Entrepreneurship Education in Nigerian Universities for Sustainable Development: Students’ Acquisition/Practice of Skills and the Envisaged Challenges.

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Abstract
The study examined the entrepreneurship education in Nigerian universities for sustainable development in relation to students’ acquisition/practice of skills and the envisaged challenges. Two research questions were posed to guide the study. The population for the study was 4,470 3rd year undergraduates who were exposed to GST entrepreneurial skills curriculum. The sample for the study was 400 drawn using stratified random sampling techniques from the seven faculties of the university. A 25-item questionnaire was used to collect data from the respondents. The instrument was validated by two experts from GST unit, and one from Measurement and Evaluation, all from Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki. The instrument yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.72 using Cronbach Alpha method. The results from the responses were analyzed using mean scores and percentages. The findings of the study revealed that the students were not exposed to the practical aspect of the skills; hence the low percentage recorded for those who are ready to practice the skills. They equally agreed that they would face the enlisted challenges in the practice of the skills. Based on the findings of the study, implications were drawn and recommendations made.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship Education; Nigeria; Universities; Sustainable Development and Skills’ Acquisition

Introduction
Education as a tool empowers children or adults to acquire knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that lead to behavioral change. It is a basic force for the socio-economic and political transformation of any society (Ivowi, 2010). It then means that any functional education should be able to prepare students to discover latent potentials and develop them to the fullest; hence the need for sustainable development. Sustainable development then involves nurturing human beings to use available resources for their sustenance, while preserving the environment for future use. Learners need to be equipped with relevant tools including academic knowledge to develop the necessary competences, to excel in life and fit into the sustainable programme of their beloved country- Nigeria. The peak of this preparation is at the higher education level.

Obanya (2007) posits that the goals of higher education are in consonance with the world’s declaration on higher education at the world conference in 1998. According to the author, the conference reaffirmed that education is a fundamental pillar of human rights, democracy, sustainable development and peace; therefore it should be accessible to all. He further
emphasizes that if education is properly packaged, it empowers the youths to be productive and dynamic in a changing world like ours. To effect the necessary change in the learners, education delivery must be packaged in such a way as to empower the youths to be independent before or after graduation. The Nigerian curriculum according to Esu (2010) has failed to empower its products with the needed skills to face life after graduation and to be actively engaged. The author explains that students are not taught appropriate skills, knowledge and values that will help them to be productive and reasonably be engaged in the society, to avoid youth restiveness. This led to her advocating of a functional and relevant curriculum that will prepare students with life or coping skills for survival and sustainable development.

In line with these expectations, Obanya (2007) reiterates that education would yield higher dividends if it is relevant to the need of the society. The author states that any new development in higher education should therefore be relevant in order not to waste resources. Obanya now goes further to highlight the following criteria for determining the relevance of a new introduction or reform in the education system:

- Historical factors that should be relevant to the original trend;
- Socio-cultural factors to mirror the way of life and aspirations of the people
- Geographical factors that would take cognizance of the physical and environmental conditions, and
- Psychological factors to take care of the needs and aspirations of the people (p.5)

The search for a relevant, functional and sustainable education in Nigeria led to the introduction of entrepreneurship education; hence, Esu (2010) states that a functional curriculum is designed to teach students skills that will equip them to function as competent and accepted adults in the society.

Entrepreneurship education is a new programme introduced by Nigerian University Commission (NUC) into Nigerian universities. According to Okojie (2011), the Federal Government in 2002 decided that entrepreneurship studies be injected into the curriculum of university education in Nigeria and since then, it has been introduced as General Studies (GST). The objective was to empower students to be able to harness opportunities, be self-reliant and become job-creators and not job-seekers. Izedoni and Okafor (2010) reiterate that entrepreneurship education equips youths with passion and multiple skills to operate a successful business on their own. The word “entrepreneur” is derived from a French root “entrepreudre” meaning, “to undertake” or “a go-between”. Entrepreneurship education on the other hand could be viewed as a way of teaching students how to acquire the necessary skills. Ekong and Williams (2006) sees entrepreneurship education as a process of teaching people how to acquire skills through the study of school subjects, and how to utilize those skills for self sustenance and self-reliance.

Entrepreneurship education is the ability to turn ideas into action, which include creativity, innovation and risk taking, as well as the ability to plan and manage projects in order to achieve objectives (Commission Communication, 2006). Expressed in another form, Ofsted (2011:2) sees enterprise or entrepreneurial education as “the equipping of children and young people with the knowledge, skills and understanding to help them make good use of the economic, business and financial environments in which they live” Enu (2012) states that entrepreneurship education is aimed at equipping the students with requisite skills and capabilities needed in the world of works (p.233). From the different definitions, one can define entrepreneurship education as a process of teaching learners to acquire skills for self-
reliance; to see opportunities where others could not and to generate wealth and create employment.

Commenting on the nature of entrepreneurship education curriculum, Shai (2009) posits that it should be comprehensive in nature and should include aspects of personal development in terms of confidential enterprise and mindsets and business development that involves technical, financial and literary skills, to engage students in self-employment. Buttressing the above facts, Ajagun (2014) echoes that entrepreneurship education involves mainly three critical abilities namely: entrepreneurship skills(attributes); life skills and employment skills. These aspects according to the author would help learners to develop confidence, self-reliance and a determination to succeed. This is because entrepreneurship education encourages young people to learn and develop ways that meet their needs and to develop skills for learning for work and for life. Introduction of entrepreneurship education curriculum into Nigerian universities is timely, especially now that the rate of graduate unemployment is rising on a geometrical progression. This laudable programme has prompted this study that tends to ascertain the entrepreneurial skills undergraduates in Nigerian universities have acquired and are ready to practice after graduation for sustainable development and the envisaged challenges.

**Statement of the Problem**

Adejimola and Tayo-Olajubutu (2009) observe that it is a common experience that about 80% of the graduates from Nigerian universities find it difficult to get employment every year. This is partly due to the curricula of the universities and other tertiary institutions which train students for white-collar jobs. These lauded intentions of entrepreneurship education faces serious challenges in our higher education programme in Nigeria, which include among others, lack of systematic and planned experiences of the skills to be acquired by the students (Obanya, 2006). Substantiating this view point, Enu (2012) observes that entrepreneurship education is a challenge for developing economies like Nigeria since the content and learning experiences are yet to be fully integrated into the curriculum of higher institutions. Howbeit, the yearning for this innovation has led to the establishment of entrepreneurship centres in universities that organize these entrepreneurship studies. The question posed by this study now is: What are the entrepreneurial skills undergraduates are acquiring and are ready to practice after graduation for sustainable development and the envisaged challenges?

**Purpose of the Study**

The study sought to find out:

1. The entrepreneurship skills/trades students are acquiring and are ready to practice after graduation, and
2. The envisaged challenges in the practicing of the skills/trade after graduation.

**Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study:

1. Which of the entrepreneurship skills/trade are you acquiring and ready to practice after graduation? and
2. What are the envisaged challenges in the practice of the acquired entrepreneurship skills/trade after graduation?

**Theoretical Framework**

The study is backed up by humanism theory of Mautner (2000) in Egwu, ; Ogbu.; Ogunji.; Oselebe and Ama, (eds.) (2011). Mautner emphasized that humanism has
relationship with entrepreneurship, which has a link to self-reliance. According to the author, entrepreneurship emphasizes individual action that will lead to self-determination and self-sufficiency. This theory is based on the assumption that man is an autonomous being capable of self-determination and that his choices can make a real difference to a society or to a course of history. Again, Egwu, et al (2011) stated that entrepreneurs rule the economics of their nations, and those nations with the highest number of innovators at any point in history are the ones that rule the world. Without innovations and inventors, new products, services and processes for the market will dry up and the economy will collapse. These theories are related to this study in the sense that they all acknowledge entrepreneurship to be a quality of the human capital involved and the prevailing economic situation.

Methodology

Research Design: A survey research design was adopted for the study, as the opinions of the university students were sought on the entrepreneurship skills/trades they are acquiring and are ready to practice after graduation cum the envisaged challenges. According to Nworgu (2006), the descriptive survey design is most appropriate when a survey involves describing certain variables in relation to a given population.

Population/Sample and Sampling Technique: The area of study was Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki – Nigeria. The population for the study was 4,470 3\textsuperscript{rd} year undergraduates who were exposed to GST entrepreneurial skills curriculum. The sample for the study was 400 drawn using stratified random sampling technique from the seven faculties of the university.

Instrumentation: A twenty-five (25) -item questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection. It had two clusters. Cluster one was on the skills the students are acquiring and ready to practice after graduation and cluster two was based on the challenges to practicing the skills.

Cluster one was structured on a yes or no response pattern, while cluster 2 was based on a 5-point scale rated thus: Very High Extent (VHE) =5 points; High Extent (HE) = 4 points; Moderate Extent (ME) = 3 points, Low Extent (LE) = 2 points and No Extent (NE) = 1 point, with criterion mean of 3.00.

The instrument was face validated by two experts in GST unit of the university, and one in Measurement and Evaluation, all in Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki. The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha and it yielded a coefficient of 0.72, which was considered high enough to make the instrument reliable for the study.

Administration procedure/Analysis Pattern: Four hundred (400) copies of the instrument were administered to the sampled respondents and 349 copies were properly filled and used for the study. The data were analyzed using mean (\bar{x}) scores and percentages. Any item with 50\% and a mean rating of 3.00 and above was accepted as entrepreneurial skills/trade the students are acquiring and ready to practice /cum envisaged challenges to their practice after graduation.

Results

Research Questions 1: Which of the entrepreneurship skills/trade are you acquiring and ready to practice after graduation?

Table 1 presents the data that answered research question 1; Entrepreneurship skills students are acquiring and ready to practice after graduation.
Table 1 presents the analysis on the entrepreneurship skills/trade the students are acquiring and ready to practice after graduation. A closer observation shows that only 4 items scored above 50% which is the bench mark thus; item 1 on water treatment and packaging that scored 55.6% (194 respondents agreed that they could practice the trade on graduation); item 2 on food processing that recorded 65.9% (230 respondents said yes). Item 3 on food packaging/preservation which scored 51.6% (representing 180 respondents in agreement and item 6 based on bakery/pastries which scored 53.6% (187 respondents affirmed to its acquisition). The other 13 items recorded lower percentage responses as can be seen from the table that accepted that they would be able to practice the various skills on graduation. Based on the findings as shown above, lower percentage of the students affirmed that they could acquire and practice most of the skills in their GST curriculum after graduation.

Research Question 2: What are the envisaged challenges in the practice of the acquired entrepreneurship skills/trade after graduation?

Table 2 presents the data that answered research question 2; Envisaged challenges in the practice of the acquired entrepreneurship skills/trade after graduation. 

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Item Description</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Taking risks</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>55.6</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>44.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Managing stressful conditions</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>65.9</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>34.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Facing more experienced competitors</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>51.6</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>48.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Identifying ready markets for products</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>43.3</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>56.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Identifying appropriate business premises</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>47.6</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>52.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>How to make proper planning</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>53.6</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>46.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>How to make proper budgeting</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>47.3</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>52.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Sourcing for take-off funds</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>36.7</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>63.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Grand Mean = 3.11
Research question 2 sought to find out from the students the possible challenges they would face in practicing the acquired entrepreneurship skills/trade after graduation. Table 2 is a presentation of their responses based on the eight items. It was observed that in items 1 and 2, the students agreed that taking risks and managing stressful conditions respectively would pose minimal challenges to them in practicing the entrepreneurship skills/trade after graduation.

A look again at the table above shows that items 20-25 recorded means that are above the decision mean of 3.00 thus: facing more experienced competitors recorded a mean of 3.16 in item 20, while item 21 on problems of identifying ready markets for products recorded a mean of 3.16. Challenges of identifying appropriate business premises in item 22 had a mean of 3.13. Again in items 23, 24 and 25 with items thus: making proper planning had means of 3.37; budgeting challenges with mean of 3.21 and sourcing for take-off funds with mean of 3.18 respectively. On the whole, the students agree to a reasonable extent, that the items in Table 1 would pose considerable challenges to them in practicing the entrepreneurship skills/trade after graduation.

**Discussion**

Table 1 presents the responses of the undergraduates on the/trade skills they would like to practice on graduation. A look at the table shows that only 4 out of the 17 items reached the bench mark of 50% and these items were mainly on consumable goods like water treatment/packaging; food processing; food packaging and preservation and baking/pastries. This is not surprising as students are conversant with these trades around their environment, and some of them have been practicing them to help in their academic endeavours. This finding agrees with the assertion of Ogah, Eze, Mbah and Emesini (2009) that students learn best those things that help them to meet real needs, or those things that are related to some active interest. Entrepreneurship education is a new programme introduced by Nigerian University Commission (NUC) into Nigerian universities. According to Okojie (2011), the Federal Government in 2002 decided that entrepreneurship studies be injected into the curriculum of university education in Nigeria and since then, it has been introduced as General Studies (GST). The objective was to empower students to be able to harness opportunities and be self-reliant, job-creators and not job-seekers. Izedoni and Okafor (2010) reiterated that entrepreneurship education equips youths with passion and multiple skills to operate a successful business on their own.

On the other hand, a high percentage of the students were not confident that they would practice the remaining thirteen skills. This could be as a result of non-practicalization of the skills by the lecturers for the students’ proper comprehension. In line with this finding, Sithole (2009) reiterated that for students to acquire the needed skills that will make them entering individuals in the future, they need to acquire specific skills through work related training, experiential teachings and practical methodologies. This involves developing the needed competences to enhanced their skill acquisition and this must be based on ‘do it yourself” or ‘hands-on-practice’ procedure. In line with the finding, Esu (2010) stated that the content of Nigerian curriculum and its methods have failed to empower its products with the needed skills to face life after graduation and to be actively engaged. The author explains that students are not taught appropriate skills, knowledge and values that will help them to be productive and reasonably be engaged in the society.

From the findings, the students were not exposed to the practical aspects of most of the skills/trade and where the practical demonstration is lacking, students do not have confidence to practice on their own; hence the low percentage recorded on skills to be
practiced after graduation. For the curriculum to be functional, students have to be equipped with skills that enable them to function as competent and accepted adults in the society (Esu, 2010).

Table 2 is the presentation of the opinions of the university students on the extent of perception of the envisaged challenges to practicing entrepreneurship skills/trade after graduation. The findings show that out of the 8 items, only 2 of them scored a little below the expected mean of 3.0. This simply portrays that the students believe that they are going to face these enlisted challenges in the practice of their own business after graduation. This is not surprising as the students were not exposed to the practice of the skills/trade; hence they do not have the confidence to face the involvements. Backing up these findings, Duru (2008) stated that learners are prepared to demonstrate commitment and interest in their vocational areas and that once this is done, they are self-motivated, responsible, flexible and adaptable to changes that would profit them. In the process, they develop the essence of risk taking, goal setting, initiative and entrepreneurial abilities. Again, entrepreneurship education is the ability to turn ideas into action, which include creativity, innovation and risk taking, as well as the ability to plan and manage projects in order to achieve objectives (Commission Communication, 2006).

Expressing these findings in another form, Shai (2009) posited that entrepreneurship education should be comprehensive in nature and should include aspects of personal development like confidential enterprise, good mindsets and business development, which they need to be properly trained on. Ajagun (2014) also echoed that entrepreneurship education involves mainly three critical abilities namely: entrepreneurship skills/attributes; life skills and employment skills. These aspects according to the author would help learners to develop confidence, self reliance and a determination to succeed. Furthermore, Dakarie; Osifila and Ogbujafor (2011) emphasized that entrepreneurship involves the ability to turn idea into action, which includes creativity, innovation and risk taking, as well as the ability to plan and manage projects in order to achieve the desired objectives. From the findings in Table 2, it is obvious that the enlisted challenges are obvious, and the students need to be properly trained to handle them appropriately, in order to make entrepreneurship education worthwhile and relevant in the university education system.

Implications of the Study
Candidly speaking, the present study findings have obvious implications. Entrepreneurship curriculum was fashioned as a functional and relevant enterprise that will prepare students with life or coping skills for survival. These lauded intentions of entrepreneurship education is facing serious challenges in our higher education programme in Nigeria, which include among others, lack of systematic and planned experiences of the skills to be acquired by the students. Most of the students in Nigerian universities are still not sure of proper skills they will acquire before leaving the four walls of the university. This implies that there is no proper coordination of the learning experiences and the practical sessions the students are exposed to; hence most of them are graduating without proper entrepreneurial skills for self reliance. This now calls for re-examination of the implementation process of the entrepreneurship curriculum in our universities to make the programme worthwhile and relevant in the contemporary Nigeria. By so doing, graduate unemployment would be reduced and sustainable development enhanced.
Conclusion
The study examined the implementation of the entrepreneurship education curriculum in Nigerian universities cum students’ acquisition/practice of the skills and the envisaged challenges. The findings showed that the students were not practically exposed to the entrepreneurship skills, with a mis-match between the general curriculum and the specific skills. Again, the students were taught these skills theoretically and were not exposed to the practical aspects (hands-on-practice). As a result, a large percentage of them responded that they would not be able to acquire the skills before graduation. Finally, the students affirmed that there are obvious challenges they would likely face in the practice of the skills/trade after graduation. Howbeit, the programme is a laudable one and should be given due attention to tackle the envisaged challenges.

Recommendations
Based on the findings of the study and the implications drawn, the following recommendations are made:

- The university authorities should as a matter of urgency put machinery in place to correct the mis-match between the entrepreneurship curriculum theory and its practice;
- Experts in the various specific skills/trade should be employed to train and re-train all the lecturers that handle entrepreneurship education in the universities for better outputs;
- Provision of enough financial and material resources to make practical sessions for the skill acquisition easier;
- The concerned university authorities and the Federal Government should create room for internship programme, to enable the students to be under the tutelage of experts, say for a period of one year before they graduate, and
- The students should be drilled on how to access soft loans and manage risk taking as they launch out to establish their business.

References
Commission Communication (2006). Fostering entrepreneurial mindsets through education and learning --com33 final


