



THE ROLE OF GREEN ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS IN ENHANCING PRODUCTION ECONOMY IN NIGERIA

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Abstract: The national hunger, poverty, and unemployment challenges have motivated individuals and groups to float their business enterprises to achieve better living conditions. There is a clarion call to move the nation from an economy of consumption to production, enhancing Nigeria's good health and well-being through entrepreneurship education. Through literature review, participant observation, and data collection from relevant agencies, this study identified the role of green entrepreneurial skills in enhancing the production economy in Nigeria. It identified that green entrepreneurial skills will help achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 1, 2, 4, and 13. This study defined the concept of entrepreneurship and green entrepreneurship. It further highlighted that entrepreneurial skills aim primarily to produce competent, skillful, and dynamic entrepreneurs who will effectively compete in the world of work. It also identified green entrepreneurial skills as necessary amidst the global challenges of climate change, thereby enhancing the production economy. The implementation of the findings of the study would help strengthen entrepreneurship and enhance the production economy in Nigeria. It concluded with the benefits of green entrepreneurship and a clarion call for further research on the role of green entrepreneurial skills in enhancing the production economy in Nigeria.

Keywords: Business Education, Climate Action, Entrepreneurship, Green Skills, Production Economy, Zero Poverty.

1. INTRODUCTION

The present high rate of unemployment, poverty, and hunger in the country has been a concern for individuals, families, and the government. The national challenges of poverty and unemployment have motivated individuals and groups to float their business enterprises to achieve better living conditions (Ezenwafor, 2014). These enterprises are expected to create wealth for their owners, improve the well-being of other individuals and communities, and contribute to national development by creating employment opportunities and alleviating hunger and poverty. To further alleviate the scourge, the need for entrepreneurship is being advanced around the globe, and Nigeria is not left out. John-Akametalu and Okolocha (2018), defined entrepreneurship as the process of designing, innovating, creating, launching and running a new business which offers a product, process or services for sale or lease. Anyone who undertakes this risky venture is known as an entrepreneur.

However, for successful entrepreneurship, an individual needs various skills to pilot the affairs of one's endeavour rightfully. These skills are necessary tools for successful entrepreneurship. According to Anadi, Egboka, Ezoba, and Ikwumelu (2010), entrepreneurial skills are competencies and capabilities that enable an individual to become productive, successful, and independent. They are survival skills that individuals, especially business education graduates, need to function effectively and successfully in self-employment. Business Education, which is a phase of Technology and Vocational-Education (TVE), is seen as one of the most powerful instruments known for developing entrepreneurship skills, creating employment, and making the beneficiaries self-reliant in modern societies. It is also used to lay the foundation for global commercial growth and development. Zarifis (as cited by Ikpe & Undie, 2014) affirms this when the author stated that one of the objectives of business education which is a branch of Vocational Education and Training (VET) is to satisfy the continuously changing needs of the labour market.

As an integral part of vocational education, business education aspires to produce skilled graduates who can meet the demands of a fast-growing society. Business education is one of the major components of vocational education, a discipline directed towards developing the learner to become productive in teaching, paid employment, and self-employment. Business education aims primarily to produce competent, skillful, and dynamic business teachers, office administrators, and businessmen and women who will effectively compete in the world of work (Odunaike, Ijaduola & Epetimehin, 2012). It also exposes the recipient to the economic system of their country. It equips them with lifelong skills that enable them to make reasonable judgments as producers (entrepreneurs), employees, or consumers of goods and services. Business education students run a four-year degree program for universities and three years for a National Certificate for Education (NCE) in various higher learning institutions. According to Imeokparia and Ediagbonya (2009), Business education undergraduates in most tertiary institutions cover both secretarial education (now known as Office Technology and Management) and Accounting Education. Office Technology and Management (OTM) emphasizes the teaching of office and management-related skills, Distributive and Marketing Education, and Commerce, and Cooperatives education, while Accounting Education primarily emphasizes the teaching of accounting-related skills; business education program is an integral part of vocational education aimed at producing citizens who are self-reliant in the society. However, for a successful entrepreneurial process, a business education graduate must have various skills to succeed in the business world. Entrepreneurship is the professional application of competencies by an individual or a set of people by launching an enterprise or diversifying from an existing one (Babu, Krishna & Swathi, 2013). It is the willingness and ability of an individual to seek out investment opportunities and establish and run an enterprise successfully. Entrepreneurial skills, therefore, are abilities and aptitudes that enable someone to survive and succeed in the management of a business. Entrepreneurship is the process of learning the skills needed to assume the risk of establishing a business. Entrepreneurial skills combine a range of technical, management, and personal skills. Nevertheless, the various skills embedded in education programmes need to be explored and learned by prospective graduates so that they can succeed as entrepreneurs.

Furthermore, green entrepreneurial skills have become an advantage and a necessity with the present global challenge of climate change presently ravaging many communities, cities and countries around the world (Anabaraonye, Ewa & Hope, 2021). These green entrepreneurial skills in waste management, renewable energy, plastic recycling, environmental photography and eco-poetry will further enable young business education graduates to maximize the green entrepreneurial opportunities available to enhance production economy in Nigeria (Anabaraonye, Orji, Ewa & Arinze, 2023; Anabaraonye, Nwobu, Nwagbo, Ewa & Okonkwo, 2022)

UNDERSTANDING ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND GREEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Entrepreneurship is seen as one of the drivers of job creation and economic growth in developing countries such as Nigeria. Thus, entrepreneurship catalyzes economic growth (Ojiagu, 2018). However, most business education graduates embark on entrepreneurship without properly acquiring the necessary skills needed for successful entrepreneurship. As a result of this attitude, these graduates without the necessary skills experience failure instead of success. Business education graduates who go into entrepreneurship fail not because they do not have the necessary capital and machines to stay afloat but because they lack the prerequisite skills to grow a small-scale business and remain in the business. It takes special entrepreneurial skills to succeed in the operation of businesses.

Entrepreneurial skills refer to business skills that one acquires to enable one to function effectively in the business environment as an entrepreneur. These skills include management, marketing, innovation, and financial skills. Several factors, such as political instability, government policies, and infrastructural inadequacy, among others, are on the high failure rate of Nigerian entrepreneurs; non-possession of relevant skills tops the list (Ezenwafor, 2014). In managing a small-scale business, one should possess these entrepreneurial skills to succeed in a competitive business environment. In the Central Bank Nigeria (CBN) credit guidelines, small-scale businesses are classified as those with an annual turnover of less than half a million naira (Onwuka & Ibe, 2006). Federal Government Small-scale Business Development Programme (SDBP) (as cited by Osuala, 2004) defined a small-scale business as any manufacturing, processing, or service industry with a capital investment not exceeding one hundred and fifty thousand naira in machinery and equipment and employing not more than fifty workers. It is assumed that small-scale business costs are not very high enough to be established. However, graduates of business education programs without relevant entrepreneurial skills can find the labor market most unrewarding and unfavorable in terms of creating jobs themselves instead of seeking jobs where none exist. This phenomenon results in business education graduates seeking jobs in various offices and government agencies where jobs are quite few or do not exist. They make no attempts at all to explore the abundant business opportunities in the country, thereby increasing unemployment. This worrisome situation necessitated the study.

Green entrepreneurship is defined as the activity of consciously addressing an environmental/social problem/need through the realization of entrepreneurial ideas with a high level of risk, which has a net positive effect on the natural environment and, at the same time, is financially sustainable (Greentproject, 2016). A green entrepreneur starts and runs an entrepreneurial venture designed to be green in its products and processes from the very moment it is set up (Anabaraonye, Okafor & Eriobu, 2019). Green entrepreneurs are valuable assets across various communities in Nigeria today. The Green entrepreneur sees the problems caused by climate change, environmental pollution, and global warming. He/she also perceives the business opportunities in waste management and recycling. He/she takes on the risk of

engaging in the process of waste recycling to ensure a sustainable environment and the sustainable economic growth of his/her community and nation (Anabaraonye, Okafor & Eriobu, 2019). With the present challenge of climate change, green entrepreneurial skills are highly needed, especially among business education graduates, to enhance climate resilience and advance the production economy in Nigeria.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The findings of this study would positively impact the students, school personnel, business educators, and curriculum planners. The findings of this study will determine the entrepreneurial and green skills needed by business education students for business operations, which will enable them to become self-employed upon graduation. This would reduce unemployment among business education graduates, as they would employ themselves and others. Implementing the study findings would help strengthen business education as a discipline as it will entail enhanced self-employment and self-reliance amongst business education graduates. The study findings are useful for entrepreneurs since they highlight the focus on entrepreneurship and green skills to improve their effectiveness in managing their business activities for greater output and maximize profits from their business ventures. To business education curriculum planners, the findings of this study will buttress their area of focus to develop the required entrepreneurship skills for self-employment. To the nation at large, when these youths are properly channeled toward productivity, the issues of social vices will be minimized, a productive labor force will be created, less dependence on the government, and good health will be assured. Finally, for researchers with a keen interest in identifying the relevance of green entrepreneurship skills in tertiary institutions in Nigeria, the findings will help them be more focused on the information provided by the study and will serve as a guide.

METHODOLOGY AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter examined current progress with “the role of green entrepreneurial skills in enhancing production economy in Nigeria” through existing literature review, participant observation, and data collection from relevant agencies. The literature review includes journal articles, magazines, book chapters, and an encyclopedia available online and in libraries. The main purpose of this research was to survey theoretical backgrounds and previous studies on the above subject matter and the current progress with the implementation of green entrepreneurship education in Nigeria.

GREEN ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS IN A PRODUCTION ECONOMY

What constitutes entrepreneurial skills has been the subject of much discussion. However, the greater emphasis on entrepreneurship education and developing green entrepreneurial skills has brought more analysis and agreement on entrepreneurial abilities and competencies. European Commission (2013) stated that entrepreneurial skills combine a range of technical, management, and personal

skills. Entrepreneurial skills are a set of abilities to turn ideas into action. They include creativity, innovation, risk-taking, and the ability to plan and manage projects to achieve objectives. They are vital to promoting innovation, competitiveness, and economic growth (International Labour Organization, 2008). Fostering entrepreneurial spirit supports the creation of new firms and business growth. However, entrepreneurial skills also provide benefits regardless of whether a person sees their future as starting a business (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2013). They can be used across people’s personal and working lives as they encompass creativity, initiative, tenacity, teamwork, understanding of risk, and a sense of responsibility (European Commission, 2013).

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (2013) has identified three main groups of skills required by entrepreneurs:

- a) Technical skills – communication, environment monitoring, problem-solving, technology implementation and use, interpersonal and organizational skills.
- b) Business management skills – planning and goal setting, decision making, human resources management, marketing, finance, accounting, customer relations, quality control, negotiation, business launch, growth management, and compliance with regulations.
- c) Personal entrepreneurial skills– self-control and discipline, risk management, innovation, persistence, managership, change management, network building, and strategic thinking.

Gururaja and Osabuohien (2024) further identified skill development as a necessary part of entrepreneurship education with the capacity to enhance the production economy. Commercial managers and creative workers require various combinations of these skills, competencies, and attributes (Cooney, 2012). In addition, entrepreneurs require knowledge of the sectors in which they operate, i.e., an IT, construction, or catering entrepreneur will require knowledge of those specific sectors or occupations. Gibb (2008) affirmed that entrepreneurial skills should be taught both formally and informally, including intuitive decision-making, creative problem-solving, managing interdependency on a know-how basis, ability to conclude deals, strategic thinking, project management, time management, persuasion, selling, negotiation and motivating people by setting an example. Tang, Kacmar, and Busenitz (2012) proposed three basic skills that are necessary to perform a successful entrepreneurial task. One skill is the competency of alertness, which measures the entrepreneur’s ability to recognize new business opportunities where others cannot identify them. The second is the creative competency, which measures the ability to provide a different and innovative approach when faced with a new problem; and then, there is self-consciousness, which is a competency of self-criticism and the ability to evaluate your ideas and the ideas of others to improve them. To this end, entrepreneurial skills are required by an entrepreneur for effective, productive, and profitable performance in the business world.

Furthermore, green entrepreneurial skills are required by the entrepreneur to adapt and mitigate the impacts of climate change in the cause of his entrepreneurial endeavors, thereby enhancing the production economy. Green entrepreneurial skills are, therefore, vital for business education graduates as the challenge of climate change threatens the survival of businesses in Nigeria as a nation.

INNOVATIVE STRATEGIES FOR GREEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

There is a great need to educate communities, cities, campuses, and companies on green entrepreneurial opportunities, skills, and strategies to enhance the production economy in Nigeria. Though there abound adverse effects inherent in climate change, the following approach could be deployed towards maximizing the green entrepreneurship education for the production economy in Nigeria:

i) Radical awareness approach to information dissemination. The emergence of information communication and technology (ICT) worldwide, to a large extent, has proven a very effective and efficient vehicle for letting people become aware of opportunities and benefits in green entrepreneurship. These information dissemination platforms besides the internet (educational blogs, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.) include radio, television, and telephone.

ii) The government at all levels in Nigeria should provide enabling environment and sustainable funds in the form of grants and loans to the teeming unemployed and underemployed business education graduates and other youths who may want to be involved in the green entrepreneurial skill businesses in their different capacities. This approach, when incorporated into long-term policy planning in climate change mitigation in Nigeria, will go a long way in reducing hunger, poverty, and unemployment among the youths in the country. This approach will further enhance good health and well-being among the youths for the production economy in Nigeria.

iii) The use and involvement of non-governmental organizations that are environmental-driven and climate change-sensitive can go a long way in providing green entrepreneurial opportunities for many youths in Nigeria. Awareness of the economic opportunities in green entrepreneurship can be communicated to campuses through the various outreaches, seminars, and workshops initiated by these environmental sustainability-driven NGOs in Nigeria.

vi) Educational blogs can inform, enlighten, and educate researchers, green entrepreneurs, and interested individuals in Nigeria, especially the internet literate ones, about green entrepreneurship. A good example is the Project Green initiative www.projectgreeninitiative.wordpress.com, which features articles and poems on climate change adaptation and mitigation for global sustainability. These blogs, which are meant to be highly interactive, allow individuals to contribute their ideas, suggestions, and feedback to the environmental sustainability-driven educators and green bloggers (Anabaraonye, Ewa & Hope, 2021).

vii) Poetry has also been discovered as a great tool which can be used to educate individuals in Nigeria about the socio-economic benefits of green entrepreneurship (Anabaraonye, Ewa & Hope, 2021).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the quest for effective and efficient entrepreneurship education in Nigeria, the following recommendations are made:

1. Government and other stakeholders in the educational sector should ensure that educational programmes and training at all levels are made relevant to provide young graduates with the needed entrepreneurial skills, including green skills.

2. Implementing entrepreneurship education course content in tertiary institutions needs to be refocused and upgraded to produce green technological innovation and result-oriented green entrepreneurs with practical training in relevant industrial sectors of the economy.

3. Women and youths should be engaged as a special point of attention in the proposed entrepreneurship education and training program as they are in the majority of the population of Nigeria.

4. Financial, technical, and moral support should be given to organizations that wish to improve and promote understanding of the needs of entrepreneurs through activities such as exchange visits, training programs, seminars, workshops, and other monitoring programs.

5. Developing websites for entrepreneurs providing information about specific grants and available loan scheme support should be encouraged in Nigeria.

6. The government should focus on developing Indigenous green technology by establishing learning and research centers relevant to the need for green entrepreneurship education to enhance Nigeria's production economy.

CONCLUSION

Entrepreneurship education and training programmes provide various opportunities and skills to students so they can work to positively benefit themselves and society at large (Atakpa, 2011). Green entrepreneurship education will go a long way towards imbuing green entrepreneurial skills and highlighting the green entrepreneurial opportunities for young graduates in Nigeria, thereby enhancing climate resilience (Anabaraonye, Okon, Ewa, Adeniyi & Nwobu, 2022). Thus, knowing its merits and contributions to production economy and sustainable development, there is the need to teach and encourage entrepreneurship skills including green skills among business education students across higher education institutions in Nigeria.

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