. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2010) defined entrepreneurship development as the process of enhancing entrepreneurial skills and knowledge through structured training and institution-building programmes. According to UNDP, entrepreneurship development aims to enlarge the base of entrepreneurs in order to hasten the pace at which new ventures are created. This accelerates employment generation and economic development. Entrepreneurship development focuses on the individual who wishes to

start or expand a business. Furthermore, entrepreneurship development concentrates more on job creation, economic growth, innovation, poverty reduction and sustainable development.

The Federal Government of Nigeria recognized the role entrepreneurship could play in the growth and development of the economy decided on two things, one, that entrepreneurship education should be made a general studies course for all undergraduates of the tertiary institutions. The second was that a centre for entrepreneurial development be established in each of the tertiary institutions where different skills would be taught. At the end of their programme of study, graduates of the tertiary institutions would be able to set up their own businesses with a view to contributing to the economy (Lawal & Ibrahim, 2020). The aforementioned is to encourage private entrepreneurship, self employment, job creations, income growth, poverty eradication and economic development.

Furthermore, the manner with which hunger and poverty have threatened the lives and future ambition of youths especially graduates in Nigeria, have led to scholars prescribing entrepreneurship development as the permanent cure for extreme hunger and poverty necessitated by unemployment. The great need for entrepreneurship development in Nigeria today, more than ever, is necessitated by the rate of unemployment and its effect on both the people and the nation. In spite of the fact that entrepreneurship development has been regarded as a panacea for employment generation and technological development in Nigeria, adequate attention has not been given to it. Against this backdrop, entrepreneurship when and if adequately developed in Nigeria will take its pride of place in quelling unemployment and thus generating employment among Nigerian youths especially the graduates and once again, place the economy on a proper footing.

Finally, Nigeria as a country has numerous business and investment potentials due to the abundant, vibrant and dynamic human and natural resources it possesses. Tapping these resources require the ability to identify potentially useful and economically viable fields of endeavours. Entrepreneurship development through functional business and entrepreneurship education is a must for economic growth and development.

Challenges of Functional Business and Entrepreneurship Education Programme

The likely challenges to functional Business and Entrepreneurship education in achieving entrepreneurship development are:

1. **Gap between theory and practice:** One of the primary challenges is the disconnect between theoretical knowledge and practical application. Many business and entrepreneurship educators focus too much on theoretical concepts, leaving students with inadequate hands-on experience.
2. **Lack of Industry Partnerships:** Another challenge is the lack of industry partnerships and collaboration. Without strong connections to the business community (town and gown connections), students may not gain the real-world experience and networking opportunities they need to succeed.
3. **Dearth of lecturers that are entrepreneurial conscious:** Fostering an entrepreneurial mindset in students can be difficult. Educators must have practical experience and knowledge of the business world to effectively teach and mentor students because many students may not have the innate qualities that are typically associated with successful entrepreneurs.
4. **Government policy:** Institutions appoint their staff based on government policy in terms of structure and spatial spread to reflect federal or state character. Most institutions tend to promote ethnicity and mediocrity in this regard with people from institution's very immediate catchment area at an undue advantage (Undie et al., 2021). This gives room for appointment of unqualified staff.
5. **Technology and Innovation:** Keeping pace with technological advancements and innovation can be a challenge for functional business and entrepreneurship education. The curriculum must stay up-to-date with latest trends and tools to remain relevant.
6. **Limited access to funding:** Business and entrepreneurship education is capital intensive since both lecturers and students need money to practicalise the theory of initiating, establishing and running an enterprise. Funds are needed for state-of-the-art Entrepreneurship Development Centres and Directorates. Limited funding can limit the ability of the programmes to provide students with the practical experience and training they need.

7. **Politics:** The force that will kill or save the university, polytechnic and college of education systems in Nigeria is politics. Government controls and has undue interference in the management of tertiary education, allocation of funds/grants, values and consequently the erosion of autonomy and academic freedom are detrimental and inhibitive to their overall development (Undie et al., 2021).

CONCLUSION

The paper concluded that for Nigeria to achieve sustainable economy and become one of the most developed nations of the world, entrepreneurship development through functional business and entrepreneurship education is a must. It will lead to production of well trained and skillful workforce, knowledgeable and competent who will engender entrepreneurship development in Nigeria and bring about economic growth and development. It will solve the problems of teaming youth unemployment, extreme poverty, as well as lack of capacity to move her economy forward relative to global economic index. This paper has advocated for functional business and entrepreneurship education to stimulate entrepreneurship development in Nigeria which can be achieved through well planned tertiary education that is knowledge driven, and one where there is partnership with the institutions, industry, Government and the society.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For entrepreneurship development in Nigeria through business and entrepreneurship education programme the following recommendations are made:

- Government should recruit, train and re-train Business and Entrepreneurship Educators in the area of entrepreneurship development. They should be sponsored to attend local and international conferences to acquire more knowledge so that they can effectively impart the entrepreneurial skills to the students.
- The management of Universities should partner with industries to enable lecturers and students to acquire practical experience to bridge the gap between theory and practice.
- The Department of business and entrepreneurship education should constantly organize workshops for the students and invite successful businessmen and women to give talk on how to initiate, source for funds, start and run a business successfully.
- The students should be made to go on attachment to successful entrepreneurs for a period of six months. This will also help them to practically acquire entrepreneurial skills that will enable them initiate, establish and run their businesses after graduation.

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