

ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION AND THE CHALLENGES OF OVER POPULATED CLASSROOMS IN SELECTED STATE OWNED TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN RIVERS STATE

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ABSTRACT

This study examines Entrepreneurship Education and challenges of over populated classrooms in selected state owned tertiary institutions in Rivers State. The study makes use of the survey Research design in which questionnaires were used to collect relevant information from the respondents. The population of the study comprises all lecturers in three state owned tertiary institutions in Rivers State. The sample size consists of 138 trained teachers in Entrepreneurship. Findings reveal that Entrepreneurship lecture halls are over-crowded, especially because of merging, and lack of availability of space. It is recommended amongst others, that government should urgently carryout an assessment with a view to building new classroom blocks and assists in renovating old structures where necessary.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, Education, Sustainable Development, *challenges*, Recession.

INTRODUCTION

Education is necessary if human beings can live meaningfully and attain their individual needs, desires and aspirations. Education is no doubt the process through which people are exposed to every relevant knowledge, skills and values needed for the sake of stability and sustainability of the recipients and the society in general. Education is therefore a means to a good end in all ramifications. However, to arrive at this good end, education must be acquired in a very conducive environment; especially Entrepreneurship education. The importance of Entrepreneurship Education,

both to individual and national growth and development, cannot be over-emphasized. That is why several scholars have researched and are still researching on the importance of entrepreneurship in the economic development of a country. Such research works have always considered issues affecting the reasons for Entrepreneurship, benefits, challenges and future of Entrepreneurship. The concept of Entrepreneurship has been variously defined by several scholars. Nwachukwu, (2003) defines an Entrepreneur as a person who can see and evaluate business opportunities, gather the necessary resources to take

advantage of them and initiate appropriate action to ensure success.

Hisrich et al. (2008) view entrepreneurship, as the process of creating something new with value, by devoting the necessary time and effort, assuming the accompanying financial, psychic and social risks and receiving the resulting rewards of monetary and personal satisfaction and independence.

While scholars have agreed that there is no "one best definition" of entrepreneurship, it is also agreed that the legion of definitions we have bother on three major components as earlier suggested by Shapero (1975). These components are:

- (1) Initiative taking.
- (2) The organizing and re-organizing of social and economic mechanisms to turn resources and situations to practical accounts.
- (3) The acceptance of risks or failure.

From the foregoing, it implies that individual involvement in entrepreneurship education is central and critical in all facets and perspectives. This cannot be achieved in an overcrowded environment because the basic factor in Entrepreneurship education is to stimulate people who would become Key players in wealth creation, job creation, assist in bringing about a good standard of living, utilize idle resources and eventually bring about revenue to the government by the means of small and medium scale enterprises created by them.

Nigerians have always clamoured for rich, sound and qualitative education at all levels. The classroom which is the heart of any educational system serves as the center, housing what can be called qualitative education.

Historically, the issue of large class size or population explosion especially at the primary school level was not pronounced in Nigeria until the 1950s. This was because the number of people seeking education before that time was small especially because of its financial implications and because of ignorance of its benefits. With the introduction of the Universal Primary Education (UPE) by the Federal Government in 1986, Nigerian schools have continued to experience a sporadic increase in school enrollment at all levels, all over the country. In some states, especially in Northern Nigeria, free feeding, at least once a day, between Mondays and Fridays have also added impetus to the large population of people seeking western education.

The fact is, when people experience primary education, they tend to go further to have secondary education and thereafter to tertiary education. Fafunwa (1974) had observed that one of the major problems affecting education in Nigeria is overcrowded classrooms. Omolewa (1981) observed that Nigerian schools are witnessing rapid educational expansion without adequate provisions for essential resources for teaching and learning in terms of classrooms and furniture to cater for the ever growing population seeking knowledge. The introduction of the Universal Basic Education Program has also brought about increased pressure and over-crowded classrooms. Some of the laudable goals of the UBE include equipping individuals with the basic knowledge, skills and abilities needed to do the following;

- (1) Have meaningful and fulfilling lives.
- (2) Contribute to the development of society.
- (3) Derive maximum social economic, and cultural benefits from society;

- (4) Discharge their civic obligations completely (FMF, 1999).

Entrepreneurship education has become so essential that it is now taught from the primary schools to the secondary schools and then in all tertiary institutions. The idea is to move people away from the level of job seekers to job providers, which can also assist in combating recessionary periods like what Nigeria has just experienced. Class size must be taken seriously because the sporadic increase of students in the selected tertiary institutions in Rivers State has made teachers/lecturers of Entrepreneurship helpless and less productive. Edward (1975) said that classrooms are student's temporary home and their immediate learning environment. They must therefore be made conducive for teaching and learning.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purposes/objectives of this study include;

- (1) To investigate whether or not the three selected tertiary institutions in Rivers State are over populated for effective Entrepreneurship lectures/classes.
- (2) To find out the causes of over population of entrepreneurship classes in the selected tertiary institutions in Rivers State.
- (3) To find out the consequences of over population of entrepreneurship classes in the selected tertiary institutions in Rivers State on sustainability of the programme
- (4) To suggest possible measures to be taken by the state government to combat the situation in order to sustain Entrepreneurship Education and its contribution to national development.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- (1) How acute is the problem of over population of Entrepreneurship Classes

in the three selected tertiary institutions in Rivers State?

- (2) What are the general consequences of overpopulation on effective teaching and learning of Entrepreneurship in the three selected tertiary institutions in Rivers State?

LITERATURE REVIEW

To allow for quality education at all levels, educationists have advised that there should be a good teacher-pupil or student ratio, Balogun (2006). The importance of having such a ratio cannot be over-emphasised, according to Farraut (1975). In the view of these scholars, good teacher – pupil / student – ratio assists teachers to give better attention to students. It also contributes a great deal to classroom management. They also added that such a situation will prevent the problem of struggling for chairs and desks. Then, concentration will be possible while the pupils/students will learn under comfortable atmosphere.

According to Popoola (2006), the state of all our public schools is growing worse by the existence of large class size. He attributed this problem to inadequate funding which leaves more to desire in the quest for quality education in Nigerian schools. Teachers/lecturers generally agree that efficiency is drastically reduced when facing a large class size.

Farrant (1984) says, increase in class size would not allow for meaningful teacher – pupil interactions. It will equally not give enough space for the teachers and students to move freely.

Teacher –student interaction is an integral part of teaching any course especially Entrepreneurship Education where practical cases, instances and examples are needed.

Adesina (1989) equally stated that overcrowded classrooms make students feel uncomfortable. As a result of this, they become restless and their interest and attention span is limited considerably. Whenever over population is permitted, students will likely show irritating and uneasy behaviours because the classroom will be stuffy. Students are also likely to get tired easily and also become aggressive (Balogun, 2006).

Again, indiscipline, in form of noise making, all manner of disorderly behaviours often characterizes an overcrowded classroom. We cannot rule out the fact that there is a whole lot of indiscipline in the Nigerian educational system today. Yet, it is only in a disciplined environment that much can be achieved.

Farrant (1975) also states that there will be no meaningful activities in an over-populated classroom. According to him, instructional materials available for teaching, which should be practically handled by the students, may not go round. This can be said to be the situation of Entrepreneurship teachers in the two Polytechnics in Rivers State; that is, the Ken Saro-Wiwa Polytechnic, Bori and the Port Harcourt Polytechnic, Rumuola, Port Harcourt. Studies carried out both by Adesina (1989) and Oloyede (1998), and Abdulrasag (2002) confirmed the fact that large class size and over-population in classes affect students' academic performance.

Indeed if the trend is not checked, the consequences may be more extreme especially in a recessed economy such as the one Nigeria is currently experiencing. The term sustainable development has become a new paradigm on the development strand, among developing countries of the world.

According to Akpan and Inyang (2017), the concept is being adopted as a way of encouraging nations to see beyond now, by developing institutions that propel advancement in economies. The concept actually evolved from environmental issues. However, in recent times, the concept has come to mean different things to Economists, ecologists, politicians, and even public policy planners. Thus, Gills, et al (1992) in Nnaa (2013) observed that for ecologists, economists and biologists who understand the essence of resource scarcity, sustainable development is generally defined as the development path that maximizes the long-term net benefits to human land. Healy (1990) in Nnaa (2013), also argues that sustainable development stresses not the need to limit development, but the need to develop in order to be able to conserve. On his own part, Nnaa (2013), while giving credence to all the views expressed above, stated that the meaning of sustainable development could best be captured in the phrase "What shall it benefit the people or the nation if they get the benefits of development now, and have nothing left for the unborn generation?".

According to him, this simply means that our concept of sustainable development should be that which addresses the needs and aspirations of the present and the future on a continuous process. In his words "The overall objectives of sustainable development are to create sustainable improvements in the quality of life for all people. The import of this is that, sustainable development aims at accelerating economic development in order to conserve and enhance the stock of environmental, human and physical capital without making future generations worse off. Here lies the import of sustainable

human development” (Nnaa, 2013; 36-37). Entrepreneurship education is indeed a window through which sustainable development can easily be achieved especially in a recessed economy like ours in Nigeria. A recession is said to be a significant decline in activity across the economy, lasting longer than a few months, and which is usually visible in industrial production, employment, real income and wholesale – retail trade. The technical indicator of a recession is two consecutive quarters of negative economic growth, (investopedia, 2017). Alternatively, a recession is a business cycle contraction which results in a general slowdown in economic activity. Macroeconomic indicators such as gross Domestic Product (GDP), investment spending, capacity utilization, household income, business profits and inflation fall, while bankruptcies and the unemployment rate rise, (Wikipedia, 2017). According to Martin, (2016), in the case of Nigeria, inflation rate has not fallen but has been rising and increasing as consumer prices for example are observed to have risen by 18.3% between October, 2015 and October, 2016. Mckimey (2016), Tejvan (2016) and Noko (2016) have identified the following factors as the general causes of inflation the world over;

- High interest rates which reduce borrowing and investments.
- Falling consumer confidence, that is, where consumers feel that the economy is bad, they are less likely to spend money.
- Fall in aggregate demand, wages and income.
- Credit Crunch which results to a decline in bank lending and therefore lower investment.
- Appreciation in the exchange rate which makes exports expensive and reduces demand for imports.
- Higher oil prices which result to increase in production cost, peculiar to Nigeria, according to Noko (2016) and Martin (2016) include;
- A drop in the price of crude oil from about \$100 a barrel in 2014 to roughly \$50 at present.
- Poor economic planning and implementation, budget delays, exchange rate policy, etc.
- High taxation rate, with a combination of low interest rate, to lower aggregate demand.
- Conflicting economic policies.

METHODOLOGY

The Researchers made use of the survey research design in which questionnaires were used to collect relevant information from the respondents. The population of the study comprised all lecturers in the three selected state owned tertiary institutions in Rivers State. However, due to limited time, finance and other constraints, the purposive sampling technique was adopted to select the respondents used. The sample consists of 138 trained teachers/lecturers on Entrepreneurship and Small Business startup, in the three selected state-owned tertiary institutions. The lecturers were interviewed on the population situation of the classes they teach. They also responded to a questionnaire drawn on consequences of large class size on teaching and learning of Entrepreneurship (CLCSTLEQ). The questionnaire that was used consists of two sections; ‘A’ and “B”, which consisted of 9 items based on consequences of large class size on teaching and learning of Entrepreneurship Education; for scoring purposes, there were two alternative responses showing whether the respondents agree with each statement made or not. Their responses were indicated by ticking any of the two alternatives provided.

DATA ANALYSIS**Research Question 1**

How serious is the problem of over population in your Entrepreneurship/Small Business startup class? This was conducted as an

interview with the Entrepreneurship teachers. They stated the number of students in their respective classes. Their responses are analyzed below;

Table 1: Population situation in the three selected state owned tertiary institutions in Rivers State in Entrepreneurship /Small Business startup lecture halls

Class Population	Number of lecturers	Percentage %
Below 100	12	8.7%
90 – 100	36	26.1%
100 – 150	75	54.3%
150 – 200 and above	15	10.9%

Source: Survey Data, 2018

The result in table 1 indicates that 12 (8.7%) of the 138 respondents have below 100 students in their classes while 36 (26.1%) have students ranging between 90-100 in their classes. 75 (54.3%) of the respondents have between 100-150 students in their respective Entrepreneurship/Small business

startup classes; While 15 (10.9%) have between 150 – 200 students and above.

Research Question 2:

What are the general consequences of overpopulation on teaching and learning of Entrepreneurship /Small Business startup?

Table 2: Summary of Entrepreneurship teacher's responses on the consequences of large class size on teaching and learning.

S/N	Questionnaire item	Agreed	%	Disagreed	%
1	Noise making is rampant in overcrowded classroom.	130	94.2%	08	5.8%
2.	Overcrowded classrooms will hinder teachers movement.	115	83.3%	23	16.7%
3.	Paying attention to individual student is not easy in an overcrowded classroom.	127	92%	11	8%
4.	Late comers can sneak in unnoticed.	101	73.2	37	26.8
5.	Teaching materials may not go round.	120	87%	18	13%
6.	Students sitting at the back may not participate very well.				
7.	Securing students attention may be difficult.	116	84.1	22	15.9
8.	To mark/ evaluate students Assignment/Test/Exam scripts can be cumbersome.	118	85.5%	20	14.5
9	Students performance may be adversely affected in many other ways.	119	86.2	19	13.8

Source: Survey data, 2017

Results from table 2 shows that 130 (94.2%) of the 138 respondents agreed that noise

making is the order of the day in an overcrowded classroom, while 8 (5.8%)

disagreed. Also, 115 (83.3%) agreed that large class size restrict the movement of lecturers in the classroom, 23 (16.7%) disagreed with the statement. On teachers inability to pay attention to students individually in an overcrowded classroom, 127 (92%) agreed while 11 (8%) disagreed. The fact that late comers can easily sneak into the class unnoticed was agreed by 101 (73.2%), while 37 (26.8%) disagreed.

On whether or not teaching materials will go round the students, 120 (87%) of the respondents agreed while 18 (13%) disagreed. 113 (81.9%) agreed that students sitting at the back of the class often find it difficult to participate meaningfully in the lecture while 25 (18.1%) disagreed. 116 (84.1%) of the respondents agreed that it is usually difficult to secure students attention in an overcrowded class, while 22 (15.9%) disagreed. On how easy it is to mark and assess / evaluate students work by lecturers in an overcrowded class, 118 (85.5%) agreed while 20 (14.5%) disagreed. 119 (86.2%) agreed that students' performances are often adversely affected in an overcrowded classroom while 19 (13.8%) disagreed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The information revealed in table 1 shows that many teachers/lecturers handling Entrepreneurship classes have more than the required number of students in their lecture halls. Many of these students, according to the lecturers, are not well seated as a result of inadequate desks/ chairs. Classroom environment has much to do with Educational success. Some Entrepreneurship lecture halls as observed are makeshift buildings, plywood houses with tattered walls and shoddy electrical fittings. The findings revealed that over 10% of lecturers have above 150 –200 students in their classes during Entrepreneurship lectures. This is very high.

The findings also show that less than 10% of lecturers have below 100 students. Reasons given by some of the lecturers for not operating within approved limits include; lack of enough classrooms, making them to sometimes merge two classes together.

The information revealed in table two shows that over population /crowdiness is already having untold consequences on the general conduct of tertiary education with respect to entrepreneurship education since the harmonization exercise by the Joint Admissions and matriculation Board, a few years ago. Between (70% - 90%) Seventy and ninety percent of the lecturers agreed that they are facing a lot of problems as a result of over population in their classes/ lecture halls. Problems like noise making, restrictions to movement, inability to pay attention to individual student, inability to secure students attention, and that quite often, late comers sneaked into the classroom unnoticed. They also expressed the fact that students performances are adversely affected, while it has not also been easy to mark, assess or evaluate students work, easily, and promptly. Participation too, is often difficult for students sitting at the back. These findings agree with the works of both Abdulrasaq (2002) and Aremu (2006), who in their individual studies, discovered that Nigerian Schools are, generally speaking, facing the problem of over population and that the problem is affecting the general classroom effectiveness and output, and also hindering the realization of Nigerian educational objectives.

CONCLUSION

This study has truly revealed some of the terrible situations prevalent in Nigerian higher institutions with particular reference to Entrepreneurship education in the three selected state-owned tertiary institutions in Rivers State. Students learning and

interaction are impossible when class sizes are too large. Entrepreneurship is a practical course which needs proper mental stimulation. If this is done otherwise, the society also stands to suffer in more ways than one. Although teachers can use several methods to subject students in the school environment, it is a bit difficult to completely do certain things in an overcrowded classroom with all manner of human beings called students. Good academic performance will continuously be hampered if the classroom environment is not conducive and if it is stressful to both teachers and students.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As a result of the findings of this study, it is obvious that the Rivers State government has a lot to do in ameliorating the problem of large class size with particular reference to Entrepreneurship education/small business startups in the three selected state-owned tertiary.

The following steps should urgently be taken;

- (1) The State Government should set up a committee to go round all the state owned tertiary institutions and assess the situation of their classrooms. The Port Harcourt Polytechnic appears to have a more Pathetic case. This will give the government firsthand information.
- (2) The State Government should allocate more funds to these institutions to enable them build more modern classrooms.
- (3) Government should urgently renovate all dilapidated classrooms.
- (4) Government should also provide desks/chairs to all the state owned tertiary institutions.

- (5) Heads of Department /Entrepreneurship Directors and co-ordinators should endeavour to divide large entrepreneurship /small business startup classes into groups. Each group should not exceed Fifty students.
- (6) Tetfund should endeavour to release funds meant for tertiary institutions once such funds have been approved.
- (7) The two institutions' Management should devise a means of generating their own revenue to solve minor challenges.
- (8) Entrepreneurship Education should be taken more seriously by all and sundry.

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