

Revisiting Entrepreneurship Education (EE) and the development of learners in Nigeria

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Abstract: This article revisited the mainstreaming of Entrepreneurship Education (EE) into Nigeria's educational system and the impact on learners. Relying on content analysis of data obtained through secondary sources, it evaluates the patterns of EE in schools, its synergies with entrepreneurship-related programmes beyond the educational system, stakeholders' involvement, the outcomes and results. The findings show that EE has not visibly promoted the building and development of learners' capacity and society. This partly accounts for the increasing rate of unemployability, unemployment and poverty in the country. The paper recommends: (i) a shift from the focus on 'traditional trade'¹ subjects that are still taught in schools in a digital age to contemporary and evolving entrepreneurship subjects; (ii) building of functional synergies between entrepreneurship education in schools and entrepreneurship-related programmes beyond the schools introduced by government, development partners and the private sector. The paper constructs a model for entrepreneurship education value-chain in line with the recommended approaches that promotes learners and societal development.

Keywords: Development of learners in Nigeria, Digital age, Educational system, Entrepreneurship Education (EE), Entrepreneurship Education value-chain.

1. INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship Education (EE) is not a new entrant into the Nigeria's educational curricula. The origin and history of EE in Nigerian schools have been traced to various periods (Okebukola, 2005; Okoli and Allahna, 2014; Bassey, Nwagbara and Bisong, 2014 in Akpan, 2021, 36). In spite of the nuances, what seems to be certain was that the fallouts of the 'National Curriculum Conference of 1969 on National Philosophy of Education', recognises amongst other goals that 'the training of the mind about the world' and 'the acquisition of appropriate skills' (Adaralegbe, 1971) laid the foundation for entrepreneurship education in Nigeria. While EE was introduced earlier at the primary and post basic levels under different nomenclatures (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2004), the use of entrepreneurship label and introduction of the course at the tertiary level tend to be recent phenomena. The first goal of basic education according to Federal Government of Nigeria (2014, 6) is to 'Provide the child with diverse basic knowledge and skills for entrepreneurship, wealth generation and educational advancement,' which runs through 'senior secondary education, higher school, and continuing education' (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2014, 17; Akinboade, 2014).

The essence of EE is to develop learners that will not only be independent and self-reliant, but also create employment and generate wealth through providing solutions to societal challenges. Amongst the set of beliefs upon which Nigeria's philosophy of education is anchored, we considered the following three to be very crucial and strategic: '(a) Education is an instrument for national development and social change; (b) education maximizes the creative potentials and skills of

the individual for self-fulfillment and general development of the society; and (c) education is to be qualitative, comprehensive, functional and relevant to the needs of the society' (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014, 1-2). These show that education is both a means to an end, and an end itself for the overall good of the learner and society. Thus, it is advocated that the contents of 21st century curricula should accommodate 'critical thinking and problem solving, creativity and innovation, effective communication and collaboration' to promote in the learners the ability to be 'proficient communicators, creators, critical thinkers, and collaborators' (National Education Association, 2012, 1-5). At the centre of global and national development initiatives and frameworks is the recognition of 'education as a means of empowering the people,' thus, any reform in the 'nation's education system' must align 'with the prevailing developmental goals in a global context' and 'create a good society that can compete globally' (Shekarau, 2014, iv-v).

Several years after the introduction of EE in Nigeria's educational system, Nigerian schools have won the 'Students for the Advancement of Global Entrepreneurship (SAGE)' competition several times (Premium Times, 2013). In a similar vein, 'the Regina Pacis Model Secondary School, Onitsha, Anambra State, won the Gold Award at the "World Technovation Challenge" held at Silicon Valley, in the United States' (The Guardian, 2018). However, these outstanding global records have not translated to similar results at home. The available statistics reveal that unemployment in the country was 33.30 per cent in 2020. It rose from '17.6 million in 2017 to 20.9 million in 2018,' and young people (15-35years) within the age bracket of learners, school leavers² and graduates (who are behind these global records) constitutes 29.7 percent, which indicate increase from 13.7 to 19.1 and 25.5 per cent in 2015, 2016, and 2017 respectively. In 2017, 2018 and 2020, 27.2, 25.7 and 53.43 per cent of those within the same age bracket were underemployed (National Bureau of Statistics, 2018, 1-3; Trading Economics, 2022). Furthermore, the number of graduates that were unemployable was 95 per cent (Onalo in Lawal, 2018). On the other hand, 'the number of poor people rose from 82.9 million in 2018/19 to 85.2 million in 2020 and 90.0 million in 2022' (World Bank in Tunji, 2022). These largely have been attributed to the nature of the educational system (Ezeh, 2021) and proliferation of schools in Nigeria (Babalobi, 2019). It is against this backdrop that we examine entrepreneurship education in Nigerian schools intended to build and develop learners' capacity and society.

Amongst the secondary sources of data for this study, we relied substantially on the Federal Republic of Nigeria's (2014) *National Policy on Education* (6th Edition). The document is the framework for learners' development that 'prescribes the guidelines and requirements for the effective administration, management, implementation of education at all tiers of government' and the strategies to achieving them. Furthermore, it is an ambitious working document that recognises the development of learners through the acquisition of entrepreneurial knowledge, skills, and competences for self-reliance, workplaces and societal needs, wealth creation and employment generation 'fit and relevant to the 21st century' (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014, iv-v) global competition. Given the plethora of challenges that plague the country, EE has been presented, if not hyped as the magic wand (Akpan, 2021) that can either reduce or end the twin challenge of poverty and unemployment, especially amongst the youth cum young people and foster sustainable development in Nigeria. This study appraises the impact of EE on learners, several years after it was mainstreamed into Nigeria's educational system. It contributes to the discourses on EE and development in three distinct ways: (i) advocates a shift from the focus on "traditional trade"¹ subjects that are still taught in schools in a digital age to contemporary and evolving entrepreneurship subjects; (ii) canvasses for functional synergies between entrepreneurship education in schools and entrepreneurship-related programmes beyond the schools introduced by government's Ministries, Departments, Agencies (MDAs), development partners and the private sector; and (iii) constructs a model for entrepreneurship education value-chain.

This study has eight sections. The introduction that provided a background to the study was followed by a brief overview of literature and theories that explicate the rationale for entrepreneurship education. These paved way for an appraisal of the patterns of EE in Nigerian schools in a digital age, and thereafter a cursory glance was taken at the promotion of entrepreneurship beyond the schools. The next section analyses the perceived gaps and lack of synergy in EE within and beyond the education system. The conclusion is preceded by an attempt to evolve a model for entrepreneurship education value-chain that promotes the essence of entrepreneurship education in schools and society.

2. BRIEF OVERVIEW OF LITERATURE

The approach to begin the teaching and learning of EE early in the primary school and sustain it in the secondary, tertiary level through continuing education appears to be a common position amongst many authors (Ojeifo, 2012; Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014; Akpan, 2021). Amadi and Amakodi (2019) cited in Akpan (2021, 39) note that the

‘Benchmark Minimum Academic Standard (BEMAS) guide for teaching entrepreneurship education in Nigeria Universities’ are: ‘(i) Introduction to entrepreneurship (ii) entrepreneurship in theory and practice (iii) types of business, staffing and marketing (iv) capital requirement and raising capital (v) financial planning and management (vi) feasibility studies and reports (vii) innovations (viii) Legal issues in business (ix) Insurance and environmental consideration, and (x) Possible business opportunities in Nigeria’. The scope of this guide mainly account for: (a) the dominant notion of entrepreneurship education as a general education, rather than a specific education at the tertiary level (Akinboade, 2014; Akpan 2021, 39), and ‘in the context of vocational and technical education’ at primary and post basic levels (Ojeifo, 2012, 81); (b) the reductionist perception of entrepreneurship education as if it is about business only. Ojeifo (2012, 79) notes that ‘The most obvious form of entrepreneurship is that of starting new business which is referred to as startup company’. This idea is shared by Akpomi (2017), SAGE Business (2018), Igbokwe-Ibeto, Agbodike and Osakede (2018), and Akpan (2021, 35-6) that view EE from the angle of starting and nurturing a ‘new business venture’ or ‘small and medium scale businesses’. This dominant notion and reductionist perception of entrepreneurship education in the country drive the prevailing patterns of teaching and learning EE in schools where ‘the spirit of entrepreneurship, which is the stimulation of entrepreneurship activities and performance’ (Akpan, 2021:35) is not developed in learners, and ‘most of them educate “about” entrepreneurship and enterprise rather than educating for entrepreneurship’ (Okoye and Chinasa, 2019).

Yatu, Bell and Loon (2018) in conceptualizing the foci of entrepreneurship education in Nigeria identified seven perspectives as shown in table 1 below. In addition to the parochial notion above, Yatu et al (2018, 173) point out that EE prepares learners for ‘securing employment in higher level jobs’. Taking cognisance of a digital age defined by the advent of globalization and information communications technologies revolution, which drives ‘disruptive change’ that impacts the old ways of doing things in virtually all walks of life (Onwughalu and Ojajorotu, 2020, 77-79), compelling the nations to embarking on ‘creative destruction’ (Schumpteter in You, 2016), we expanded the foci of EE. We added that EE inculcates in learners the abilities for deep and critical thinking, identification and recognition of new opportunities and tapping into them, providing new solutions to existing problems, leveraging existing businesses, policies, programmes and infrastructure.

Table 1: The foci of Entrepreneurship Education in Nigeria

Entrepreneurial intention
Entrepreneurship and gender-related issues
Entrepreneurial skills
Entrepreneurial mindset
Entrepreneurial attitude
Entrepreneurship education and challenges
Entrepreneurial venturing

Adapted from Yatu, Bell and Loon (2018)

The challenges facing EE is one of the seven perspectives identified by Yatu et al (2018). These include: a deviation in the implementation and teaching of EE from the conception in the National Policy of Education, poor funding that reinforces lack of policy implementation, lack of tuning the minds of learners by educators to develop entrepreneurship intention, spirit and entrepreneurial behaviour, negative feedbacks from school leavers and graduates to learners, lack of EE resources (books, workshops, etc), dearth of entrepreneurship educators, deficient curriculum, insufficient allocation of teaching and learning hours, poor teaching methods, limited or lack of practical/hands-on experience (Ojeifo, 2012; Igbokwe-Ibeto et al, 2018; Akpan, 2021). This paper centres on some of the ways to successfully navigate through these challenges. Thus, we added to the observed challenges the following: lack of stakeholders consultation and involvement in the design, development and implementation of EE curriculum, absence of functional synergies amongst the schools, relevant Ministries, Departments, Agencies (MDAs), development partners and private sector stakeholders, which affects collaboration, the sharing of resources, workshops and laboratories, the non-alignment of EE subjects/courses with contemporary and evolving skills, workplaces and societal needs.

3. THEORIES OF ETIOLOGY ON ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION

In this section, we present the crux of seven theories on the gamut of entrepreneurship education. Icek Ajzen's (1988) theory of planned behaviour (TPB) advocates inculcating in learners entrepreneurship intention and nurturing it for the development of entrepreneurial behaviour through EE. Harvey Leibenstein's (1968) X-efficiency theory emphasises the avoidance of waste and the achievement of desired results. Thus, EE inculcates in learners the idea of maximising available time, and utilising opportunities to improve their lots by avoiding any form of wastage through self-efficacy, which is a function of planned behaviour. Friedrich Hayek's (1948) theory of inevitability of discoveries explains the evolving and dynamic nature of society. It emphasises change driven by new discoveries, as a thing that is constant. The industrial revolutions, from the first to the fourth, and arguably the fifth with their attendant changes (Onwughalu & Ojaborotu, 2020) attest to this fact. This theory promotes invention, creativity and innovation, which EE inculcates as an act of deep and critical thinking in learners. This aligns perfectly with the tenets of Joseph Schumpeter's (1939) innovation theory of entrepreneurship.

Furthermore, how to equip the learners to successfully navigate through the disruptions created by new discoveries and innovations is the focus of Frank Knight's (1921) theory of uncertainty. EE teaches learners about the occurrence of uncertainty, like the COVID-19 pandemic for instance, and how to respond to them. George Shackle's (1979) theory of creative imagination guides choices and actions in times of uncertainty as the period comes with opportunities and challenges. Thus, EE teaches the learners the act of rational choice in decision-making during normal and times of uncertainty. Lazear's theory of entrepreneurship advocates for hybrid entrepreneurship, which is 'a simultaneous mix of self-employment (entrepreneurship) and salary employment' (Kurczewska, Mackiewicz, Doryń, and Wawrzyniak, 2020, 277). This teaches the learners to aim for multiple streams of income, to be both a salary earner and self-employed. This perspective is understood better in countries where inflation has impacted heavily on wages and salaries, and eroded the purchasing power of their currencies. Nigeria is a case in point, and the government encourages the civil servants to engage in agricultural ventures like farming, animal husbandry, etc.

These theories offer a wider spectrum of explanations on EE and learners' development nexus beyond the 'Benchmark Minimum Academic Standard (BEMAS) guide for teaching entrepreneurship education', and Yatu et al's (2018) foci of entrepreneurship education in Nigeria discussed in our review of literature section. The integration of the crux of these theories that aim at critical thinking, self-efficacy, planned behaviour, invention and innovation, new businesses or ventures, identification and recognition of new opportunities, providing solutions, coaching and mentorship, and leveraging should guide the objectives of EE at all the educational levels in Nigeria.

4. APPRAISING THE PATTERNS OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION IN NIGERIAN SCHOOLS IN A DIGITAL AGE

The National Policy on Education sets out the mechanisms that promote the patterns of teaching and learning EE in Nigerian schools. These include the teacher-learners' population in a classroom, systematic subjects combination, subject-time allocation, qualified educators, contents and pedagogy, recognition of practical/hands-on and adequate funding.

Given the correlation between classroom population and learners' performance, the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014, 9-56) specifies the teacher-pupils/students ratio of 1:10 for crèche and special schools, 1:25 nursery and pre-primary schools, 1:35 primary and junior secondary school, and 1:40 for post-basic level. These specifications are observed in very rare cases. Compliance may be found at the crèche, nursery and pre-primary levels, mostly in private schools. Beyond these stages, the classroom population sizes barely matches the stipulated specifications. This has negative implications for the teacher-learner relations, inculcating requisite knowledge and skills, and the usage of equipment and facilities for practical/hands-on, which the teacher-students' ratio is recommended at 1:20 (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014, 25). Reyes (2019) and Lawal (2019) note that overcrowded classroom and the attendant consequences is a global phenomenon. However, concerning Nigeria, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation cited in Lawal (2019) observes that 'of all the 189 countries, Nigeria is among four nations with the highest number of overcrowded classrooms in its secondary schools'. In support of this, a pupil in an interview reported in Lawal (2019) explains: 'We're more than 100 in my class. There are not enough chairs and desks in many classrooms in the school. We're just too much in this school'.

At the basic and secondary school education levels, the subjects' combination is systematically designed in ways that learners must take entrepreneurship and related subjects. In 'Primary Classes 1-3' the entrepreneurship and related subjects are 'Mathematics', and 'Basic Science and Technology' comprising 'Basic Science, Basic Technology, and Information Technology'. In 'Primary Classes 4-6' and 'Junior Secondary Education' levels, 'Pre-Vocational Studies' comprising 'Home Economics and Agriculture' were added to the list of entrepreneurship and related subjects as obtainable in 'Primary Classes 1-3' (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014, 10-13).

Subjects at the 'Secondary School Education' level are expansion and consolidation of what are obtainable at the basic education level, divided into distinct and specific subjects. They are grouped into 5 broad categories: 'Science and Mathematics, Technology, Humanities, Business Studies, and Trade/Entrepreneurship'. Out of the 5 'fields of studies', the components of the following 4 are either entrepreneurship based or related: (i) 'Science and Mathematics (comprising Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Further Mathematics, Health Education, Agriculture, Physical Education, Computer Studies); (ii) Technology (comprising Technical Drawing, General Metal Work, Basic Electricity, Electronics, Auto Mechanics, Building Construction, Woodwork, Home Management, Food and Nutrition); (iii) Business Studies (comprising Stores Management, Accounting, Commerce, Office Practice, and Insurance); and (iv) Trade/Entrepreneurship Subject (comprising 34 trade areas)' (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014, 18-21). The National Policy on Education makes 'Trade/Entrepreneurship Subject(s)' mandatory in the combination of 'a minimum of eight (8) or maximum of nine (9) subjects' at the post-basic education level (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014, 22). Interestingly, none of the afore-mentioned areas within the listed fields of studies recognises cutting-edge subjects areas like Robotics, Coding, Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, etc., that promotes and drives contemporary entrepreneurship skills in a digital age. On the other hand, the subject areas listed under Trade/Entrepreneurship are on 'traditional trades' perceived by many learners as largely artisanal, which explains the gross under patronage of vocational and technical education in the country.

Entrepreneurship education at the tertiary level assumes two patterns: (i) As a compulsory course(s) taken across all the disciplines, and/or (ii) as 'full-fledged disciplines at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels' (Ojeifo, 2012, 78; Akinboade, 2014), co-ordinated by a Centre for Entrepreneurship Education under different labels (Igbokwe-Ibeto et al, 2018; Ogunbiyi, Olawale, Awogboro and Oyeniyi, 2016). Unfortunately, EE practical/hands-on in most tertiary institution in the country still revolves around the 'traditional trades', especially those that appear to be easy³ like: 'Cosmetology, Dyeing and Bleaching, Decoration' and Confectionaries (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014, 20-21).

The limited time allocated to the teaching of entrepreneurship as a compulsory course(s) and paucity of qualified educators reinforces each other. The drafting of educators who are already in the school system with no requisite expertise to handle entrepreneurship courses for whatever reasons, impinges on the time allotted to teach entrepreneurship education courses. The limited time accommodates the following: (i) teaching of 'traditional trades' we identified as being easy to handle, (ii) covers the weakness of the educators, and the gaps for lack of workshops, laboratories, (iii) the absence of partnered, experiential and integrated learning. These partly account for why most educators 'educate "about" entrepreneurship and enterprise rather than educating for entrepreneurship' (Okoye and Chinasa, 2019).

To further promote practical/hands-on in entrepreneurship education at the post-basic and tertiary levels, the government founded or established the following specialised schools: Technical Colleges, Vocational Enterprise Institutes (VEIs), Innovation Enterprise Institutes (IEIs), Monotechnics, Schools of Health and Technology, Colleges and Universities of Technology, and Agriculture (Onwughalu, 2012, 106-124; Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014, 24-26). Three factors have impeded these initiatives: funding, contents, and pedagogy. The Federal Government of Nigeria (2014, 70) recognises that 'At least 26% (UNESCO minimum standard recommendation) of the Federal, States and Local Governments budget should be dedicated to funding of education at all levels' and pledges that 'Government shall provide adequate funds for science, technology and trade/entrepreneurship education' (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014, 23). Furthermore, the government explains that 'A sizeable proportion of expenditure on university education shall be devoted to Science and Technology'. And in view this, 'Not less than 60% of places shall be allocated to science and science-oriented courses in the conventional universities and not less than 80% in the universities of technology and agriculture' (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014, 42-3). Interestingly, the highest national budgetary allocation to education sector was 10.79% in 2015 (Sasu, 2022).

In spite of the disruptive change that shapes the dynamics of education, workplaces and societal needs in a digital age, the contents of educational curricula and pedagogy in Nigeria have remained largely unchanged. We had pointed out earlier, the absence of cutting-edge subjects and the retention of ‘traditional trades’ subjects in the contents delivered to learners. In addition to this, teaching in Nigeria is still done predominantly through the lectures and seminars methods (Akpomi, 2017, 147) and the schools are still designed to be mere ‘knowledge and education providers’, when they are ‘confronted with a generation of students that consider employability a standard condition of a successful education’ (Ripmeester, 2016, 125). Shekarau (2014, iv-v) observes a need to train learners that function and compete globally. One of the ways to achieving this objective is through pedagogy. In the face of information communications technologies revolution and proliferation of electronics devices, the schools and educators in Nigeria are yet to leverage partnered, experiential and integrated learning. Another way to go about it is through ‘universal curriculum’, or ‘internationalisation of the curriculum’ (Jones, 2016), which Leask (2015) cited in Leask (2016, 50) defines ‘as the process of incorporating international, intercultural, and global dimensions into the content of the curriculum as well as the learning outcomes, assessment tasks, teaching methods, and support services of a programme of study’. The mainstreaming of internationalisation at home into the pedagogy is also one of the ways to improving the patterns of entrepreneurship education in Nigeria.

5. A CURSORY GLANCE AT PROMOTING ENTREPRENEURSHIP BEYOND THE SCHOOLS

In this section, we examined some of the programmes intended to promote entrepreneurship beyond the schools. The National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (2004, 100) observes that ‘28 poverty reduction projects and programmes’ have been implemented in the country between ‘1975 and 2001’. Since Nigeria returned to civil rule in 1999, there have been several of similar initiatives by the state and federal governments, development partners, and the private sector. However, we zeroed in here on a select few by the federal government. Under the regime of President Olusegun Obasanjo, the Capacity Acquisition Programme (CAP) and Mandatory Attachment Programme (MAP) of the Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES) component in the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) introduced in 2001, and the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) established in 2003 are notable. Both the CAP and MAP were targeted at skills acquisition through training. While the former was for a short-term (3 to 6 month) for ‘all unskilled and unemployed Nigerians’, the latter was for a medium-term of 2 years ‘only for graduates of tertiary institutions’ (International Food Policy Research Institute, n.d). On the other hand, the target beneficiaries of SMEDAN are ‘prospective entrepreneurs’ and part of its mandate is to ‘provide Support Services such as Entrepreneurial Training & Education’ through ‘partnership that works’ as one of the ‘operation strategies’ (Adelaja, 2007:3-5). For the short-lived regime of late President Umaru Musa Yar’Adua, the “Reintegration” component of the Amnesty Programme is remarkable. It was a programme which duration “ranges from six months to five years of training through vocational skills training, formal education or entrepreneurship skills acquisition either in Nigeria or abroad, depending on ex-militants’ interests” (Oluwaniyi, 2011 :51).

Furthermore, under President Goodluck Jonathan’s administration, two programmes are worthy of mention: the Youth Enterprise with Innovation in Nigeria (YouWin), and the Vocational Training Scheme (VTS) and Graduate Internship Scheme (GIS) of the Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P) introduced in 2011, and 2012 (Ikebuaku, 2022). Under President Muhammadu Buhari’s administration, within the broad framework of the National Social Investment Programme (NSIP), the N-Power programme with its graduate and non-graduate categories, the Government Enterprise & Empowerment Programme (GEEP) and the Presidential Youth Empowerment Scheme (P-YES) introduced in 2016 and 2020 (invoice.ng, n.d; Growth Platform, 2021) respectively appear to be popular. Aside the above-mentioned programmes, the Skills Acquisition, and Entrepreneurship and Empowerment components of the National Youth Service Corps’ (NYSC) Skill Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development (SAED) programme introduced in 2012 (Omotoso, 2019) is also strategic.

We observe that all the programmes for sustainable development identified above share similar characteristics in terms of target group, objectives, duration, strategy and modus operandi. First, the youth and young people of all categories who are not beyond 45 years are at the centre of these programmes. The reason is not far-fetched as this group constitutes the bulk of the unemployed in the country. Second, the programmes aim to impart skills, reduce poverty, generate employment and create wealth. Third, they are mainly of short and medium-terms that begin and end with the regimes

that initiated them. Fourth, the approaches are seminars, training, internship and doling out of funds either as monthly stipend or take-off capital to participants through designated ministries, departments or agencies. These programmes like those that existed between “1975 and 2001” are also: (i) “ad-hoc”, (ii) “uncoordinated” and (iii) “more or less a fire-brigade approach” (National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy, 2004:100), except in a few cases like the SMEDAN and NYSC that have survived successive regimes as they act as facilitators for initiated programmes. The implications of these programmes for EE in schools are analyzed in the next section.

6. PERCEIVED GAPS AND LACK OF SYNERGY IN EE WITHIN SCHOOLS AND BEYOND THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

We noted in the preceding section the plethora of initiatives that promote entrepreneurship outside the school system. At the global level, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (United Nations, 2000; United Nations, 2016) are development frameworks that mainstreamed and prioritized education. In line with the government’s recognition of “assistance from International and Local Development Partners” (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2014:70), the international development partners like the World Bank, Department for International Development (DFID), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), etc have initiated and implemented several programmes to drive and achieve the targets for education goals in Nigeria. There are also state governments and private sector initiatives for similar purpose as exemplified in the “Osun Youth Empowerment Scheme (OYES), Youth Agricultural Entrepreneur Programme (YAGEP), the Skills Training and Entrepreneurship Programme (STEP) and Tony Elumelu Foundation Entrepreneurship Programme (TEEP)” (Ikebuaku, 2022:24; Opportunity for Africa, 2022).

All these initiatives, irrespective of their sources intend to achieve similar aims and objectives. They intend to harness the innate talents and gifts of the people, especially, the youths and young people for sustainable development. They also intend to develop and build learners, youths and young people’s capacity, diversify the economy, reduce or eliminate poverty, unemployability, unemployment, and underemployment. How have these initiatives fared within the schools and beyond the educational system? On the one hand, we observed perceived gaps in the areas of the programmes focus, and on the other, lack of synergies amongst the agencies and facilitators of the programmes. For instance, the intervention programmes of the World Bank, Department for International Department, USAID, and the United Nations’ UNICEF, UNESCO, UNDP are found mainly: (i) at the rudimentary and formative education stages i.e. in the primary and post-primary school levels; (ii) they focus on literacy, numeracy, provision of conveniences, increasing access to school and bridging the ratio between the boy and girl child; and (iii) they rarely introduce and emphasize in a digital age, cutting-edge subjects like Coding, Robotics, Machine Learning, Artificial Intelligence, etc., in schools. At the tertiary level for instance, the World Bank’s Science and Technology Education Post-Basic (STEP-B) programme was visible within the lifespan of the Project. Its memorabilia are vehicles and office equipment like air-conditioner, chairs, desks, etc, that bear inscriptions of the project, which is suggestive of where most of the project’s funds were sunk. All these raise the question of the intent of the agencies and what their interventionist programmes are designed to achieve. Onwughalu (2017) attributes it to lack of sincerity of purpose that manifests in lack of adequate consultation, absence of synergy amongst the development partners operating in the sector on the one part, and the beneficiaries on the other, which culminate to lack of ownership of the programmes and projects by the people that accounts for their end at the expiration of their duration.

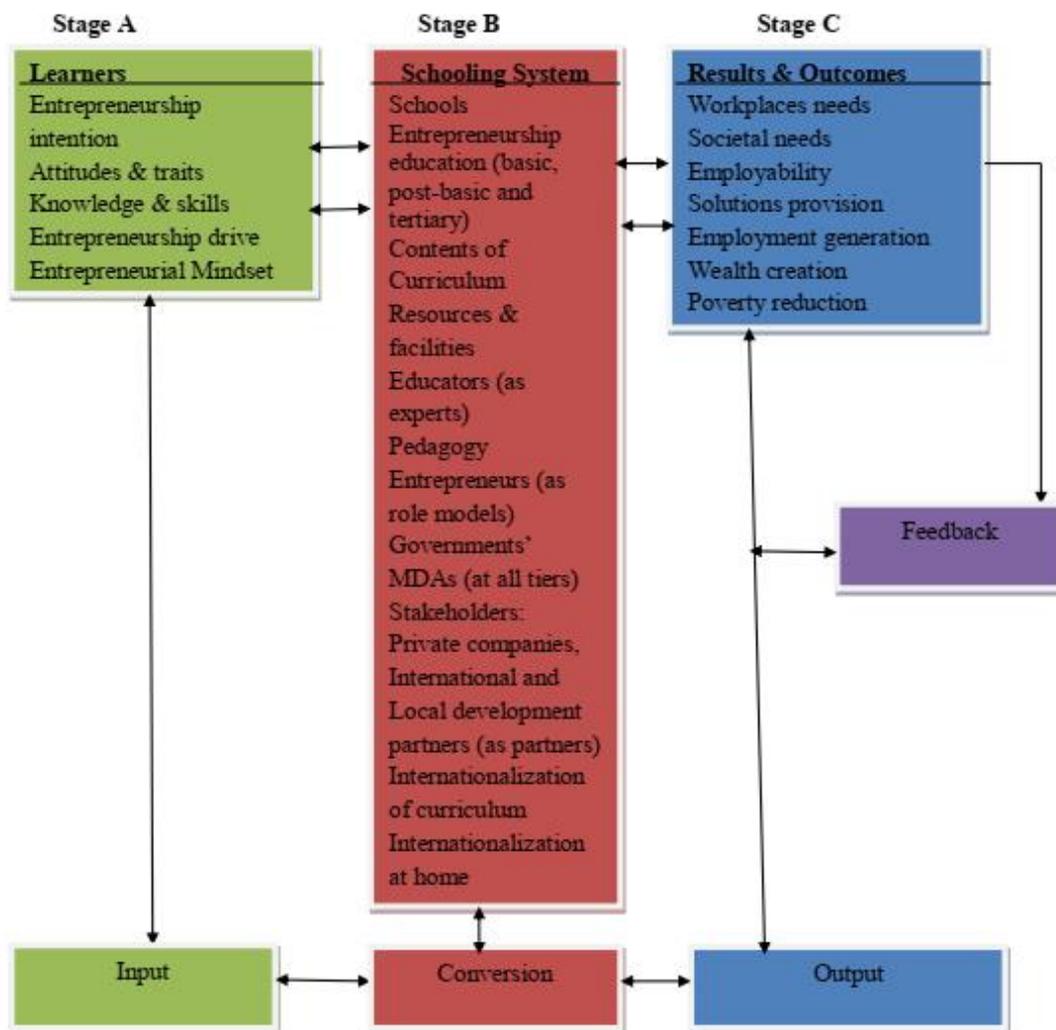
Furthermore, there seems to be no conscious efforts to systematically link and connect entrepreneurship education in schools with entrepreneurship related programmes beyond the schools. Some of the programmes in the latter are facilitated through established ministries, departments and agencies. For instance, the Ministries of Finance, Communication Technology, and Youth Development facilitated the Youth Enterprise with Innovation in Nigeria (YouWin). The National Youth Service Corps facilitates the Skill Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development (SAED) programme. The SMEDAN through the “National School Entrepreneurship Programme (N-SEP)” promotes hands-on at the basic and post-basic levels (Small & Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria, 2019), and supports “the National Competition of the Student for the Advancement of Global Entrepreneurship (SAGE)” and the “Corpers Entrepreneurship Development Programme (CEDP)” (Adelaja, 2007:48-54). In all these, three things stand out: (i) there is a silo relation amongst the programmes as well as the facilitators; (ii) there is no forward and

backward linkages between entrepreneurship education in schools and entrepreneurship related programmes outside the schools; and (iii) there is no evidence of systematic sustenance, escalation and consolidation of entrepreneurship education from the basic through post-basic and tertiary education to the National Youth Service Corps level and beyond.

7. TOWARDS THE EVOLUTION OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION MODEL

We build on our analyses in the preceding sections to construct a model for entrepreneurship education. The model conceives entrepreneurship education value-chain that shows the: (i) intersection, (ii) interaction, and (iii) forward and backward linkages amongst the three stages that are also processes in the value-chain. The first stage centres on the learners, and forms the input into the value-chain. The schooling system is the second stage that receives the learners and acts as the conversion zone. The results and outcomes from the intersection and interaction between the learners and schooling system constitute the third stage, which forms the output as shown in figure 1 below:

Figure 1: Entrepreneurship education value-chain



Source: Author's initiative

Stage A: The learner as a prospective entrepreneur is at the centre of entrepreneurship education. Entrepreneurship intention may be inherent in a learner or not. Where it is lacking, the educator stimulates the intention, and where it exists, he or she increases and sustains it through EE. The level of entrepreneurial drive in a learner is primarily a function of personal attitudes and traits that shape the dispositions to learning and acquiring entrepreneurial knowledge and skills, which boil down to developing the right mindset. Yatu et al (2018:171) define mindset as “a default mode of thinking” that “is a confluence between cognition and conation”. Developing entrepreneurial mindset in learners through the

schooling system promotes entrepreneurship venturing. Little wonder, Ojeifo (2012:80) argues that “The propensity to behave entrepreneurially is not exclusive to certain individuals. Different individuals will have a different mix of capabilities for demonstrating and acquiring entrepreneurial behaviors, skills and attributes. These behaviors can be practiced, developed and learned; hence it is important to expose all students to entrepreneurship education”.

Stage B: Since the mindset is perceived “as the internal lens through which an individual sees and navigates through life” (Yatu et al, 2018:171), the schooling system as an agent of entrepreneurship education play crucial roles in shaping learners’ thought process towards developing entrepreneurial mindset and achieving the desired results and outcomes. It requires a conducive or an enabling environment for such a functional schooling system to evolve. As shown in figure 1 above, entrepreneurship education introduced at the basic level should be sustained and consolidated through post-basic to tertiary level and beyond as we noted earlier in the preceding section. Furthermore, the contents of entrepreneurship education curriculum should be seen to be dynamic and reflect workplaces and societal needs in line with global standard and best practices. This underscores the involvement of entrepreneurs in the curriculum design, development and revision. It also explains the inclusion of internationalization of curriculum in the schooling system, such that the curriculum in Nigerian schools is similar with what is obtainable in other advanced countries. The availability of equipment, facilities and resources are prerequisites for entrepreneurship education. This is one area where collaboration amongst the schools, stakeholders (private companies, international and local development partners (as partners), and the governments (Ministries, Departments and Agencies) at all tiers is imperative to construct, equip new workshops, laboratories, libraries and share existing ones. The available resources and facilities influence the quality of educators attracted and the pedagogy. Recruiting experts as educators and engaging practicing entrepreneurs (as role model) to participate in the teaching and hands-on sessions for learners is another area of collaboration amongst the schools, stakeholders, and governments. Internationalization at home is another form of pedagogy, where the learners and their educators can participate actively in teaching and learning in the Diaspora in real time virtually, while at home, based on contrived agreement between or amongst schools.

Entrepreneurship programmes beyond the educational system mainly centre on empowerment of the youth and young people, who are within the age bracket of learners, school leavers and fresh graduates. To link and connect these programmes with entrepreneurship education in schools through the government, stakeholders, and the schools’ collaboration is very crucial. Some of the stakeholders include: The Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (MAN), Nigerian Association of Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Agriculture (NACCIMA), and private individuals like Tony Elumelu Foundation Entrepreneurship Programme (TEEP), etc. The governments’ Ministries Departments and Agencies include: The Ministries of Youth Development, Communication Technology, Finance, Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), Universal Service Provision Fund (USPF), Industrial Training Fund (ITF), Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund), Petroleum Technology Development Fund (PTDF) National Universities Commission (NUC), National Board for Technical Education (NBTE), National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE), Bank of Industry, Bank of Agriculture, Small and Medium Scale Enterprise Development Agency (SMEDAN), National Youth Service Corps (NYSC), etc. Amongst the stakeholders, governments and schools there should be manifest unity of purpose that promotes functional synergy between entrepreneurship programmes and education within and beyond the schools for sustainable development. In this vein, generic templates should be developed in adequate consultations with the schools, governments and stakeholders for two things: (i) To guide entrepreneurship related interventions (based on learners, workplaces and societal needs assessments) within schools and beyond the educational system. (ii) To engender functional synergy and collaboration amongst the schools, governments and stakeholders. These will facilitate the permanence of entrepreneurship programmes, their co-ordination amongst the governments and stakeholders as well as the linkages with entrepreneurship education in schools, for its sustainability and consolidation through the schooling system to the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) and beyond.

Stage C: The intersection and interaction of the processes analyzed in Stages A and B will result in producing different entrepreneurs who will fill the vacancies in workplaces that produce the goods and render services needed for societal advancement. Some will start up new firms, while others will provide new solutions to existing challenges, through these ways generate employment, create wealth and reduce poverty. The feedback mechanism in the model reports constant changes from the output that impacts the learner, schooling system as well as the results and outcomes.

8. CONCLUSION

This paper has discussed the mainstreaming of entrepreneurship education in Nigeria's educational system intended to develop and build the capacity of learners for sustainable development. Identifying the actors and process involved to develop and build the learners as entrepreneurs, this paper elaborated on the one hand, the types of subjects taught to develop entrepreneurial attitudes, traits, knowledge, skills, drive and venturing in learners; and on the other, the roles and relationships amongst the government, non-governmental organizations and the private sector as actors in the process. We found out that in a digital age, concerted effort is yet to be made to shift the focus on entrepreneurship subject areas in schools from "traditional trade" subjects like "Cosmetology, Dyeing and Bleaching, Decoration" and Confectionaries (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014:20-21), to cutting-edge subjects areas like Robotics, Coding, Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, etc. We also observed that the plethora of entrepreneurship-related programmes that have existed and still exist in the country are not linked and connected to promote entrepreneurship education in schools.

In spite of the fact that entrepreneurship education was introduced in schools early from the basic through the post-basic to the tertiary level (Ojeifo, 2012; Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014; Akpan, 2021), the approach to entrepreneurship education "in the context of vocational and technical education" (Ojeifo, 2012:81) at the primary and post basic levels, and from the notion of a general education, rather than a specific education at the tertiary level (Akinboade, 2014; Akpan 2021:39) creates a narrow perception of entrepreneurship education as if it is only about establishing small businesses. These have attendant effects on the learners who are trained under this kind of atmosphere. Our triangulation of theories on entrepreneurship education shows that it is a wide range of education that inculcates entrepreneurship intention, and nurtures it in learners to develop entrepreneurial behaviour; promotes maximization of time availability, and utilization of every opportunity to improve the learners' lots. As well as raises the consciousness of the dynamic nature of society and the inevitability of change that create rooms for new inventions, innovations and creativity through the ability of deep and critical thinking. Thus, the foci of entrepreneurship education include inculcating in learners the abilities for critical thinking, identification and recognition of new opportunities and tapping into them, providing new solutions to existing problems, leveraging existing businesses, policies, programmes and infrastructure.

Within the context of the above, we constructed a model for entrepreneurship education. The model creates entrepreneurship education value-chain that recognizes and takes into consideration the milieu, learners, schools, government and relevant stakeholders in the schooling system and beyond. The model takes into account how learners, schools, government, relevant stakeholders and their activities intersect and interact in society. It presents a 3-stage value-chain of Learners (stage A), Schooling system (Stage B), and Results and Outcomes (Stage C) with the inherent forward and backward linkages amongst them. This premise forges the templates for: (i) functional synergy between entrepreneurship education within schools and entrepreneurship-related programmes outside schools; (ii) co-ordination, collaboration and reinforcement amongst the governments (Ministries, Department & Agencies), the stakeholders (private individuals, companies, international and local development partners), and the schools; and (iii) unity of purpose amongst all for sustainable development. The model serves as a tool that can be helpful to us in repositioning entrepreneurship education for the development of learners in Nigeria. This also elicits further interrogation of this model as a suggestion for further studies.

Notes

1. These are the trades that were introduced when technical and vocational education training was first conceived in Nigeria, and they have barely been changed despite societal advancement. Beyond the schools, these trades are mainly practiced by roadside artisans who still use simple tools and equipment. Their conduct and attitudes towards the customers and clients do not elicit prestige and respect for the trades, thus, they rarely attract learners and school leavers.
2. The learner may complete only primary education, or after completing basic education does not continue to post-basic education. Therefore, we refer "to either Basic Education graduates who are not proceeding to Senior Secondary Schools, or Secondary School graduates that do not proceed to tertiary level" (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2014:17) collectively here as school leavers.
3. The reasons why most tertiary institutions zero in on these areas for EE are not far-fetched: (i) There are paucity of Workshops, Resource Centres, Laboratories to facilitate impacting entrepreneurial knowledge and skills on complex

trades like “Auto Body Repair and Spray Painting”, Welding and Fabrication Engineering Craft Practice” for instance. (ii) There is lack of expertise as the same lecturers that teach other regular courses who do not possess entrepreneur experience, skills and knowledge handle EE courses. (iii) The burden of procuring the materials for practical sessions and carrying out assignments rest mainly on the shoulders of the students and their parents/sponsors, these easy areas tend to lessen the burden.

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