

ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION: A PROSPECT TO SOLVING UNEMPLOYMENT PROBLEM AMONG NIGERIAN YOUTHS

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Abstract

It is a known fact that youth unemployment is one of the major problems facing developing countries, including Nigeria. Hence, the need to embrace entrepreneurship as an alternative means of survival is paramount among Nigerian youths. Entrepreneurship education has been identified as a gateway to youth empowerment and sustainable economic growth through the acquisition of necessary skills, which should be nurtured starting as early as the elementary education and progressing through all levels of education, including adult education. This study therefore examines the role of entrepreneurship education in solving the problem of unemployment among Nigerian youth. The study sought to examine the problem and causes of unemployment in Nigeria, the concept of Entrepreneurship, Entrepreneurship education and its importance to Nigerian youths, as well as the prospects of entrepreneurship development in reducing unemployment in Nigeria.

Introduction

In Nigeria today, education and training is beginning to take a new aspect as many people are diving and embracing education in its totality. This singular act of being educated has resulted to enormous number of graduates from various universities, polytechnics, colleges of education etc. The perceptions of earning a living with tertiary institutions certificate after graduation has endangered Nigerian system of education and have also generate an increase in the number of unemployed graduates. Youth unemployment is one of the major challenge confronting most developing countries. Nigeria has gotten one of the highest rates of youth unemployment in the world due to a lack of employment skills. Olubukola (2013) stressed that unemployment is a global phenomenon where suitable workforce of a nation is disengaged in the overhaul of the nation. As indicated by statistics, Youth unemployment in Nigeria is observed to be on the increase, and various efforts seem not to be yielding significant results. According to the National Bureau of Statistics, Nigeria's unemployment and underemployment rates are a combined of 55.7% at the end of the 2nd quarter in the Year 2020. The rate of unemployment among Nigerian graduates is a threat to the nation's economy as tertiary institutions produces graduates yearly without commensurate job opportunities. Ekpo (2010) concisely stated that a study carried out by the Federal Ministry of Education from 2005-2010 showed that seventy-one percent (71%) of graduate students from Nigerian

Universities and other forms of tertiary institutions are yet to get job. In similar development, Nwachukwu (2012) reported that Economic Survey in 2011 doted unemployment rate in Nigeria at 23.9%. In other words, over 38 million Nigerians are unemployed. It is disturbing to acknowledge that a greater number of this percentage are graduates from Nigeria universities, polytechnics and colleges of education who roam the street and in the job markets looking for non-existing jobs for lack of entrepreneurial skills. Lack of entrepreneurial skills is no doubt a major contributing factor to the problem of unemployment of graduates in Nigeria (Adebisi & Oni, 2012). The incidence of graduate unemployment is attributed to the educational system operated during pre and post-independence era in the country which placed emphasis on liberal education rather than acquisition of vocational skills which prepares school leavers and graduates with vocational skills for better employment opportunities. Again, in spite of federal government efforts to create 2 million jobs every year, most Nigerian university graduates fail to get employed (Babalola, 2017). This is evident as many graduates stay 4-5 or more years after graduation before getting a job or no job at all.

In respect of the above sad and deplorable situation, the government has done little to reduce the misery and frustrations of the citizenry. This has foisted a state of hopelessness on the majority of young and old people who have resorted to any means including crime to succeed in life. They resort to vices because they are not gainfully engaged. In other words, they are unemployed not because they lack the qualification but because the system has crippled politically, economically, socio-culturally and even religiously (Anyadike, Emeh & Ukah, 2012). The need for entrepreneurship development in the country today and specifically the Nigeria private and public universities is necessitated by the fact that entrepreneurship development is a major factor in economic growth and development. Again among thousands of tertiary graduates produced by tertiary institutions in Nigeria every year, only a few hundreds of them are lucky to secure paid employment. Hence, going through the higher institutions of learning and/or possessing professional qualifications in disciplines like accounting, law, engineering, and medicine is no longer a guarantee for getting the desired employment because of the shrinking economy. However, the way out is through encouraging the development of entrepreneurial skills which can help to transform the challenges into business opportunities (Odia & Odia, 2013).

Problem of unemployment in Nigeria

Unemployment and Poverty remains key developmental challenges in Nigeria over a very long time. According to Udu and Agu (2015), unemployment is “a situation in which persons capable and willing to work are unable to find suitable paid employment”. According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) (2007), unemployed workers are those who are currently not working but are willing and able to work for pay, currently available to work and have actively searched for work. Ekpo, P. (2010)) defines

unemployment as “the facts of a number of people not having a job; the number of people without a job; the state of not having a job”. Nigeria does not seem to have credible data on the rate of unemployment because no institution has been able to produce accurate figures showing the current rate of unemployment (Udu and Agu, 2015). The great need for entrepreneurship development in Nigeria today, more than ever, is necessitated by the rate of unemployment and its effect on both the people and the nation and the need for small and medium enterprises. According to Eme, O.I. (2014) despite the abundant human and natural resources notwithstanding, Nigeria is still one of the poorest countries in the world and has one of the highest rates of youth unemployment in sub-Saharan Africa, in spite of its alleged strong economic growth.

Causes of unemployment in Nigeria

Going by the study, scholars have recognized some leading causes of youth unemployment in Nigeria as follows:

1. Rural urban migration: In Nigeria, there exists a rapidly growing urban labour force arising from rural urban migration. The factor is aggravated and triggered by the lack of infrastructural facilities, which makes the rural life unattractive. Youths move to urban areas with the probability of getting lucrative and productive employment in the industries. In addition, there is the focus of social amenities in the urban centres. This implies that the rural areas are neglected in the allocation of social and economic opportunities.
2. Rapid population growth: Going by Nigeria National Bureau of Statistics of 2012, the total population of citizens in Nigeria was around 166.2 million people, and projections for the future indicate that the population could be over 180 million by the year 2021, given the annual growth rate of 3.2 percent (National Population Commission and ICF Macro, 2012). With this population, Nigeria is the most populous nation in Africa and the high population growth rate has resulted in the rapid growth of the labour force, which is far exceeding the supply of jobs.
3. Corruption: This crime which has pervaded the entire social structure of Nigeria, has raided the country of developing a vibrant economic base. Funds meant for development projects have been misappropriated, diverted, or embezzled and stashed away in foreign banks, while some ineffectual and corrupt bureaucrats cum administrators in the public parastatals have discharged these establishments (Okafor, 2011). The ruling (political) class failed since they traded the vision, policy, and strategy, that should be the thrust of every leadership with dealings (contract award and other mundane money- related activities), as each successive government patiently took turns to target on the nation’s wealth, by using public power, resources, good will, utilities, instrument of abuse, and personal gains. As such, this cripples the economy and intensifies unemployment that generates abject poverty, hunger and frustration which is killing the zeal and means for entrepreneurship development in the Nigerian youths.

4. Lack of sustainable entrepreneurship Development Programme and training: Entrepreneurship Development Programme is increasingly recognized as important driver of economic growth, generating employment, fostering innovation and poverty reduction through the empowerment of young men and women (UNCTAD, 2010). Poor entrepreneurship development has also been identified as an immediate reason for the increasing youth unemployment in Nigeria. Entrepreneurship Development Programmes (EDPs) have been described by Maina, (2013) as a purposeful intervention by an adult (the teacher) in the life of a learner to impart entrepreneurial qualities and skills to enable the learner to survive in the world of business. Its aim is to equip learners with skills, knowledge and disposition that can help them develop or implement innovative social or business plans.

Entrepreneurship

According to Mba & Godday (2014), entrepreneurship is a process of identifying opportunities, allocating resources, and creating value through identifying unmet needs or opportunities for change. In a job-scarce environment where unemployment is rife, the need for fostering entrepreneurship, especially among Youth, is a primary concern. The entrepreneur has been seen as an actor, innovator or a developer of technology. Entrepreneurship is also seen as the willingness and ability of an individual to seek out investment opportunities, establish and run an enterprise successfully. Esomomu, (2018) defined entrepreneurship as the effective manipulation of human intelligence, as demonstrated in a creative and innovative performance. The National Directorate of Employment (NDE, 2012) in Onyebueke and Ochnongo (2012) sees entrepreneurship to be an art which involves recognizing a business opportunity, mobilizing resources and persisting to exploit that opportunity. Tijani-Alawiye (2014), defines entrepreneurship as the process of adding to the stock of existing small, medium and big enterprises available to a country by creating and promoting many capable entrepreneurs who can successfully run innovative enterprises, nurture them to grow and sustain them, with a view to achieving broad socio-economic development goals. It is also the process of bringing together creative and innovative ideas and copying them with management and organizational skill in order to combine people, money and resources to meet an identified need and thereby creating wealth. Shepherd and Douglas, (2011) in Akanwa and Akpanabia, (2012) observe that entrepreneurship development is the ability to envision and chart a course for a new business venture by combining information from the functional disciplines and from the external environment in the context of the extraordinary uncertainty and ambiguity which faces a new business venture. Entrepreneurial development has been found to be capable of making positive impacts on the economy of a nation and the quality of life of the people. However, it has to be noted that only business that have been able to adopt and actually practice the principles of creativity and innovation are positively impacting the economy and add value to the life of the people. The only thing that is constant in this world is change. So, if one wants

to meet his or her steps with the rest of the world then in this scenario it is imperative for him or her to adopt new phenomenon, new methodologies and new technology. In this regard, the phenomenon of innovation and creativity is very important. Nowadays, businesses, entrepreneurs and individuals, are adopting the concepts of innovation and creativity.

Entrepreneurship Education

In order to reduce the rate of unemployment among Nigerian number of graduates roaming about on the street with certificate qualification without having a meaningful source of livelihood, the concept of entrepreneurial education (training) was introduced into tertiary education in Nigeria. The aim of entrepreneurial education was for knowledge acquisition by students to enable them in setting up and hovering a business with other skills needed for its survival and also to become successful entrepreneurs. Maina, (2013) sees entrepreneurial education as part of the total educational system that involves the acquisition of skills, ideas and management abilities necessary for job creation. For Gibson (2011), entrepreneurial education is defined as the process of using private initiative to transform a business concept into a new venture or to grow and diversify an existing venture or enterprise with high great potential. Entrepreneurial education is a lifelong process, starting as early as the elementary school and progressing through all levels of education, including adult education. It is seen as a tool which equips an individual to be an entrepreneur (Antoncic & Hisrich, 2013). Entrepreneurial education can also be seen as the purposeful intervention by educators in a learner's life to impact entrepreneurial qualities and skills to enable the learner to flourish in the business world. The purpose of entrepreneurship education is to come up with individuals who are capable of starting new business ventures. Entrepreneurship education can increase student entrepreneurial skills and intention, and entrepreneurship activities stimulate economic growth. It has been more than 70 years since the first entrepreneurship course was developed at Harvard Business School in 1947. Since then, the number of entrepreneurship courses has increased significantly worldwide. Most tertiary institutions in Nigeria lack entrepreneurial content that would have enabled graduating students to become job creators rather than job seekers. With inadequate skills and few opportunities, graduates are confronted with a future of low-wage employment and underemployment in the informal sector with little job security and prospects. According to Onuma (2016), the present youth unemployment challenge facing Nigeria has been traced to students' lack of entrepreneurial skills. According to Martin, & Iucu (2014), entrepreneurship education develops students' entrepreneurial skills and attitudes. The purpose of entrepreneurship education in Nigeria is to inculcate skills for job creation. Teachers are vital to entrepreneurship education because they are the facilitators and multipliers of knowledge that help students acquire entrepreneurial skills. According to Karimi, Biemans, Lans, Mulder & Chizari (2012), entrepreneurship is essential to the increase of economic efficiencies, market innovation, creation of new

jobs, and raising of employment level. Entrepreneurship education helps students to develop skills, knowledge, and attitudes needed to achieve the goals they set for themselves. An effective teaching method is required to acquire entrepreneurial skills. Increasing entrepreneurship education is required to enhance students' creativity in job rotation. Nwangwu, (2017) observed that the lack of tertiary education success to imbibe entrepreneurship education belief in students has led to wastages in both human and natural resources. According to Brixiová, Ncube, & Bicaba (2014), Fundamental changes need to be made to the educational system. Entrepreneurship courses should be introduced at the early stages of education, and the benefit of entrepreneurship should be better marketed. Universities should employ entrepreneurial education lecturers who have practical experience alongside teaching and learning aids.

Importance of Entrepreneurship education to Nigerian Youths

According to Iyamu & Ojeaga (2015), the following can represent the significance of entrepreneurship education:

1. To build up individuals who will be properly equipped with skills for productive work life.
2. To build up people who will be capable of meeting modern business and technological challenges.
3. To bring up the youths with positive skills and attitudes toward work.
4. To Furnish the youths with the necessary knowledge and skill for employee or self-employment.
5. To bring up a couple of reliable and competent technical manpower capable of being mobilized in times of national economic emergency.
6. To prepare the Youth for meeting community skills and national economic aspirations.
7. To let the Youths decide a perfect area of business education for which they have aptitudes and interest.
8. To teach the learners to develop skills for making rational economic decisions.
9. To enable the learners to relate their expertise to the needs of their communities.
10. To prepare business and industrial managers who will be capable of industry
11. To provide vocational and technical knowledge in various areas of business.

According to the NYP (2019), one of the strategies to improve youth inclusion's welfare is the introduction of obligatory entrepreneurship training in the curriculum of polytechnics and universities. Entrepreneurship training assists creativity in technical and vocational skills and instils in the individual the necessary abilities to be self-reliant through technical education.

Prospects of Entrepreneurship Development in Reducing Unemployment

Ogundele, Akingbade and Akinlabi (2012) stated that the contribution of entrepreneurship training and education on unemployment through youth empowerment

will be much significant if entrepreneurship is encouraged at all levels in the economy. Also, Akpan, C. and Etor, C. (2013) observed that through entrepreneurial studies, which is inter-disciplinary training that focuses on the acquisition of relevant skills needed to start and run a new business venture, unemployment and poverty can be reduced. As Onyeizugbe, Orogbu and Oyigbo (2015) have observed, attempts to provide solution to societal problems often set processes in motion such that the opportunities for engaging human efforts called job creation are provided. They noted that jobs are created when firms established by entrepreneurs employ people with requisite skills to occupy vacant positions. To Tijani Alawiye (2014), entrepreneurs successfully run innovative enterprises, nurture them to growth and sustainable level so that more hands can be engaged in the running of the enterprise. Through such processes, he remarked, job opportunities are created. Entrepreneurship development affords the youth the opportunity to be productively engaged so as to divert their attention from negative vices such as crime, militancy and so on. According to Rasmussen and Stroheim (2015), the major role of entrepreneurship development is wealth creation. Persons engaged in entrepreneurship, either on their own efforts or inside an organization to pursue opportunities without regard to resources under their control. Also, Ezeanokwasa, F.N. and Nwachukwu, O.P. (2014) emphasizes the need for youth entrepreneurial empowerment to harness their potentials and intellectual creativity. This, to him, is because its potency is capable of lowering unemployment and poverty level and elevating living standards and quality of life of Nigerians.

Conclusion

Entrepreneurship is essential for rapid and sustained economic growth and development. It creates the required manpower and skills necessary for accelerated growth, reduced unemployment and alleviates poverty. In order to achieve this, it is recommended that students be encouraged to embrace entrepreneurship education or training which will enable them to become wealth creators by being self-reliant. Also, there is the need to empower other vocational and skills acquisition centres, by providing them with the necessary materials in entrepreneurship education, in order that they can assist in the development of entrepreneurial skills required by individuals to set up cottage industries. Moreover, government should be consistent in youth entrepreneurship policy as well as the provision of grants to youths for the development and utilization of the skills acquired from entrepreneurship training. Finally, curriculum builders should consider the inclusion of entrepreneurship education courses in the curriculum of studies from the primary to tertiary education level. This will go a long way to encourage the youths to be self-reliance after graduation.

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