

Entrepreneurship Education: a Necessary Tool for Employment Generation and Poverty Reduction among University Graduates in Nigeria

¹Omeke, Faith C., ²Onu, Eucharia A. & ³Oboegbulem, A. I.
*^{1,2&3} Department of Educational Foundations
Faculty of Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka*

Abstract

This paper considers entrepreneurship education as a necessary tool for employment generation and poverty reduction among university graduates in Nigeria. Today, the twin challenges of unemployment and poverty are facing graduates of tertiary institutions owing to the global economic meltdown and economic recessions in most countries including Nigeria. This has led the National Universities Commission (NUC) to inculcate entrepreneurship education into the university curriculum with a view to alleviating impending poverty for graduates. They are trained to acquire entrepreneurial skills needed to develop their moral, intellectual and social capacities. Various governments aspire to reduce poverty among graduates by promoting entrepreneurship education. As entrepreneurship is associated with creativity, innovation and new ways of operation, it provides answer to poverty and consequently employment opportunities for graduates. The potential entrepreneur therefore develops intelligence to convert his education to intellectually productive ventures. He is also opportune to explore options for global citizenry, rather than depend solely on the tradition expectation of white-collar jobs. Having acquired entrepreneurial skills, he takes risks and achieves success. This paper therefore highlights the following; concepts and definitions of entrepreneurship, education and entrepreneurship education. Objectives of entrepreneurship education and some strategies that could be applied in poverty reduction and employment generation were also highlighted. It was suggested among others that to achieve objectives of entrepreneurship education, Nigeria governments should legislate against societal corruption practices and promote accountability through strong institutional infrastructure. Budgets and all finances proposed to favour employment generation and poverty reduction have to be properly executed.

Keywords: *Entrepreneurship education, Employment generation, Poverty reduction, University graduates.*

Corresponding Author: Omeke, Faith C.

Background to the Study

The economic condition in Nigeria has clearly shown that white collar jobs or paid employment is no more available to absorb graduates from tertiary institutions. This has resulted in high rate of unemployment and poverty among the teeming population of Nigerians, particularly graduates from universities. This apparently predispose most of these youths to all forms of social ills such as armed robbery, rape, political thuggery, car snatching, kidnapping, assassination among others. The Nigerian governments have over the years initiated several measures and policies to reduce the level of poverty among the masses. However, some of these measures or programmes failed as a result of poor planning, poor implementation procedure, inadequate fund, inadequate awareness especially in the rural areas, and marginalization. Entrepreneurship has been found as an effective measure embraced by the government to reduce mass unemployment and poverty in the country. Unachukwu (2009) acknowledging this fact, stated that in the face of economic recession and global meltdown, entrepreneurship is the central pillar to economic growth and development, employment generation and poverty alleviation. Entrepreneurship education entails philosophy of self reliance such as creating a new cultural and productive environment, promoting new sets of attitudes and culture for the attainment of future challenges (Arogundade, 2011).

Entrepreneurship development through education has been receiving attention globally. Efforts have also been made to mobilize and enhance entrepreneurial activity which will consequently benefit individuals, government, and the society at large. In order to enhance the employability and self employment potentials of university graduates in Nigeria, authorities of the National Universities Commission (NUC) proposed and inculcated entrepreneurship education into the university curriculum with effect from 2007/2008 academic session. The main objective of inculcating entrepreneurship education into the curriculum of Nigerian universities is to redirect education and training for relevance and quality by developing in the university undergraduates as well as graduates an entrepreneurial mindset and equipping them with the skills necessary to start and run a business successfully. These university graduates would be equipped with saleable skills necessary to re-invent organizations, create new jobs, add social and economic value, and nurture a sustainable enterprise culture (Okojie, 2009). Similarly, Cotton, O'Gorman and Stampfi (2000) emphasized that the rationale for the inclusion of entrepreneurship education into the curriculum is to help graduates acquire increased understanding of entrepreneurship, equip them with entrepreneurial approach to the world of work and prepare them to act as entrepreneurs and managers of new businesses. Thus, the objectives of entrepreneurship education as presented by the European Union (2002) include; raising students' awareness of self employment as a career option; promoting the development of personal qualities such as creativity, risk taking and responsibility; and providing the technical and business skills in order to start a new venture.

The development process of any country is determined by the way the production forces in and around the economy is organized. For most countries, the development of industry had depended a great deal on the role of private sector. Entrepreneurship has played a major role in this regard. Ogundele (2007) supported this fact by stating that promotion and development of entrepreneurial activities would aid the dispersal and diversification of economic activities and induce even development in a country. Similarly, Osuagwu (2002) added that entrepreneurial development in Nigeria should be perceived as a catalyst to increase the rate of economic growth, create job opportunities and consequently reduce or alleviate poverty. In addition,

Ariyo (2008) noted that if Nigeria wants to reach its full potential in terms of economic and social developments, it cannot afford to ignore the importance of its indigenous entrepreneurs and the contributions that they make to the country's economy. Entrepreneurship remains the gateway to sustainable wealth creation and employment generation in Nigeria (Ogundele, 2000). In the view of Matanmi and Awodun (2005), if Nigeria desires to move out of the disturbing high level of unemployment and ravaging level of poverty, adequate attention must be given to entrepreneurship education. The successful contribution of entrepreneurship to employment generation and poverty reduction depends on entrepreneurship orientation and training given to university undergraduates. Entrepreneurial orientation is the development of entrepreneurial skills, effective and efficient application of the skills in the management of businesses.

The incidence of poverty in Nigeria is on the high side, where 70% of the total population has been classified as poor (Ewhrudjakpor, 2008). This rate of poverty is however noticeable by the increasing rate of unemployment, high level of illiteracy, corruption and bad governance among others. Therefore, as a panacea to this problem, entrepreneurship has been identified as a means of providing employment and income generation in the country. Iteje (2009) defined poverty as the absence of those ethical, social and material resources needed to develop the moral, intellectual and social capacities of individuals, communities and institutions. He further highlighted that moral reasoning, group decision making and freedom from racism are all essential tool for poverty alleviation. According to Sonn, cited in Iteje (2009), poverty is the single greatest social burden in the world today. It is a timeless matter. It defies all economic and social systems. It occupies the national debate in varying degrees depending on the nature of the government in power. He further asserted that government's success is often determined by the extent to which it is able to meet the challenges of poverty. Entrepreneurship provides the answer to alleviating poverty for it is associated with creativity, innovation, new solutions and new ways of operation for the purpose of wealth creation and employment opportunities for graduates. The objective of this paper therefore is to emphasize the need and importance of entrepreneurship education as a necessary tool for employment generation and poverty reduction among university graduates in Nigeria.

Concept of Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship has been defined by various authors to mean many things since the middle age. However, the summary of what entrepreneurship means will reflect the individual definer's point of view. For Anugwom (2002), an entrepreneur is either a creative innovator that is capable of satisfying consumer's wants or an adaptive innovator that modifies an existing or similar products or services for better performance. The entrepreneur has been seen as an actor, or a developer of technology (Igbo, 2006). Entrepreneurs also engage in managerial activities of planning, controlling, organizing, directing and coordinating any business to achieve the objectives of the enterprise. Gana (2001) defined entrepreneurship as the willingness and the ability of an individual to seek out investment opportunities in an environment and be able to establish and run an enterprise successfully based on identified opportunities.

Entrepreneurship is more than simply "starting a business". It is a process through which individuals identify opportunities, allocate resources, and create value. This creation of value is often through the identification of unmet needs or through the identification of opportunities for change. According to Acs and Storey (2004), entrepreneurship revolves around the realization of existence of opportunities in combination with decision to commercialize them

by starting a new firm. Similarly, Ikeme and Onu (2007) noted that entrepreneurship has been seen as the use of human courage to seek investment opportunities and establish a profit oriented enterprise. It is a clear manifestation of human intelligence as demonstrated in creative performance. It seeks to find out how best graduates can convert their education to intellectual productive ventures in order to bring out the best in individuals (Esomonu, 1998). In the same vein, Onyia (2009) believed that when students are exposed to think in entrepreneurial way within their various content areas, it provides them with the opportunity to explore the options for productive global citizenry rather than focus solely on the traditional expectation of white collar jobs. Entrepreneurship therefore demands that individual graduate should be prepared to assume a reasonable degree of risks, be a good leader, highly creative and innovative. It is for this reason that graduating students are well tutored into the benefits of entrepreneurship before they pass out to the wider world. The experiences of developed economies in relation to the roles played by entrepreneurship buttresses the fact that the importance of entrepreneurship cannot be over-emphasized especially among the developing economies. In order to highlight its significance in relation to the growth and development of any given economy, entrepreneurship has been seen as “source of employment generation and poverty alleviation”. This is because entrepreneurial activities have been found to be capable of making positive impacts on the economy of a nation and the quality of life of the people (Adejumo, 2000). According to Seth (2015), entrepreneurship activities are important because they create new businesses, add to national income, generate new wealth and create social change, which is achieved through the unique offerings of new goods and services.

Concept of Education

Education is undisputedly recognized as the bedrock of any meaningful development. The National Policy on Education declared that; not only is education the greatest force that can be used to bring about redress, it is also the greatest investment that nation can make for the quick development of its economic, political, sociological and human resources (FRN, 2004). Aghenta (2001) asserted that education is bound to accelerate the process of national development which must be well planned, funded and implemented. Education has several functions including; provision of skills and techniques designed to improve human competencies, and also raises the level of productivity, creativity, initiative and innovation.

According to Onwuka (2001), education is an instrument for raising the quality of life of individuals and preparing them for service and living. Sule (2004) is of the opinion that education is a sure pathway to liberation of the mind and improvement of socio-economic status of people. It also follows that education and training help individuals to be empowered and escape poverty by providing them with the skills and knowledge to raise their output, income and wealth. In a similar vein, Agbodike (2004) re-iterated that education should be geared towards developing the entire citizenry through rigorous promotion and commitment to a well laid educational foundation. He further advanced that it has the ability to promote literacy, reduce ignorance, and cater for the learning needs of all people within the society. It ensures the acquisition of appropriate levels of skills, literacy, numeracy and other life required knowledge along with ethical, moral and civic values needed for laying a solid foundation for life-long learning. In agreement, the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2013) in her National Policy on Education highlighted that the philosophy of education is based on the development of the individual into a sound and effective citizen, full integration of the individual into the community and provision of equal access to educational opportunities for all citizens. The education has to be geared towards self realization, better human relationship, individual and national efficiency.

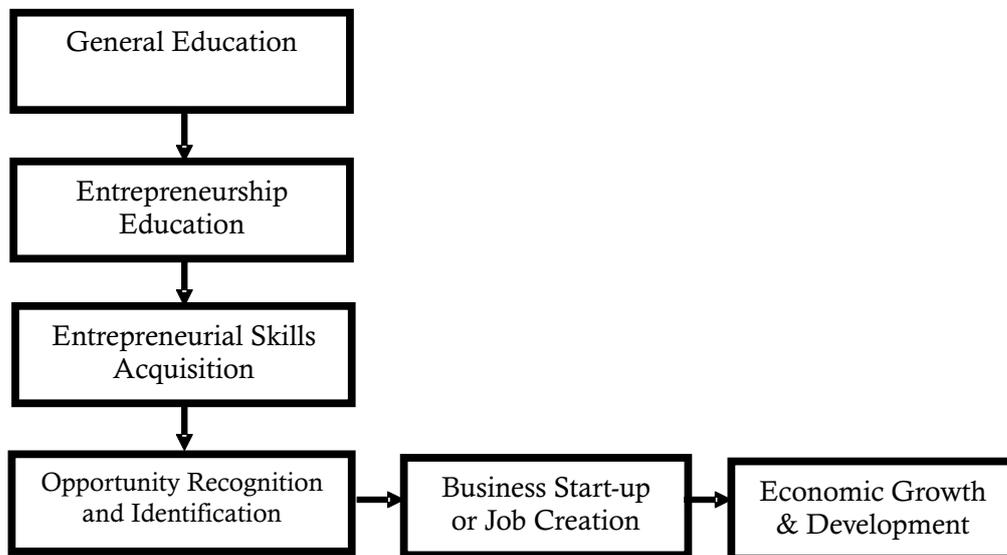
It has been observed by education stakeholder that Nigeria educational system (primary, secondary and tertiary) are not equipping the beneficiaries with the needed skills to face the challenges of 21st century technology and scientific knowhow. They agitated for revision of tertiary institutions curriculum that would propel the nation to industrial and technological development. In the face of high level of unemployment among graduates of universities, it becomes imperative that higher education programmes be redesigned to incorporate not only the philosophy of self-reliance but also studies that will enable them become self-reliant and consequently job creator instead of job seekers. This is where entrepreneurship education as a course of study was brought to focus.

Entrepreneurship Education

For an individual to embark on any business venture or taking up entrepreneurial form of business for self employment, such a person requires certain qualities and education in order to be successful. He also needs a lot of skills, ideas, boldness, confidence, motivation, courage, hard work and positive thinking in order to overcome any challenge that may confront him. Entrepreneurship education as perceived by Omolayo (2006) is a structured formal conveyance of entrepreneurial competencies, which in turn refers to the concepts, skills and mental awareness used by individuals during the process of starting and developing their growth-oriented ventures. Entrepreneurship education is a purposeful intervention by an educator in the life of the learner to impact entrepreneurial qualities and skills to enable the learner to survive in the world of business (Ogundele, Akingbade and Akinlabi, 2012). Entrepreneurship education is a lifelong process, starting as early as elementary school and progressing through all levels of education, including tertiary level. The standards and their supporting performance indicators are a framework for teachers to use in building appropriate objectives, learning activities and assessment for their target audience. Students will be exposed to challenging educational activities, experience that will enable them develop the insight needed to recognise and identify entrepreneurial opportunities and the expertise to successfully start and manage their own businesses to take advantage of these opportunities.

Entrepreneurship education encourages undergraduates as well as graduates aspire to become job creators rather than job seekers. It helps them to pursue their dreams and contribute to overall productive capacity and national economic growth and development. It also equips them with skills for constant improvement and innovations in their undertaken. From the foregoing therefore, the authors saw the need to develop a conceptual model for entrepreneurship education and economic growth and development.

Conceptual Model for Entrepreneurship Education, Economic Growth and Development



Source: Omeke, Onu & Oboegbulem (2017)

This model tries to identify the need to inculcate entrepreneurship education into various universities curriculum in order to generate employment and reduce the high incidence of poverty among graduates. Students while in school will be exposed to entrepreneurship education and training, acquire the necessary skills, recognize and identify opportunities to exploit and eventual creation of jobs. The aggregation of individual efforts and emergent large number of businesses will promote the economic growth and development in the country.

Objectives of Entrepreneurship Education

As earlier mentioned in this paper, entrepreneurship education is oriented towards different ways of realizing opportunities. This is what makes it different from other disciplines. The objectives of entrepreneurship education are numerous in bringing about the desired changes on the high rate of unemployment among university graduates. Some of the objectives that entrepreneurship education would achieve as stated by Akanbi (2002) are as follows:

1. To integrate all business learning and alert business students to manipulate skills and experiences to become entrepreneurs. This implies translation of theoretical experience into more practical situation in a vocation which will enable them become self-employed.
2. To initiate creativity and innovativeness into students.
3. To encourage and sensitize students to possible joint ventures that they can engage in either with colleagues, friends or relatives.
4. To make students identify areas in which they can go into production in their respective disciplines.
5. To reduce the fear of getting started and enhance the ability of going into business to positive thinking and belief in personal achievement.
6. To encourage students to go back to the rural and less developed areas to establish small scale businesses.

7. To encourage students to become job creators rather than job seekers in order to reduce unemployment and consequently alleviate poverty among themselves.

Entrepreneurship education according to Paul (2005) is structured to achieve the following objectives:

1. To offer functional education for the graduates that will enable them be self-employed and self-reliant.
2. To provide graduates with adequate training that will enable them be creative and innovative in identifying novel business opportunities.
3. To offer graduates with adequate training in risk management in order to make certain bearing feasible.
4. To reduce high rate of poverty and rural-urban migration.
5. To create employment and serve as a catalyst for economic growth and development.
6. To provide graduates with enough training and financial support that will enable them establish careers in small and medium sized enterprises.
7. To inculcate the spirit of perseverance in the youths which will enable them persist in any business ventures they may embark on; and finally
8. To create a smooth transition from traditional to a modern industrial economy.

Strategies for Employment Generation and Poverty Reduction

It is not just enough to inculcate aspects of entrepreneurship to graduating students, but strategies for its achievement must be properly planned and instilled in them for easy application. In support of this, Ayodele (2006) proposed the following strategies:

1. A graduate who has acquired the entrepreneurial skills should be empowered by pooling local, public and private funds to create a small venture capital fund.
2. There should be school based enterprises where students identify potential businesses, plan and operate small businesses using the school as mini-incubators.
3. There should be some form of genuine school work based learning incorporated in some studies as part of the national economic development strategies. The development of apprenticeship scheme would give new graduates some work experience.
4. Entrepreneurship internship programmes should be developed where students are made to match with locally successful entrepreneurs.
5. An enterprise college aimed at fostering the specific skills should be established to serve as skill acquisition centre for the graduates.
6. The federal government should provide or create an economic enabling environment by lowering duties on imported materials and other goods needed for the development, sustenance and growth of small scale enterprises.
7. Government taxation on small scale businesses should be improved. That is they should not charge heavy tax on micro products from these enterprises. Instead, governments, private institutions and non-governmental organizations should by all means promote the use and marketing of products from young entrepreneurs. It is expected that when the products are of fine quality, governments should ensure that they find their ways into the global market.

Conclusion

The period after graduation has been miserable for most Nigerian graduates because of lack of employment. Most of them are afraid of how to cope with life challenges. Entrepreneurship education will therefore enable them acquire entrepreneurial skills and competencies that will empower them to thrive continuously over challenging circumstances and to earn income in such effort. Entrepreneurship education, if effectively implemented in various tertiary institutions, will no doubt eradicate the problems of unemployment and reduce poverty among the graduates. In the same vein, it will make the individual to be self employed, contributing to the community and national development. Finally, sustained education and enlightenment programmes on the opportunities that abound in the environment should be put in place. If the Nigerian government must revitalize its economy, reduce unemployment progressively, and generate more employment opportunities, a paradigm shift in policy that is critical to effective entrepreneurship education becomes imperative.

Recommendations

It is hereby acknowledged that entrepreneurship education that is already inculcated into the university curriculum is a move in the right direction. The importance of training the manpower that will carry out this assignment cannot be over-emphasized. Based on this, the following suggestions are made:

- 1) Seminars and workshops in effective teaching of entrepreneurship skills, knowledge and competences should be organized by various tertiary institutions for instructors or entrepreneurship educators.
- 2) The campaign for the dignity of labour should be highlighted right from secondary schools so that emphasis on white-collar job be discouraged, and the minds and preferences of the youths be shifted to skills that can generate and create wealth.
- 3) Governments should promote development in enterprising by legislating against societal corrupt practices and encouraging accountability through strong institutional infrastructure.
- 4) The federal government should provide enabling environment conducive for the smooth operation of both indigenous entrepreneur and foreign investors in order to boost the economy.
- 5) Adequate financial, physical and human resources should be provided by various stakeholders not only for potential but also for existing entrepreneurs.
- 6) Curricula reform which is geared towards equipping the beneficiaries of universities with skills to be self-reliant is necessary for sustainable development of the nation
- 7) Finally, budgets and all finances proposed to favour employment generation and poverty reduction have to be properly executed.

References

- Acs, Z. J. & Storey, D.J. (2004). Introduction: Entrepreneurship and economic development. *Regional Studies*, 38(8), 871-877.
- Adejumo, G. (2000). Indigenous entrepreneurship development in Nigeria: Characteristics, problems and prospects. *Advances in Management. Journal of Department of Business Administration, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria*, 2(1), 112-122.
- Akanbi, A.A. (2002). Entrepreneurship education for business students in tertiary institutions. *Journal of Vocational and Technical Studies*. 1(3).
- Anugwom, G. A. (2002). *Entrepreneurship in Nigeria: Principles and practice*. Enugu: Computer Edge Publisher.
- Ariyo, D. (2008). *Small firms are the backbone of the Nigerian economy*. Retrieved Nov. 8, 2005, from <http://www.africaeconomicanalysis.org>
- Arogundade, B.B. (2011). Entrepreneurship education: An imperative for sustainable development in Nigeria. *Journal of Emerging Trends in Educational Research and Policy Studies (JETERAPS)*, 2(1), 26-29.
- Ayodele, J.B. (2006). Obstacles to entrepreneurship development in Nigeria. In Omotosho, F., Aluko, T.K.O., Wale, O.I. & Adaramola, G. (ed). *Introduction to entrepreneurship development in Nigeria*. Ado-Ekiti: UNAD Press.
- Cotton, J. O., Gorman, C., & Stampfi, A. (2000). *Can national education policies meet the call for more entrepreneur? A project supported by the European Community (Project NO. FIN/00/C/P/RF/92650) (www.google.com); March, 2005.*
- Ehiametalor, E.T. (1988). *Perspectives on national development*. A book of reading. Benin: University of Benin Press.
- Esomonu, N. P. (1998). *The essentials of entrepreneurship education in technology, science and arts*. Umunze: Research and Publication Unit, Federal College of Education Technical.
- European Union (2002). *Final report of the expert group "Best Procedure" project on Education and Training for Entrepreneurship*. Brussels: European Commission. Directorate-General for Enterprise.
- Ewhrudjakpor, C. (2008). Poverty and its alleviation: The Nigerian experience. *Journal of International Social Work*, 51(4), 519-531.
- Federal Government of Nigeria (2004). *National policy on education revised edition*. Lagos: Federal Government Press.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004). *National Policy on education*, Abuja: NERD. 2nd Edition.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013). *National policy on education: Four year strategic plan for the development of the education sector (2011-2015)(6th ed.)*. Lagos: NERC Press.

- Gana, J. (2001). Entrepreneurship education: An imperative for sustainable development in Nigeria. *Journal of Emerging Trends in Educational Research and Policy Studies*, 2(1), 26-29.
- Ikeme, A., & Onu, V.C. (2007). *Creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship: Implications for Nigerian youths and government*. Paper Presented at the Annual Conference of the Nigerian Psychological Association, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.
- Iteje, K.M. (2009). *Entrepreneurship, job creation, income empowerment and poverty reduction in Nigeria*. A Seminar Paper for July 2009 MACEP Lectures at National Centre for Women Development, Abuja. <http://www.icenning.org/maceple-ctures.php>
- Matanmi, S. & Awodum, M. (2005). An assessment of competitive strategies and growth patterns of new enterprises in Nigeria using the developing economy model. *Lagos Organization Review*, 1(1), 26-32.
- Nakpodia, E.D. (2003). *Educational administration: A new approach*. Warri-Nigeria: Jonakase Publishing Ltd.
- Nakpodia, E.D. (2003). Managing conflict in Nigerian university. *African Journal of Resource Development Education*, 9(2).
- Nwangwu, I.O. (2007). Entrepreneurship education: Concept and constraints. *African Journal of Education and Development Studies*, 4(1), 196-207.
- Ogundele, O.J.K. (2002). *Determinant of entrepreneurial emergence, behaviour and performance in Nigeria*. Unpublished Doctorial Dissertation; Nigeria: University of Lagos.
- Ogundele, O.J.K. (2007). *Introduction to entrepreneurship development, corporate governance, and small business management*. Lagos: Molofin Nominees
- Okojie, J.A. (2009). *Imperative of the federal government directive on the establishment of entrepreneurship studies in Nigerian universities*, A Paper Presented at the 1st Conference on Effective Implementation of Federal Government Seven-Point Agenda Held at NUC, Abuja, Feb. 4-6.
- Omolayo B. (2006). Entrepreneurship in theory and practice. In F. Omotosho, T.K.O. Aluko, O.I. Wale Awe and G. Adaramola (eds). *Introduction to Entrepreneurship development in Nigeria*. Ado-Ekiti; UNAD Press.
- Onaga, P.O. (2010). *Rethinking teacher quality in technical education: A propelling force for Nigeria achieving vision 20:2020*. Paper presented at international conference organized by the Faculty of Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. May 19th-22nd.
- Onyia, C. (2009). *Globalization, Entrepreneurship Education*. Paper presented at the Annual International Education Conference: University of Nigeria, Nsukka.
- Osuagwu, L. (2002). Entrepreneurship in a developing economy: Empirical evidence from Nigerian business organizations. *International Journal of Entrepreneurship*, 6(11), 19-32.

Paul, E.O. (2005). Entrepreneurship education. In Ezema Priscilla N., Paul Elizabeth O., Chike, A. Eheli, Henri U. Anih (eds). Entrepreneurship in vocational education. Enugu: OZYBEL Publishers.

Peretomode, V.F. (2007). What is higher in higher education? Benin-City: Justice Jecko Press and Publishers Ltd.

Seth, S. (2015). Why entrepreneurs are important for the economy. Retrieved from www.investopedia.com on 25/4/2017.

Sule, M.N. (2004). Sociology of education in perspective. Jos: Dekka Publisher.

Unachukwu, G.O. (2009). Fundamentals of entrepreneurship in educational management. Enugu: Cheston Agency Ltd.