

# PROMOTING ENTREPRENEURIAL AND LIFELONG LEARNING THROUGH DISTANCE EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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## **Abstract**

*The Nigerian economy in the present circumstance of globalization and particularly the present economic recession actually needs re-engineering through the promotion of entrepreneurial and lifelong education through distance education platform. This is because distance education has been identified to play very significant role in promoting viable and entrepreneurial and lifelong education which is also very significant for the government in re-positioning small and Medium Enterprise Development and the churning of the empowerment and indigenization policies that will propel programmes which will lead to poverty alleviation of poor citizens in the Nigerian nation through distance education which encourages and promotes lifelong learning education. The authors exerted what entrepreneurship is all about, what lifelong education stands for, issues about distance education, issues about promoting entrepreneurship through Distance Education (DE) and how the Nigerian economy can improve through entrepreneur and lifelong education. The authors offered some recommendations and made conclusion.*

**Keywords:** Entrepreneurship, lifelong education and distance education

Across the world, Higher Education has turned from a mere privilege available to the elite few into a mass education. This trend has not spared those of us in the developing countries like Nigeria. In 1960 when Nigeria attained its independence from the British colonialist, North People's Congress and National Council of Nigeria and Cameroon (NPC-NCNC) government, especially in the Western Region introduced the

education for all policy to correct the previous education access imbalance. As a result of the policy, enrolment in schools rose up (Dumbu & Chadamoyo, 2012). The rise in enrolment in schools swelled the demand for higher education in the country. Higher education in Nigeria, and to be specific, University education became the centre of debate for policy makers in a bid to absorb the students that were being churned out from the secondary schools. This among other reason led to establishment of the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) in 1982, but was suspended until the year 2000 when it became firmly established in the country. NOUN was established by an Act of parliament in 2000 and mandated to provide tuition through Open and Distance Learning (ODL). Presently, the University has study centers in all almost parts of the country. This means that the University is releasing graduates into the labour market which is already saturated. Consequently, the main problem in Nigeria today is that there is high unemployment coupled with high levels of poverty. Higher education is however looked up to provide solutions to the ever increasing problems of unemployment and poverty.

Studies have established that the panacea to the challenges bedeviling the nation lies in the hand of higher education among which is ODE solution to prove and satisfy that through the inclusion of entrepreneurship courses in ODE programmes graduates will be self employed due to entrepreneurship education they received while in school. The National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) is a university that is offering flexible learning opportunities to its student.

### **Characteristics of ODL Students**

Some of the students that enroll with the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) are mature and some of them are work. With that in mind, one can be tempted to say there is need of a paradigm shift (Dumbu et al; 2012) in the designing and development of the University education curriculum in the Open and Distance Learning situation. The best route to take in order to tackle the unemployment challenge in Nigeria is to mandate the Open and Distance Learning institution, the National Open University of Nigeria to develop curriculum which include Entrepreneurship Education (EE). The design of the curriculum should be that all students that are enrolled in the university have to do courses in Entrepreneurship Education as compulsory courses. Students from across the university faculties should be given a chance to study entrepreneurship basing on the fact that there are certain entrepreneurial courses that demand creativity, determination, flexibility, leadership, passion and self confidence. Thus, it becomes difficult to say that those students enrolled in the Faculty of Commerce are best placed to become entrepreneurs. Students from the other faculties also share the same entrepreneurial characteristics. Therefore, this calls for the revision of the university curriculum to include Entrepreneurship Education to all students in all the faculties across the University.

### **What is Entrepreneurship?**

According to Odunaike and Amoda, (2013) entrepreneurship is the art of setting up and running an enterprise in a profitable and sustainable manner. To satisfy those needs, the entrepreneurs have to start to satisfy the needs of the customers in market. To satisfy these needs, the entrepreneurs have to start up new ventures in line with the identified needs of the market (Dumbu & Chadamoyo, 2012). Therefore, scholars can regard entrepreneurship as the willingness and ability of the individual entrepreneur to identify and exploit the investment opportunities in an environment. However, not individual is entrepreneurial but only those activities performed by the individual that bring innovation to the new satisfaction of the customers demand. From this one can see that the individual differences that exist in people calls for the radical paradigm shift from the simple thinking that those students in the Faculty Business Administration in a University have a strong entrepreneurship drive. The contemporary business environment characterized by stiff competition requires individuals, who are innovative, who that can risk to exploit the business opportunities with the scarce disposable resources. This is done through the identification of the varying and dynamic demands of the market (Akpan, Effiong & Ele 2012). It was argued by Odunaike and Amoda (2013) that entrepreneurs, in their endeavour to satisfy the new demands of the market can be described as innovative modern industrial business leaders. Overall, entrepreneurship can be regarded as the ability of the individual to mobilize scarce resources, attaches risk to the exploitation of the existing business opportunities in a profitable way. The desire of the entrepreneur is to gain in the process, some revenue that are above the cost and risk associated with the entrepreneurial activity. Entrepreneurship was established in 1700s and its meaning has evolved ever since (Alberti, Sciacia & Poli, 2014). In simple terms, it is starting one's own business but economists believe it is more than that. Schumpeter (2011) defined an entrepreneur as a person who destroys the existing economic order to create and benefit the structure by introducing new products and services, or by creating new forms of organization or by exploiting new raw material. It simply means that a traditional and established means of doing business are replaced by creative and innovative ways of doing business. Drucker (2015) who is regarded as one of the leading management thinker of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century describes entrepreneurs as someone who searches new opportunities and responds to these by the exploitation of scarce resources.

One can therefore said that an entrepreneur is someone who has a unique instinct, mindset, inspiration or vision, strength, willingness and ability to conceptualize ideas and implement a business plan and who perceives changes as an opportunity to create value. Many countries believe that entrepreneurship is the main element for stimulating economic growth and development hence leading to increased employment opportunities (Ossai & Nwalado, 2012). When talking about stimulating economy scholars cannot ignore the role played by the higher education as the creators of knowledge. It has been argued by Abdullah (2012) that entrepreneurship activity is

associated with generating and founding of new firms which become the engine for the growth and innovation of the economy during the times of economic challenges.

### **Concept of Entrepreneurship/Entrepreneur**

Entrepreneurship is a lifelong learning process starting from an early age as at elementary school and progressing through all levels of education (Odunaike & Amoda (2013). The focus of Entrepreneurship Education (EE) is on making the learners understand and capacitate them for pursuit of entrepreneurial behaviour. From the definition above one can observe the Entrepreneurship Education (EE) can sometimes be equated to Business Education. The concept of entrepreneurship has its roots in the early works of Drucker (2015) who is regarded as the contemporary management thinker. Elsewhere, entrepreneurship is originated from Shigeru Fijii, a scholar and teacher in Fijii language at Kobe University in Japan. Thereafter, the concept was adopted in other parts of the world with the first course in Entrepreneurship introduced in United States of America at Harvard Business School. This phenomenon later gained acceptance and more recognition in developing countries and other parts of the world.

In the first instance, the government which has recognized the need for the introduction of EE in the higher education curriculum as a means for addressing the economic and social transformation goals. it is expected of the government to use EE to with the perennial challenges of unemployment and poverty in the nation. Through education, especially lifelong education the government aims at developing an entrepreneurial culture which is oriented to job creation. Most jobs arise from entrepreneurial small firm, not even from large enterprises. The second of the demand for entrepreneurship education is the business world itself. There seems to be a general paucity of managerial skills in of managers who should oriented to the development of new businesses to assure a continual renewal.

Drucker (2015), the contemporary management thinker regards entrepreneurship as the way individuals who quest for exploiting business opportunities search for change in meeting the dynamic demands of the market. Drucker (2015) in this case, viewed entrepreneurship as a practice behaviour that can be learnt. Therefore, entrepreneurship is a process which involves the effort of individual entrepreneurs in identifying viable and profitable business opportunities in the environment. Keat (2011) argued an individual entrepreneur mobilizes resources for the exploitation of the existing business opportunities. They interact with the environment through their capacities to scan and make feasibility studies of the environment to see what can be obtained a profit. Similarly, Timmons and Spinell (2014) opined that entrepreneurship is an activity that caused the destruction of the traditional methods of doing business in the environment by bringing in new methods and technology which is the essence of economic development. Aina and Salako (2008) described entrepreneurship as the willingness and ability of an individual to seek out profitable investment opportunities. In the process of taking advantage of investment opportunities, scarce resources are

employed (Ogundele, Akingbade & Akinlabe, 2012). Reward in the form of profit is the major driver and incentive for entrepreneurship but this is always accompanied by financial, social and economic risks (Kikechi, Owano, Ayodo, & Ejakat, 2013).

Entrepreneurship Education is the veritable vehicle for intervention by the University in the life of the learner to input entrepreneurial skills. The intervention by university is to enable the university product/graduate to survive in the world of business and also assist the government in achieving one of its main objectives of reducing unemployment among the university graduates. Entrepreneurship education results in the new business start ups (Isaac, Visser, Friedrich & Brijal, 2014).

When included in the university curriculum, Entrepreneurship Education has the potential of enabling graduates systematically acquire job related knowledge, skills and attitudes that will help in business management. It is hoped that the graduate, after acquiring the Entrepreneurship Education will develop orientation towards new business startup. Business management skills that differentiate an entrepreneur from a manager is the technical skills which involves the technical knowledge of starting and running new business in a modern way. For one to acquire the entrepreneurship technical skills, the entrepreneur should be in possession of rare or innate control ability which allows for high degree of self discipline. Ogundele (2012) argued that entrepreneurs should be innovative, change oriented and also be visionary.

Contemporary research. Ogundele (2012) in the field of entrepreneurship concur that there is need to emphasize Entrepreneurship Education. Entrepreneurship Education traditionally has been recognized by individuals. Traditionally, the universities have dwelled more on Business Entrepreneurship Education which is lifelong learning process where competency awareness, creativity, application, startups and growth depict the Entrepreneurship Education curve. Government of the world is faced with a common problem of unemployment phenomenon and Nigeria is not spared. The country, in its bid to deal with the unemployment phenomenon which is rising in the university graduate sector has to grapple also with other policies aimed at improving the performance of the ailing economy. To deal with the current situation like any other government there is need to throw weight on the policy of indigenization and empowerment. These two policies are seen as enabling policies to react to the unemployment that the country is currently facing. These policies cannot go a long way if they are not supported by the universities and especially with the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) where Continuing Education in the context of Lifelong Education could be achieved through the introduction of Entrepreneurship Education in the university curriculum. Therefore, the curriculum change for inclusion of Entrepreneurship Education other than Business Education cannot be over emphasized.

### **Lifelong Learning and Entrepreneurship**

Education is an essential ingredient of economy prosperity especially in developing countries that are characterized by low income and high unemployment

level (Ndibe, Danda & Abdulazeez, 2013). There can be little doubt that the development of the modern economy is underpinned in the curriculum of its higher education sector. For example, in Nigeria, where the government introduced various poverty alleviation programmes for sustainable socio-economic transformation, the development and attainment of this objective has nothing short of amazing when it comes to the role of lifelong learning or education through acquisition of skills, knowledge and attitudes could have been acquired by the individuals of the society.

The importance of Continuing Education (CE) cannot be overemphasized. Greater efforts should be needed to enable to make the public aware of the actual benefits of continuing education, and to make participation in and acceptance of continuing education more entrepreneurial oriented through transparency and counseling. Like other social fields, continuing education will thus need to modernize and turn itself into a learning system, pursuing goals of increased effectiveness, social justice and social and political sustainability. It must be the guiding principle of all concerned that lifelong learning is a worthwhile investment.

As the knowledge based information society develops, lifelong learning is becoming one of the key factors for individuals, society and policy-makers including the issues of entrepreneurship education. It is not enough for the individual to learn once and for all: there is constant need to go on learning in response to technological and social change in order to cope with demands at work, in society and in politics and training. And if learning is to continue throughout life, the foundations must be laid early in education for sustainable learning, for “Learning to Learn”. In addition to employability, lifelong learning aims at increasing self-reliance and social participation. In future, local, regional and national success will depend increasingly on the economic, social and political “Knowledge” and hence on the continuing education of citizens.

In the context of greater self-reliance and consequent withdrawal by the state from detailed management, and in the light of technological developments in multimedia resources, it will be both necessary and possible for individuals their own learning free from constraints of time and place. If the relevant equipment is available in the various fields of education, and if suitable software programmes are developed, it will be possible to make increased use of multimedia learning facilities. Continuing education establishments will not be however, but will acquire a different function, becoming agencies that provide learning support through information, counseling and coaching. In order both to enhance effectiveness and save money through synergy and to avert the dangers of isolation, greater attention will have to be given to networking between the various providers of continuing education/higher education institutions, vocational colleges, continuing education establishments and enterprises, between the various fields of education (initial, higher and continuing education), and between various social fields (education, the environment, economic activity, employment, social security, and culture). Together with increased opportunities for individual learning, this interweaving and cooperation will be a feature of continuing education.

### **Types of Distance Education for Entrepreneurship Education**

Distance education or distance learning is a mode of delivery education and instruction, often on an individual basis, to students who are not physically present in a traditional setting such as a classroom. Distance learning provides access to learning when the source of information and learners are separated by time and distance, or that requires a physical on-site presence for any reason (excluding taking examinations), has been referred to as hybrid or blended courses of study. Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), aimed at large-scale interactive participation and open access via the web or other network technologies, are a recent development in distance education. The earliest distance education courses may date back to the early 18<sup>th</sup> century in Europe. One of the earliest examples was from 1728 advisement in the Boston Gazette for Caleb Phillips, teacher of the new method of “Short hand”, who sought students who wanted to learn through weekly mailed lessons.

The first distance education course in the modern sense was provided by Sir. Isaac Pitman in the 1840s, who taught a system of shorthand by mailing text transcribed into shorthand on postcards and receiving transcription from his students in return for correction. The element of student feedback was a crucial innovation of Pitman’s system. This scheme was made possible by the introduction of uniform postage rates across England from 1840.

This early beginning proved extremely successful, and the phonographic correspondence society was founded three years later to establish these courses on a more formal basis. The society paved way for the later formation of Sir Isaac Pitman Colleges across the country. The University of London was the first University to offer distance learning degrees, establishing its external programme in 1858. The background to this innovation lay in the fact that the institution (later known as University College, London) was non-denominational and, given the intense religious reveries at the time, there was an outcry against the “godless” university. The issue soon boiled down to which institutions had degree-granting powers and which institution did not.

### **Internet**

The widespread use of computers and the internet have made distance learning easier and faster, and today, virtual universities deliver full curricula online. Entrepreneurship Education (EE) can be provided for majority of individuals through the use of internet technologies. The implementation of internet forum, online discussion group and online learning community contribute to an efficacious distance education. Research showed that socialization plays the most vital role in effective distance education.

### **Synchronous Learning**

In synchronous learning, all participants are “present” at the same time. In this regard, it resembles traditional classroom teaching methods despite the participants

being located remotely. It requires a timetable to be organized. Web Conferencing, Video Conferencing Education Television, Instructional Television are examples of synchronous technology, as are Direct Broadcast Satellite (DBS), Internet Radio, Live Streaming, Telephone and Web-based VOIP. Online meeting software such as Adobe connects has help to facilitate meetings in distance learning courses. Another form of synchronous learning that has been entering the classroom over the last couple of years is the use of robot proxis.

### **Asynchronous Learning**

In asynchronous learning, participants access course materials flexibly on their own schedules. Students are not required to be together at the same time. Mail correspondence, which is the oldest form of distance education, is an asynchronous delivery technology, is one message board forums, e-mail, video and audio recordings, print materials, voicemail, and fax.

### **Interactive Radio Instruction (IRI)**

Distance learning can also use Interactive Radio Instruction (IRI), Interactive Audio Instruction (IAI), online virtual worlds, digital games, webinars, and web casts, all of which are referred to as e-learning.

### **Paced and Self-Paced Models**

Distance education can be delivered in a paced format, much as traditional campus based models in which learners commence and complete a course at the same time. Alternatively, some institutions offer self-paced programmes that allows for continuous enrolment and the length of time to complete the course that is set by the learner's time, skill and commitment levels. Paced courses may be offered in either synchronous mode, but self paced courses are almost always offered asynchronously. Each delivery model offers both advantages and disadvantages for students.

Paced models are familiar modes as they are used almost exclusively in campus based schools. Institutes that offer both distance and campus programmes usually use paced models as teacher work load, student semester planning, tuition deadlines, exam schedules and other administrative details can be synchronized with campus delivery. Student's familiarity and the pressure of deadlines encourage students to readily adapt to and usually succeed in paced models. However, a student freedom is scarified as a common pace is often too fast for some students and too slow for others. In addition, life events, professional or family responsibilities can interfere with a student's capability to complete tasks to an external schedule. Finally, paced models allow students to readily form communities of inquiry and to engage in collaborative work.

Self-paced model maximize student freedom, as not only can students commence studies on any date, but they can complete a course in as little time as a few weeks or up to a year or longer. Students often enroll in self-paced study when they are



under pressure to complete programmes, have not been able to complete a scheduled course, need additional courses or have pressure which precludes regular study for any length of time. The self-paced nature of the programming though is an unfamiliar model for many students, can also lead to excessive procrastination resulting in course incompleteness. Assessment of learning can also be challenging as exams can be written on any day making it possible for students to share examination questions resulting in loss of academic integrity. Finally, it is extremely challenging to organize collaborative work activities, though some schools are developing cooperative models based upon networked and connective pedagogies for use in self-paced programmes.

### **Conclusion**

Entrepreneurship Education aims at developing an entrepreneurial culture which would cultivate job creation. It is the demand by government to deal with the challenges of unemployment and poverty reduction. Second strand is the demand for entrepreneurial education that is created by students. These are the group of students who are interested to venture in starting up their own business and also wish to obtain knowledge helpful in their careers. The last strand of the demand for entrepreneurship education is the business world itself. There seems to be a general scarcity of managerial skills in enterprises and of managers who are oriented to the development of new business to assure a continual renewal.

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations have been made for this paper. These include:

1. There is an urgent need for the provision of Entrepreneurship Education through lifelong learning or continuing education activities.
2. Universities should stress on entrepreneurship education curriculum for their students.
3. The entrepreneurship Departments/Units in the universities should be linked with the university Alumni Association.
4. Universities should establish Entrepreneurship Development Centers.

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