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## Entrepreneurship Education in Developing Countries: A Study of the Key Challenges in Sierra Leone

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### Introduction

Africa is a continent with one of the largest youth population; more than half of the population is “aged less than 21 years and two-thirds less than 30 years” (Awogbenle and Iwuamadi 2010: 1) or in terms of age brackets usually 15–30 and 15–35 (Mkandawire 2000; Argenti 2002; Chigunta et al. 2005). However, the actual definition of youth generally varies from country to country (Temba and DeWaal 2002). For example, Nigeria defines it as 18–35, Botswana 12–29, Ghana 15–35, South Africa 15–35, Malawi 14–25, The Gambia 12–30 and Sierra Leone 15–30 (Chigunta 2005; ILO 2015). Even in terms of international organisations such as the United Nations and the Commonwealth, there is no clear agreement. Indeed, the United Nations defines a youth as anyone between the ages of 15 and 24, whilst the Commonwealth defines a youth as anyone

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L.-P. Dana et al. (eds.), *African Entrepreneurship*, Palgrave Studies of  
Entrepreneurship in Africa, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-73700-3\\_5](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-73700-3_5)

between the ages of 15 and 29 (Chigunta et al. 2005). Despite such differences, according to the International Labour Organization (ILO) Global Trends for Youth 2013 report “the world is facing a worsening youth employment crisis: young people are three times more likely to be unemployed than adults and almost 73 million youth worldwide are looking for work”. In Africa, about 60 per cent of the 200 million youth population are unemployed (Agbor et al. 2012). In Sierra Leone, specifically 70 per cent of the youth population are unemployed (UNDP 2014). The problem is severe even among graduate youths that in theory should possess more skills sought by employers to gain a competitive advantage (Collins et al. 2004; Galloway et al. 2005; Mitra 2011; Wilson et al. 2009; ILO 2015; Msigwa and Kipesha 2013). A study conducted by the Career Graduate Youths shows that only about 16 per cent of the graduates’ population achieved employment after studies (World Bank 2013). Thus, the competition for jobs among graduates has become intense, as the traditional education system is no longer a passport for graduates to gain secure employment in the twenty-first century (Nabi and Bagley 1999; Collins et al. 2004; Mwiya 2014). This stark reality has a damaging consequence on the economic development of the country and the personal development of youths in general (Agbor et al. 2012; ILO 2015).

To this end, the Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL) has in the context of Agenda for Change, which is in line with its Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP II), implemented a new legislation for youth-friendly initiatives that are focused on creating an environment that is conducive to youth employment, development, entrepreneurship and empowerment (World Bank 2013). Among such initiatives is the development and implementation of entrepreneurship education programmes for youths across the country (World Bank 2013). Entrepreneurship education (EE) is recognised to play a significant role in an economic system (Isaacs et al. 2007; Hisrich et al. 2007; Nagesh et al. 2008); indeed several scholars (e.g. Thomas and Mueller 2000; Abimbola and Agbola 2011, de Wit and de Kok 2014) indicate EE as an element that facilitates economic growth, creates employment and jobs and helps in particularly empowering the disadvantaged segment of the society, which may have a minor access to labour market. Such claims are also confirmed by empirical studies; for example, a study of Premand et al. (2012) shows that EE programmes increase the level of employment among youths in Tunisia. Similarly, Blattman et al. (2015) concluded that EE interventions

in Uganda helped in reducing graduate youth unemployment, and this is true in comparative studies too (e.g. Cho and Honorati 2013) on African countries (specifically, Uganda, Malawi and Sierra Leone).

Yet, whilst research on the importance of entrepreneurship education abound, scant is the literature on the challenges faced in effectively developing such education, generally in Africa, and even less in specific countries, for example, Sierra Leone (Kingombe 2012; Agbonlahor 2016). Thus, this chapter aims to address this gap by reviewing through an exploratory approach some of the challenges faced in developing EE programmes across Africa, using Sierra Leone as a case study. The study has several contributions. Firstly at a theoretical level, it focuses on “concrete” challenges faced in an institutional environment of a developing country, highlighting the necessity of more grounded and context-specific studies for entrepreneurship education research. Secondly, the study contributes to the debate on impacts of EE with specific reference to the prospect of ameliorating youth employability. Thirdly, results from this study have potential to assist policy makers to create effective strategies in relation to EE programmes in developing countries.

Apart from this introduction, the study is structured as follows: the second section reviews concepts of EE and its impacts on graduate youth unemployment. It also grounds the study in the institutional environment of Sierra Leone with specific reference to its social and economic context and public policies dedicated to the stimulation of entrepreneurship. The third and fourth sections focus respectively on the methodology adopted to collect the data and findings on the key challenges faced in effectively implementing EE programmes in Africa. Finally, conclusions, recommendations, limitations and future avenues for research are discussed.

## **Entrepreneurship Education Impacts and the Context of Africa**

### **Entrepreneurship Education**

Despite several debates on whether entrepreneurship can be taught or not, Kuratko (2003: 11) stated “it is becoming clear that entrepreneurship, or certain facets of it, can be taught [...] business educators and

professionals have evolved beyond the myth that entrepreneurs are born, not made”. However, there is no single and generally accepted definition of EE as a field of study; rather there is still an evolving definition (Isaacs et al. 2007). In general entrepreneurial education has several aspects: (1) it is the process of providing skills to recognise commercial opportunities and its weak signals and insights (Jones 2007); (2) it focuses on understanding and developing an individual capacity for the pursuit of entrepreneurial behaviours, skills and attributes in their widely different contexts (Gibb 2005); and (3) it targets both secondary and higher education students with the latter comprising graduate and undergraduate students that are enrolled on formal degree-granting programmes (World Bank 2014).

There are several objectives of EE programmes that vary from increasing or creating entrepreneurial culture, spirit and attitudes among participants and/or a community in general (e.g. Kirby 2004; Henry et al. 2005; Gibb 2005; Mwasalwiba 2010) or to stimulating participants’ intention towards creating new ventures and jobs (e.g. Henry et al. 2005; Matley 2005). Indeed, comprehensive definitions (e.g. Fayolle et al. 2006; Venkatachalam and Waqif 2005) assess key objectives of an EE programme as changing the state of the individual behaviour and intention towards entrepreneurship and to become entrepreneurial in nature which will inversely lead to the creation of new businesses as well as new job opportunities.

Hytti and O’Gorman (2004) grouped objectives of entrepreneurship education into three key areas: education for, about and in entrepreneurship. Education for entrepreneurship aims at developing present and potential entrepreneurs with relevant skills and knowledge that will help them to either create new ventures or enhance existing ones (Mwasalwiba 2010). This education thus is aimed at developing certain type of skills such as personal and social skills, skills relating to financial literacy and business start-up (OECD 2009). As a whole it “is concerned with the inculcation of a range of skills and attributes, including the ability to think creatively, to work in teams, to manage risk and handle uncertainty” (OECD 2009: 5). This first area is rather developed in traditional approaches.

The second area, education about entrepreneurship, instead focuses on the primary objective of creating a good understanding of entrepreneurship

among different stakeholders including students, policy makers and the general community (Hytti and O’Gorman 2004). In this case the learning outcomes are more related to developing a social and institutional environment favourable to entrepreneurial activities, with positive externality for the developing market.

Finally, education in entrepreneurship seeks to achieve the objective of making individuals become more innovative and/or entrepreneurial in either their existing firms or place of work (Henry et al. 2005). In the perspective of pedagogies, this education is regarded as the most complicated since it aims to modify mindsets and attitudes first and later also behaviours of individuals (Fayol et al. 2005). However, at the same time, it seems also the most powerful in terms of impacts (Rae et al. 2012).

Another aspect relevant to entrepreneurship education that has increased over the past years is the interests in different methods/pedagogies used to deliver EE programmes (Gibb 2005; Kirby 2004; Mwasalwiba 2010). Entrepreneurial pedagogy can be referred to as a collection of different teaching techniques that is aimed at achieving the intended goals of the entrepreneurship programme (Hägg and Peltonen 2014). However, there appears to be some disagreement between academics and business practitioners on what is the best method for teaching entrepreneurship (Jones 2007; Neck and Greene 2011). Academics support a theory-based approach to teaching entrepreneurship which focuses on rigorously engaging students into theories of how to become an entrepreneur (Yamakawa et al. 2016). Yamakawa et al. averred that theoretical-based pedagogical approach uses nascent entrepreneurship and strategic theories to teach participants about the theoretical paradigm of entrepreneurship. The goal of theory-based entrepreneurship pedagogy is to enhance the participants’ conceptual understanding of entrepreneurship whilst harnessing their analytical skills (Cobham 2000).

On the other hand, practitioners are largely in support of a practice-based entrepreneurship pedagogy which focuses on developing the entrepreneurial skills of participants by using real-life case studies of entrepreneurs and allowing them to use their individual experiences. The practice-based pedagogical approach is based on the singular premise that entrepreneurship is about doing, and hence, the best way participants

can learn about how to become entrepreneurs is by applying entrepreneurial principles (Yamakawa et al. 2016). However, Neck et al. noted that a good theory without an action is busy work and an action without a theory is not worth learning. Thus, both theory and practice-based pedagogies are required to effectively teach the concept of entrepreneurship; the two are sine qua non conditions to effectively teaching entrepreneurship programmes.

## **The Impact of Entrepreneurship Education on Graduate Youth Unemployment**

According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), the youth employment crisis is fearsome; only in Africa, on an estimated total of 200 million youth, 60 per cent are unemployed (Agbor et al. 2012). The situation is no better even in the most educated segment of youth population, that is, those regarded as young graduates, relegating the traditional education system to a mere obsolete “machine” no longer a passport for employment in the twenty-first century (Nabi and Bagley 1999; Collins et al. 2004; Mwiya 2014). Most employers now demand that graduates possess more entrepreneurial attributes and skills in order to help them gain a sustainable advantage (Collins et al. 2004; Galloway et al. 2005; Mitra 2011; Wilson et al. 2009; Msigwa and Kipesha 2013). This leaves the unemployed graduate youths to proactively seek for programmes that will help them acquire entrepreneurial attributes and skills that align with the demands of employers (Woodier-Harris 2010).

There is therefore a need to design mechanisms that help young graduates to acquire the necessary skills that will lead to employment (Lungu et al. 2007). To this end, key stakeholders in developing countries have shown strong interest in EE as a tool for fighting graduate youth unemployment (Henry 2013; ILO 2015; Volkmann et al. 2009; World Bank 2008). In particular, policy makers as well as researchers have recognised the important role that EE plays in equipping graduates with entrepreneurial attributes and skills (Harrison and Leitch 2010).

Many empirical studies (e.g. Charney and Liecap 2000; Luthje and Frank 2002; Wiklund and Shepherd 2003) assert that there is a positive

relationship between EE and business creation which invariably leads to a reduction of youth unemployment. This is also true for graduates; those who were engaged in EE programmes went on to start their own businesses within 0.7 years after graduation, whilst those who were not engaged in EE programmes started after 2.8 years after graduation (Gibcus et al. 2012). Concurrently, studies conducted in the UK and USA have indicated that individuals who are more educated in entrepreneurship are likely to be successfully engaged in entrepreneurship activities than the less educated ones (Robinson and Sexton 1994; Pickernell et al. 2011). Research conducted by Blanchflower and Shadforth (2007) concluded that in the UK most self-employed individuals who own and effectively run their businesses hold a university degree compared to their counterparts.

Helping individuals to create small businesses and a better understanding of the start-up process will increase the possibility of graduate students to find an alternative occupation to graduate jobs, reducing the unemployment rate among them and yet creating new jobs also for others (Bygrave 2003; Maina 2013).

Similar results have been obtained also in developing countries. Ogundele et al. (2012) found out that EE in Nigeria encourages youths to be job creators rather than job seekers. Olorunmolu (2010) also averred that EE helps to produce entrepreneurs who in turn reduce the problem of youth unemployment and other social-related problems in a country. For this reason, calls to governments and non-governmental agencies related to improving the livelihoods of youths focus on EE (Bennell 2000).

## The Context of Sierra Leone

Sierra Leone is situated in the West Coast of Africa. It was colonised by the British Crown, but got its independence in 1961. The country currently has a population of about 6.5 million people. It is endowed with many natural resources including diamonds, bauxites, iron ore, gold, abundant fertile agricultural land and natural harbour among others (World Bank 2015). The country has gone through some huge downturns including a rebel war that lasted for ten years and the recently ended Ebola disease that killed hundreds of people. Both situations also led to

the departure of many foreign-owned companies contributing to the existing rise in youth unemployment.

According to UNDP (2014), the current rate of youth unemployment in Sierra Leone stands at 70 per cent of the overall youth population. Worse still, out of the 5000 graduate youths leaving university each year, only few gain employment (Sierra Leone National Youth Commission 2013). A study between 2010 and 2012 on the employment status of recent graduates shows that 55 per cent of students were still looking for a job, 16 per cent were employed, 16 per cent were actively engaged in further education, 5 per cent were self-employed and 7 per cent were recorded not doing anything (Career and Advisory Placement Services (CAPS), World Bank 2013). The reason for the large number of unemployed graduates is both due to a lack of requisite skills needed by the labour market and a lack of job offers in the economic system. Indeed, there are limited amount of jobs in the formal sector; thus youths are increasingly faced with the challenge of getting paid jobs than their experienced older counterparts (UNDP 2014), and it has negatively impacted the economic growth of the country (World Bank 2013; Berrian 2016). Unfortunately, this situation also poses a strong concern for the security of the country as unemployed (youth) people will or may end up engaging in anti-social behaviours. Thus, great efforts have been made by both governments and non-governmental agencies in promoting entrepreneurship education across the country in order to help reduce the staggering level of unemployment that it faces. In 2013, the Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL) set its five-year development agenda which it referred to as “The Agenda for Prosperity” (PRSP II 2013–2018); the aim of the plan is to reduce poverty, to create jobs and to increase economic growth (GoSL 2013).

The present government’s agenda has mainstreamed youth employment initiatives to reduce the general level of unemployment in the country (GoSL 2013). The government has also established a special ministry for youths and the National Youth Commission (NAYCOM) (Act of Parliament, No. 11 of 2009) to promote “friendly policies” for training, educating and empowering youths to behave in an entrepreneurial way and



to develop their potential, creativity and skills, aiming to setting up businesses and/or be creative whilst working for private, public or social companies for national development (NAYCOM 2009). These with many other policies have helped drive the number of EE programmes across the country.

In similar vein, the African Union's (AU) action plan for the Second Decade of Education (2006–2015) recognises the importance of EE-related programmes “as means of empowering individuals to take control of their lives and suggests the integration of vocational training into the general education system” (Kingombe 2012).

Higher education institutions are mediums through which developing countries may empower individuals with entrepreneurial capacities that help in driving economic growth (World Bank 1994). In the context of Sierra Leone, higher education refers to any formal education provided to students that have met the minimum entry qualification, that is, the West African Senior School Certificate Education (WASSCE) or its equivalent (Education Act 2004). The programmes of higher education institutions in Sierra Leone include (1) university programmes, leading to bachelor, master and doctorate degrees; (2) teacher training programmes, leading to Teacher Certificate (TC) and Higher Teacher Certificate (HTC); (3) polytechnics, leading to ordinary Diploma and Higher National Diploma (HND); and (4) professional courses leading to professional certificate and general practice in the field (World Bank 2013). A list of higher education institutions registered with the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC), the body responsible for quality assurance in the country, both the public and private sector, is shown in Table 5.1. As shown, the majority of higher education institutions are based in the Western Urban region of the country with few in other regions. However, at least each region has one public higher institution (World Bank 2013). It is important to note that the University of Sierra Leone, which has the largest number of students, has three main constituent colleges, that is, Fourah Bay College, College of Medicines and Allied Health Sciences and the Institute of Public Administration and Management (World Bank 2013).

**Table 5.1** List of higher education institutions in Sierra Leone

	Institution	Location
	<i>Public institutions</i>	
1	University of Sierra Leone	Western Urban
2	Njala University	Moyamba, Bo
3	Milton Margai College of Education and Technology	Western Urban
4	Freetown Teachers College	Western Urban
5	Port Loko Teacher's College	Port Loko
6	Northern Polytechnic	Makeni
7	Eastern Polytechnic	Kenema
8	Bonthe Technical College	Bonthe
	<i>Private institutions</i>	
1	University of Makeni	Makeni
2	Institute of Electoral Administration and Civic Education	Western Urban
3	College of Management and Administration (COMA)	Western Rural
4	College of Business Studies	Western Urban
5	College of Travel and Tourism Studies	Western Urban
6	Banktec College of Information Technology	Western Urban
7	MASTEE College of Technology	
8	Emibex College of Management and Finance	Western Urban
9	Crown Technical College	
10	Evangelical College of Theology	Western Rural
11	Silicon Pro	Western Urban
12	Every Nation College of Administration	
13	Freetown College of Management and Accountancy	Western Urban
14	Christian Leadership College	
15	Institute of Advanced Management and Technology	Western Urban
16	Institute of Business Studies and Administration (IBSA)	
17	Institute of Business Administration and Technology (IBATECH)	Western Rural
18	Institute of Continuing Education and Consultancy Services	Western Urban

*(continued)*

**Table 5.1** (continued)

	Institution	Location
19	Institute of Management, Accounting and Tourism (IMAT)	Western Urban
20	Orthodox College of Education of West Africa	Western Urban
21	Pentecostal International Christian College of Management and Administration	
22	Kelhas College for International Studies	
23	LICCSAL Business College	Western Urban
24	Sierra Leone Theological College and Church Training Centre	Western Urban

Source: World Bank (2013)

## Methodology

This research was carried out through a qualitative analysis of different case studies of higher education institutions offering EE programmes in Sierra Leone. Indeed, qualitative approach is largely used to effectively analyse EE programmes (Caputo et al. 2016; Basu et al. 2008). Yet, most of the data on EE programmes in Sierra Leone are either incomplete, fragmented or scarce; thus, a heavy reliance on secondary data could result in inconsistent findings. For this reason a case study analysis of higher education institutions offering EE programmes was preferred. The richness of the data collected should allow for theoretical saturation to infer general conclusions (Eisenhardt and Graebner 2007; Eisenhardt 1989).

In conducting a qualitative analysis of the multiple case studies on EE, the researchers went through the following process:

1. Firstly, a systematic search on electronic databases, for example, EBSCO business resource and Web of Science, has been performed looking for case studies and reports on Sierra Leone. The search mainly focused on key words such as entrepreneurship education, EE programmes and EE programmes in Sierra Leone, youth employment in Sierra Leone, the

**Table 5.2** List of institutions included in the study and interviewees

Name of institution	Number of people interviewed	Position	Location
University of Makeni (UNIMAK)	1	Programme Manager	Makeni
Institute of Public Administration and Management (IPAM)	2	Dean of Business Administration Department and Module Leader	Western Urban
The Institute of Advanced Management and Technology (IAMTECH)	1	Course Director	Western Rural
Milton Margai College of Education and Technology (MMCET)	1	Lecturer	Western Urban
Njala University, Sierra Leone (NUSL)	2	Lecturer	Moyamba, Bo
Northern Polytechnic	1	Lecturer	Makeni
Eastern Polytechnic	1	Module Leader	Kenema
College of Management and Administration (COMA)	1	Module Leader	Western Rural
College of Business Studies	1	Lecturer	Western Urban
Emibex College of Management and Finance	1	Lecturer	Western Urban
Freetown College of Management and Accountancy	1	Module Leader	Western Urban
Institute of Business Studies and Administration (IBSA)	1	Lecturer	Western Urban
Institute of Business Administration and Technology (IBATECH)	1	Lecturer	Western Rural
Institute of Continuing Education and Consultancy Services	1	Founder	Western Urban
Institute of Management, Accounting and Tourism (IMAT)	1	Founder and CEO	Western Urban

impact of entrepreneurship education on youth unemployment, the challenges of entrepreneurship education and so on.

Additionally, online searches were made to identify reports, websites and articles on institutions offering EE programmes in Sierra Leone. Meanwhile, whilst a comprehensive list of higher education institutions was found on the TEC's website (Table 5.1), it doesn't clearly state what these institutions offer, so it was impossible to discern those involved in delivering EE programmes. The lack of data availability in developing countries has been cited as one of the biggest challenges researchers face (Ramadani et al. 2015; Ramadani and Schneider 2013). To this end, telephone and mail contacts were made to each institution to establish whether they offered EE programmes. From the main set of institutions found from this direct interaction, the following criteria were applied to assess the validity of the case and thus the inclusion in the sample:

- a. Programmes with clear outcome(s) that are measurable;
- b. Programmes with details of their target group(s);
- c. Programmes delivered by higher education institutions;
- d. Programmes should take the forms and pedagogies of entrepreneurship education.

Using these criteria, the final sample was reduced to 15 cases.

2. Secondly, after selecting the required cases, telephone interviews were carried out to get in-depth qualitative insights. In total, 17 people were interviewed across the 15 institutions identified. Table 5.2 shows the name of the institutions, number of people interviewed, their position and location of the institution.

## Findings and Discussions

The main aim of the research is to assess some of the challenges facing EE programmes across Africa using Sierra Leone as a case study. To effectively achieve this aim, the extant literature was searched to identify the key challenges facing EE programmes in Africa generally and in Sierra

Leone specifically and then used as background to guide the creation of the case study.

From our data entrepreneurship education has been regarded as an effective tool in combating the rise in youth unemployment especially among graduates across the world and in Africa in particular (Kirby 2004; Mwasalwiba 2010; Ojeifo 2013; Agbonlahor 2016). Entrepreneurship education helps graduates to harness new ideas through creativity and innovations (Nwosu and Ohia 2009) and in developing the entrepreneurial mindsets and capacities of graduates which inherently leads to self-employment (Wilson 2008). In a nutshell, also from our cases, it emerged that entrepreneurship education is regarded as the “catalyst of entrepreneurs” who can take risks, plan, organise and coordinate resources in order to either make profit or help communities (Singh and Sharma 2011).

However, the effective implementation and integration of EE programmes across Africa and Sierra Leone in particular remains a key challenge (Kingombe 2012). The key challenges that emerged from the qualitative data collected through interviews are the following:

### 1. Funding

The effective implementation of EE programmes requires an adequate level of funding for state-of-the-art buildings, equipment, training for trainers and funds to help participants to effectively execute their business plans. As also Agbonlahor (2016) surmised, the infrastructure required to deliver practical and quality-oriented EE programmes requires huge investment in capital. However, there was a general consensus among the interviewees that there is currently a lack of appropriate funding for the effective implementation of EE programmes. For example, one of the trainers at the Institute of Public Administration and Management (IPAM) highlighted that “funding is one of the key challenges facing most EE programmes in Sierra Leone today”. Another at the Institute of Advanced Management and Technology (IAMTECH) re-echoed that “there is a lack of sufficient funding for graduates who want to execute their business plans after acquiring the requisite entrepreneurial skills”. Oketch (2009) pointed out that there is a lot of rhetoric from government over the importance of

entrepreneurship to economic growth but yet still less is done to fund such process. A very close look at the Sierra Leone government budget profile for financial year 2014–2018 can shed some light on the contradiction between the government emphasis on creating jobs through entrepreneurship and the actual funding available for it (Ministry of Finance and Economic Development 2016). In developing countries, the vast majority of resources available are spent on social services; hence, funding for skills development is always scarce (Kingombe 2012). Also, funding EE programmes in Sierra Leone is based on “tripartite mechanisms” that include the government, individuals and employers (including non-governmental organisations (NGOs)) (Kingombe 2012). This current trend calls for the role of individuals and enterprises in contributing to the costs of skills development (Atchoarena 2009), and this arrangement is indeed a hindrance as most youths do not have the resources to commit in acquiring skills.

## 2. Cultural Perception

Promoting African entrepreneurship is a long-term process, involving overcoming negative cultural perceptions regarding entrepreneurship (Kingombe 2012). Unfortunately, EE programmes seem to be not yet fully understood in developing countries. One of the reasons to that is the societal views and sentiments on entrepreneurship that is regarded as a second-class choice when compared to other professions, for example, medicine, law, engineering, accounting and so on. (Billet 2009). Also, entrepreneurship is often seen as something to be engaged in only by those who have dropped out of formal education (Kingombe 2012). This is supported by one interviewee at the University of Makeni who stated that “the profession of entrepreneurship is treated as a profession for school drop-outs in the country”. The widely held national beliefs about entrepreneurship, according to another interviewee at Njala University, render it “a last resort by youths who are unable to get university requirements”. Several studies have been carried out about the relationship between entrepreneurship and national culture (Pinillos and Reyes 2011; Rauch and Frese 2000). For example, Mungai and Ogot (2011) studied the perceptions of four ethnic communities in Kenya on entrepreneurship. The study found huge differences among the communities, suggesting

that certain cultures may embrace entrepreneurship more than others, suggesting frantic efforts to make entrepreneurship as part of the national culture.

### 3. Governmental Policies

Government policies help in effectively implementing EE programmes (Agbonlahor 2016). Most of the people interviewed indicated that although current government policies call for the promotion of EE programmes in the country, such policies, however, do not make EE modules/programmes compulsory for at least some profile of graduates. One interviewee at the Eastern Polytechnic stated that “it is at the sole discretion of colleges to embed entrepreneurship related programmes within their curriculum”. This was observed by Nyalley (2010) who stated that there is no national policy that makes it compulsory for EE to be part of the national curriculum and syllabus. There was a call from the Sierra Leone Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport to make this a priority if we are to benefit from the objectives of entrepreneurship-related programmes (Kingombe 2012). However, based on the interviews conducted, it is clearly seen that this call has not been adequately responded to.

Indeed, the integration of EE into national curricula has been a successful choice in both developed and developing countries (European Commission 2012; Undu 2013; Achor and Kate 2013). For instance, the European Commission through its “Europe 2020 Strategy” has stressed the need to embed innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship into its education systems (European Commission 2012). This is highlighted in three key flagship programmes: Innovation Union, Youth on the Move and Agenda for New Skills and Jobs (European Commission 2012). This strategy helped the integration of EE programmes nationwide. Probably, similar results would be secured by Sierra Leone too. The inclusion of entrepreneurship programmes/modules in the national curriculum would also contribute to the general cultural acceptance of entrepreneurship as a profession and a viable and respectable source of income.



#### 4. Lack of an Adequate System to Develop Curricula

Curriculum development is a vital part of any effective delivery of EE programmes. Thus, the absence of an effective curriculum design for EE programmes is a major hindrance to its smooth running (Agbonlahor 2016). An effective curriculum design should aim at involving all stakeholders, for example, students, trainers, businesses and policy makers who can help shape the learning outcomes, teaching and assessment strategy of the programme. However, most interviewees highlighted that the programme which is designed by the National Council for Technical, Vocational and Other Academic Awards (NCTVA) does not seek the input of most of the key stakeholders. One of the interviewees at the Milton Margai College of Education and Technology (MMCET) stated that “they are only given syllabi to teach and are never part of the actual process of design”. Another at the Institute of Public Administration and Management stated that “the development of a module specification for entrepreneurship is done with little or no involvement of the key stakeholders of the module itself”. Also, there is a lack of problem-based learning activities within the curriculum. According to one interviewee at Northern Polytechnic, “the curriculum emphasises the development of a business plan as an educational approach ignoring other problem-based learning activities”. Meanwhile, the Consortium for Entrepreneurship Education (2012) indicated that this is a very common problem in most curricula.

#### 5. Lack of Experienced Entrepreneurship Educators

Entrepreneurship educators are an important facet of any EE programme. Hence, these figures need the opportunity to acquire relevant knowledge, skills and attitudes required to design, deliver and assess EE programmes (EU 2014). There is, however, a dearth of skilled and experienced staff for such purpose registered in Sierra Leone (Kingombe 2012). One interview at the University of Makeni highlighted that “Staffs do not own a businesses or are (were) not involved in start-up processes and thus lack the practical knowledge to advise students on what is required to manage the challenges of businesses in real life”. Another at Njala University stated that “the vast majority of staff delivering EE programmes across the country does not have entrepreneurship related

qualifications; most educators come from disciplines like economics and business administration which are similar but quite different from entrepreneurship as a concept”. In a developed country like the USA, for instance, staff that have a qualification and background in entrepreneurship are a must (Zhuo and Haxia 2012).

## 6. Theory-Driven Approach

As already stated, two main approaches for delivery entrepreneurship exist: theoretical- and practical-oriented (Yamakawa et al. 2016). The latter focuses largely on action-oriented delivery, whereas the former focuses on teaching entrepreneurship by heavily depending on theoretical foundations. The actual paradigm of EE programmes in Sierra Leone is largely theoretical-based. One interviewee stated that “the limitation of the theory-driven pedagogy is that it does not encourage students to effectively engage with the hard realities of the business environment”. Another from the same institution concluded that “the over-reliance on theory-driven approach to entrepreneurship education by educators in Sierra Leone has to do with a lack of adequate resources to help sponsor students on field trips”. He continues to say “though some schools invite external speakers from the business environment to talk in class, the vast majority are not employing such strategies”. In countries like the USA and UK, for instance, the invitation of an external speaker to share their experiences with students is a normal practice. The lack of a practical-based paradigm in most African countries is also a result of the inadequate equipment and facilities for delivery of practical-related programmes (Akpomi 2009; Nwosu and Ohia 2009, Offorma et al. 2012)

## Conclusion and Recommendations

It is clear from the literature that graduate youth unemployment is rising in Africa (Agbor et al. 2012; Msigwa and Kipesha 2013) and is even more severe in a country like Sierra Leone (UNDP 2014). To combat this alarming problem, policy makers have reached a consensus that EE programmes play a major role (Abimbola and Agbola 2011; de Kok and de Wit 2014). Such programmes seek to create a general awareness of

entrepreneurship and equip learners with the relevant skills and knowledge needed to start and develop a business and/or become more innovative whilst working for others. Graduates engaged in EE programmes tend to benefit more as they can be better placed to either commercialise their ideas derived from studying their respective disciplines or engage in social enterprises. The Government of Sierra Leone has rolled out youth-friendly policies that are geared towards promoting EE across the country. As a result of its benefits, there has been a surge in the number of EE programmes implemented across the country.

However, the effective implementation of these programmes is met with some challenges. Through this study have emerged those challenges which hamper the full realisation of the benefits of EE.

There is therefore an urgent need for its effective implementation across all institutions in the country, with a strong consideration of responsibilities from a plethora of actors. For instance, governments must develop the required policies and provide the right resources for its effective implementation. Institutions responsible for developing entrepreneurship curricula must ensure that all stakeholders are involved in its designs. Educators should be open to continually learning from best practices across the world avoiding also to be overly dependent on a theory-based pedagogical approach.

According to our findings, this study concretely aims to suggest some practical implication and recommendations to ameliorate the specific situation of Sierra Leone and of developing countries more in general:

- There should be a government-driven policy that should encourage higher education institutions to make EE modules (programmes) compulsory for all graduates in the country. This can be achieved by effectively collaborating with all Chancellors and Head of schools. The governmental body responsible for promoting EE initiatives in the country can form a forum where all these subjects can meet and discuss nationwide strategies.
- There is an urgent need for NCTVA and all institutions responsible for the EE programme development to review the curricula. Such a review should call for the involvement of stakeholders, for example, educators, business owners, students, relevant government officials

and so on. The review should also aim at benchmarking international practices.

- The government should help in providing adequate funds for all EE activities including but not limited to the building of a very conducive lecture environment that supports activities and training of all staff engaged in the design and delivery of the programmes. Funding also has to be provided for students with very bright innovative ideas. Higher institutions can also help in raising funds through strategic partnerships with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and other entrepreneurship centres across the world, for example, the National Consortium for Entrepreneurship Education, the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation and so on.
- There is an urgent need for higher education institutions to train and retrain their current and future staff in the design and delivery of the programmes. This can be done locally or internationally or a mix of the both. Also, webinars could be arranged with industry experts to train all staff. In addition, the future recruitment of staff should include people who either have a business background or hold a qualification in entrepreneurship or a mix of both.
- A centre for entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship education should be set up by the government body responsible for promoting EE programmes. Such centre should have the mandate to co-ordinate all EE initiatives across the country.
- There should be a nationwide drive on educating people on the importance of EE as a viable force for changing their lives. Key facts about EE impacts in graduate youth unemployment should be communicated using different mediums. Incentives can also be provided to participants who enrol for EE programmes. This will help change the perception of people with time.

Of course, this study also has its limitations; indeed it focuses only on EE programmes of higher education institutions in Sierra Leone. The study did not therefore include EE programmes targeted at primary and secondary school students and working professionals who are not enrolled in tertiary education institutions. It does not also cover entrepreneurship training programmes targeted at youths in general, those in formal

education and not offered by organisations such as ILO, UNDP and other non-governmental institutions. Further, few institutions which offer EE programmes were not included due to difficulties in reaching them. Therefore, the list of higher education institutions included in this study is not exhaustive though it is representative of the overall population.

For these reasons, future researchers are encouraged to conduct a comprehensive review of the challenges of EE programmes in Africa using comparative studies, siding qualitative analyses with a more quantitative approach in order to give the full account of impacts of entrepreneurship education.

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