

UNLOCKING UNIVERSITY UNDERGRADUATES' POTENTIALS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT THROUGH ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY NIGERIA

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Abstract

In this paper, the importance of unlocking the potential of undergraduates in Nigerian universities for sustainable development was discussed. Skilled individuals with potential are those individuals who are greatly encouraged to pursue their dreams and are further provided with an enabling environment to develop their innate skills, their potential to succeed is actualized and the result is that their dreams can be realized. The Administrators are people in positions of authority, they are in charge of policy-making which includes activities that would aid the development of different skills of their students. Thus, university administrators are inadvertently in charge of the development of policies that can unlock the potential of their undergraduates to attain sustainable development. It was discussed in this paper that the major way this goal of unlocking undergraduate potential can be achieved is through the provision of entrepreneurship education. Problems that may hinder this lofty goal were discussed to include; inadequate funding, scanty supply of facilities, poor motivation, and insufficient supply of quality lecturers amongst others. In this paper, it was concluded that entrepreneurship education is a very necessary tool for unlocking undergraduate potential and that university administrators should make it a priority to provide quality entrepreneurship education for their students. This paper provided plausible suggestions for the problems hindering the development of undergraduate potential including the provision of funds by the Federal government, encouraging partnerships with foreign counterparts, provision of facilities, and increased motivation among others.

Keywords: Undergraduates Potential, Education, Sustainable Development, Entrepreneurship Education

Introduction

This introduction highlights how crucial unlocking university undergraduates' potential for sustainable development through entrepreneurship education in 21st-century Nigeria is. It shows the interconnectedness amongst the key elements-education, entrepreneurship and sustainable development. By education, there is a holistic approach through which sustainable development is integrated into entrepreneurship education. The

youths and graduates are considered leaders of tomorrow. Therefore, they have the power to shape a nation either positively or negatively. Entrepreneurship education has a great influence as it serves to empower students with the knowledge, and skills to navigate their untapped potentials. Entrepreneurship tends to foster collaboration amongst students to address challenges regarding sustainability. It is important that

an entrepreneurial spirit can be fostered amongst graduates as the future comes with a lot of sustainable practices. Entrepreneurship education not only equips an individual with independence in business but also an understanding of challenges in society and innovative approaches to them. This research will give an idea of a comprehensive approach to entrepreneurship education notwithstanding the capacity by which graduates emulate positive change and innovative sustainable solutions. On a global scale, students' knowledge of entrepreneurship education helps them better understand global issues, challenges in entrepreneurship and how to utilize sustainable development. In the 21st century, technology has advanced to a higher level and must by extension be used by students for problem solving. For entrepreneurship and sustainable development to thrive there needs to be a collaboration amongst educational institutions, the government and individuals in the society. The study establishes an important issue plaguing the Nigerian educational system: Inadequate attention to entrepreneurship education in the university curriculum. The problem stated highlights the severity of this absence on undergraduates. There is a hindrance in skills which hinders their ability to offer essential skills thereby impeding sustainable development in the country. There have been several scholars who carried out a related study but there is a limit in scope which is why the researcher is carrying out this study on unlocking university undergraduates' potential for sustainable development through entrepreneurship education in the 21st century Nigeria.

Education

Education is the impartation of knowledge for positive change in behaviour after an individual undergoes the tutelage of rigorous experience which will add value to him/herself and the society at large. Wokocha (2014) postulated that every nation strives towards the provision of quality education for its citizens because of the realization that education is a major tool for socio-economic political and cultural development. Ariguzo and Nwaneri (2018) as cited in (Ofor-Douglas (2021) opined that education is the fulcrum for the realization of full potential and fulfilment of roles as members of society. The Federal Republic of Nigeria FRN (2014) states clearly in her National Policy on Education that education is an instrument for national development. Chisley (2011) education as a process that provides learners a chance to better themselves and move beyond the implementation that could be forced upon their impressionable minds through those who essentially have the same passion as they are. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013) opines that education in the country is to equip the child with appropriate productive and functional skills, abilities and competencies, to be able to contribute meaningfully to the development of the society. Education is the master key that unlocks a country's potential towards national transformation and sustainable national development (Ilechukwu, 2019). Education is the foundation for the right footing if a nation intends to grow tall in affairs of doing things locally and globally for sustainability (OforDouglas, 2023b). Furthermore, education is thus serving the purpose of adding value to anywhere it is accessible (Ofor-Douglas, 2023c). It is to be noted that education produces highly motivated conscientious individuals and equips them to be able to fit into the social life of the society at large and enhance their commitment to national goals (Wood, 2008 in Bakwai et al., 2013). Ukaeje as cited

in Okoh and Ibekwe (2013) rightly asserted that education is a process society establishes to assist the young to understand the heritage of the past, to participate productively in the society of the present, and to contribute to the future. Okeke in Odiba (2012) contended that education is a process of learning that assists in the provision of suitable skills, training of youths for economic, social, cultural and political responsibilities, and transmission and transformation of social, economic and cultural structure from generation to generation. Education is a process by which an individual gains knowledge, insight, development, attitude or skills (Achugbue and Ochonogor, 2013). Teixeira and Queiros (2016) opined that education is more productive as the skills of the workforce increase productivity and capacity for innovation development exponentially. In other words, Nwadini (2015) proposed that in Nigeria, education is both in public good and an investment on one hand, and the other hand a catalyst for stimulating and sustaining overall national development on the other hand.

(Samruhaizad and Azahan (2017) cited in Sahek and Nasri, 2019) mentioned that education is capable of providing intelligent human civilization in organizing life and making decisions that benefit the human race. Quality education means excellence in all aspects of the school programme and its surrounding educational communities. This includes healthy learners, healthy environments, content with relevant curricula and materials, qualified teachers and teaching materials for learning, and quality products endowed with knowledge, skills and attitudes in actualizing set educational goals (Branch and Adiele, 2019). The quality of education provided by institutions however may vary based on multiple factors, the teaching system, programs provided, quality of lecturers and the learning environment under which the education is being provided (McAlee, 2013). In gaining admission into the university, an individual is a raw product and upon completion a finished product. An individual's potential is further strengthened, and education makes that a possibility. When education is gained not only is the individual deeply rooted in knowledge but also an avid problem solver. Institutional administrators must ensure that evaluation procedures are established for proper assessment by external stakeholders. This will help to ensure that the education provided to learners by universities in Nigeria contributes significantly to the educational needs of the society (Asiyai, 2014).

University Education

University education is the education of higher learning received after the completion of the upper basic education. University education is education given after secondary school. It can therefore be considered a platform on which the future development of a nation rests (Anyim, 2012) cited in Ofor-Douglas (2022a). The World Bank (2021) asserts that university education can be seen to be all official post-secondary education, including those offered by public and private universities, colleges, technical training facilities and vocational schools. To promote sustainable living for all, reduce poverty and promote growth, tertiary education is essential in society as cited in (Ofor-Douglas, 2022b). It is to be understood that university education is seen as an important aspect of sustainable development goals that are relevant to transforming and empowering citizens with relevant skills, knowledge and attitudes to enable them to become

productive members of society (Chanksehani & McCowan, 2021) as cited in (Ofor-Douglas, 2023a). University education serves as a centre for the production of persons with intellectual capacity and a high-level workforce needed for social and economic development, especially in the 21st approach towards modernization, and technological and global advancement (Agboola & Ofoegbu, 2015). Graduates and internship students interact with society to share knowledge, help the nation in making decisions and come up with new ideas for doing things better as opined by the British Council (2014). The purpose of university education is for teaching, learning, research, community, and skill development. The lofty goals of university education are to be achieved through teaching, research, dissemination of existing and new information, services to the community, skill development and a storehouse of knowledge. Eseyin and Wagbara (2023) rightly state that university education which is inferred as the Ivory tower of any nation occupies the top position in the educational structure of most countries and is designed to contribute to the pursuit and actualization of the developmental objectives of any nation. The goals and objectives of university education in any nation are often tied to the economic aspiration of the country and achieving these goals sustainably contributes to the overall development of the nation. University education is primarily for all-around development which can be achieved from acquired skills and knowledge. In light of gaining admission and upon graduation in a chosen area of specialization, an individual gets an insight into what it means to be professional and at the same time can apply said skill and knowledge. Graduates are equipped to be critical thinkers and problem solvers with analytical skills. This gives a sense of empowerment to solve issues when they arise in the face of sustainable development which ranges from societal concerns to environmental problems. Looking beyond academics, the university exposes an individual to diverse aspects of life which will help in navigating the global world. It gives an understanding of societal issues and helps in decision-making and assertiveness. In sustainable development, the university slowly introduces diversity in terms of social, and economic sustainability in their curriculum. A sense of responsibility towards developing a sustainable future is born with professional impact and sustainable solutions. In conclusion, university education is paramount for undergraduates' potential and sustainable development by acquiring specified knowledge in a particular field, encouraging critical thinking and giving a sense of responsibility for a sustainable future. Keeping this in mind, graduates are well-groomed to take over and contribute positively to society at large.

The Goal of University Education

University Education shall make optimum contribution to national development by:

- (a) Intensifying and diversifying its programmes for the development of high-level manpower within the context of the needs of the nation.
- (b) Making professional course content to reflect our national requirements.
- (c) Making all students, as part of a general programme of all-round improvement in university education, offer general study courses such as history of ideas, philosophy of knowledge and nationalism.

- (d) To provide research relevant to the nation's development goals. In this regard, universities shall be encouraged to disseminate their research results to both government and industries.
- (e) To inculcate community spirit in the students through projects and action research.
- (f) Ensure technically based professional courses in the universities shall have, as components, exposure to relevant future working environments.
- (g) To guarantee that teachers in professional fields have a relevant future working environment.
- (h) To ensure that 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. (National Policy of Education, 2014).

Individuals are required to have degrees for a wide range of careers such as medicine, education, engineering, accounting and law and the university provides for the obtainment of such degrees. University education is advantageous to any nation such that individuals who are educated can be of great benefit to their immediate environment and their community at large. The benefits of university education cannot be overemphasized which include: ☐ University education will help an individual to succeed in today's workforce and establish an enjoyable career of his/her choice

☐ The job market is extremely competitive, and employers require the services of skilled employees to work for them. This skill can be developed in the university. (Ofor-Douglas, 2021a).

Sustainable Development

Sustainable development can be defined as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations. It is the development that takes care of present and future generations in every sector of life from health to welfare to education amongst others. Sustainable development is a progression that meets the needs of the present and that of future generations, which guarantees the balance between economic growth, care for the environment and the social well-being of the people (Acciona, 2020). Sustainable development is a development that can be conferred either indefinitely or for a given period. Sustainable development (SD) has become a ubiquitous development paradigm- the catchphrase for international aid agencies, the jargon of development planners, the theme of conferences and academic papers, as well as the slogan of development and environmental activities (Ukaga, Maser and Reichenbach, 2011). Sustainable development is the development that is characterized by continuity and is either indefinitely or for a given period. The concept seems to have attracted the broad-based attention that other development concepts lacked and appears poised to remain the pervasive development paradigm for a long time. (Scopelitti et al, 2018; Sheperd et al, 2016). Usen (2015) opined that no society can effectively experience peace and enjoy sustainable development without education. She mentioned that the cardinal philosophy of education in Nigeria is the development of a just and egalitarian society. She then pointed out that the insecurity challenge in Nigeria has indeed become a formidable one to the Nigerian Government and Nigerians. Sustainable development can be defined as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations. Corruption

increases operational costs and reduces benefits and, in short, is inimical to sustainable development, poverty reduction and good governance (Simbine & Oladeji 2010). Agwuogu (2013), affirms that sustainable development is the type of development that should be initiated and managed properly in such a way as to give attention to continuity and preservation as people explore available resources for the enlargement of their existence. School leaders could achieve sustainable development as a consequence of determining, measuring, and standards, of school life, except for the test on which students are expected to be successful (Mullis, Martin, Foy and Arora (2012). Umunadi (2010) as cited in Ofor-Douglas (2021b) revealed that such knowledge will adequately equip the students to be more effective in 21st century Nigeria, characterized by science and technology and raise a generation that thinks for themselves and respects the dignity of labour and equally propel its citizenry who blossom economically (Ofor-Douglas, 2021b). Age (2015), identified some objectives which sustainable national development is expected to realize: increasing capital income and employment, promoting human welfare, satisfying basic needs; and protecting the environment. Considering the path of future generations, equipping both the rich and poor in participation on a broad basis in development and decision-making is important.

Entrepreneurship Education

Entrepreneurship is the sole ownership of a business and making well-informed decisions for said business. Alawiye (2014) as cited in Adetayo, Oke and Aderonmi (2015) proposed that entrepreneurship is a process of increasing the number of entrepreneurial activities or increasing the number of existing small, medium and big enterprises in a country by promoting entrepreneurs who can successfully run innovative enterprise. Entrepreneurship education is a field of study that deals with the organization of knowledge in a particular subject in such a way that it commands the hidden potential in the subject in the area of self-employment and job creation (Mkpa, 2014). Entrepreneurship education serves as a reminder that an individual can be self-reliant and not lose themselves in white-collar jobs.

It has been observed that young men and women are unable to secure formal employment opportunities; and it is believed that encouraging the scaling of entrepreneurship through education intervention may be an ever more important way to harness their enthusiasm, energy and ambition to gain self-employment and contribute to economic development. (Williams, & Udo, 2020).

Adebuyi, Fadeyi, Oladele & Adeybuyi (2016) cited in Ofor-Douglas (2023) noted that entrepreneurial education was introduced as a priority in the Nigerian educational curriculum for secondary and tertiary institutions to inculcate entrepreneurial skills in the students and direct their focus on setting up their own business after school. Bolarin (2012) explained that the need to carefully re-assess or re-evaluate the type and quality of education that is accessible to the youth in Nigeria's tertiary institutions of learning becomes imminent. This section examines the way entrepreneurship is integrated into the university curriculum through programs thereby giving graduates essential skills and business business-oriented mindset. An individual who is an entrepreneur is a problem solver and critical thinker not only in profit generation and maximization but by day in day-to-day challenges which can arise making a positive impact in society. Jones

and English (2004) as cited in (Kamis, et al, 2017) rightly put it that entrepreneurship education is the process of providing individuals with the ability to recognize commercial opportunities and the insight, self-esteem, knowledge and skills to act on them.

Entrepreneurship Education for Sustainable Development

One of the ways university administrators can unlock the potential of their university undergraduates is through the process of entrepreneurship education. Entrepreneurship education is education that stimulates the in-built skills of individuals, providing knowledge on how to engage in practices that promote self-reliance. Ugwuoke (2013) views entrepreneurship education as education that uses students'/learners' talents, potentials and private initiatives to transform ideas and concepts into a venture. Through entrepreneurship education, learners, applicants and able-bodied youth learn to produce goods or render services in a given vocation; this provides income for them and the school or workshop where they carry out this trade (Ogbuanya & Abdullahi, 2013).

Entrepreneurship education brings about self-esteem to those who are engaged in it. (Nyangu, 2012). Entrepreneurship education also inspires people to accept and respond to changes (John, Sule & Ubom 2012). Entrepreneurship education has an impact on an undergraduate's ability and assists in sustainable development by bringing together multifaceted skills and positive-minded individuals. Entrepreneurship education in the university not only makes individuals business oriented by also in the area of sustainability for the future to come as undergraduates become problem solvers while navigating societal issues which could be environmental, social or economic. Programs which constitute ethical decision-making are a core component, teaching aspiring entrepreneurs to make choices that align with sustainable principles. This ethical foundation is crucial for maintaining integrity and building businesses that contribute positively to society. Entrepreneurship will go a long way to serve as a guide for creativity, and innovation and a driving force for meeting market demands which are in alignment with sustainable practices. On a global scale entrepreneurship education will expose an individual to opportunities beyond their comfort zone notwithstanding if it is in the international markets or by association with other professionals. The large-scale exposure helps in contributing to sustainable development in a broader sense. As universities embrace entrepreneurship education, they not only raise business-savvy individuals but people who are committed to contributing to sustainable development practically through their various professional outlets.

Benefits of Entrepreneurship Education

Several benefits of entrepreneurship education have been advanced in the literature. As contained in the thesis developed by Tiryaki (2010) cited in Ogundele and Egunjimi (2016), these benefits include:

- **Provision of employment opportunities:** Entrepreneurial activities boost employment opportunities and reduce the number of job seekers. Consequently, many idle youths are actively engaged in undertaking one economic activity or the other.

- **Effective resource utilization:** In this regard, the entrepreneur utilizes natural resources thereby attracting resources from less productive sectors to more productive areas.
- **Equitable distribution of income and wealth:** Entrepreneurial activities in the rural areas create new jobs thereby increasing local incomes and raising the quality of life in the rural communities. Such entrepreneurial activities effectively connect the rural communities to the larger urban dwellers.
- **Facilitation of technological transfer/adaptation:** Opportunities for developing and adapting appropriate technological approaches are provided by entrepreneurs. This facilitates the absorption of all kinds of workers- skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled.

Strategies for Entrepreneurship Education in Nigerian Universities

The following are Strategies for promoting entrepreneurship education in Nigerian universities:

📌 Seminar/workshop

University administrators should organize meetings, seminars, workshops, and conferences, amongst others so students can be trained to perform vocational skills which they can use in future. This will help prevent the widespread issue of youth violence due to unemployment and poverty.

📌 Visitation of entrepreneurship centres

University management should make routine visits to entrepreneurship centres to ensure they are adequately equipped with the necessary materials for entrepreneurial development and also to ensure the smooth running of the centres to give students the best education and skills.

📌 Practical-oriented entrepreneurship education

University management should ensure that practical lessons are taught to students so they can be more skilled in vocational activities.

📌 Recruiting qualified and capable entrepreneurship lecturers

University management should ensure entrepreneurship lectures are well-qualified to teach and relate with students properly.

📌 Innovative teaching strategies

University management should be sure to review their curriculum and improve it regularly by adding new programs and teaching strategies.

Problems of Undergraduate Potential in Nigerian Universities

Mathew (2014) avers that adequate educational funding, infrastructural rehabilitation improved national economy, and corruption control can also help to woo professional workers to Nigerian educational institutions thereby reducing the effects of brain drain in the country. The following serve as problems that act as hindrances to the development of undergraduate potential in Nigerian universities for the attainment of sustainable development through entrepreneurship education. They include:

1. **Inadequate Funding:** This is a major problem causing a hindrance to the development of undergraduate potential in Nigerian universities. The World Bank in 2010 as cited in Famurewa (2014) proposed that the problem of higher education funding, especially university education is more serious

in Africa than in the rest of the world. For instance, Nigeria has not been able to meet international standards regarding budgetary provisions for education and even has been doing far less than some of her neighbouring countries. According to Timi-Johnson and Abam (2017), funds allocated to tertiary education have not significantly increased to meet the growing demand for infrastructure for conducive learning, research and development and increase in students' enrolment. The absence of funds in universities would not aid the development of undergraduate potential as funds are required for the development of entrepreneurship education which needs finances for the provision of teaching/training materials.

2. **Inadequate Facilities:** This is another major problem plaguing the development of undergraduate potential in Nigerian universities for sustainable development. Gbenu (2012) rightly mentioned that inadequate provision of infrastructural facilities, teaching aids and instructional materials in schools, poor remuneration of teachers (lecturers), and poor conditions of service reduce the lecturers' commitment to teaching. This problem of lack of facilities is stemmed from the problem of lack of funds. Facilities for entrepreneurship education such as instructional materials for the different skills are to be of good quality and usually require maintenance. Where these facilities are unavailable, the undergraduates would not be taught properly and would end up as half-baked graduates.
3. **Poor Motivation:** Another problem causing a decline in the development of undergraduate potential in Nigerian universities is the poor motivation of the undergraduates. Students who lack the level of academic motivation, exhibit a weak drive towards the pursuit of academic goals. Such students manifest signs and symptoms of indifference and apathy towards school (Okoh, 2016). The motivation of undergraduates can be seen in the form of the provision of incentives for hardworking and well-deserving students, the provision of physical gifts and awards, and scholarships, amongst others.
4. **Poor Leadership:** This is another problem derailing the development of undergraduate potential in Nigerian universities. The leadership/administration of a university is meant to play a vital role in the development of undergraduate potential. They are in charge of making policies that guide the activities of the students. These activities would then contribute to the development of the potential of students. Some universities are not adequately run by administrators as they lack the qualities needed for effective management of higher education (universities). If higher education (university education) is to be refocused, the leadership of the tertiary education institutions must re-examine how to better lead the organization and must find innovative approaches and strategies which fit best in the higher education context to cope with the global challenges of the 21st century (Black, 2015).
5. **Inattention to Entrepreneurial Education:** This serves as another hindrance to the development of undergraduate potential in Nigerian universities. Entrepreneurship education aims to develop the innate skills within undergraduates to promote self-sufficiency and self-reliance. In a situation where it is absent from the curriculum, the skills of the students would not be adequately developed and this would further result in a decline in their potential. Alawiye (2014) as cited in Adetayo, Oke and

Aderonmi (2015) described entrepreneurship as a process of increasing the number of entrepreneurial activities or increasing the number

of existing small, medium and big enterprises in a country by promoting entrepreneurs who can successfully run innovative enterprise. Entrepreneurship is a catalyst for development and it is an important factor in achieving economic growth, creating jobs, increasing productivity and reducing poverty (Lopez, Casorla & Pranta, 2019). Entrepreneurship focuses on the realization of an opportunity and exploring it for personal gains and national wealth (Johnson, Golley, Oyibo-Edwin, 2014).

6. **Inadequate supply of qualified Lecturers:** Most of the lecturers being employed by Nigerian universities lack the adequate qualifications required for the development of undergraduate potentials for the attainment of sustainable development. These lecturers are usually hired based on who they know and not what they have to offer. Elements of bias such as favouritism and tribalism are usually seen in the employment process of Nigerian lecturers while applicants with adequate qualifications are being disregarded. Jacob and Atobauka (2021) noted that social effects such as poor education, administrative difficulty, high student-teacher ratio and shortage of staff as part of the social effects that can be suffered by the nation.

Conclusion

The paper discussed the unlocking of undergraduate potential in Nigerian universities for the attainment of sustainable development. It was noted that entrepreneurship education is a major contributor to the goal of university administrators in unlocking the untapped potentials of their students. Subsequently, university administrators should make it a priority to provide quality entrepreneurship education for their students. Relevant stakeholders in Nigerian university education should also engage in activities that support the development of undergraduate potential in Nigerian universities to allow for a sustainable society when these undergraduates complete their university education. The problems which serve as a hindrance to the development of undergraduate potential in Nigerian universities for the attainment of sustainable development were discussed to include lack of funding, poor motivation, absence of entrepreneurship education, and lack of quality lecturers, amongst others. These problems can be solved through the following suggestions:

Suggestions

Several issues can arise but there are several ways they can be curtailed

1. There should be a provision of adequate funds for the promotion of entrepreneurship education. This can be sourced from the Federal Government through TETFund, NGOs, philanthropists, and also through partnerships with other universities, both local and international.
2. Adequate provision of state-of-the-art facilities for the promotion of entrepreneurship education in Nigerian universities for the development of undergraduate potential for sustainable development. Regular maintenance of these facilities should also be a priority.

3. Regular motivation of university undergraduates should be encouraged for the development of undergraduate potential for the attainment of sustainable development. Motivation in the form of stipends, scholarships, loans, and awards, amongst others should be given to boost the morale of undergraduates.
4. The leadership/administration of Nigerian universities should possess quality leadership skills which would positively affect the development of undergraduate potential in their universities.
5. Entrepreneurship education should be highly prioritized in Nigerian universities. It should be given the necessary finances and materials to ensure its effectiveness to adequately contribute to the development of undergraduate potential for the attainment of sustainable development in Nigeria.
6. Quality lectures should be employed in Nigerian universities for the development of undergraduate potential for the attainment of sustainable development. The screening process of lecturers should be strict and without elements of bias, tribalism, and favouritism. Employment should be strictly based on qualifications.

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