

EXPLORING THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN POLITICAL CLIMATE AND ECONOMIC FACTORS ON ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The paper explores the implication of politics and economy on the entrepreneurship education in relation to sustainable development. It delved into the intricate relationships between Nigeria's political landscape, economic conditions, entrepreneurship education and sustainable development. The paper focused on how political instability and economic volatility impact the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education hindering sustainable development. A mixed method approach was employed to investigate the implication of political and economic factors on entrepreneurship education, highlighting the need for a synergistic approach to achieve sustainable development. It was found that politics and economies have serious relationship with entrepreneurship education and are among the main factors that determine sustainable development of a nation. It recommends that political stakeholders and economic gladiators need to give entrepreneurship education the priority it deserves towards sustainable national development. The opinions in this paper provided valuable insights for policy makers, educators, and entrepreneurs, underscoring the importance of a stable political climate and robust economic framework in fostering entrepreneurship education and sustainable development in Nigeria.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship education, sustainable development, political instability, economic volatility, Nigeria.

Introduction

The promotion of entrepreneurship as a solution to solving numerous economic and social challenges facing the world has attracted significant attention by governments, policy makers and the academia. In Nigeria, entrepreneurship development is gradually taking the centre stage it deserves in economic planning and national rebirth. Entrepreneurship has now been included in the national education curriculum at all levels and various schemes have been inaugurated to promote entrepreneurial skills among the teeming youth. The global attention to entrepreneurship development option is born out of its effectiveness in tackling unemployment, poverty and social ills as well as its crucial efficacy in the achievement of economic growth and overall national development (Ali & Abdulganiyu, 2021).

Entrepreneurship education is the type of education designed to change the orientation and attitude of the recipients and the process will equip them with the skills and knowledge to

enable them start and manage a business. It aims at developing the requisite entrepreneurial skills, attitudes, competencies, and disposition that will predispose the individual to be a driving force in managing a business (Agu, 2016). Entrepreneurship education aids students from all socio-economic backgrounds to think outside the box and nurture unconventional talents and skills. It creates opportunities, ensure social justice, instills confidence and stimulate the economy. Entrepreneurship education is a lifelong learning process, starting as early as elementary school and progressing through all levels of education, including adult education. Introducing young kids to entrepreneurship develop their initiative and help them to be more creative and self –confident in whatever they undertake and to act in a socially responsible way (Success, 2017)

The importance of entrepreneurship education cannot be overstated; as it plays a crucial role in economic growth and development of a country (Eniola, 2018; Chukwuma and Ogbeide, 2017; Aduku, Nafiu & Yakubu, 2016; Aliyu, 2018). Yet, this importance of entrepreneurship education is touched in Nigeria by some factors of politics and economies. Entrepreneurship development and education are often politicized and used as campaign tools rather than genuine effort to create entrepreneurs and metamorphose the productive capacity of the nation. This leads to policy changes, several abandoned projects, unfulfilled dreams and waste of resources (Asikhia, 2018 & Eze, 2012).

Economic instability is another serious factor that hinders entrepreneurship development and education in Nigeria. Entrepreneurship teachers and students are not well motivated due to their low economic status. Several micro businesses die prematurely for economic predicaments. Small businesses could not grow into medium or large –scale business for the same factor of economic imbroglio (Olohundare & Kayode, 2014; Shehnaz & Ramayah, 2019). This paper therefore delves into the effects of politics and economic factors on entrepreneurship education for sustainable development in Nigeria.

Entrepreneurship Education

Entrepreneurship education is made of all kinds of experiences that give learners the ability and vision of how to access and transform opportunities of different kinds and increase their ability to participate and respond to societal changes (Olohundare & Kayode, 2014). Entrepreneurship education deals with those attitudes and skills that are necessary for the individual to respond to his/her environment and explore its potential in the process of conserving, starting and managing a business enterprise ((Dougherty, Neubert & Park, 2019). This implies that entrepreneurship education prepares the individual to be properly equipped to acquire saleable skills which could be used to manage his own business or that of other persons (Dougherty et al; 2019). Entrepreneurship education involves all forms of training, instruction, teaching and learning programmes that intend to equip the youth with functional knowledge and skills, promote innovation and build up their character, attitude and vision. Entrepreneurship Education is aspect of educational curriculum whose aim is to assist students to develop positive attitudes, innovation and skills for self-reliance rather than depending on the government for employment. Such experience will in turn produce graduates with self-confidence and capacities for independent thought to discover new information leading to economic development.

A major defect the Nigeria educational system, inclusive of the universities, is its theoretical inclination. Most Nigerian institutions of learning produce graduates who are at best only suited for white collar jobs and have little or no basic skills of any other vocational relevance. This accounts for the high rate of unemployment and unemployable graduates in the country. This problem of theory with no practice made Nigerians job seekers rather than job creators. This problem reached its peak in the early 2000s that the Federal Government in 2004 had to mandate the Ministry of Education to make the study of Entrepreneurship compulsory for all Nigerian students irrespective of their specializations (Aduku et al, 2016).

In the year 2006, the Federal Ministry of Education directed Nigerian higher education institutions to include Entrepreneurship Education as a compulsory course for all students with effect from the 2007/2008 academic session. This led to the inclusion of Entrepreneurship Education in the curriculum of universities and all other higher institutions in Nigeria. Most higher institutions in Nigeria now have centre for entrepreneurship education in their institutions and Entrepreneurship education has also been extended into the curriculum of the secondary and basic education in the country.

The need for Entrepreneurship Education at all levels of education in Nigeria made government to review the curriculum for basic and post basic education in the recent time. The basic education programme now has vocational studies as part of subject for pupils at basic school levels. Entrepreneurship related subjects like Animal Husbandry, Marketing, Electronic Repair and Maintenance, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and so on are also made part of compulsory subjects for Secondary Schools.

The mode of Entrepreneurship Education and training in Nigeria in recent years according to Ali and Abdulganiyu (2021) include Direct teaching and learning of Entrepreneurship as part of school curricular, apprenticeship method, industrial attachment or Student Industrial Working Experience Scheme (SIWES), Entrepreneurship Development Workshop, Skills Acquisition Training, Vocational and Technical Training, Agriculture Training and Information and Communication technology (ICT) Training.

Importance of Entrepreneurship Education

The importance of entrepreneurship education cannot be overemphasized; especially in the millennium education has however gone beyond the rhetoric of classroom teachings only. Marlborough (2023) observed that entrepreneurship education in the present super-computer age focuses on developing real-world skills that will help learners to lead exceptionally in a rapidly changing world. Entrepreneurship education teaches students crucial life skills, such as:

- How to collaborate and work with a team
- How to speak in public and prepare an effective presentation
- How to collect and analyze data
- How to use social media as an advocacy tool
- How to solve real, complex problems that do not have a definitive answer
- How to use curiosity and creativity to find an innovative approach to difficult problems.

Entrepreneurship students learn to understand product development cycle, come up with their own unique business proposals, and deliver multiple pitch presentations. This process

results in a superior experience that serves the students long after they have graduated from school. Entrepreneurship education does not just benefit those entering the fields of science, technology, and business. Students of art, music, and humanities can develop their imagination and learn how to apply creative thinking skills to real-world problems (Marlborough, 2023). Entrepreneurship education prepares students for an uncertain future. We live in an age of unprecedented global and technological transformation. Today's students face an uncertain future full of complex global, social, and environmental issues. According to the World Economic Forum's Future of Jobs survey (2020), half of today's work activities could be automated by 2055. Creating completely new roles, responsibilities and challenges for the future workforce. Therefore, we cannot predict exactly what students will need to know after they graduate. Entrepreneurship-focused programs thus teach students crucial life skills that will help them navigate this uncertain future (Dougherty, Neubert & Park, 2019). These skills include problem solving, teamwork, empathy, as well as learning to accept failure as a part of the growth process.

Through entrepreneurship education, students learn creativity and collaboration. As standardized testing becomes more common in schools, opportunities for student to innovate and collaborate with others have become more essential. Entrepreneurship Education encourages creativity, innovation, and collaboration. These attributes are highly valued by employers in the world and will have student well beyond school (Dougherty et al, 2019). Problems identification is another skill entrepreneurship education teaches. Students need to learn how to identify problems before they learn how to solve them. Problem-solving has been taught in school for decade but the same cannot be said for problem identification. Traditionally, problem-solving is taught by presenting students with issues that are already clearly defined by someone else. In the real world, problems can only be solved when they have been properly identified and described. Entrepreneurship education teaches children to identify problems they have never encountered before a skill that will be very useful in tomorrow's world.

Grades, Resilience, Intelligence and Techniques (GRIT) are also developed in a student through entrepreneurship education and training. GRIT according to Duckworth (2022) may be the single most important factor in a person's long-term success. GRIT consists of passion and sustainable persistence applied toward long-term achievement. The demanding and uncertain entrepreneurship journey requires more passion and sustained persistence than most other activities. This makes an entrepreneurship-focused program ideal for developing GRIT in the students.

Entrepreneurship education also makes the world a better place for individuals, communities organizations and nations. Entrepreneurs seek to solve problems, meet needs and ease pain points with the help of their products and services. They are hard-wired to make a difference and make the world a better place. By participating in entrepreneurship programs, students do not just become ready to create their own futures; they become ready to change the world (Duckworth, 2022).

Challenges of Entrepreneurship Education in Nigeria

There is no doubt that entrepreneurship education in Nigeria is faced with numerous challenges that affect its effectiveness. The challenges are not outrightly different from what faced the Nigerian education system as a whole (Aliyu, 2018; Olohundare & Kayode, 2014). Challenges of entrepreneurship education in Nigeria range from politics, unavailable fund and facilities to inadequate personnel and enabling environment (Dougherty et al; 2019). Barriers to effective youth entrepreneurship and vocational education in Nigeria according to Oyekunle (2019) include poor perception of entrepreneurship education by public, mismatch between training and labour market skills demand, economic inconsistency and uncertainty of funding for self-establishment.

Arowolo (2012) and Oyekunle (2019) believe that politicization of entrepreneurship development project is the biggest challenge of entrepreneurship in Nigeria. Aliyu (2018) opined that the challenges of entrepreneurship education in Nigeria include poor capacity of teachers, absence of curricular capacity to support the training, lack of infrastructural support, over-emphasis on theory delivery and absence of research support and linkages.

Challenges facing entrepreneurship education can therefore be summarized as follows: (Arowolo, 2012).

1. Political interest
2. Economic instability
3. Poor funding
4. Inadequate qualified teachers and instructors as well as supporting staff
5. Inadequate facility and equipment for teaching and learning
6. Poor planning, supervision and evaluation of the programme
7. Emphasis on theoretical knowledge rather practical knowledge due to lack of entrepreneurship education centres.
8. High level of corruption and poor maintenance culture
9. Poor enabling business environment
10. Poor knowledge based economy and low spirit of competition
11. Poor societal attitude to entrepreneurship education development.

The Politics in Entrepreneurship Education

Virtually everything in Nigeria is politicized; including religion, education and security (Jega, 2017; Dada, 2007). Although politics cannot be separated from entrepreneurship education and economy; since government is the policy maker, the executor and end benefactor of all sectors; politics and indeed government policies in Nigeria have direct impact on the state of entrepreneurship education. Government policies serve as guidelines and frameworks that define the objectives, strategies, and implementation process of entrepreneurship education programs (Imhonopi & Urim 2018).

The governance and policies shape the curriculum, funding, and support system for entrepreneurship programs in education institutes and their implications on the availability of resources, the development of entrepreneurial skills, and all the overall growth of the entrepreneurial ecosystem are inordinate. By understanding the impact of governance and policies, stakeholders can identify areas for improvement and advocate for changes that

promotes a thriving entrepreneurship ecosystem in Nigeria. It is therefore crucial for policymakers, educational institutions, and entrepreneurs to work together to create an enabling environment that fosters entrepreneurship education and supports aspiring entrepreneurs in their journey towards economic success (Adamawa State Government, 2014). By understanding the significance of governance and policies, we can gain insights into the evolution of entrepreneurship education, analyze the progress made and identify areas for further improvement in entrepreneurship education in Nigeria.

According to Imhonopi & Urim (2018), the political system in Nigeria has remained iron-gated manned by mean and supercilious political iron-sides whose goal in governance is to perpetuate personal and clannish interests, objectives and motivations. The entrepreneurial environment that could have weaned some of the youths off idleness and crime is challenged and experiences paroxysms manifesting systemic neglects, disinvestment, primordial corruption and politicized or partisan citizen assistance. Thus, Nigerian youths have become the new denizens treated as undeserving of equitable state interventions.

The political plinth has been used by many nations as the veritable lever that helped to galvanize their youth out of poverty, social and economic deprivations. The political fulcrum in China, Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Singapore, Malaysia, Botswana, Rwanda, South Africa under Mandela, Libya under Ghaddafi, became a planisphere for fine-tuning and polishing the youths of those nations, giving them a sense of direction and hope and galvanizing them into becoming tools for positive change in their political economy (Imhonopi & Urim, 2018; Oteh, 2009).

However, it seems that the political elite in Nigeria suffer from a complexed amnesia state when it comes to the management and investment in Nigerian youth. It also appears that the political process is treated as some sort of dystopia that is difficult to manage but impossible to let go for the interests and benefits of minority that wields political power. Else, how would educated Nigerians be allowed to emigrate in their thousands to other countries of the world, deepening the brain drain catastrophe that the country already faces, and bringing these youths in the harm's way such that they are now enslaved and commoditized by some host countries where these youths find themselves when such a cataclysm is avoidable (Imhonopi & Urim 2018).

Entrepreneurship Education and Economic Instability

National politics often determines the quality of education policies, programs and processes and eventually the products (Imhonopi & Urim 2018). Government underfunding and commoditization of education is likely to worsen the crisis in education. The current economic crisis confronting many governments is creating severe conflicts in educational sector of many nations. On the one hand they had to reduce their budget deficits to avoid excess indebtedness. On the other hand, they had to promote education firstly to alleviate unemployment as a short run crisis measure and secondly to avoid the public funding, which greatly affect the education sector. Some government carried out overall budget cuts. These had negative effects on teachers, students and families.

A research by Bamigboye, Ede and Adeyemi (2021) on the impact of economic crises on education in the South-West part of Nigeria shows that the current economic crisis in

Nigeria had an observable impact on the education sector as many States Governments proceeded to drastic budget cuts on education. Only few governments however, acknowledged the importance of the educational sector in overcoming the current economic crisis. These few states see the need of increased spending on education, supporting students, families and education providers as a way to enhance productivity and efficiency of state economy. The result of the research shows a great difference between the states cutting budget on education because of economy, economic downturn and those pumping more fund into education sector in the midst of economic crises. This research concludes that adequately funded educational system, if genuinely promoted and honestly managed is capable of creating mass-fully developed human talent whose creative thinking would get any nation out of the economic crises and permanently shut the door to its future occurrence (Bamigboye, Ede & Adeyemi, 2021, Adamawa State Government, 2014).

Nigeria has been hit by the global economic crises together with developed and developing countries all over the world. The term economic crisis can be defined as a situation where there is a recession in nation's economic activities, a situation where the world's economy seems to be standing on its head. In Nigeria, the educational system is almost completely dependent on government budgetary allocation and with the economic crisis, the sector no doubt witnessed its fair share of budget cuts which affects not only the teachers but also the students and families (Oteh, 2009). Teachers' salaries represent around two-thirds of public expenditure on education, which explain why in some countries the first sign of a slowdown had a direct impact on pay when the economy is in crisis, and graduate unemployment is high, the teaching profession used to be a safer and more attractive choice than other occupation because of the respect given to the profession and regular payment of teachers' salary but nowadays contrary is the case. But significant salary reductions due to economic crisis can also have a negative impact on a country's attempt to attract the best individuals to the teaching profession. As a consequence, countries will find it more difficult to maintain the quality of learning in the future.

Economic crisis has affected all aspects of education delivery. Education which is the foundation of development ought not to be treated casually by its stakeholders. A situation where parents could not afford even one-time meals for themselves and their children due to general inflation, such a family will rather take the children into child labour than schooling. A situation where teachers struggle for transport fare due to high pump price of fuel, classes will be missed and curriculum would hardly be covered. A situation where entrepreneurs usually complain of high cost of running business and many eventually folded up, would rather discourage future entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship education process.

Entrepreneurship Education for Sustainable Development in Nigeria

Governments, all over the world, situated within the developed, transition or emerging economic taxonomies, have discovered the benefits that entrepreneurship provides in the creation, escalation and sustainability of employment opportunities and income generation among their citizens (Anyadiko, Emeh & Ukah, 2012; Surajo, & Karim, 2016; UNCTAD & Commonwealth, 2015). Entrepreneurship has been seen as having the capacity positively impacting a nation's economy and the quality of life of its people (Maina, 2014), bringing about economic growth and expansion of youth-led enterprises (Adegun & Akomolafe, 2013; British

Council, 2015; Fadeyi, Oke, Ajagbe, Isiavwe, & Adegbuyi, 2015; Oteh, 2009; UNCTAD & Commonwealth, 2015). However, while every administration in power put in place diverse programmes to potentiate the entrepreneurial ecology with intention for greater youth participation (Ayoade, & Agwu, 2016; Odia, & Odia, 2013) the impact of these programmes considering the high youth unemployment in the country and the perennial challenges locked within the entrepreneurial space, has been everything but effective. Thus, the concern of this paper is straightening the potential atmosphere to accommodate education and entrepreneurship for sustainable development of Nigeria.

Conclusion

For Nigeria to achieve her sustainable development goals, there is a need for paradigm shift from theory to practice of entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship development has been the goal of every well-meaning leadership in the world due to its unquantifiable prowess to make a nation truly independent. For entrepreneurship to develop, entrepreneurship education is indispensable. Effective delivery of entrepreneurship education curriculum in theory and practice rest strongly on an enabling environment devoid of unnecessary politicization and economic imbroglio. Politics is interwoven in every human endeavour; it has to be objective and directed toward effective productivity. Entrepreneurship is for economy as economy is for entrepreneurship. A situation where one suffocates the other may not lead to development. Stakeholders in Nigeria education, politics and economy therefore need to work a balance that will prioritize national development rather than the self-interest in our education, politics and economic objectives.

Recommendations

1. For sustainable development in Nigeria and for Nigeria to compete successfully among the comity of nations in this era of productivity; entrepreneurship development through concerted efforts in entrepreneurship education is inevitable.
2. Efforts on entrepreneurship development, project and education should devoid of unnecessary politics that undermine productivity and results.
3. Political stakeholders and economic gladiators in Nigeria need to give entrepreneurship education the priority it deserves to achieve sustainable national development.
4. There should be a deliberate effort by government and stakeholders for some economic reliefs to entrepreneur to cushion the effects of some though economic policies on survival of businesses.
5. Due to its importance and inevitability, entrepreneurship education deserves more attention through budget allocation and motivation of entrepreneurship teachers and students for sustainable development in Nigeria.

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