

## Entrepreneurship Education: A Pathway for Creating Lifelong Skills for Sustainable Development

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### Abstract

*The study examined entrepreneurship education as a pathway for creating lifelong skills for sustainable development. Two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. The descriptive survey design was used for this study. The population of the study is 210 lecturers teaching Business Education and Entrepreneurship Education courses in four tertiary institutions in Rivers State. The stratified sampling technique was used to select 135 lecturers from the population. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire structured in a Likert format titled: Entrepreneurship Education: A Pathway for Creating Lifelong Skills for Sustainable Development (EEPCLSSD). Only 128 copies of the questionnaire were retrieved among which 8 were not usable while only 120 was used for the study. Mean and standard deviation was used to answer the research questions while t-test was used in testing the hypotheses. The findings revealed that entrepreneurship education is a pathway for creating lifelong skills for sustainable development. The study recommended that entrepreneurship education lecturers are hereby encouraged to develop in themselves some lifelong skills as to enable them become quality mentors to students in entrepreneurship and that curriculum planners are should include the findings of this study in the curriculum as to enable students achieve lifelong skills early in life.*

**Keywords:** Entrepreneurship Education, Pathway, Lifelong Skills, Sustainable Development.

### Introduction

Entrepreneurial activities so far have been confirmed by several scholars to be the route towards the economic development of every nation. Therefore, creating its effectiveness and inculcating its presence in the school curriculum and making it effective precisely in the higher institutions have recently being a point for discussion (Akintola, 2014). Every year, the number of graduates entering the labour market from the higher institutions grows significantly. However, debate has surfaced over whether these graduates possess the employability skills required by their prospective employers or not. Some critics contend that the higher institutions are falling behind the times in meeting the relevant job requirements of organisations.

According to Akpotowoh, & Amahi, (2012) employers are complaining that graduates are unable to fulfill their needs in the uncertain environment of the current market. This point was supported by Atakpa, (2019), who found a skills gap between employer requirements and the graduates from the educational system. Dacre & Sewell, (2010) revealed that higher

institutions often fall behind in meeting employer requirements because changes in industry move faster than the evolution of programmes offered by educational institutions. Higher education simply does not always keep pace. Industry is becoming more flexible, technology is changing, and there are demands for new skills and expertise. Additionally, universities have been criticised as providing inadequate education. Koko (2010). supports this motion, revealing that recent graduates are not equipped with up-to-date knowledge and technology. As a result, this deficiency has affected graduates' competencies, their ability to join the workforce, and also contributes to unemployment among graduates as to sustain development.

Entrepreneurship education as noted by Ubulom, and Dambo, (2016) can facilitate lifelong skills toward sustainable development. It helps in developing generic competencies, skills, attitudes, interdisciplinary understanding of knowledge, and its application for a sustainable future. Entrepreneurship education facilitates knowledge and awareness and critical reflection on consumption, human-nature interdependency and sustainable living. Lifelong skills have been identified by Wolugbom, (2017). as psycho-social abilities, encompassing a broad range of personal, interpersonal, psychological, social and cognitive skills, which enable students to know, understand and translate the knowledge; take right choices and decisions, interact appropriately, manage their emotional well-being, lead a harmonious and sustainable life.

The World Health Organization has defined lifelong skills as, "the adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life". UNICEF defines life skills as "a behaviour change or behaviour development approach designed to address a balance of three areas: knowledge, attitude and skills". The UNICEF definition is based on research evidence that suggests that shifts in risk behaviour are unlikely if knowledge, attitudinal and skills-based competency are not addressed (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004).

Life skills are essentially those abilities that help promote mental well-being and competence in young people as they face the realities of life. Most development professionals agree that life skills are generally applied in the context of health and social events. NICEF, UNESCO and WHO list the ten core lifelong skill strategies and techniques as: problem solving, critical thinking, effective communication skills, decision-making, creative thinking, interpersonal relationship skills, self-awareness building skills, empathy, and coping with stress and emotions.

According to Anderson, Potočnik and Zhou (2014) self-awareness, self-esteem and self-confidence are essential tools for understanding one's strengths and weaknesses. Consequently, the individual is able to discern available opportunities and prepare to face possible threats. This leads to the development of a social awareness of the concerns of one's family and society. Subsequently, it is possible to identify problems that arise within both the family and society. With life skills, one is able to explore alternatives, weigh pros and cons and make rational decisions in solving each problem or issue as it arises. It also entails being able to establish productive interpersonal relationships with others. Sustainable development is a term used at the time of the Cocoyoc declaration on environment and development in the early

1970s. Okorafor, (2011) asserted that since then it has become the trademark of international organisations dedicated to achieving environmentally benign or beneficial development. It is important to indicate that whenever the term is used, it communicates the parsimonious utilisation of resources that should be allowed to sustain coming generations (posterity). It is therefore crucial to affirm that sustainable development cannot be achieved if people are not willing to learn through new technologies and the contemporary approaches that should be employed in poverty alleviation endeavours.

This is true because poverty contributes immensely to the unsustainable exploitation of resources because there is a tendency for poor people, who are often unenlightened or illiterate to have limited to no control over the resources that are in their milieus. It is therefore important to have lifelong skill that promotes conservation of resources as a vehicle through which people can be transformed to respect their relationship with the environment and to jealously guard against unprincipled exploitation of their resources. As opined by UNCED (1992), critical promotion of sustainable development should improve the capacity of the people to address environmental and development issues through generating ethical awareness, values and attitudes, skills and behaviour consistent with sustainable development.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The role of entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial activities in economic and social development in developing countries has often been underestimated. Beghetto, and Kaufman (2010) stated that over the years, however, it has become increasingly apparent that entrepreneurship indeed contributes immensely to a sustainable economic development the quality lifelong skill acquisition. In developing economies like Nigeria, most of the business activities are in the informal sector and are termed as Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). The informal sector in Nigeria is dominated by the disadvantaged groups such as women, youth and those who have retired from formal employment.

These groups account for about 76% of Nigerian population (Beghetto, 2010). This underutilization of the untapped potential in the disadvantaged group is attributed to a myriad of reasons. Two major reasons to account for the underutilization of this potentials as to develop lifelong skills are, first, inability to effectively use entrepreneurship skills and knowledge in poverty reduction and second, lack of initiatives to facilitate entrepreneurship skills and knowledge among groups susceptible to poverty in order to bring meaningful economic and social transaction so as to promote and enhance income distribution and economic stability (Bacigalupo Kampylis, Punie & Brande 2016).

This study tends to establish if entrepreneurship education has a positive influence on the improvement of lifelong skills for sustainable development. However, to date, limited study has been conducted on how entrepreneurship education can enhance lifelong skills for sustainable development in Nigeria despite the various entrepreneurship development programmes in the country. Consequently, this study gears towards examining entrepreneurship education as a pathway for lifelong skills and sustainable development. The study therefore tends to answer the following research questions:

### Research Questions

1. What are the lifelong skills needed by male and female lecturers in Entrepreneurship education for sustainable development?
2. what are the ways entrepreneurship education enhances lifelong skills for sustainable development based on male and female?

### Null Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female lecturers in Entrepreneurship education on the lifelong skills needed for sustainable development
2. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female lecturers on ways Entrepreneurship education enhances lifelong skills needed for sustainable development

### Methodology

The descriptive survey design was used for this study. The stratified sampling techniques was used to select 135 lecturers from about 210 lecturers teaching business and entrepreneurship related courses in four tertiary institutions in Rivers State. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire structured in a Likert format which consists of three parts and was titled: Entrepreneurship Education: A pathway for creating lifelong skills for sustainable development (EEPCLSSD). The instrument provided response to the two research questions with 15 items; Item 1-7 addressed research question one and item 8-15 addressed research question two in a 4-point rating scale weighted as “Strongly Agreed” (SA) – 4 points, “Agreed” (A) – 3 points, “Disagreed” (D) – 2 points and “Strongly Disagreed ” (SD) – 1 point. To establish the validity of the instrument, the questionnaire was subjected to face validation by two experts from the Department of Entrepreneurship Education in Federal College of Education Technical Omoku and one expert from the Department of Business Education in Ignatius Ajuru University of Education Port Harcourt. The data analysis was done using the mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions while t-test was used to test the null hypotheses. The mean was obtained by the summation of all responses as assigned to a rating scale in an item divided by the total number of responses:  $4+3+2+1/4 = 2.50$ . The mean score of 2.50 and above was accepted, while those below 2.50 were rejected. Also, the decision rules for the hypotheses was that any hypothesis which t-calculated value is less than the t-critical table value of 1.96 is considered accepted whereas if it is more than the critical table value is considered rejected.

### Results

The results of the study were presented based on the research questions and hypotheses that guided the study

**Table 1:** Administration and retrieval of questionnaires

	No of cases	Percentage (%)
Copies of administered questionnaire	135	100
Copies of retrieved questionnaire	128	94.81
Copies of questionnaires not retrieved	7	5.19
Copies of unusable questionnaire	8	6.25
Copies of usable questionnaire	120	93.75

**Table 2:** Demographic Analysis

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Female	40	33.33
Male	60	66.67
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100</b>

**Research Question 1:** What are the lifelong skills needed by male and female lecturers in Entrepreneurship education for sustainable development?

**Table 3:** Mean ratings and standard deviation of lecturers on the lifelong skills needed for sustainable development

S/N	lifelong skills needed for sustainable development	Female Lecturers		Male Lecturers		Remarks
		$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	
1.	Critical thinking and problem solving skills	3.00	1.76	3.23	1.08	SA
2.	Effective communication skills	2.76	0.76	2.85	0.61	A
3.	Empathy, and coping with stress and emotions skill	3.70	0.71	3.43	0.59	SA
4.	Decision-making	3.00	0.67	3.00	0.67	SA
5.	Creative thinking skill	3.20	0.98	3.10	1.94	SA
6.	Interpersonal relationship skills	3.30	0.90	2.90	1.74	A

7. Self-awareness, self-esteem and self-confidence skills	3.50	0.50	3.45	1.57	SA
<b>Total Mean/SD</b>	<b>22.06</b>	<b>5.37</b>	<b>21.96</b>	<b>5.57</b>	<b>SA</b>

Source: Field work, (2022)

The data presented in Table 3 showed that critical thinking and problem solving skills, effective communication skills, empathy, and coping with stress and emotions skill, decision-making, creative thinking skill, Interpersonal relationship skills and Self-awareness, self-esteem and self-confidence skills which has a total mean of 22.06 and SD of 5.37 for female and mean of 21.96 and S.D of 5.57 form male indicates that the respondents strongly agreed that these are the lifelong skills needed for sustainable development

**Null Hypotheses 1:** There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female lecturers in Entrepreneurship education on the lifelong skills needed for sustainable development

**Table 4:** t-test analysis of the mean ratings of male and female Entrepreneurship Education Lecturers on the lifelong skills needed for sustainable development

Gender	n	$\bar{X}$	SD	df	t-cal	t-tab	decision
Female	40	22.06	5.37	118	1.96	1.09	NS
Male	80	21.96	5.57				

Result in Table 4 showed that the t-tabulated 1.09 is less than the t-calculated 1.96 thus, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female lecturers in Entrepreneurship education on the lifelong skills needed for sustainable development was accepted. This implies that at 0.05 level of significance there's no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female entrepreneurship education lecturers on the lifelong skills needed for sustainable development.

**Research Question 2:** what are the ways entrepreneurship education enhances lifelong skills for sustainable development based on male and female?

**Table 5:** Mean ratings and standard deviation of entrepreneurship education lecturers on ways entrepreneurship education can enhance lifelong skills for sustainable development

S/N	Ways entrepreneurship education enhances lifelong skills for sustainable development	Female Lecturers		Male Lecturers		Remark
		$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	
8.	By developing generic competencies, skills, attitudes through the educating process	3.30	1.03	2.80	0.84	SA
9.	Fostering innovation through entrepreneurship education	3.53	0.83	2.83	0.54	SA
10.	By going into practically oriented programs in entrepreneurship	2.80	0.87	2.74	1.08	A
11.	Cultivating the entrepreneurship students' mindset towards self reliance	2.90	0.80	2.90	0.83	A
12.	By internalising the entrepreneurial value through the school curriculum	3.10	0.83	2.70	1.10	SA
13.	Through understating entrepreneurial skills	3.10	0.94	3.03	0.82	SA
14.	Student entrepreneurs are taught to use multi-party interaction to achieve knowledge iteration	3.13	1.11	3.13	1.05	SA
15.	Through value-based teaching	3.50	0.96	3.00	0.67	SA
<b>Total Mean/SD</b>		<b>25.36</b>	<b>7.20</b>	<b>23.13</b>	<b>6.93</b>	<b>SA</b>

*Source: Field work (2022)*

The result presented in Table 5 showed that respondents strongly agrees with a total mean score of 25.36 and SD of 7.20 for female and mean total mean score of 23.13 and SD of 6.93 for male that by developing generic competencies, skills, attitudes through the educating process; fostering innovation through entrepreneurship education; By going into practically

oriented programs in entrepreneurship; internalising the entrepreneurial value through the school curriculum; understating entrepreneurial skills; student entrepreneurs are taught to use multi-party interaction to achieve knowledge iteration and through value-based teaching entrepreneurship education can enhance lifelong skills for sustainable development

**Null Hypotheses 2:** There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female lecturers on ways Entrepreneurship education enhances the lifelong skills needed for sustainable development

**Table 5:** t-test analysis of the mean ratings of male and female Entrepreneurship education lecturers on ways entrepreneurship education enhances lifelong skills for sustainable development

Gender	n	$\bar{X}$	SD	df	t-cal	t-tab	Decision
Female	40	23.13	6.94	118	1.63	1.96	NS
Male	80	25.36	7.20				

Result in Table 4 showed that the t-tabulated 1.96 is less than the t-calculated 1.63 thus the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female lecturers on ways Entrepreneurship education enhances lifelong skills needed for sustainable development was accepted. This implies that at 0.05 level of significance there's no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female entrepreneurship education lecturers on ways entrepreneurship education enhances lifelong skills for sustainable development

**Discussion of Findings**

**Lifelong skills needed by male and female lecturers in Entrepreneurship education for sustainable development**

The findings showed that the respondents to very high extent agreed that critical thinking and problem solving skills; effective communication skills; empathy, and coping with stress and emotions skill; decision-making; creative thinking skill; interpersonal relationship skills and self-awareness, self-esteem and self-confidence skills are the lifelong skills needed for sustainable development. This finding agrees with a study by Dacre and Sewell, (2010) who found out that entrepreneurship education fosters in an individual the prowess of business idea generation. This goes a long way to show the level at which the identified lifelong skills can bring about sustainable development in Nigeria. The identified lifelong skills are needed not just for personal purposes but for employment creation abilities and economic development of the pandemic but for contingency as the cases arises.

**Ways entrepreneurship education enhances lifelong skills for sustainable development based on male and female**

The findings showed ways entrepreneurship education enhances lifelong skills among individuals for sustainable development. Some investigated indicators include: developing

generic competencies, skills, attitudes through the educating process; fostering innovation through entrepreneurship education; going into practically oriented programs in entrepreneurship; By internalising the entrepreneurial value through the school curriculum; cultivating the entrepreneurship students' mindset towards self reliance; understanding entrepreneurial skills etc. This investigation is in line with the findings of Atakpa, (2019) who found out that entrepreneurship education helps in developing generic competencies, skills, attitudes, interdisciplinary understanding of knowledge, and its application for a sustainable future. And with that of Okorafor, (2011) who established that entrepreneurship education facilitates knowledge and awareness and critical reflection on consumption, human-nature interdependency and sustainable living. This also goes a long way to justify the research question too. Hence, entrepreneurship education should be taken seriously in the higher institutions and their curriculum planning process.

### **Conclusion**

This study examines how entrepreneurship education can create lifelong skills for sustainable development. In setting out the objectives of the study, some lifelong skills which could determine sustainable development, such as critical thinking and problem solving skills, effective communication skills, empathy, and coping with stress and emotions skill, decision-making, creative thinking skill, Interpersonal relationship skills and self-awareness, self-esteem and self-confidence skills were identified. The findings of this study reveal that entrepreneurship education is a sure pathway for creating lifelong skills for sustainable development.

### **Recommendation**

The following recommendations were made from the findings of the study:

1. Entrepreneurship education lecturers are hereby encouraged to develop in themselves some lifelong skills as to enable them become quality mentors to students in entrepreneurship.
2. Curriculum planners are encouraged to include the findings of this study in the curriculum as to enable students achieve lifelong skills early in life.
3. Government at all levels should intensify effort towards improving the quality of entrepreneurship education as it is a sure pathway for sustainable development.

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