

## LEADERSHIP AND ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS: EDUCATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

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### Abstract

*A good number of enlightened members of the society understands that educational institutions are established basically for the purpose of development- progressive transformation, self-realization, positive impacts, acquisition of skills, competences, values, attitudes, adaptation, coping with life's problems, proffering solutions to life's challenges among others. This paper explores the significance of leadership and entrepreneurial skills within the education ecosystem. It examines the concept of leadership and entrepreneurial skills and their significance in individual growth and career development. It examines how these skills contribute to the holistic development of students, preparing them for future challenges in an increasingly competitive global economy. The study reviews various educational approaches and strategies that foster leadership and entrepreneurial qualities among learners. Furthermore, it discusses the role of educators and institutions in cultivating these skills to empower students as innovative and effective leaders. It also highlights the challenges and solutions in implementing leadership and entrepreneurial skills into the educational settings. The analysis and summary of the study presented laid emphasis that; by fostering these competencies early, educational institutions can empower future leaders and entrepreneurs who will be equipped to drive innovation, create positive change, and contribute meaningfully to the society. Again, continued research and collaboration among educators, policymakers, and industry leaders will be essential in refining educational approaches that would effectively nurture these vital skills.*

**Keywords:** Leader, Leadership, Entrepreneurship, Education

## Introduction

Leadership in education is a multifaceted and dynamic practice that requires a blend of vision, communication, collaboration, and ethical responsibility. Effective educational leaders inspire and empower students, teachers, and the broader community to strive for excellence, equity, and lifelong learning. They are adaptable, data-driven, and committed to continuous improvement, fostering an inclusive environment where every student can succeed (Field work, 2024). By advocating for educational needs and engaging with the community, educational leaders ensure that schools are not only centres of academic achievement but also nurturing spaces for holistic development. As the educational landscape continues to evolve, the role of leadership remains crucial in shaping the future of education and society at large. Leadership and entrepreneurship acumen, and or skills are fundamental pillars in the dynamic landscapes of business and innovation. These skills are not only crucial for individuals aspiring to lead teams but also for those venturing into the realm of entrepreneurship, where innovation, risk-taking, and vision play pivotal roles.

Leadership, at its core, is about guiding teams towards shared goals with clarity, empathy, and effective communication. A leader's ability to inspire, motivate, and empower others is key to fostering a collaborative and productive work environment. Decisiveness, coupled with strategic thinking, allows leaders to navigate challenges and make informed decisions swiftly. In her position, Okogbaa (2005) avers that leadership functions are a necessity in every organization to help maintain equilibrium needed for productivity.

Entrepreneurship on the other hand, embodies a spirit of innovation and creativity. Entrepreneurs are visionaries who identify opportunities, disrupt markets, and create value through novel ideas and solutions. They embrace risk, leveraging it as a catalyst for growth, while maintaining resilience in the face of adversity.

Successful leaders often integrate entrepreneurial traits into their leadership style, fostering innovation and adaptability within their organizations. They cultivate a culture that encourages experimentation, embraces change, and rewards initiative. By balancing strategic foresight with operational excellence, these leaders steer their teams towards sustainable growth and competitive advantage.

In today's interconnected and rapidly evolving global economy, the intersection of leadership and entrepreneurship becomes increasingly significant. Leaders who embody entrepreneurial spirit bring a fresh perspective to organizational challenges, driving innovation and unlocking new opportunities. They embrace uncertainty as a catalyst for innovation, fostering a culture of continuous learning and adaptation. Moreover, the evolving landscape of leadership demands leaders who can navigate complexity, embrace diversity, and harness technology to drive organizational success. Entrepreneurial leaders are adept at seizing opportunities, challenging the status quo, and transforming visions into actionable strategies. They leverage their understanding of market dynamics and consumer behavior to anticipate trends and capitalize on emerging opportunities.

Leadership and entrepreneurial skills are not merely individual competencies but catalysts for organizational growth and innovation. Leaders who combine visionary leadership with entrepreneurial acumen are poised to navigate the complexities of today's business environment successfully. By fostering a culture of creativity, resilience, and continuous improvement, they empower their teams to achieve shared goals and drive sustainable business success in an increasingly competitive global marketplace.

### **Leadership: Conceptual Clarification**

Leadership is one of the most common characteristics of all the species of the animal kingdom, whenever any of the species is in a group a leader often emerges. Thus, the problem of leadership has engaged the attention of thinkers, social scientists, administrators and researchers all through the ages. It is in particular, an elusive but fascinating issue of continuing, consuming and abiding interest among scholars. Leadership problem has been identified by researchers as a crucial factor in institutional effectiveness. Indeed, it is the major factor in the determination of the success and progress not only of any institution but also of a nation.

There is no globally acceptable definition of the concept of leadership by scholars. However, in trying to describe the general nature of leadership, Katz & Kahn in Irikana & Orisa (2007) identified three basic meanings of the concept, namely;

1. as an attribute of an office or position;
2. a characteristic of a person and
3. a category of actual behaviour.

Thus, all conceptions of leadership found in the literature can be subsumed under one of these basic concepts. One of the most classic definitions of leadership comes from Arnold and Feldman in 1986. To them, leadership is an influence process- that leadership involves the exercise of influence on the part of the leader over the behaviour of one or more people.

Similarly, leadership involves one person trying to get others to do something that he wants them to do. In this regard, the study of leadership becomes an attempt to understand how a leader comes to have influence over others, that is, influence over the thoughts, feelings and actions of the followers. Buttressing this stance, scholars like Jacobs & Jaques cited in Okogbaa (2025) argues that leadership is a process of giving purpose (meaningful direction) to collective effort, and causing willing effort to be expended to achieve purpose. In corroborating this fact, Okogbaa (2025) noted that leadership is a social influence process in which one individual exerts intentional influence over others to structure activities and build relationships in a group or organization. The leader is therefore, in a position to direct the group or individuals towards the achievement of some goal or goals.

Giving its significance, there can be no such thing as uncontrolled, unrestricted or uninfluenced behaviour when two or more persons come together. Therefore, a leaderless society does not exist.

These few definitions of leadership indicates that leadership is more than just influencing others, it extends towards the issues as maintenance of organization in terms of keeping the organization together, satisfying individual needs, encouraging self-direction, promoting interdependence, and preserving harmony. Leadership is a social process in which an individual or individuals are influenced to make certain decisions, set and achieve goals and keep the group voluntarily together in harmony.

### **Leadership Portfolio/Position in the Educational Setting**

The responsibilities entrusted in these positions are serious and must not be taken for granted, because it can impact organizational success and goal attainment. However, whenever one is playing a key role and is in a position to clarify the goals and paths to goals for others, they are leaders such as:

- i. Heads of Institutions;
- ii. Professors;
- iii. Deans of Faculties;
- iv. Directors of Directorates;
- v. Heads of Departments/Units;
- vi. Chairmen of Boards/Committees;
- vii. Project Supervisors;
- viii. Lecturers/Teachers in Classrooms;
- ix. Academic Advisers;
- x. Students' Union Leaders;
- xi. Course Reps;
- xii. Group Work/Team Leader, etc.

### **Major Thrusts of Leadership and Its Skills**

Leadership is not limited to formal positions of authority; it can emerge at any level of an organization or community. Effective leadership is often characterized by its ability to inspire others, drive innovation, and achieve collective success. Leadership skills are those skills that are essential for guiding and influencing individuals or groups towards achieving common goals. They include the following:

- a. **Vision and Direction:** Leaders provide a clear vision of the future and set goals to achieve it. They articulate a compelling direction that motivates and aligns others.
- b. **Communication:** Effective leaders communicate clearly and persuasively. They convey ideas, instructions, and expectations in a way that inspires trust and commitment.

- c. **Decision-Making:** Leaders make informed decisions, often under uncertainty. They analyze situations, weigh options, and choose courses of action that benefit the organization or group.
- d. **Influence and Motivation:** Leaders inspire and motivate others to perform at their best. They recognize individual strengths, empower team members, and create a supportive environment.
- e. **Adaptability:** Leaders adapt to changing circumstances and challenges. They remain flexible and open-minded, adjusting strategies as needed to achieve goals.
- f. **Integrity and Ethics:** Leadership involves acting with integrity, honesty, and ethical behavior. Leaders earn trust by demonstrating consistency between words and actions.
- g. **Team Building:** Leaders build cohesive teams by fostering collaboration, resolving conflicts, and promoting a sense of belonging and unity.
- h. **Empathy:** Understanding and empathizing with team members fosters a positive and productive work environment.

### Entrepreneurial Skills: The Term

Any attempt at a venture creation such as none business start-up, expansion of an existing business by an individual, or team, or a cooperate body is a process by which individuals or groups pursue opportunity. Entrepreneurship is often associated with functions of innovating and bearing risk. It also involves the recognition of opportunities in terms of needs, wants, problems and challenges. It encompasses the efforts to use resources to implement innovative ideas for thoughtfully planned ventures. Sexton and Bowman in Onyesom & Ukadike (2011) avers that entrepreneurship is the process of identifying opportunities, gathering resources, and exploiting these opportunities through concrete actions.

Entrepreneurial skills refer to the abilities and qualities that enable individuals to identify opportunities, innovate, take calculated risks, and successfully launch and manage ventures. These skills are essential for entrepreneurship and are increasingly valued in various contexts beyond starting businesses, including within corporate settings, nonprofit organizations, and even in personal pursuits (Field study, 2024).

### Education: A Glimpse of the concept

Education is an ancient concept that has been present since the inception of humanity. It involves the transmission of valuable knowledge from one generation to another. The primary objective of education is to cultivate well-rounded members of society, fostering the development of their intellect, emotions, and practical skills (often referred to as the three 'Hs': Head, Heart, and Hand). A truly effective education is one that equips individuals to meet their personal needs and fulfil their civic responsibilities (Nwokah 2024). Functioning as an instrument of change, education endeavours to alter the environment by influencing the thoughts and actions of individuals within that environment. It serves as a dynamic process

through which individuals enhance their knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes for personal growth and societal benefit. Furthermore, education represents the mechanism through which societies strive to preserve and elevate their accumulated knowledge, skills, and cultural heritage. This perpetual effort aims to promote the well-being of humanity and ensure its survival in the face of unpredictable, sometimes hostile, and destructive elements and forces stemming from both human actions and natural occurrences (Okafor, 2017, as cited in Nwokah, 2019).

Education is described as a developmental process involving a careful dissemination of knowledge, skills and values necessary for life's progress and actualization of self-goals. By educating an individual, the goal is to pass on some desirable information, skills, attitudes, interests, and frames of mind best for personal development. It is an important instrument for fostering systematic and sustainable human and material development within nations. It stands as a priority sector in any conscientious society, encapsulating the process of acquiring knowledge, skills, attitudes, interests, abilities, competencies, and the cultural norms of a community. This transmission of knowledge to successive generations is pivotal for perpetuating societal development. To realize these educational benefits, curricula are meticulously developed for various school subjects across different educational levels.

### **Integrating Entrepreneurial Skills in Education – The Nexus and Rational**

Leadership and entrepreneurial skills are not only beneficial for starting and managing businesses but also contribute to personal development, academic/career advancement, and organizational success. They enable individuals to seize opportunities, drive innovation, and create value in diverse professional and entrepreneurial endeavors- educational perspective and even beyond.

1. **Promoting creativity, Critical thinking and Innovative skills to Enhance Deep Learning:** Skills in critical thinking and creativity have been identified as important components of learning that promote acquisition of life skills for survival and the building of complex systems to drive a nation's economy. For these reasons, educational institutions must build in learners, the skills for observation, critical analysis, ability to weigh evidence and to make deductions and conclusions to solve real-life situations. The ability to think outside the box, generate new ideas, and innovate solutions to problems is key in our modern society.
2. **Functional Education and Training for Skill Acquisition:** Education should be functional enough to train and develop in learners, sufficient skills, knowledge and abilities to deal with challenges as they encounter them in their environments. Such trainings should provide a range of learning experiences that strike a balance between lower and higher order learnings known to promote both short- and long-term memory development, skills in critical thinking and creativity, which are part of the 21<sup>st</sup> century survival skills, desirable for survival in today's world.
3. **Professional Development/Business Acumen:** Professional development should be seen as a must for all levels of staff, the leader inclusive. When everyone's capacity is built,



confidence level will increase and resourcefulness will be the order of the day to enhance goal attainment. Again, emphasis on deliberate effort towards the understanding of business principles, including finance, marketing, operations, and strategic planning cannot be overemphasized in a knowledge driven economy.

4. **Adaptability:** Readiness to adjust strategies and approaches in response to changing market conditions, technological advancements, or customer preferences should form part of the functions of education which tends to bring about change in positive behaviours.
5. **Networking:** Building and maintaining relationships with stakeholders, mentors, and potential partners to support business growth and opportunities.
6. **Resilience:** This involves the ability to persevere through challenges, setbacks, and failures, learning from experiences and continuing to pursue goals.
7. **Leadership:** Educational leaders at all levels, tertiary, secondary and primary levels should be passionate, intentional and mindful of their actions as they play their roles each day. Their positive examples can inspire, persuade and influence subordinates to perform tasks more willingly to assure goal attainment.
8. **Financial Literacy:** Understanding financial statements, principle of financial accounting, budgeting, forecasting, and managing cash flow to ensure sustainable business operations is very important.
9. **Risk Management:** Skill in assessing risks and making decisions under uncertainty, balancing potential gains with potential losses.

## Conclusion

The cultivation of leadership and entrepreneurial skills within educational contexts is crucial for preparing students to navigate an increasingly complex and interconnected world. Through entrepreneurship education or skill, individuals are inspired and induced to be actively involved in productive work, as they proceed from one level of training to another and earning some wages while they are learning. This entrepreneurship education is basically an insurance against poverty and unemployment. Again, it is a tool against delinquent behaviour of various sorts; sociologists and psychologists are of the view that “an idle mind is the devil’s workshop”. Signifying that an unemployed person can be prone to negative behaviours like crimes (armed robbery, kidnapping, bombings, political thug) Orisa, (2013). By fostering these competencies early on, educational institutions can empower future leaders and entrepreneurs who are equipped to drive innovation, create positive change, and contribute meaningfully to society. Therefore, it is quite appropriate that the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills will assist the recipients on their quest to create wealth and be self-reliant. It will also enable them decide on the kind of small-scale business to embark upon and how to seek financial assistance or loan from individuals, governments, micro-finance banks or non-governmental organizations

(NGOs). Moving forward, continued research and collaboration among educators, policymakers, and industry leaders will be essential in refining educational approaches that effectively nurture these vital skills. Stakeholders too, must join in the clarification of the statement of their goals and also agree on the strategies to achieve them. To this end, school based strategized leadership is essential for effective goal attainment; and all hands must be on deck to actualize this. The educational leader should take the reins as it is expected, be intentional and mindful to lead the system to success (Okogbaa, 2025).

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