



# **A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT OF THE ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION POLICY IN THE NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES**

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### ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** Looks essentially at the mismatch between the theory and practice of graduate entrepreneurship in Nigeria against the backdrop of lingering unemployment. Specifically x-rays the entrepreneurship education policy introduced in 2006 in search of a framework for evaluating its implementation across Universities in Nigeria.

**Design/Methodology/Approach:** Reviews the performance of the policy in the context of the Global Entrepreneurship & Development Index (GEDI) model for evaluating entrepreneurship performance across countries which relies on a number of international benchmarks.

**Findings:** Identifies the lack of supportive entrepreneurship environment as a major factor responsible for the absence of correlation between enterprise education, high motivations and aspirations gathered at the University towards self-employment by graduates and actual career decisions in a business establishment.

**Originality/Value:** The effort through this study to promote graduate entrepreneurship as part of strategies to combat unemployment and its attendant socio-economic problems in Nigeria contributes to global poverty eradication initiatives.

**Keywords:** entrepreneurship; entrepreneurship education; environmental support; graduate entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship performance.

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### INTRODUCTION

Poverty, unemployment and insecurity are social problems that have remained major issues for all nations to contend with regardless of their development status as these problems constitute obstacles to social progress and result in waste of human and material resources (Akwara et al., 2013). Eneji et al. (2013) observed that vices ranging from prostitution, fraud, cultism, armed robbery, drugs and child trafficking, 419, kidnapping to hostage-taking among others being perpetrated with high level of complexity by the youths are attributable to prevailing unemployment and poverty.

The state of unemployment in any society is a function of the level of entrepreneurship skills as well as human capital endowment which are basic requirements for the establishment and sustenance of new businesses (Jovanovic, 1982; Lucas, 1978). Consequently, the level of unemployment reflects the degree of entrepreneurship in a society.

The preponderance of unemployment and poverty as well as the identification of entrepreneurship as an alternative strategy to combat the menace led to the ascendancy of entrepreneurial education and training as a global phenomenon. Most developed and developing countries have therefore adopted entrepreneurship to address these among other prevailing socioeconomic challenges. This is responsible for the level of attention contemporarily being accorded to the subject by a number of countries across the world with progress being made, albeit at a slow pace (Abubakar, 2012; Anho, 2014; Mosaku-Johnson, 2012). Suffice to observe that one of the means to address the lingering unemployment and poverty across the globe is by up scaling the entrepreneurship culture and skills of the populace through Entrepreneurship Education.

## STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Globally, university has been identified as an instrument of wealth creation, global market competitiveness and economic development in view of the enormous potential of its graduates for innovation and identification of business opportunities occasioned by their exposure to diverse knowledge and research activities during their academic pursuit. In response to the menace of graduate unemployment in the face of non-existing jobs and in recognition of the significant status of the University, the National Universities Commission (NUC) introduced Entrepreneurship Studies as compulsory for all University undergraduate students in Nigeria in order to awaken their entrepreneurial spirit. The policy was intended to empower graduates to harness opportunities for self-employment and job creation. The Federal Government in addition mandated the establishment of Centres for Entrepreneurship in all the higher institutions across Nigeria including linkages and collaborative programmes with Research and Development Centres as well as Science and Technology Incubation Centres in furtherance of its entrepreneurship education policy initiative (Amuseghan and Tayo-Olajubutu, 2009; Akpan and Etor, 2013; Obisanya et al., 2010, Okojie, 2011; OECD, 2011).

The task of engendering economic growth and development by promoting graduate entrepreneurship assumed lately by the Universities, however, is an entirely new mission added to teaching and the conduct of research known as the two traditional missions of the Universities. The new mission requires leveraging on the private sector and business start-up support service providers and other actors within the entrepreneurship ecosystem given that need-based expertise and capabilities and supportive environment for experimentation are the key to successful entrepreneurship (Amuseghan and Tayo-Olajubutu, 2009; OECD, 2011).

Despite these complementary policy initiatives evolved by the government to combat the rising graduate unemployment, the state of affairs has barely improved as a number of graduates still roam about without jobs and rarely practicing entrepreneurship. This means a failed transition from school to work for most graduates as the labour market is unable to absorb them upon graduation, year in, year out. It also amounts to enormous waste of valuable human, material and natural resources as well as alternative foregone for economic growth (Allotey and Say, 2013; Akwara et al., 2013).

## OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The objective of this study is generally to review the entrepreneurship education policy introduced in 2006 as compulsory course for undergraduates in Nigeria, within the framework of existing business start-up support options. This is with a view to determine its implications for promoting the practice of entrepreneurship and creating potential employment opportunities among would-be graduates as well as develop a framework for evaluating the implementation of the policy across Universities in Nigeria.

## METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a documentary approach as its design. The population of the study is the Nigerian Universities and its potential graduates. The research instruments used for the collection of data comprise basically of journal articles, conference papers and Internet search

engineers among others with authors duly acknowledged and reference made to every material consulted. Content analysis was used to analyse the data. The use of the content analysis is in line with the conclusion by Stemler (2001) that this method systematically employs explicit rule of coding that can be replicated for reducing numerous words into fewer content for the purpose of making inference where qualitative data are involved.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Entrepreneurship*

Beyond mere starting one's own business, entrepreneurship encapsulates the process of identification of opportunities to satisfy unmet need and channeling of productive resources accordingly, with the aim of creating value in the form of relevant good and services that customers are willing to pay for (Anyadike et al., 2012). It is risk-related innovative undertakings that require the commitment of human, material and financial resources including time targeted at creating value and receive associated monetary reward, fulfillment and independence. In other words, as the 'organiser', 'innovator' and 'risks bearer', an entrepreneur is anyone with potentials to recognise opportunities and channel scarce resources accordingly with profit motive (Emmanuel et al., 2012; Olorundare and Kayode, 2014) Entrepreneurship drives economic development and leads to wealth creation and employment generation through the activities of businesses developed by the entrepreneur, hence the conviction among stakeholders in the promotion of a strong entrepreneurial culture on as a veritable tool for socio-economic development. It is in this context that entrepreneurship education must necessarily as observed by Akudolu (2010) and European Commission (2008) be distinguished from vocational and business education.

### *Entrepreneurship Education*

Entrepreneurship education focuses on the development of students' requisite technical know-how and motivation for success in a business or other settings. It entails varying experiences that develop and enhance students' capacity to use their innate innovative skills to visualise and access opportunities and take calculative risks in order to respond to societal changes. Entrepreneurship education is therefore more than just establishment of business creation (Olorundare and Kayode, 2014). Entrepreneurship Education is the development of relevant entrepreneurial behaviour, skills and attitudes in different context in the course of the students' entrepreneurial career, appropriate deployment of which translates to the creation of a wide-range of long-term benefits to society and the economy (Olaleye, 2010; Anho, 2014). It promotes "creativity, innovation and self-employment" (European Commission, 2008).

### *Graduate entrepreneurship*

Contrary to its usage in several official quarters and speeches as somebody that finished from tertiary institution, a graduate refers exclusively to a bachelor or higher degree certificate holder. It must therefore be distinguished from those who hold certificates of others tertiary institutions aside the University here in regarded as 'diplomates' (Antony and Evelien, 2013). Graduate entrepreneurship for the purpose of this study therefore connotes entrepreneurship

practice among University graduates characterised by the level of entrepreneurial activities in the form of actual career decisions by the graduates in privately-owned business establishment.

### *Stakeholders in entrepreneurship education and supportive entrepreneurship environment for experimentation*

Byrne and Fayolle (2010) distinguished a number of actors in University Entrepreneurship Education. They include academic staff made up of professors, lecturers and assistant lecturers, doctoral students and research assistants; practicing entrepreneurs; entrepreneurs employed as University staff identified as ‘pracademics’, industrial experts, business professionals which comprised lawyers, consultants, accountants and financiers among others, incubator or business support staff and the alumni.

### *Entrepreneurship development and incubation centres*

Underscoring the importance of incubator as a tool for Entrepreneurship Education particularly at the tertiary level identified incubator as a meeting point for education, research and economy otherwise known as the first, second and third missions of the University, respectively. Incubators prepares students particularly in the final year for practical business which is an alternative employment by providing them with start-up supports at those foundational stages in a business life cycle when it is at risk (Ivona 2013; OECD, 2011). They offer shared resources including business locations and other support services to new ventures (Anna and Charlotte, 2008). Incubators link entrepreneurs to financial community for grants and other forms of financial resources to support businesses. While it is desirable that they are established in the Universities, incubators are mainly external resources. Solid arrangement must however be put in place by the University authority on matters relating to referrals and direct linkage of student entrepreneur with incubation centres (European Commission, 2008).

The Entrepreneurship Centres manage “close cooperation and referral between university-internal and external business start-up and entrepreneurship support organisations” (OECD 2010a,b). It is the responsibility of the centre as an ‘entrepreneurial hub’ of the institution to facilitate intra-departmental teaching of entrepreneurship (European Commission, 2008). The Centre coordinates teaching, research, networking, advocacy and synergies within the private sector and government with a view to institutionalising entrepreneurship and innovation as envisioned in relevant government policies (Amuseghan and Tayo-Olajubutu, 2009). It also identifies business opportunities within the University environment

Universities with established Entrepreneurship Centre globally are currently on the rise (OECD, 2011).

### *Overview of the entrepreneurship education policy and limitations to effective implementation*

Akpan and Etor (2013) identified information, financial management and risk-taking skills as foremost entrepreneurial skills required by students to empower them for job creation. They rated large class size, inadequate funding of entrepreneurship programmes and poor mindset of students towards entrepreneurship education as major constraints to effective teaching of entrepreneurship education in Nigerian universities.

Some scholars acknowledged that exposure to Entrepreneurship Education Curriculum raised the level of entrepreneurship awareness among students and left positive impression on them towards self-employment in terms of career intentions and aspirations preferences, with employment, autonomy, creativity among others as motivators for such mindset (Akudolu, 2010; Obisanya et al., 2010; Fatoki, 2010; Mosaku-Johnson, 2012; Ogah and Emesini, 2013; Wilberforce and Kofi, 2012). The scholars however recognised the lack of appropriate practical skills and exposure, governmental support, finance and unwillingness to take risk as some of the potential barriers to successful translation of the high career aspirations into business start-up decisions among graduates. In realization of the importance of the number of graduates who actually start private businesses upon exposure to Entrepreneurship Education as against those with mere intentions, the scholars recommended further study into the factors responsible for the absence of correlation between enterprise education, high motivations and aspirations gathered at the tertiary level towards self-employment and actual career decisions in a business establishment.

To address this mismatch between theory and practice of entrepreneurship, the scholars recommended a curriculum that is practical oriented and ‘learner-centered’; an instructional method which is ‘entrepreneurship-driven’ with specific focus on ‘learning by doing’ devoid of formal lectures and a method where the teachers performs the role of a Counselor by way of engaging the learner in ‘constructive feedback’ among others. The scholars also suggest a content delivery method that leverage high-tech, live case studies with successful entrepreneurs and which expose the students to network of entrepreneurial community that enable them to design and launch successful ventures. They advised that the Entrepreneurship Education curriculum should be dovetailed into school settings at all levels of education to stress the benefit of self-employment and entrepreneurship at the basic level and raise awareness of its being an alternative future career options at the post-basic level. The researchers called for governmental support to provide an enabling environment for the growth of entrepreneurship. It is against the background of the outcome of the literature review that this study attempts to fill the gap relating barriers to successful translation of the high career aspirations into business start-up decisions among graduates.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This study was situated within the framework of the Global Entrepreneurship & Development Index (GEDI) model used for evaluating entrepreneurship performance. GEDI measures entrepreneurship profile, impact and performance in and across countries relying on a number of international benchmarks. The essence of the GEDI is to equip countries in taking necessary steps to reduce to the barest minimal, potential cultural, economic and institutional barriers that will affect countries’ entrepreneurship rating on the basis of the benchmarks (National Policy Statement on Entrepreneurship in Ireland, 2014).

The model is premised on culture, human capital and education; business environment and supports; innovation; access to finance; entrepreneurial networks and mentoring; and access to markets as elements in the ecosystem of the entrepreneurship environment within which the entrepreneurs operate. It argues that an effective entrepreneurship environment requires each of these elements mutually reinforcing to form a coherent whole in order to provide support for the entrepreneurs throughout the entrepreneurship lifecycle. Stakeholders in the ecosystem are therefore expected to play their role to provide enabling environment for the entrepreneurs to perform optimally.

The GEDI adopts Entrepreneurial Attitudes (ATT), Entrepreneurial Activity (ACT) and Entrepreneurial Aspirations (ASP) identified as '3As' of development to measure entrepreneurship performance. The sub-index of ATT include market size, education, the risk a version, rate of internet usage and culture while those of ACT are determined by the level of potential startup activity measured by opportunity start-up motives, nature of the start-up whether technology intensive, educational level and distinctive nature of the product and or service. It also measure institutional variables such as "the ease of doing business, the availability of the latest technology, the level of human development, and the freedom of business operation". The ASP sub-index measures uniqueness, quality and strategy of entrepreneurial activity. This sub-index also include variables newness of product and technology, internationalisation, growth ambitions and finance. Research and Development potential, the complexity of business and of innovation, the level of globalisation, and the availability of venture capital are measured under the institutional variables. The average of the three sub-indexes when calculated gives the GEDI for the referenced country. Entrepreneurship performance of a country according to this model is therefore an outcome of the interaction among attitudes, activity and aspiration; hence, retarded when these index are in a state of disequilibrium. The GEDI index addresses defects in earlier measurement index. It recognises the multi-faceted nature of entrepreneurship and differentiates qualitative and quantitative aspects of entrepreneurial activity by making allowance for variables at individual and institutional levels. Availability of funds for new ventures, the level of risk-averseness and gender mainstreaming in entrepreneurship are also among the aspects addressed by the GEDI.

According to this model, a country's choice of policy or approach to entrepreneurship depends to a large extent on the level of development determined by whether the economy is factor-driven, efficiency-driven or innovation-driven. The focus of factor-driven economies expectedly should be on entrepreneurial attitudes geared towards encouraging initial activity while preparing the ground for entrepreneurial aspirations afterwards. Efficiency-driven economies are to pay attention on the stimulation of entrepreneurial activity while sustaining efforts to improve entrepreneurship attitudes and at the same time developing entrepreneurial aspirations. Emphasis in an innovation-driven economy should be on aspirations while improvement of entrepreneurial attitudes and activities continue unabated.

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Arising from the review of literature on entrepreneurship performance using the GEDI model, it was established that entrepreneurship performance is a function of the quality of entrepreneurship education determined by the level of environmental supports from the entrepreneurship ecosystem. This conclusion forms the basis for the development of conceptual model shown in Figure 1. The model proposes a dynamic process of assessing entrepreneurship performance by evaluating the relationship among Quality of Entrepreneurship Education, Level of Environmental Supports and Entrepreneurship Performance. It measures entrepreneurship performance in terms of Entrepreneurial Attitude, Entrepreneurial Activity and Entrepreneurial Aspiration. The model relies on the assumption that entrepreneurs operate within the framework of an ecosystem which receives from and gives to elements in the ecosystem and is susceptible to change as a result of action or inaction of forces within and outside the ecosystem. Elements of the ecosystem comprise the Government, the University, personnel, students and start-up support facilitators such as Entrepreneurship and

Incubation Centres among others. It concludes that any attempt to measure entrepreneurship performance must be carried out holistically taking into consideration the enabling nature of the environment characterised by quality of interaction among all elements of the ecosystem. It suggests that institutions saddled with the responsibilities of teaching entrepreneurship education should leverage existing windows for interaction within their environment based on the status quo for improved entrepreneurship performance. In view of the dynamic nature of the entrepreneurship ecosystem and its susceptibility to change, the outcome of the impact assessment of the entrepreneurship performance serves as input in the policy review process of the entrepreneurship performance cycle.

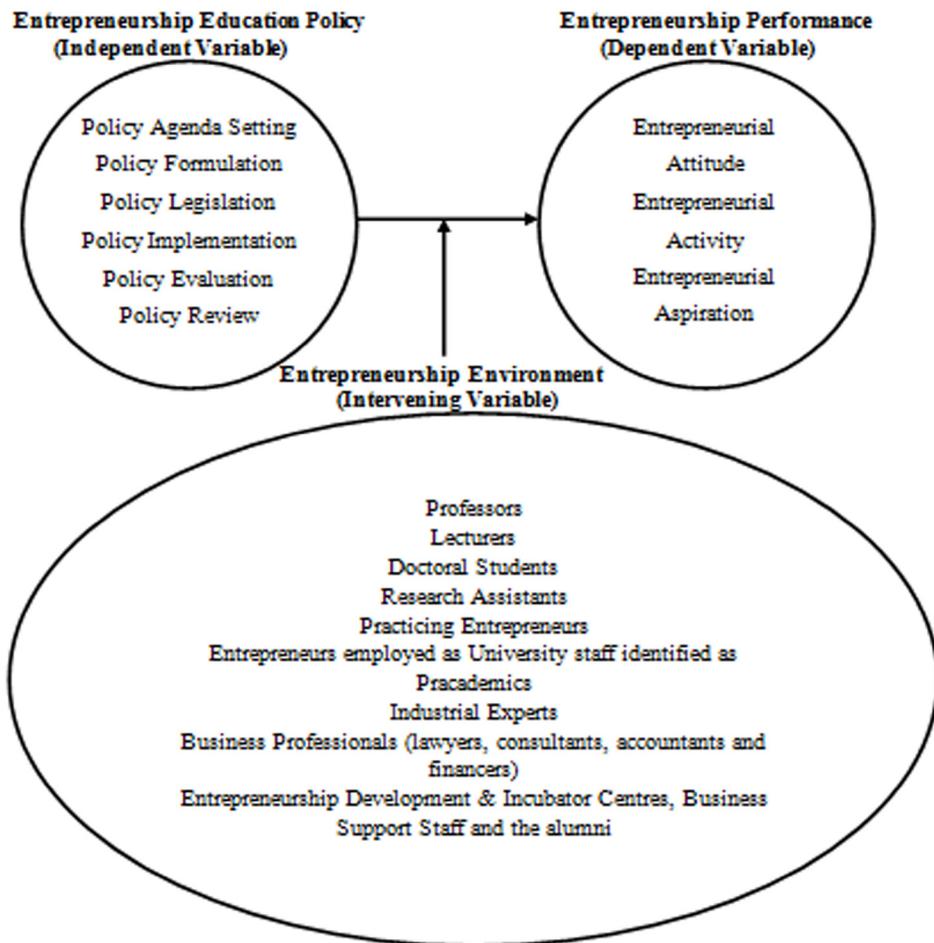


Figure 1 A conceptual framework for entrepreneurship performance

## HYPOTHESES

The study proposes the following hypotheses:

1. there is a positive relationship among Entrepreneurship Centre, Incubation Centres and level of entrepreneurship activities;
2. there is a positive relationship between the quality of entrepreneurship education and the level of entrepreneurship activity;

3. there is a positive relationship between the level of environmental support and entrepreneurship performance and
4. there is a positive relationship between level of development and entrepreneurship performance.

## PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

This study establishes that the Entrepreneurship Education policy as construed by the Government has the potential to contribute to the empowerment of University graduates for potential employment. Apart from large class size, inadequate funding, poor mindset, unwillingness to take risk and lack of appropriate practical skills, exposure and governmental support as some of the potential barriers to successful translation of the high career aspirations into business start-up decisions among graduates, implementation and lack of environmental support from relevant stakeholders and synergies between the University Communities and other collaborating agencies in line with global best practices were identified as major obstacles to the success of the policy across Universities. An aspect of the factors hindering graduate entrepreneurship that had received little attention from scholars especially who have conducted studies on entrepreneurship education in Nigeria are start-up support facilities for experimentation of entrepreneurship such as Incubation and Entrepreneurship Centres where as from the review of literature, these two remain critical success factor in the level of entrepreneurship activities, performance and success.

## PRELIMINARY CONCLUSION, RESEARCH RELEVANCE AND POLICY IMPLICATION

### *Preliminary conclusion*

This study further justifies the critical role of the entrepreneurship education policy in preparing graduates for self-employment and empowering them to own their business and employ others with the Universities as facilitators. Considering the dependence of entrepreneurship performance on the extent of synergies among stakeholders in the entrepreneurship ecosystem, the study attempts to fill the literature gap by relating entrepreneurship performance among graduates with the quality of entrepreneurship education as determined by the level of environmental supports from the entrepreneurship ecosystem. It singled out Start-up supports facilities like Entrepreneurship Development and Incubation Centres in addition to other factors identified by scholars as key to promoting graduate entrepreneurship.

### *Research relevance and policy implication*

The relevance of this study stems from the fact that the findings will serve as handy literature in understanding the dynamics of practical entrepreneurship. This study is also significant given that entrepreneurship, especially in Nigeria and other developing countries is relatively new, having been introduced into Curricula of tertiary institution a few years ago. Related to this is the fact that the introduction of Entrepreneurship Education policy in Nigeria is indeed a paradigm shift from the traditional role of the tertiary institutions especially Universities as centres for education and research in view of their newly assumed socioeconomic role of

job creation. The research also complements scholarly efforts already made by the research community in this field of study by serving as a valuable guide, reference material or at best a foundation for further for further studies for future researchers whose choice of topic may be related to the one under consideration. The study is also apt against the backdrop that it contributes to global effort at alleviating poverty and improving quality of lives of people as contained in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which has the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger as first on the list of its goals and the provision of decent employment for women, men and young people as one of its targets (Wikipedia, 2013).

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### BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

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