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Entrepreneurship Education for Students with Physical Health Challenges in Nigeria: A Way Forward

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Abstract

Entrepreneurship is an employment strategy that can lead to economic self-sufficiency for people with physical health challenges. Self-employment provides such category of people and their families with the potential to create and manage businesses in which they function as the employer rather than merely being an employee. This is possible only when entrepreneurship education is designed in such a way that it takes good care of the needs of students with physical health challenges. The objective of this paper is to explore and discuss entrepreneurship education as it applies to students with physical health challenges. The paper discussed the concepts of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship education, the concept of students with physical health challenges, the place of entrepreneurship education in tertiary institutions in Nigeria, as well as the kind of entrepreneurship education that is suitable for students with physical health challenges. Other issues discussed by the paper include the benefits associated with entrepreneurship education for students with physical health challenges, problems associated with entrepreneurship education for students with physical health challenges, as well as the way forward.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship; Entrepreneurship Education; Physical Health Challenges; Benefits; Problems; Way Forward.

Introduction

The importance of entrepreneurship education to humanity in general and to economic growth cannot be overstated, given its developmental incentives for individual well-being and the promotion of economic activity. Thus, entrepreneurship education is critical in enabling everyone, even those with physical health challenges, to develop their own economic prospects. It allows students to overcome obstacles and make meaningful contributions to society by cultivating skills, resilience, and ingenuity.

The acquisition of skills through entrepreneurship education significantly increases self-employment and work options for members of society in general, including persons with



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physical health challenges. Entrepreneurship is more than just skill acquisition; it is the acquisition of skills and ideas with the goal of producing employment for oneself as well as others. As a result, entrepreneurship education could take the form of technical education, business education, computer applications, fine and applied arts, among other things, and it is regarded as beneficial to citizens in order to become self-sufficient by establishing and maintaining small and medium-sized businesses in society.

In Nigeria today, the rising rates of poverty, unemployment, corruption, security threats, and a slew of other social issues have concerned both the government and the people, to the point where the government is unable to ensure the employability of our graduating youth from universities and other training institutions, whether part-time or full-time. As discussed by Tiamiyu (2010) and Omede (2010), the practical skills acquisitions in various areas of entrepreneurship lead to economic stimulation in a dynamic society, where individuals with entrepreneurial skills embark on production of saleable items. Therefore, vocational and technical oriented education for persons with physical health challenges will further strengthen their chances of independent living and stimulate the entrepreneurial interests and potentials embedded in these category of people.

Entrepreneurship and Entrepreneurship Education

The term "Entrepreneurship" has been defined as the process of establishing an enterprise or corporation, as well as arranging business transactions and taking risks in order to profit from the skills obtained (Omolayo, 2006). In this concept, entrepreneurship is simply understood as a process of combining creativity and innovativeness with managerial and organisational expertise in order to utilise available resources to fulfil a goal and create money.

In another definition, Fasla (2017) stated that entrepreneurship is the complete course of action followed by a person to start and manage a business for profit. Thus, it contributes to a country's economic growth and development because entrepreneurs are regarded as the seed of a nation's industrial development, with the fruits being job opportunities, an increase in per capita income, a higher standard of living, and balanced national development. It is the process of combining factors of production such as land, labour, and capital to produce a product or service for public consumption (Nwangwu, 2007). This is achievable through entrepreneurship education, which equip an individual with knowledge, information and training that enables them to function adequately in a dynamic economic environment like Nigeria (Ayannuga, 2008).

According to Omede and Oguche (2016), entrepreneurship education can be defined to mean skill-oriented education, education for self-reliance, training for managing reasonable risk in



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the business sector, and training for economic and social inclusion. It is the combination of information, abilities, and attitude essential for the successful promotion and administration of a company enterprise. This sort of education is typically intended for students who are interested in and can benefit from learning specialised skills within a given occupational cluster.

As discussed by Dan'inna and Bagiwa (2020), entrepreneurship education is gaining popularity since it is viewed as a driving force in the development of the economy and job creation, and hence a solution to the country's unemployment problems. This is because, via entrepreneurship education, both normal people and those with physical health challenges can be trained in some way to contribute to national development by becoming self-employed, self-sufficient, and living independently.

Students with Physical Health Challenges

In general, students with special needs are considered exceptional students, such as the visually impaired, hearing impaired, speech disordered, multiple handicapped, special mobility impaired, and others who require an adaptable curriculum to meet their unique learning needs as a result of their unique circumstances (Omede 2011). Yusuf (2010) defined students with special needs as those who have one or more disabilities such as blindness, partial blindness, partial hearing loss, physical disability, speech disorder, learning disabilities, social maladjustment, mental retardation, or gifted and talented. According to the National Policy on Education (2004), they are individuals who are unable to comply with standard school class organisation and methods due to learning challenges.

Among the students with special needs are those who have physical health challenges. They are students in diverse areas who have one or more physical disabilities and require education and training in various skills for self-reliance and economic survival (Omede & Oguche, 2016). This group of students requires specialised education and services to help them reach their full potential and compete with their peers in the economic domain. According to Tiamiyu (2010), the fundamental goal of entrepreneurial skills is to equip individuals for work in recognised occupations such as agriculture, home economics, business, and technical education.

To achieve this goal to the best extent possible, special educators and vocational rehabilitation specialists must work together to provide appropriate training and placement for people with physical health challenges. This type of rehabilitation entails integrating persons with physical health challenges into the community's occupational, social, and cultural life in order to teach them how to live independently (Ihenacho, 2010).



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Entrepreneurship Education in Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria

During the 2007/2008 academic year, the Federal Government of Nigeria, through the National Universities Commission (NUC), implemented entrepreneurship education throughout universities in the country and it was extended to other tertiary institutions. This innovation aimed at providing tertiary institution students with entrepreneurial skills, interest, attitudes, and competencies in order to create jobs and improve the nation's economic, technological, and industrial development while also reducing poverty to a bare minimum. This will also help to achieve the objectives of entrepreneurship education, particularly for students with physical health challenges, as specified in the National Policy on Education. These objectives, according to Omede and Oguche (2016) include among others preparing them for useful living in the society, providing them with saleable entrepreneurship skills relevant in the 21st century and beyond, enabling them compete with their peers in developed world, in technology development and application, making them partners in small scale industries, making them contribute to Nigerian information communication technological needs, and providing them with the knowledge, skills and motivation to encourage entrepreneurial success in varied setting.

According to Ubogu (2020), entrepreneurship education should be considered a crucial component of our educational curriculum due to the clear necessity to produce alternate forms of employment. Nigerian graduates of the twenty-first century cannot afford to be a "jack of all trades and master of none"; in order to be marketable, they must enter the labour market with a specialised talent. Section one of Nigeria's National Education Policy (FRN, 2004) emphasised the need of functional education being relevant, practical, and complete. In addition, emphasis should be placed on the acquisition of appropriate entrepreneurial skills and competencies for personal and societal development. This implies that the quality of instruction at all levels of education, has to be directed towards including the values and competencies necessary for self – reliance.

Akpotu and Agabi (2011) advised Nigerian higher education institutions to incorporate entrepreneurship education into their curricula, making it mandatory for all students, regardless of specialisation. This is consistent with the presidential decision to include compulsory entrepreneurship education in higher education curricula, which recognises the necessity of developing such abilities in citizens for job creation. It would require the country's colleges and higher institutions to begin developing an entrepreneurial human capital basis for national development.



Entrepreneurship Education for Students with Physical Health Challenges

According to the literature, it is more expensive to create entrepreneurs among the physically challenged population. This is due to their great susceptibility (Gartner, Shaver, Gatewood, & Katz, 1994), which causes them to be mainly unnoticed, neglected, and excluded from mainstream growth. In general, they are disempowered and economically excluded. People with physical health challenges, on the other hand, make natural entrepreneurs since their disability can serve as a motivator for independent problem solving and invention. They proposed that children with physical health challenges frequently discover novel and successful ways of moving around, talking, and overcoming their difficulties. The experience of confronting and coping with unknown challenges can be a worthwhile, however tough, form of human development (Mwangi, 2013).

As discussed by Che Ku Mohd, Shahbodin, Abdul Rashid, Jano, & Al-Shami (2019), during career education and counselling, self-employment should be emphasised as a realistic option for students with physical health challenges, otherwise they might not be aware of such an option. Some ways to assist them learn more about self-employment as an alternative may include allowing them to speak to company owners during the day of work, interview with them to know more about setting up and running a small company, and allow them participate in small businesses and in career explorations such as simulations, and games that look at owning a company more intensively.

Benefits of Entrepreneurship Education for Students with Physical Health Challenges in Nigeria

Entrepreneurship education not only prepares students for self-employment but also enhances their problem-solving abilities and decision-making skills. Through entrepreneurship education, students with physical health challenges are empowered to create their own paths toward economic self-sufficiency. The following are some other benefits that students with physical health challenges can derive from entrepreneurship education as outlined by Learning Disabilities Online (2024):

1. **Opportunity for work based experience:** Work experiences for students with physical health challenges during training, both paid and unpaid, help them acquire jobs at higher wages after they graduate. Also, students who participate in occupational education and special education in integrated settings are more likely to be competitively employed than students who have not participated in such activities.
2. **Opportunity to exercise leadership and develop inter personal skills:** By launching a small business or school-based enterprise, students with physical health challenges can lead and



experience different roles. In addition, they learn to communicate their ideas and influence others effectively through the development of self-advocacy and conflict resolution skills. Moreover, they learn how to become team players, and to engage in problem solving and critical thinking skills, valued highly by employers in the competitive workplace of the 21st Century. Mentors, including peer mentors both with and without physical health challenges, can assist them in developing these competencies.

3. **Opportunity to develop planning, financial literacy, and money management skills:** The ability to set goals and to manage time, money and other resources are important entrepreneurship skills which are useful in any workplace. For students with physical health challenges, learning about financial planning, including knowledge about available work incentives, is critical for potential entrepreneurs with physical health challenges.
4. Other benefits as outlined by Inoegbu and Ezeanochie, as cited by Omede and Oguiche (2016) include:
 - ✓ Improved academics performance, school attendance, and educational attainment.
 - ✓ Increased problem-solving and decision-making abilities, job readiness, and social psychological development.
 - ✓ Improved interpersonal relationships, teamwork, money management and public speaking skills as well as health status.

Problems of Entrepreneurship Education for Students with Physical Health Challenges in Nigeria

According to Omede (2010), entrepreneurship education for people with physical health challenges in Nigeria has a lot of problems such as a lack of specifically trained teachers, inadequate funding, insufficient resources, and the absence of an all-encompassing curriculum. In this regard, the National Policy on Education (2004) provides that in pursuance of the goals of vocational and technical education, the main features of the curricular activities for technical colleges shall be structured in foundation and trade modules, and the curriculum for each trade shall consist of some basic components, namely: general education, theory and related courses, workshop practices, industrial training/production work, and small business management and entrepreneurial training.

In Nigeria's special education curriculum, however, there is little emphasis on small business management or entrepreneurial training for people with physical health challenges. Actually, it is not structured around foundations and modules; rather, it focuses on general education theory and associated courses, with workshop activities, industrial training, and production



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work accounting for a lesser fraction of the curriculum, without considering technical and vocational education as an important component in improving the technical and vocational capacities of individuals with physical health challenges in practical schools.

In terms of financing, it is impossible to overstate how crucial fund is to any establishment. This is due to the fact that an establishment cannot claim to exist without it. As a result, without funding, entrepreneurship education for people with physical health challenges cannot succeed. Furthermore, it is clear that entrepreneurship education entails more real experience and activity than just theoretical exercises. Therefore, in order to achieve its goals, it is imperative that certain basic resources – both human and material – be obtained.

Orim, Olayi, and Ewa (2009) identified that the primary challenge facing entrepreneurs with physical health challenges is raising capital. This is because banks and other financial institutions are reluctant to offer loans and grants to this category of people, due to concerns about non-repayment. Consequently, the environment is not favourable for the successful integration of entrepreneurship education into special education curricula.

Poor infrastructure, the scarcity and difficulty of materials and equipment, and a competitive disadvantage are further issues. In this sense, a normal person might take advantage of their condition to deceive them, which would be frustrating and may lead to a subpar strategy for feasibility. Additionally, some hearing-impaired people's bad public relations may work against them in this area. The worst case scenario is when the general public discriminates against the goods and services offered by people with physical health challenges, even if the goods or services they offer are of excellent quality. Low patronage and the eventual failure of the enterprise or business will follow from this. The government, the target group, curriculum designers, the school, the family, and society at large can work together to overcome these issues.

Way Forward on Entrepreneurship Education for Students with Physical Health Challenges in Nigeria

Despite the aforementioned challenges and problems that hinder the effective implementation of entrepreneurship education for people with physical health challenges, it is important to note that entrepreneurship education plays a crucial role in empowering students with physical health challenges to explore self-employment and business opportunities. The following are some strategies and considerations that can be utilised in order to make entrepreneurship education functional and effective among students with physical health challenges:

1. **Inclusive Curriculum Design:** There is the need to review existing curricula of entrepreneurship education to ensure that they accommodate the participation of students



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with physical health challenges. If necessary, amend the content to be more inclusive. In addition, the objectives should include engagement in entrepreneurial training so as to guide students toward self-employment pathways (Krüger, & David, 2020).

2. **Mentorship and Role Models:** There is the need connect students with physical health challenges to mentors who have experience in entrepreneurship. These mentors can provide guidance, share insights, and serve as role models to these aspiring entrepreneurs. In addition, there is the need to introduce these students to successful entrepreneurs with physical health challenges. This is because learning from real-life examples can inspire and motivate them to establish and maintain their own business enterprise (Che Ku Mohd, Shahbodin, Abdul Rashid, Jano, & Al-Shami, 2019).
3. **Career Planning and Counselling:** Students with physical health challenges need to be provided with relevant business information during career planning and counselling sessions. This includes understanding market trends, funding options, and legal considerations, and other career talks that are likely to motivate them to start their own businesses (Che Ku Mohd, Shahbodin, Abdul Rashid, Jano, & Al-Shami, 2019).
4. **Skill Development:** It is a fact that entrepreneurship education helps students develop organisational skills, including time management, leadership, and interpersonal abilities. These transferable skills are highly sought after by employers, hence the need to ensure proper acquisition of these skills by students with physical health challenges during their entrepreneurship training (Learning Disabilities Online, 2024).
5. **Accommodations:** Some students with physical health challenges may need accommodations in order to maximise their ability to benefit from entrepreneurship education. Accommodations are changes made in say classrooms, worksites, offices, or even assessment procedures that help people with physical health challenges learn, work, or receive services. Accommodations are designed to alleviate the effects of a disability so that the person can perform effectively. This is necessary in order to ensure effective implementation of entrepreneurship education for people with physical health challenges (Learning Disabilities Online, 2024).
6. **Financial Planning:** There should be a special financial planning considerations for people with physical health challenges, in form of a career path that involves small business ownership. Several work incentives should be made available to assist them in their efforts. It is also important that they understand the impact of their small business efforts on their entitlement to cash and medical benefits (Learning Disabilities Online, 2024).
7. **Other Ways:** Other ways as summarised by Kamal-Chaoui and Korte (2021) include among others increasing the visibility of entrepreneurship by people with physical health



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challenges, boosting entrepreneurship skills through training and peer-learning, improving access to start-up finance, ensuring that the local ecosystem is supportive of entrepreneurs with physical health challenges, and using income support systems to support the entrepreneurship education programme.

Summary and Conclusion

From the foregoing discussion, it was established that entrepreneurship is an employment strategy that can lead to economic self-sufficiency for people with physical health challenges. In this regard, entrepreneurship education is made compulsory in higher education curricula. Some benefits that students with physical health challenges can derive from entrepreneurship education include opportunity for work based experience, opportunity to exercise leadership and develop interpersonal skills, opportunity to develop planning, financial literacy, and money management skills among others. However, entrepreneurship education for people with physical health challenges in Nigeria has a lot of problems such as a lack of specifically trained teachers, inadequate funding, insufficient resources, and the absence of an all-encompassing curriculum.

In conclusion therefore, the researchers are of the view that to overcome these problems and challenges, some strategies and considerations need to be utilised in order to make entrepreneurship education functional and effective among students with physical health challenges. They include inclusive curriculum design, mentorship and role models, career planning and counselling, skill development, accommodation, and financial planning.

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