

IMPACT OF INNOVATIVE AND DIVERSIFIED ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION PROGRAMMES ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN RIVERS STATE.

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Abstract

In the bid to promote sustainable development in line with the SDGs, entrepreneurship education programmes have been identified as an imperative tool for sustainable development in Rivers State, Nigeria. Entrepreneurship education is a collection of formalized teachings that informs, trains, and educates anyone interested in participating in socio-economic development through a project to promote entrepreneurship awareness, business creation, or small business development. The objectives of entrepreneurship education programmes have not been achieved maximally. There are arising issues of vandalism, theft, fraudulent practices etc. The limitations of entrepreneurship education programmes is significant in the attitude of graduate youths towards white collar jobs, especially in the oil rich regions to which Rivers State belongs. The researchers have observed that there is a decline in entrepreneurial activities among school leavers and graduates which make up a high population of energetic but mostly unemployed youths of the State. This research aims at innovative and diversified entrepreneurship education programmes hinged on sustainable development in Rivers state. This work is geared towards exposing Rivers people to innovative entrepreneurial activities as a means of diversifying from the traditional means of entrepreneurship, through educational institutions in the state in order to achieve sustainable development. Innovative and diversified entrepreneurial activities such as ICT-based-business, reprographic business, green entrepreneurship business, agricultural technology/based business among others and the concepts of entrepreneur, entrepreneurship, entrepreneurship education, challenges of entrepreneurship education in Nigeria and strategies for effective entrepreneurship education will be the focus of this study.

Keyword: Innovative, Diversified, Entrepreneurship Education, Entrepreneurship and Sustainable Development

The high rate of unemployment globally is a major concern to government of nations and international organization, there has been an expanding interest in business venture as a

result of its essential worth in expanding public thriving and decreasing the scourge of unemployment among the communities. Entrepreneurship is a movement that involves legitimate venturing and accounting for profit. According to Shane and Venkataraman (2000), emphasize that it is a “nexus” that involves entrepreneurial individuals seizing and exploiting lucrative opportunities. The world has never been in need of students and graduates who wants to make a difference than it is today (Emmanuel, 2020). Youths are craving to make a difference and proffer solutions to the challenges of life. This has stirred up so many innovations and diversification, especially in the area of entrepreneurship. According to Davis (2015), entrepreneurship is the creation and running of one’s own business. Peterman and Kennedy (2003) further noted that entrepreneurship is the administration of abilities, or the individual drive used to consolidate assets beneficially.

Growth in entrepreneurship education has accelerated dramatically over the past years in both developed and developing countries (Robinson & Carpenter,2004). Entrepreneurship education is “a collection of formalized teachings that informs, trains, and educates anyone interested in participating in socio-economic development through a project to promote entrepreneurship awareness, business creation, or small business development”. Suleiman (2010) noted that entrepreneurship education seeks to prepare people particularly the youths to be responsible, enterprising individual who became entrepreneurs or entrepreneurial thinkers by immersing them in real life learning experience whereby they can take risks, manage result and learn from the outcome. The entrepreneur is believed to possess some traits which includes; boldness, confidence, personal leadership and force(Okojie,2009). The entrepreneur is defined as someone who has the ability and desire to establish, administer and succeed in a startup venture along with risk entitled to it, to make profits. The trend of technologies has exposed businesses to innovative means of transacting, also diversification in ventures and application for the goal of problem solving and profit making. An innovative and diversified economy is considered sustainable in development and has high positive impact on the Nation and its citizens.

In order to understand the concept of sustainable development, it is essential to first understand the individual term, sustainable and development. The Oxford Dictionary defined sustainable as the ability to be maintained at a certain rate or level. It is the quality attached to a thing. Development, Balogun in Kobani and Alozie (2015) noted that development is concerned with change but it is not simply the same as change. They noted further, that development is concerned with those progressive changes which are rooted in, sprang out of previous situations. This means that development is not making everything new but a new emerging from the old, (Kobani & Alozie, 2015). Sustainable development, according to the Brundtland Report: in Kobani and Alozie (2015), is the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generation to meet their own needs. Innovation is defined as the generation and introduction of new ideas, which leads to the development of new products and services, processes and system in all areas of business activity, while diversification is a corporate strategy involving investing and establishing a range of business with different features in order to reduce risk.

Innovative and diversification of entrepreneurship education programmes will be of positive impact for sustainable development in Rivers State. As earlier stated by Kobani andAlozie, development is not making everything new but a new emerging from the old. There is need for the new method of entrepreneurship emerging from the old or traditional

method of entrepreneurship education programmes it is the place of innovation and diversification. Integrating technological skills of entrepreneurship with traditional methods, such as cinematography, 3D Animation creation, renewable energy (Solar installation and repair), agricultural technologies, green entrepreneurship etc. Rivers State is located at the south-south region of Nigeria with 23 local government areas, blessed with natural resources. Innovative and diversified entrepreneurship programmes will be of immense benefit to the development of Rivers State and the effective utilization of these resources. Especially crude oil which has over 1,000 by-products, in the view of Dana (2001) noted that our educational institutions, few as they were, remained factories for producing white collar jobbers with no special profession nor was entrepreneurship skills envisaged in the educational system. It is against this background that the researchers hope to unravel the impact of innovative and diversified entrepreneurship education programmes on sustainable development in Rivers State.

Concept of Entrepreneurship

To understand the concept of entrepreneurship it is imperative to know the entrepreneur. The entrepreneur is defined as someone who has the ability and desire to establish, administer and succeed in a startup venture along with risk entitled to it, to make profits. The entrepreneurs are often known as a source of new ideas or innovators, and bring new ideas in the market by replacing old with a new invention. It can be classified into small or home business to multinational companies.

Pittaway and Cope in Ahiauzu and Emmanuel (2021) defined an entrepreneur as someone who commercializes his or her innovation while Emmanuel (2020) in her view opined that an entrepreneur is: A person who identifies business opportunities that will fill the gaps in the market, A person who understands the risk of starting a new business venture. A person who creates a firm, which aggregates capital and labour in order to produce goods and services for profit and one who is an important driver of economic growth and innovation.

Entrepreneurship is the ability and readiness to develop, organize and run a business enterprise, along with any of its uncertainties in order to make a profit. The most prominent example of entrepreneurship is the starting of new businesses. Entrepreneurship is the creation and running of one's own business (Davis, 2015). Entrepreneurship has been succinctly described as the process of seeking and identifying opportunities for the creation of needs - satisfying values that result in starting and running new ventures or improving existing others under conditions of risks (Gabriel & Kobani, 2022). Peterman and Kennedy (2003) further noted that entrepreneurship is the administration of abilities, or the individual drive used to consolidate assets beneficially. In economics, entrepreneurship connected with land, labour, natural resources and capital can generate a profit. The entrepreneurial vision is defined by discovery and risk-taking and is an indispensable part of a nation's capacity to succeed in an ever-changing and more competitive global marketplace.

Concept of Entrepreneurship Education

Entrepreneurship education includes all teaching, awareness, training and support activities in the discipline of entrepreneurship, in order to develop the mind of an individual to become an entrepreneur, that is one who will accept the obligations and the risk for

business activities with the assumption for making a economic profit. The business visionary by and large settles on the item, secures the offices, and unites the workforce, capital, and creation materials. In the event that the business succeeds, the business visionary receives the benefit of benefits; on the off chance that it falls flat, the person assumes the misfortune.

Entrepreneurship education embraces various concepts and meanings and they carry different interpretations, as well as commonly used words, such as enterprise education, small business education and entrepreneurship education. Carpenter (2002) opine that entrepreneurship education does not necessarily sign the formation or running of an enterprise. He suggested two major sources to the conceptual confusion related to entrepreneurship education: the boundaries that enterprise education has with other concepts, such as work-related learning, action learning, experimental learning and entrepreneurial learning, and the fact that their relation to enterprise education is blurred.

Objectives of Entrepreneurship Education

The objectives of entrepreneurship education clearly show that it is concerned with the development and survival of both the individual and society, for sustainable socio-economic and political development to be achieved. The objectives of entrepreneurship education as spelt out by Osuala (2010) are:

1. To provide meaningful education for young people which could make them self-reliance and subsequently encourage them to drive profit and be self-independent.
2. To provide graduate with the training and support necessary to help them establish a career in small and medium size business.
3. To provide graduates with training skills that will make them meet the manpower needs of society.
4. To provide graduates with enough training in risk management to make uncertainty bearing possible and easy.
5. To stimulate industrial and economic growth of rural and less developed area
6. To provide graduate with enough training, this will make them creative and innovative in identifying new business opportunities.
7. To provide small and medium sized enterprises with the opportunity to recruit qualified graduates who will receive training and tutoring in the skills relevant to management of the businesses.

From the above objectives, it is obvious that this type of education if it is given the necessary attention and properly implemented will produce quality graduates/school leavers that will foster job creation and reduce unemployment and alleviate poverty in Rivers State Nigeria. When sufficient job opportunities are created, it will invariably help in taking the youths away from criminality, prostitution, drug use and drug abuse, violence, crime, and civil unrest among others (Olorunmolu, 2008).

Characteristics of Entrepreneurship

In entrepreneurship practice, not all entrepreneurs are successful; there are definite characteristics that make entrepreneurship successful. A few of them are mentioned below: Ability to take a risk, innovation, visionary and leadership quality, open-minded, flexible. Know your product, etc.

Importance and Benefits of Entrepreneurship Education

The “aims of various governments to combat poverty through the establishment and creation of poverty reduction programmes failed because graduates of the education system lack practical skills”, United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2005). Nevertheless, many stakeholders believe that fostering entrepreneurial customs, through entrepreneur education will maximize individual and collective socio-economic success on local, national and global base. Entrepreneurial skills and attitudes provide benefits to the society even beyond their application to business activity (Akpomi,2008), She further stated that “personal qualities that are relevant to entrepreneurship such as spirit of initiative and creativity can be useful to everyone in their responsibilities and in their daily existence”. Emeruwa (2005) opined that by teaching entrepreneurship education, we are using the framework of education to initiate specialized learning activities that will create a class of graduates with the right experiences and insights to discover and create entrepreneurial opportunities and also gain the expertise to successfully start and manage their own businesses to take advantage of existing opportunities. Entrepreneurship education among graduates will lay solid foundation for the emergence of a generation of innovators willing to apply necessary capital into the production process for new products, open and expand new markets, explore new sources of materials and ensure the organization of new industries. Significantly, the importance of E&EE cannot be over emphasized, the following can be considered as benefits of entrepreneurship;

“Creation of employment, innovation, impact on society and community development, increase standard of living, supports research and development”.

Through this process, there would be an emergence of small unit of businesses that would burgeon into bigger industrial or business concerns with the application of the right managerial skills. Entrepreneurship education will produce graduates who will provide jobs, create wealth, enlarge and fast-track the economy to attain the status of one of the twenty most developed economies of the world by the year 2030. Entrepreneurship Education plays a vital role in the social, political and economic development of any nation. This is possible when jobs are created for the citizenry by establishing a lot of businesses that will accommodate the unemployed youth in the country. Entrepreneurship education helps to reduce the problem of unemployment and other social vices in Nigeria. Emeruwa (2005) asserted that the entrepreneur does not only identifies but mobilizes and organizes the resources to tap the opportunities by assisting men, materials, money and machines to explore the opportunity.

Production of goods and services that is important to the well-being, comfort and happiness of individuals in the society at large. The entrepreneurs are usually motivated in their activities not only by the need for material contributions to the welfare of the communities but also the desire to make profit (Akinbode, 2009). This uplifts the dignity of labour. Through entrepreneurship education, utilization of local resources is made possible. The graduates of this specialized education set up their small/medium scale business, which will enable them to utilize the local resources available in their vicinity. Olorunmolu (2008) asserted that in terms of their economic benefits small firms can be said to be greater in local resources maximizes than their large counterparts. Through quality entrepreneurship education, Nigeria could produce a lot of entrepreneurs who could establish and manage

businesses on their own. Based on the above merits, it is no doubt that entrepreneurship education could be used as major weapon in reducing the worrisome, untamed and ever rising problem of unemployment and poverty in Nigeria (Alabi, Alanana & Bahal, 2014).

Types of Entrepreneurial Opportunities

Entrepreneurial opportunities can be categorized into two namely: exploitative opportunities and innovative opportunities as noted by Ahiauzu and Emmanuel (2021).

1. **Exploitable opportunity:** This opportunity is open to anyone who has the capacity of seeing an unexploited market through the information available. In this case, the individual with deep insight with analytical mind can easily manipulate such opportunity for maximum return on investment.

2. **Innovative Opportunities:** Here, the innovator is absolutely in charge of this opportunity in which case, only those with innovative ability can maximize such opportunities by virtue of their innovative insight. The fact is that the innovation observes the existence of opportunity.

Role of Entrepreneurship Education Programmes to Community Development

Rodney (2012) in an attempt to analyse the various roles of entrepreneurship education programmes to community development, to this end, it must be noted that the development of any community does not begin with food and services, but with people, their creative capacity and capability ideology, world view, values, norms and orientations. Therefore, the development of a community can only be possible when individual and group members, through the instrumentality of education and the benefits therefore, are able to mobilize and channel their mental resources purposefully, overcome and take control of their environment, manipulate and manage it for their own betterment and for the community at large.

Okonwa (2011) said that the concept of community development in its most central sense must mean an expanded capacity of individuals from an offered local area to saddle their normal assets and control nature such that upgrades their government assistance with practically zero help from outside. Martin (2008) said that for a development activity to qualify as community development, it must aspire to a qualitative change of the economic and socio-cultural conditions of the community.

Anyanwu (2011) stated that community development can be seen as “a socializing process for the induction of social change for better living in a community, through the development of abilities, attitudes and often forms of behaviour which are positive to the value of that community.” He further said that community development introduces new ideas and new abilities for taking care of issues. It includes a cycle of schooling which assists individuals with intuition for them to execute projects without help from anyone else and to impact enduring answers for their local area issues by themselves. Adult and community education is involved in the promotion of the general objectives of democratization and regeneration, both viewed in the context of life-long education. Biddle (2015) is of the opinion that “the development of communities should accommodate the integration of the various aspects of community improvement, such as agriculture, health, nutrition, family, education, training and appropriate technology.” Meier (2010) concludes that in as much as other things are necessary for community development, education appears to outweigh other

factors. In reviewing the progress made by most independent countries in Africa and Asia. Edem (1983) said that education and community development are interwoven.

Kosemani (2011) rightly pointed out that education should provide the basis or instrument for community development, socialization of the younger generation into the new civic cultures and instilling in them an allegiance to the community. Community development has the principal purpose of bringing about desirable changes for better living among the people (Amirize, 2012). Kumar (2014) viewed it as “movement’ designed to promote better living conditions for the whole community through the initiative and active participation of the people themselves.” Barikor (2011) “sees community development as an integrated process by which the efforts of the citizens are united with those of government authorities and voluntary agencies to improve the social, economic and cultural conditions of the community.” In this context, the efforts of citizens for community development are entrepreneurship education programmes.

Entrepreneurship Education for Sustainable Development

Entrepreneurs play an important role in the economic development of Nigeria, both rural and urban areas. According to Thomas and Bara (2004), small and medium businesses account for the largest group of businesses in terms of number in our economy and also provide the largest employment opportunities in Nigeria. Entrepreneurship education helps the nation by providing self-employment to school leavers and graduate of people in our society. Homevor (2005) stated that in Port Harcourt Local Government Area, entrepreneurs share certain common traits that are the fundamental process of economic growth and development that helped shaping the minds of Nigerians. Also in the eastern part of Nigeria especially in Aba, Abia State Nigeria. Studies have shown high level of unemployment and deviance among the youths in Nigeria, saying only concerned and more committed efforts among International agencies, Government and Non-Governmental Organizations could revert the ugly trend (Ache, 2007).

Recognizing the importance of Entrepreneurs in our economic development, the Federal, State and Local Governments decided to develop series of schemes to strengthen and enhance their capabilities, continued survival and growth. Such schemes includes “formal funding Institutions; Banks, Micro-credit Agencies, Venture Capital and the Non-formal funding agencies like Donors and specialized Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO)” (Agu, 2001). In August 15th 2013, The CBN launched the MSME Development Fund with a share capital of N220 billion (Wikipedia). The micro, small and medium scale enterprises (MSMEs) have been recognized worldwide as effective instruments for energizing a young/infant or backward economic system and constituting the bedrock for a nation’s industrial take off. The importance of small-scale business according to Chima (2013) in Weinberger (2005) is predicated on their impact and contribution to a diversified production as well as their effect in achieving macro objectives. These roles include creating employment opportunities, promotion of indigenous technology, industrialization of rural, areas and efficient use of resources which imply less use of foreign exchange resources.

Innovative and Diversified Entrepreneurship Education programmes for Sustainable Development

In July 2014, the UN General Assembly Open Working Group (OWG) proposed a document containing 17 goals to be put forward for the General Assembly's approval in September 2015. This document set the ground for the new SDGs and the global development agenda spanning from 2015-2030. The 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) to transform our world:

“No Poverty, Zero Hunger, Good Health and Well-being, Gender Equality, Clean Water and Sanitation, Affordable and Clean Energy, Decent Work and Economic Growth, Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure, Reduced Inequality, Sustainable Cities and Communities, Responsible Consumption and Production, Climate Action, Life Below Water, Life on Land, Peace and Justice Strong Institutions Partnership to achieve the 17 goals”.

Entrepreneurship education has been identified as a major tool for achieving these goals. Rashid (2019) extensively stated that both replicative and innovative entrepreneurs have been shown to be instrumental for sustainable development. Replicative ones who start new businesses regardless of whether similar firms are already present in the market are important in fighting poverty enhancing competition and increasing product supply. Therefore, replicative entrepreneurs could be expected to contribute to reducing poverty and tackling unemployment, directly advancing SDGs 1 and 8. However, it is the innovative entrepreneurs, who provide new services and goods needed by the public, create a learning environment for future entrepreneurs, commercialize knowledge and new ideas, generate (longer-term) profitability and instigate endogenous change which has the potential to disrupt the status quo. They therefore have the additional advantage of contributing to Sustainability, SDG 9 through fortifying local infrastructure, stimulating homegrown technology development and enhancing sustainable industrialization.

Entrepreneurship education has the potential to advance social and environmental sustainability in addition to economic sustainability. For instance, supporting female entrepreneurship contributes to women empowerment, improving quality of life, as well as economic growth and entrepreneurial diversity, hence directly contributing to the advancement of SDG 5. Migrant and refugee entrepreneurship also enhances social integration, empowerment and psychological wellbeing, reduces dependency on welfare and foreign aid, creates employment opportunities for other newcomers and stimulates domestic entrepreneurship, providing evidence of entrepreneurship's capability to reduce inequality and enhance social cohesion (support for SDG 10). Additionally, recent green entrepreneurial innovations in agriculture, packaging, energy and manufacturing have the potential to directly enhance sustainable production and consumption (support for SDG 12).

Accordingly, entrepreneurship education and training EET initiatives focusing on outcomes such as business creation, innovation and technology and/or environmentally conscious product and service development have the potential to advance SDGs 8, 9 and 12, respectively. There is therefore a higher need for specialists to support learners in organizing and prioritizing knowledge rather than its mere provision, while utilizing digital means and educational technology given their extraordinary potential to enhance the quality, outcomes and accessibility of education and learning with EET being no exception (Rashid, 2019). To a high extent, sustainable development in Rivers State Nigeria can be achieved with innovative

and diversified entrepreneurship education programmes rather than the traditional entrepreneurship education programmes which are receptive.

Innovative and Diversified Entrepreneurial Businesses for Rivers State Nigeria

The Nigerian society has many challenges which provide business opportunities for startups. Here are some untapped business opportunities to consider: ICT-based-business, reprographic business, green entrepreneurship business, agricultural technology base business, transportation and logistics, waste management, real estate, fashion designing.

Challenges of Entrepreneurship Education in Nigeria

The Nigerian economy, historically, has depended significantly on oil revenues. However in the recent years, the country has been trying to diversify away from dependence on oil by setting an ambitious goal. The country wants to increasingly globalize education through information and communication technology, and entrepreneurship. The following are the most important obstacles facing rapid entrepreneurial development according to Sunday (2016):

1. Rampant political and bureaucratic corruption together with the absence of social consensus on important macroeconomic policy issues.
2. Poor access to vocational and skills development training for rural and urban youths involved in the informal economy.
3. Absence of regulatory mechanisms for effective oversight of enterprise development initiatives, especially those in the MSME space.
4. The presence of administrative and trade barriers that curtail capacity building and inhibit access to technical support.
5. Significant infrastructural deficits (especially with regards to roads and electricity) and systematic irregularities inimical to small businesses.
6. Absence of a pro-active regulatory environment that encourages innovative enterprise development at the grassroots level.
7. No doubt, one of the biggest challenges of any entrepreneur is access to capital.

Strategies for Effective Entrepreneurship Education

Human talent is the single most important productive factor in today's knowledge economy (Ekpudu,2012). Focusing on the development of a skilled workforce and the expansion of human capacities through high quality systems of entrepreneurship education, training, skills acquisition and lifelong learning is important for helping youths and graduates find good jobs and enterprises to find the skilled workers they need. The following strategies according to Ayodele (2006) will help to alleviate the problem of entrepreneurship education in the country.

1. There should be some form of genuine school work based learning incorporated in some studies as part of the national economic development strategies. The development of apprenticeship scheme would give new graduates some work skills and experience.
2. Pool local public and private funds to create a small venture capital fund.
3. School based enterprises where students identify potential business, plan, create and operate small business using the school as mini-incubators.

4. Provide small business schools where interested students and community members can participate.
5. Develop entrepreneurship internship programmes matching students with locally successful entrepreneurs with clearly established education programmes.
6. Establishing an enterprise college aimed at fostering the specific skills sets required for entrepreneurship to serve as skill acquisition centres for the youths.
7. Creating an economic friendly political environment.
8. Improving on the government taxation on small scale businesses.

Conclusion

Rivers State, created by Decree No.19 of May 31, 1967, is one of 36 states in the Federation of Nigeria. Port Harcourt is the capital of Rivers State. Rivers State and its people are blessed with bountiful natural resources that need to be identified and explored through innovative and diversified entrepreneurship education programmes in order to curb youth restiveness caused by idleness or unemployment which is a major concern to Nations of the world. This scenario has stirred up youth restiveness, social vices and illegal activities in communities, such as oil bunkering and kidnapping, cultism, electoral violence as a result of idleness (Amie-Ogan & Amie-Ogan, 2019).

Entrepreneurship education is the revamping of fallen bridges, leading to sustainable development, on the bid of achieving SDGs beyond MDGs by 2030. The definitive aim of the EE programme is to stimulate graduate/school leavers entrepreneurship abilities, in an innovative and diversified method, for economic growth and sustainable development to realize the country's goals of becoming one of the top economies of the world by the year 2030.

Suggestions

1. The appropriate fund meant for entrepreneurship education should be properly channeled to the programme.
2. Rivers State Tertiary institutions should have entrepreneurship courses as general studies (GST), making it compulsory for all student, a prerequisite for the fulfillment of B.Sc.
3. The produce of young entrepreneurs should be celebrated and encouraged as a means of promoting the programme.
4. The government, NGOs should initiate an awareness campaign on entrepreneurship, the difference between working for, with and owning a firm.
5. Financial facilities should be made easily available for starters and growers of MSMEs by the Rivers State government and NGOs in the state.

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