

# **Entrepreneurship Education and Skill-Oriented Trade Development in Nigerian Higher Institutions**

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## **Abstract**

*The goal of entrepreneurship education and skill-oriented trade development is to equip students with entrepreneurial capacities in terms of the ability to take risks, identify opportunities and manage resources available even in the face of challenges and difficulties. Entrepreneurship education is designed to furnish students with skills required to enable them to be self-reliant and self-employed. This study therefore assessed the relevance of the curriculum content of entrepreneurship education in choosing skill-oriented trade by postgraduate students in higher institutions of learning. The descriptive research design was adopted to assess three hundred respondents selected from three institutions of higher learning in Lagos State using random sampling techniques. A structured questionnaire was used for data collection. Research questions were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The findings of the study reveal that: the existing curriculum content of entrepreneurship education is comprehensive but does not solve the problems of the immediate environment; students lack the capability to identify skill-oriented trade opportunities; and there is a significant relationship between students' course of study and course contents of entrepreneurship education. It is therefore recommended that policy makers should fine-tune the courses to be relevant to students' immediate environment and review the pedagogical approach to learning.*

**Keywords:** *Entrepreneurship education, education, higher institution, skill oriented.*

## **Introduction**

The emergence of knowledge economy has led the Nigerian universities to the adoption of entrepreneurship education curriculum for human capital development. This is to alleviate the problem of unemployment by providing useful and relevant educational services. Lack of entrepreneurial skills is no doubt a major contributing factor to the problem of unemployment of graduates in Nigeria. Entrepreneurial drive can be achieved through effective teaching and learning and promotion of entrepreneurial spirits among students. To achieve this there is the need to reposition and transform entrepreneurship education curriculum content and approach towards drive for job creation in solving

immediate needs. Nwankwo's (2004) report on the National Universities Commission's (NUC) survey revealed that Nigerian University graduates lack basic job competence, oral communication and managerial skills. The situation according to Ikpesu, (2014) called for re-designing the curriculum to equip the future generation of graduates with skills, knowledge and attitudes to cope with the challenges of productivity. These identified gaps between what is obtained and the expected goals of tertiary education in meeting the global challenges of wealth creation led the Federal Government through the National Universities Commission (NUC) to make it mandatory for all Nigerian universities to introduce entrepreneurship education (EE) for undergraduates beginning from 2007/2008 academic year. This is to enhance the knowledge of appropriate skills, competence and disposition among the graduates to be globally competitive and capable of contributing meaningfully to Nigerian's socio-economic development.

Entrepreneurship education therefore, develops and equips students with the necessary skills and competence required to enable them to be self-reliant and self-employed. Higher education contributes to national development through high level relevant manpower training. This implies that advanced intellectual capability of the individual is as a result of high manpower training. The overall objective of entrepreneurship education is to continuously foster entrepreneurship culture amongst students and faculties with a view of not only educating them but also to support graduates of the system towards establishing and maintaining sustainable business ventures. However, Ekpo (2010) as cited in Onuma (2016) stated that a study carried out by the Federal Ministry of Education from 2005-2010 revealed that seventy one percent (71%) of graduate students from Nigerian Universities and other forms of tertiary institutions are unemployed. Recent report of the Nigeria Bureau of Statistics (NBS) revealed that over 1.5 million Nigerians are unemployed in the first quarter of 2016; with 42.24% of the population representing youth unemployment rate ([www.thecable.ng](http://www.thecable.ng)). It is assumed that with the introduction of entrepreneurship education in our schools graduate unemployment and poverty which has been of national concerns will be salvaged and the philosophy of self-reliance will be promoted. This is because it is assumed that entrepreneurship education has the potential to instill into students of higher institutions of learning the skills, ability and knowledge to enable them to identify potential business opportunities.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The introduction of entrepreneurship education in Nigerian universities is expected to create jobs and ease the problem of unemployment among graduates.

However, these goals have not been fully achieved. Studies have shown that despite their benefitting from entrepreneurship education, unemployment has persisted among our graduates in terms of wide margins between desired outputs and real outcomes (Agbonahor, 2016). Similarly Amadi (2014) asserts that the situations pose great challenges to the very existence of individuals in most developing nations thereby calling for the training of educated men and women who can function effectively in the society in which they live in. It is against this background that this study therefore, assessed the relevance of the curriculum content of entrepreneurship education to choosing skill-oriented trade by university graduates.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of this study is to:

1. Examine the relevance of the existing curriculum content of entrepreneurship education in higher institutions of learning to students' skills acquisition for self-reliance.
2. Assess students' capability to identify skill-oriented trade opportunities in their environment.
3. Identify the relationship between students' course of study and the course contents of entrepreneurship education.

### **Research Questions**

1. What is the relevance of existing curriculum content of entrepreneurship education in higher institutions of learning to students' skill acquisition for self-reliance?
2. How does the knowledge of entrepreneurship education influence their ability to identify skill-oriented trade opportunities in their environment?
3. How does students' course of study relate to the curriculum contents of entrepreneurship education?

### **Hypothesis**

There is no significant relationship between students' course of study and the course contents of entrepreneurship education.

### **Significance of the Study**

The need for entrepreneurship education in the developmental effort of the nation cannot be underestimated as it helps to deal with myriad socio-economic problems. The study will help policy makers to maintain a balance between the potential needs of the teaming youths and how to adapt the curriculum to harness,

inculcate and develop entrepreneurial careers of the young generation. The study will encourage policy makers to leverage on culture of high-tech entrepreneurship through practical entrepreneurship endeavour, visits to high-tech start-ups and live case studies with successful entrepreneurs, to expose students to the content, context and how to build new ventures. This will enhance their ability to identify, create, design and launch new ventures based on innovative technologies. This will also encourage a highly interactive environment that will enhance sustainable development.

### **Review of Related Literature**

While education is the act or process of acquiring general knowledge, developing the powers of reasoning and judgment, entrepreneurship education arms the students with additional knowledge, attributes and capabilities essential to apply these abilities in the context of setting up a new venture or business (Cheung and Chan, 2011). The emphasis of the Entrepreneurship Education (EEd) is to produce entrepreneurs – people capable of taking risks in the process of producing goods or rendering services to make profit (Singh and Sharma 2011). According to Wilson (2008), the introduction of EEd in most European universities was aimed at developing entrepreneurial capacities and mind sets of students. It is this purpose driven nature of EEd that influences the curricula provisions of institutions in Europe. At inception, it was envisaged that entrepreneurship education will not only equip graduates with the motivation for successful entrepreneurship, but also to provide the needed prop to boost private sector investment to curb the problem of unemployment among school leavers. Ajeunmobi and Ademola (2014) assert that entrepreneurship education is meant to emphasize the importance of promoting attitudes such as personal responsibility, motivation, a spirit of innovation, curiosity and taking responsibility for the development of the society. Akinkugbe (2004) presumed that the objective of EEd is to develop in graduates, the skills, entrepreneurial orientation and mind set to prepare for the business, vocational and professional lives after their formal university education. Given this trend, EEd need to undertake some policy changes including faculty or school overall development of alternative specialized programs, to be more accommodating to future entrepreneurs. In the same vein Lee and Wong (2005) asserts that the teaching of EEd should be focused on elaborating its role as a catalyst for economic development and job creation in any society.

### **Entrepreneurship Education**

Entrepreneurship education, according to Ajeunmobi and Ademola (2014), is defined as the whole set of education and training activities - within the educational system that is concerned with knowledge, ability and willingness of an individual to turn ideas into action, exploring novel opportunities to be able to start and own business. In other words, entrepreneurship education is geared towards the promotion of entrepreneurship and stimulating entrepreneurial skills for an enterprising career in starting and leading a business and achieving self-employment. Similarly Amadi (2014) asserts that entrepreneurship education seeks to provide students with the knowledge, skills and motivation to encourage entrepreneurial success in a variety of settings. Entrepreneurship education involves the transmission of knowledge and skills to encourage entrepreneurial activities; promotion of economic education and civil society and enhancement of teaching and learning to motivate the learner. According to Gyamfi (2013), entrepreneurship education is an orientation that seeks to transform graduates from job seekers into job creators in order to reduce graduate unemployment thereby increasing students' interest in entrepreneurship as a career. The rationale for introducing entrepreneurship course in universities curricular development is to help the students to acquire increased understanding and imbibe the spirit entrepreneurship.

### **Curriculum Content and Entrepreneurship Education**

Given the current high rate of unemployment, many graduates have considered venturing into entrepreneurship since the labour market is full. Gyamfi (2013) argues that the types and quality of the education received sometimes do not develop the specific skills needed in wealth creation and management process. There seems to be lack of specific skills to initiate wealth creation and sustain it for self-reliant. Commenting further, Gyamfi (2013) states that the course content of the entrepreneurship education programme should make a constructive contribution to improving the orientation of people that result in the acquisition of skills, creativity, confidence, drive and courage to create self-employment. The course content of entrepreneurial skills are categorized into three broad areas namely; technical skills, business management skills and personal skills. Entrepreneurship education is developed to include the growth of an entrepreneurial culture, promote enterprise, create new ventures, and foster entrepreneurial mind sets (Kuratko, 2003). EEd is focused on life and action orientation primarily embodied in teaching students how to develop a business plan and help them see things from a different perspectives, create a mind set to develop entrepreneurship capabilities and self-made wealth. Arogundade (2011)

as cited in (Amadi 2014) observed that higher education has not properly included the philosophy of self-reliance such as creating a new cultural and productive environment that will promote pride in primitive work and self-discipline, encouraging people to take part actively and freely in discussions and decisions affecting their general welfare, promoting new sets of attitudes and culture for the attainment of future challenges. Justifying the importance of entrepreneurship education, Agbonahor (2016) believed that entrepreneurship education will not only equip students with new skills to be able to harness opportunities, be self-reliant and become job-creators and not job-seekers on graduation; it was also to provide the needed prop to boost private sector investment to curb the problem of unemployment among school leavers. To ensure success and for effective delivery of entrepreneurship education, the contents of the curriculum over the years must be consistent, properly coordinated and in constant review (Chinonye and Akinbode, 2014). This is to ensure the relevancy and effectiveness of the curriculum in solving the problem of unemployment. Entrepreneurship education programmes should be able to equip students with innovative skills for self-reliant. This will encourage action-based approach to teaching and learning by exposing the students to the practical aspects of the course. However, Chinonye and Akinbode (2014) state that the major challenge facing the teaching of entrepreneurship education is the application of the curriculum contents in solving the problem of wealth creation for our graduates. Malaysia, learning from the mistakes of South Africa, channeled the role of EEd to supporting the local economy and society, which helped to develop entrepreneurial dispositions and inculcate the spirit of entrepreneurship in graduates (Cheng, Chan & Mahmood, 2009). Chinonye and Akinbode (2014) enumerate expected key outcomes of entrepreneurship education among students. These include:

- Development of entrepreneurial behaviour, skills and attitudes,
- Understanding and imbibing of entrepreneurial values and emotions
- Motivation towards an entrepreneurial lifestyle and occupation
- Competencies in practice
- Development and management of organization for sustainability
- Management of interpersonal relationships.

OECD (2010) opines that Entrepreneurial curriculum should contain information that would help learners to identify opportunities, evaluate business concepts, develop a functioning business plan, fund and launch ventures and real life situations as case studies which should be discussed in the classroom.

The entrepreneurship course contents of some universities include topics such as entrepreneurship theory and practice, business, staffing and marketing, capital requirement and raising, financial planning and management, feasibility studies and reports, innovations, legal issues in business, insurance and environmental consideration, and possible business opportunities in Nigeria.

### **Methodology**

The study employed the descriptive survey research design, which according to Amadi (2014) entails the collection of data from a defined population to describe opinion, status, benefits, and views of the population using the variables under study. The population for the study included all postgraduate students of the University of Lagos and Lagos State University. A sample size of 150 students was selected from each of these institutions using the purposive random sampling technique, giving a total of 300 respondents.

The researcher used a questionnaire titled Entrepreneurship Education and Skill-Oriented Development (EESD). The instrument was validated by experts in the field of Educational Administration and Measurement and Evaluation. A pilot study was carried out using 30 students and analyzed using the Cronbach alpha. A reliability coefficient of 0.81 was got and was considered reliable for the study.

The instrument was personally administered and retrieved by the researcher. The 300 copies were completed, retrieved, and used for statistical analysis. Mean scores were used in answering the research questions. A 4-point Likert type rating scale was used, which was further reduced to Agree and Disagree; the criterion mean value of 2.5 was set and all items below this value are considered to be on disagreeing affirmation and vice versa. The hypothesis was tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation.

### **Results**

The result from table 1 indicates that the curriculum content of entrepreneurial education is not relevant enough to students' skill acquisition for self-reliance based on responses of the respondents. With a mean score of 2.166 and 2.853, the respondents revealed that the curriculum content of entrepreneurial education has not helped them to develop good writing skills and to articulate good business ideas for self-reliant respectively. The table equally showed that respondents agreed to lack of confidence and motivation in exploiting their immediate environment even with the teaching/learning of entrepreneurial education (mean: 2.316; 2.66).

Table 2 shows that the respondents disagreed that entrepreneurship education influences students' ability to identify skill-oriented trade opportunities in their environment. With a mean score of 2, 3, 4, respectively, the respondents agreed that entrepreneurial education has not been able to influence students' ability to identify opportunities and engage in wealth creation. The respondents also agreed (mean score 5, 7, & 8) that entrepreneurial education has not helped them to identify and develop career life in the vocational field.

Table 3 indicates that there is no relationship between students' course of study and the course content of entrepreneurship education (Mean: 2.9). This is based on the fact that their knowledge of models, course content not correlating in entrepreneurial education and , according to the respondents, have not helped them to identify opportunities in their field of study. This is supported with mean scores of 2.560.

The result from table 4 shows a significant relationship between students' course of study and the course content of entrepreneurship education. The finding is based on the result of analysis which produced r- value of .503,  $P < 0.05$  at 298 degree of freedom. Thus the null hypothesis which states that "there is no significant relationship between students' course of study and the course content of entrepreneurship education" was rejected.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The result of the study reveals that the existing curriculum content of entrepreneurship education in higher institutions of learning is not relevant to students' skills acquisition for self-reliance. The result corroborates Gyamfi's (2013) observation that the types and quality of the education received sometimes do not develop the specific skills needed in the wealth creation and management process.

The findings also show that entrepreneurship education has not helped to influence students' ability to identify skill-oriented trade opportunities in their environment. The result is in line with Arogundade (2011) as cited in Amadi (2014), who observes that higher education has not properly included the philosophy of self-reliance such as creating a new cultural and productive environment that will promote pride in primitive work and self-discipline. Contrary to the result, OECD (2010) believes that Entrepreneurial curriculum should contain information that would help learners to identify opportunities, evaluate business concepts, develop a functioning business plan, fund and launch

ventures and real life situations as case studies which should be discussed in the classroom.

The result of the study reveals that there is a significant relationship between students' course of study and the course content of entrepreneurship education. The result corroborates the study of Akinkugbe (2004) which concludes that the objective of EEd is to develop in graduates, the skills, entrepreneurial orientation and mind set to prepare for the business, vocational and professional lives after their formal university education.

### **Conclusion**

In analyzing the relationship between the curriculum content of EEd and skills for self-reliance, it was observed that despite the fact that the EEd curriculum is designed to equip students with the necessary skills to be self-reliant, the expected outcome has not been fully achieved. Our graduates still display lack of the appropriate education needed for skill-oriented trade development in Nigeria.

### **Recommendation**

Based on the results of the study, we recommend as follows:

1. Policy makers should fine-tune the curriculum to align with the students' areas of specialization rather than making it general for all departments (each department to have a curriculum peculiar to its specialization). There should be some policy changes including faculty or school overall development of alternative specialized programmes, to be more accommodating to upcoming entrepreneurs.
2. Realizing the differences in the environment where the students come from, policy makers should align the contents of the curriculum to be relevant to students' immediate environment in terms of having alternative courses rather than making every student go through the same EEd curriculum. The EEd curriculum should be re-designed to equip the future generation of graduates with skills, knowledge and attitudes to cope with the challenges of their environment.
3. Since the rationale for introducing entrepreneurship courses in universities' curricular is to help the students to acquire increased understanding and imbibe the spirit of entrepreneurship, there should be a review of the pedagogical approach to teaching/learning whereby practitioners in the industries should be made part of the teaching of the courses. This could help to develop students' interest in entrepreneurship.

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**Appendix**

**Table 1: Existing curriculum contents of entrepreneurship education and students skills acquisition for self-reliance**

S/N	Statements	Agree	Disagree	Mean	Std. Dev.
1	Entrepreneurship education has helped me to develop good writing skills	139 (46.3%)	161 (63.7%)	2.166	.857
2	Entrepreneurship education has helped me to be able to articulate good business ideas	228 (76%)	72 (24.0)	2.853	.949
3	Entrepreneurship education has helped me to develop and present ideas in convincing manner to attract sponsorship	149 (49.6%)	151 (50.30%)	2.706	1.069
4	Entrepreneurship education did not motivate me to be self-reliant	198 (66%)	102 (34%)	2.316	.934
5	Entrepreneurship education has helped me to exploit my immediate environment	74 (24.7%)	226 (75.3%)	2.66	.203
6	I lack confidence to venture into any type of business	165 (55%)	102 (34%)	1.853	1.004
7	Fear of being cheated by others has not allowed me to collaborate with others to start up a business	123 (41%)	117 (59%)	2.040	1.18
<b>Average Mean</b>				<b>2.370</b>	<b>.885</b>

**Table 2: Entrepreneurship education and skill oriented trade opportunities**

S/N	Statements	A	D	Mean	Std. Dev.
1	Knowledge from entrepreneurship education is enough to encourage me to start up a business	40 (13.3%)	260 (86.7%)	2.440	1.176
2	I do not have the ability to see problems as opportunities	162 (54%)	138 (46%)	1.800	.775
3	Entrepreneurship education has not helped me to indulge in wealth creation	188 (62.7%)	112 (37.3%)	2.263	1.04
4	Despite my introduction to entrepreneurship Education, I still cannot identify and approach good customers	192 (64%)	108 (36%)	1.936	1.037
5	Entrepreneurship education has helped me to develop career life into vocational fields	73 (24.3%)	227 (75.7%)	2.450	1.13
6	With my knowledge from entrepreneurship education, I can manage and set business goals for myself	203 (67.6%)	97 (32.30%)	2.546	1.07
7	It has not been easy for me to go through the process of generating business plan	258 (89.3%)	31 (10.7%)	2.603	1.043
8	Current trends in technology have not encouraged me to identify a business plan	108 (36%)	192 (64%)	1.903	.834
9	It is still difficult for me to choose appropriate sales strategy	166 (55.3%)	134 (44.7%)	2.590	1.11
<b>Average Mean</b>				<b>2.281</b>	<b>1.02</b>

Note: (i) Figures in the parenthesis are frequency distributions (ii) Figures outside the parenthesis are percentage distribution

**Table 3: Relationship between course of study and course content of entrepreneurship education**

S/N		Agree	Disagree	Mean	Std. Dev.
1	My Knowledge of models in business has helped me to identify opportunities in my area of study	197 (75.70%)	103 (34.4%)	2.560	1.078
2	Entrepreneurship education has helped me to identify a business that is related to my course of study in my immediate environment	147 (49%)	153 (51%)	2.336	1.166
3	The inadequacy of the teaching approach hinders my ability to develop any business plan	162 (54%)	138 (46%)	2.403	1.117
4	The internship period of my course of study is not enough to give me experience needed	96 (33%)	195 (67%)	2.577	1.065
5	The course content of the entrepreneurship education does not correlates to my course of study	28 (9.6%)	263 (90.4%)	3.319	.641
6	Current trends in technology require practical details to start a business and not theory that we learn in the school	121 (41.60%)	170 (58.40%)	3.398	.946
7	I will prefer those working in the industry related to my course of study to teach entrepreneurship education than my current lecturers	240 (83.0%)	51 (17%)	3.446	.886
8	If I have the opportunity and the resources I will want to be self employed	259 (86.4%)	9 (3.6%)	3.202	.889
<b>Average Mean</b>				<b>2.905</b>	<b>0.973</b>

Table 4: Pearson Product Moment Correlation showing Relationship between course of study and content of entrepreneurship education

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Dev	R- value	P-value
Students course of study	300	2.51	.325	.503	.000
Course content	300	2.53	.399		

$P < 0.05$ ,  $df = 298$