



THE RELEVANCE OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION IN PROMOTING YOUTH EMPOWERMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study emphasizes that building a society that is responsive to encouraging and favourable to youth entrepreneurship education is the responsibility of every society as well as the government. Encouraging the youth to become entrepreneurs have a lot of advantages in terms of solving problems of unemployment as well as paving way for the innovation and growth of the economy. The main objective of this study was to explore the relevance of entrepreneurship education in promoting youth empowerment in Nigeria. Entrepreneurship is all about being a visionary self-starter, one who is able to identify opportunities to offer solutions in the form of product, technology, processes or services to fulfill a need. In this study, data was gathered from a self administered questionnaire conducted among selected youth entrepreneurs from Anambra State of Nigeria. The scales used in the questionnaire were based on a 5-point Likert scales. Prior to conducting the main study, a pilot test was conducted to improve the reliability and validity of the questionnaire. The participation in the study was on voluntary basis and the respondents were given sufficient time to return the questionnaire. The result of the study was consistent with the study of other scholars quoted in this study. We concluded that entrepreneurship education for youth flourishes best when the climate is conducive and that creative thinking is fostered when peace is in place. We recommended that to effectively foster entrepreneurial skills development among youth people, that entrepreneurship courses should be embedded within all levels of the educational system. We also recommended that youth entrepreneurship training programs that combine in-classroom lessons with work place training have higher success rates than courses with only in-classroom.

Keywords: *Entrepreneurship Education, Youth Empowerment and Self Employment*

Background to the Study

In recent time, entrepreneurship is regarded as one of the best economic development strategies to develop country's economic growth and sustain the country's competitiveness in facing the increasing trends of globalization. For most people, the popularity of entrepreneurship is largely due to the positive effects it has on many countries as a catalyst that creates wealth and the generation of opportunities. More specifically, entrepreneurship is a major engine driving many

nations' economic growth, innovation and competitiveness. Most studies have shown there is a positive relationship between entrepreneurship and economic growth in terms of job creation, firm survival and technological change (Karanassios, Pazarskis et al 2006).

The history of entrepreneurship education could be dated in 1938 when Shigeru Figii, who was a teaching pioneer at Kobe University, Japan, initiated education in entrepreneurship courses and programmes were pioneered and introduced in American Universities. Many American universities have comparatively long tradition as entrepreneurship education providers through its business schools. In essence, the objectives of entrepreneurship education are aimed in changing youth/students state of behaviour and intentions that make them to understand entrepreneurship to become entrepreneurial and to become an entrepreneur that finally result in the formation of new businesses as well as new job opportunities (Fasua, 2006). In achieving this, Baumol (2010) argued that the design of entrepreneurship education needs to be creative, innovative and imaginative and most importantly tying to the real world. Entrepreneurship is all about being a visionary self-starter leadership, one who is able to identify opportunities to offer solutions in the form of product, technology, process or service to fulfill a need and thereby gather and employ all necessary resources, including manpower, finance, technology, process or service to fulfill a need and thereby gather and employ all necessary resources, including manpower, finance, technology, infrastructure and others to build a successful enterprise in the chosen area of business. Being an entrepreneur calls for playing a multi-disciplinary and multi-financial role in managing one's enterprise. A successful entrepreneur is able to not only identify business opportunities but is enterprising in his approach to developing the business opportunities into successful business enterprise. This calls for the ability to think ahead, ability to create options, ability to gather resources, manage resources to achieve the target as well as negotiate and solve problems both internal to the business as well as with external environment.

Entrepreneurship is also about being able to attract the best talent to provide leadership and guidance to grow and nurture the talent, manage and harness the talent pool together. Through training, one can develop basic initiative towards entrepreneurship and can be moulded to become a successful entrepreneur. Also, ability to think creatively, looking at the macro and micro environment as well as options, negotiating with alternatives and managing processes on all fronts without losing out on the vision can be sharpened through entrepreneurial training and education.

Statement of Problem

The Nigerian youth faces many challenges and the prospect of long term unemployment after graduation points a particularly bleak picture for both economic and social development of the country and the future of the youth. The problem central to this study is the expectation that exposure to entrepreneurship education at higher institution might influence youth's attitudes towards seeking entrepreneurship as a career choice and subsequently their plans for the future.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study is to examine the relevance of youth entrepreneurship education as an alternative in promoting self employment in Nigeria. To achieve this main objective, the following specific objectives were formulated to guide the study:

1. Define the role of youth entrepreneurship education within Nigeria context.
2. Determine the unique challenges Nigerian Youth face in managing their enterprises.
3. Determine what factor(s) motivates Nigerian youth in start their own enterprises.
4. Suggest practical ways to enhance youth entrepreneurship education in Nigeria.
5. Contribute in closing the knowledge gap that exists on the opportunities and constraints to youth entrepreneurship education in Nigeria.

Recognizing the complexity of factors that drive youth entrepreneurship education, this study adopts three broad approaches to gain understanding of economic, legal and other institutions impacting entrepreneurship education in Nigeria. In addition, the study looks into personal traits of successful young entrepreneurs to inform possible changes to the educational system and facilitate creation of an enabling environment.

Literature Review and Theoretical Conceptualization

The relevance of youth entrepreneurship to self employment has been highlighted by many researchers (Davidsson et al 2006). It is well recognized that education and training opportunities play a key role in cultivating future entrepreneurs and in developing the abilities of existing entrepreneurs to grow their business to greater levels of success (Casson, 2005).

According to the European Commission (2008), the aim of entrepreneurship education and training should be to develop entrepreneurial capacities and mindsets that benefit economies by fostering creativity, innovation and self-employment. Scase (2000) recognized that more globally government across the world are increasingly recognizing the positive impact that the creation of new businesses can have on employment levels as well as the competitive advantages that small firms can bring to the market place.

In examining the key skills required of entrepreneur, Page (2012) identified a number of key elements which he believed featured prominently in entrepreneurship

1. The ability to identify and exploit a business opportunity.
2. The human creative efforts of developing a business or building something of value.
3. A willingness to undertake risk.
4. Competence to organize the necessary resources to respond to the opportunity.

Feit (2002) propounded that within any society, it is important to support all people with entrepreneurial mindset not just the entrepreneurs, as they each have the potential to inspire others to start a business. Feit argued that any educational training should enable people not just to develop skills to start a business, but rather to be capable of behaving entrepreneurially in whatever role they take in life. Gibb (2010) argued that the manner in which entrepreneurship is taught needs to be significantly altered as the traditional model of entrepreneurship is no longer applicable to the modern business environment. Gibb portrayed the dominant model of entrepreneurship as being static and focused heavily on the writing of business plan, and the various functional activities of an enterprise. His alternative "appropriate" model portrays the entrepreneur's dynamic with a range of behavioural attributes that need to be developed. According to Gibb, this model embraces a number of key characteristics;

1. Instilling empathy with entrepreneurial values and associated ways of thinking, feeling, communicating, organizing and learning things.
2. Development of the capacity for strategic thinking and the practice of making intuition decisions based upon judgment with limited information.
3. Creating the capacity for relationship learning and network management.
4. Creating the capacity to design entrepreneurial organization of all kinds in different contexts and understand how to operate them successfully.
5. Focusing strongly upon processes of opportunity seeking, evaluation and opportunity grasping in different contexts including business.
6. Creating a vision of and empathy with the way of life of the entrepreneurial person.

Gibb's alternative model has found an increasing band of supporters who view the development of behavioural attributes as critical to the growth of entrepreneurial activity in the modern world. Such supporters highlighted that contemporary business activity is not based upon functions

operating in silos but rather on the need for highly interactive teams which enable firm's particularly high growth firms to have organic structures and emergent strategies.

Rae (2012) highlighted a model for entrepreneurship education that considered effectiveness as the key outcome rather than learning. The model was designed for the development of entrepreneurship skills to grow a business as it seeks to combine mindset, capability and effectiveness.

Kutzhanova et al (2009) highlighted that personal transformation was an important part of training programmes for entrepreneurs. They suggested that learning starts with a deeper understanding of one's strengths and weaknesses, and it entrepreneurs should first learn about their own identity and personality.

Ardichvilli et al (2003) demystified the role of cognition in entrepreneurship education and training, particularly with respect to identifying key cognitive traits of individuals who embody an entrepreneurial mindset.

Following the extensive review of the literature undertaken, the following are the principal entrepreneurial skills that need to be developed amongst growth oriented entrepreneurs:

- i. Customers Oriented: Entrepreneurs should be committed to creating customer value through the provision of innovative products and service.
- ii. Strategic Development: Entrepreneurs should learn how to select from a number of market strategies that can influence their chances of success.
- iii. Financial Management: Entrepreneurs should learn the skills required to access additional venture capital.
- iv. Human Resource Management: Entrepreneurs need to understand and appreciate the need to enhance the HR practice of the firm and to offer financial incentives to employees.

The finding that comes from the review of existing literature is the role of mentoring and how the mentors should be people who have achieved success within the field identified by the growth orientated entrepreneur to expand their horizons. In addition, there has been much discussion whether entrepreneurs are born or made, while it is generally acknowledged that there are natural born entrepreneurs. There are also scholars who believed that entrepreneurship is a skill that can be learned. Drucker (1985) argued that entrepreneurship is a practice and that most of what we hear about entrepreneurship is all wrong, it's not magic, it's not mysterious and it has nothing to do with genes. Drucker stated that entrepreneurship is a discipline and like any discipline, it can be learned. If one agrees with Drucker's concept of entrepreneurship, then it follows that education and training play a key role in its development. In a traditional understanding, entrepreneurship was strongly associated with the creation of a business and therefore it was argued that the skills required to achieve this outcome could be developed through training. More recently entrepreneurship is viewed as a way of thinking and behaving that is relevant to all parts of society and the economy. Such an understanding of entrepreneurship now requires a different approach to training.

In the recent time, studies have been extensively focused on the field of entrepreneurship education, which enjoyed exponential growth level internationally (Raichandhusi 2005, Hill, Cioneide et al 2003). The studies emphasize the role of entrepreneurship education in producing potential entrepreneurs from the educational system. Entrepreneurship education has been recognized as one of the vital determinants that could influence youth's career decisions (Peterman and Kennedy 2003). Due to its influence, these studies intend to examine how entrepreneurship education could influence youth's propensity to entrepreneurship. Despite the

exponential growing research interest in the area of entrepreneurship education, very little studies have been done on the relevance of youth entrepreneurship education in promoting self employment in Nigeria. Hence, it is the aim of the study to contribute to the current literature by identifying the variables of entrepreneurship skills that influence young Nigerians inclination towards entrepreneurship.

Suffice to say that entrepreneur is a person who compete through innovation, discover through networks, persuade resource owner and indeed bear risk. Pramodita and James (1999) defined entrepreneurship as a process whereby an individual in associations with an existing organization creates a new organization or instigates renewal or innovation within the organization. Shaker (1991) observed that entrepreneurship may be formal or information activities aimed at creating new business in established companies through product and process innovations and market development. William and Ari (1990) emphasizes that entrepreneurship encompasses two major phenomena such as new venture creation without existing organizations and the transformation of organizations through strategic renewal.

Several theories have been put forward by scholars to explain the field of entrepreneurship. These theories have their roots in economics, psychology, sociology, anthropology and management. The economics entrepreneurship is classified into two parts: Classical and Neoclassical theories which explore the economic factors that enhance entrepreneurial behaviour. The psychological entrepreneurship theories emphasize personal characteristics that define entrepreneurship. The theory emphasizes some of the characteristics or behaviour associated with entrepreneurs, that they tend to be more opportunity driven, demonstrate high level of creativity and innovation and show high level of management skills and business know-how. They are found to be optimistic, emotionally resilient and have mental energy, show intense commitment and perservice, thrive on competitive desire to excel and win, tend to be dissatisfied with the status quo and desired improvement.

Stevenson (1990) argued that the hub of entrepreneurial management is the pursuit of opportunity without regard to resources currently controlled. The Resources based entrepreneurship theories argue that access to resources by founders is important predictor of opportunity based entrepreneurship and new venture growth (Alvarez and Busentz 2001). The theory stresses the importance of financial, social and human resources (Aldrich 1999). The theory also emphasizes that the access to resources enhances the individual's ability to detect and act upon discovered opportunities (Davidson and Honing 2003). Nafukho and Muyia (2010) concludes that there is almost universal agreement that the way in which individuals and organizations create and implement new ideas are central to the concept of entrepreneurship, hence define entrepreneurship as; "Behaviours, skills, and attitudes applied individually or collectively to help individuals and organizations to create, cope with and enjoy change and innovation involving, higher levels of uncertainty and complexity as a means of achieving personal fulfillment".

It follows from his discussion that entrepreneurial activities could promote business start-up at least at three levels. First, at the attitudinal level, directing youths towards career choice. Second, at the intentional level, where planned behaviour can be predicted and thirdly, at the practical level, where it increases the propensity of youth to start a business. Shane (2003) argued that entrepreneur's ability to discover and exploit opportunity differs between individuals and depends on individual's attitude towards risk-taking. A risk adverse individual is less likely to exploit entrepreneurial opportunity. As such, a person might not search for or discover entrepreneurial opportunities if he/she has a negative attitude towards risk-taking. In the same vein, an individual may have an innovative business or service idea and great likelihood to access micro finance but might not utilize the opportunity if he/she fears risk.

Research Methodology

The literature review provided valuable insight into the identification of aspects influencing youth entrepreneurship education. Standard questionnaire were developed and used to generate data for the study. Information was gathered regarding the biographical information of the participating youth entrepreneurs, the motivational factors for starting their businesses, the obstacles that they are currently experiencing and their support and development needs. The attitude toward enterprise (ATE) test introduced by Athayde (2004) was identified as a suitable instrument for employment in a study of this nature. The ATE test was developed to measure young people's attitude towards a collection of constructs (leadership, achievement, personal control, creativity and intuition). The focus of measurement therefore was not on the actual traits of the entrepreneurs, but rather on youth's attitudes towards using achievement, personal control, creativity, leadership and intuition.

Population of the Study

Twenty micro, small and medium sized enterprises located in Anambra state (Nigeria) with a population of 1650. Convenience sampling was employed as all the respondents involved in the study. A total of 1480 questionnaire were completed, but ten questionnaire were removed from the data-set due to inadequate information provided by the respondents, resulting in a final sample of 1470 respondents ($n = 1470$). The respondents were informed prior to the distribution of the questionnaire that participation in the study was not compulsory. Prior to conducting the main study, a pilot test was conducted to improve the reliability and validity of the questionnaire.

Data Collection Techniques

Data collected was statistically analyzed using SPSS version 14.00. Data from the questionnaire was coded, investigated for integrity and presented in useful outputs such as frequency tables. The frequency tables were used to draw conclusion and to make recommendations regarding the development of young entrepreneurs. Accordingly, exploratory factor analysis, Varimax with Kaiser Normalization was conducted on the data obtained to assess the discriminate validity of the items used to measure the level of entrepreneurial attitudes among young people. Kaiser's criterion, stipulating that factors with eigen values less than one should be retained was used to determine the number of factor to be extracted. The Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy of 0.87 was adopted. The factor analysis yielded reliable results. The exploratory factor analysis combines with the interpretability of the factors provided some evidence of construct validity for the study. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated to assess the internal consistency between the items of the measuring instrument. A Cronbach's alpha of 0.70 represents a minimum acceptable reliability for the study.

Table 1: Factor Analysis for Key Variables

	Main Variables	Factor Analysis
1	Entrepreneurial Inclination: a. Considered entrepreneurship as a high desired career option. b. Never thought of entrepreneurship as a career. c. Would like someday to start my own business. d. Have the planning for opening a new venture.	0.735 0.642 0.635 0.593
2	Image of Entrepreneurship: a. Entrepreneurship is about job creation. b. Entrepreneurship is an honourable profession. c. Admire those who succeed in running their own business	0.572 0.541 0.538
3	Role Model: a. Interested in business because my friends are in business. b. Friends are main source of business related information. c. Believed that closet friends think I should become self employed.	0.648 0.624 0.593
4	The Entrepreneurial Internship Prorammes: a. Feeling Confident About Tackling Unfamiliar Work Based Problems b. Help to develop the ability to plan and organize my day-to-day work. c. Help to develop my job related skills. d. Develop my communication skills.	0.572 0.549 0.526 0.492
5	University Role in Promoting Entrepreneurship Skills a. University is an ideal place to learn about starting a business. b. University infrastructure and policies discourage entrepreneurship c. A creative university environment inspires to support the start-up of new business d. The university provides resources to assist young entrepreneurs.	0.584 0.562 0.496 0.473

Source: Data Analysis, 2015

Statistical Analysis:

The results presented in table two below show the descriptive statistics of the sample demographics.

Table 2: Demographic Profile of the Sample

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Gender:		
Male	980	66.67
Female	490	33.33
Total	1470	100
Marital Status:		
Single	905	61.56
Married	435	29.59
Widowed	130	8.84
Educational Background:		
First leaving certificate	116	7.89
Secondary school certificate	209	14.22
NCE/OND	273	18.57
B.Sc/HND	389	26.46
MBA/MPA/MSc	440	29.93
PhD	31	2.11
Others	12	0.82
Total	1470	100

Source: Survey Data, 2015

Table two above explained the detail biographical information for the analysis and participation of the respondent for the study.

Table 3: Nature of Entrepreneurship Exposure

	Nature of Exposure	Frequency	Percentage
1	Participated in entrepreneur day in the state	120	8.16
2	Acquired entrepreneurship skill development at school.	248	16.87
3	Generate business idea in business plan.	136	9.25
4	Attend entrepreneurship training else-where.	240	16.33
5	Visit to existing business enterprise.	230	15.64
6	Put a business idea into practice	238	16.19
7	Run an imaginary business.	124	8.44
8	Has business subjects at school	134	9.12
	Total	1470	100

Source: Survey Data, 2015

The results presented in table 3 above showed a positive relation for entrepreneurship skills development at school (16.87%). This positive relation show that the respondents indeed participated fully in such activities while at school environment. The findings suggest that exposure to entrepreneurship remains a sporadic event and therefore presumed to have positive effect on youth entrepreneurship skill. In addition, the frequency of entrepreneurial activity shows that greater number of the respondents was exposed.

Table 4: Motivation for Self-Employment

	Variables	Frequency	Percentage
1	Need for independence	185	12.58
2	Need for flexible schedules	149	10.14
3	Need for a challenge	145	9.86
4	Dissatisfaction with salaried jobs	162	11.02
5	Social status	141	9.59
6	Role models and other people's influence	137	9.32
7	Ensure high-job security	143	9.73
8	Difficulty in finding job	146	9.93
9	Develop hobby	133	9.05
10	Enter the family business	129	8.78
	Total	1480	100

Source: Survey Data, 2015

Young entrepreneurs in Nigeria were motivated to start their own enterprise by both “push” and “pull” factors. The most important motivators for starting a business enterprise were the need for independence, the need for flexible work schedules and dissatisfaction with salaried jobs. The results of this study confirmed with the findings of previous studies by Ghosh and Cheruvalath (2007), Hughes (2006) and Demarkino et al (2002).

With regard to the obstacles facing young entrepreneurs, the findings were not different from other youths in the developing countries. They have similar challenges.

Table 5: Mean, Standard deviation and inter-correlation for the variables

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5
Entrepreneurial Inclination	3.84	0.68	1				
Image of Entrepreneurial	4.57	0.36	0.102	1			
Role Model	3.58	0.27	0.152	0.128	1		
Entrepreneurship Internship	3.72	0.29	0.165	0.153		1	
University Role in Promoting Entrepreneurship Skill	4.36	0.44	0.185	0.177	0.164	0.168	1

Note: P < 0.05

From the table, we noticed that young entrepreneurs with self employed have higher inclination towards entrepreneurship (68%). In addition, young university students with working experience were more inclined towards entrepreneurship than those without the experience. The role of university in promoting entrepreneurship was highly correlated as well as image of entrepreneurship. Interestingly, from the correlation matrix, all scales have statistically significant correlation with entrepreneurial inclination.

Limitations and Suggestions for Further Studies:

There exist numbers of limitations associated with this study that need to be acknowledged. Employment of the ATE tests should include a brief explanation of each construct and the underlying statement prior to administration of the questionnaire. The lack of focused entrepreneurship training programmes combined with the absence of pre and post testing against a control group of similar design made it almost impossible to determine the potential impact of the intervention utilized in the study.

This study attempted to make a contribution to the body of knowledge on youth entrepreneurship

education in Nigeria and can be regarded as a step towards moving away from the current dependence on anecdotal evidence. More comprehensive study is needed to gain insight into the motivational factors for self employment. The study was conducted in a limited area of Anambra state and the sampling technique adopted cannot be considered to be representative of all youth in the country. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalized.

Further study is needed to gain more insight into the unique challenge facing youth entrepreneurs in promoting self employment in the country. Therefore, the findings of the study present challenges for further study. We need more theories on youth entrepreneurship education as theoretical conceptualization has not kept pace with the large amount of empirical studies. In addition, cultural factors provide another very fertile area of inquiry for both theory and empirical studies with the possibility of making not only a significant contribution to knowledge but also for policy and management practices.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the study have shown that young Nigerians are often drawn to entrepreneurship out of necessity, to escape unemployment and build livelihoods, but also motivated by the possibility to realize their vision and contribute positively to the development of the country and communities. Based on the findings of the study, policies aiming to support youth entrepreneurship could focus on three distinct but complementary areas.

First, to assist young people preserve beyond the start-up and succeed over the longer term, training and capacity building need to extend from the nascent entrepreneurship into early entrepreneurship stages and beyond. In this context, a system of certificate could be established for young entrepreneurs that complete such courses while running their businesses, which would also ease their access to credit, moreover, young people could be linked with and learn from established entrepreneurs through professional networks and mentoring programmes for the purposes of both skill transfer and peer support. The government could play an active role in the regards, through advocacy and featuring successful young Nigerian entrepreneurs who could serve as role models and help establish entrepreneurship as a viable livelihood strategy in Nigeria.

Secondly, fundamental changes need to be made to the educational system, with courses on entrepreneurship and problem solving skills featuring prominently at all levels. Specifically, entrepreneurship courses should be introduced at the early stages of education and benefits of entrepreneurship should be better marketed. In addition, new and innovative financing needs to be developed to ease the credit constraints experienced by this young Nigerians. Methods relying on substituting collateral requirements with psychometric testing are steps in the right direction.

Thirdly, to establish enabling entrepreneurship framework conditions, government needs to continue and even accelerate the ongoing reforms of the business environment, especially those aimed at easing regulations. At the same time, a key message of this study is that an enabling business environment is necessary, but not sufficient to foster productive youth entrepreneurship in Nigeria. Soft infrastructure, including supportive value systems needs to be in place to even chances of business success of youth and adult entrepreneurs.

From this study, it also became apparent that young people are not well informed about regulatory requirements they need to meet in order to start business or obtain loan. In fact, they are not even fully aware of the various institutions and services available to support youth entrepreneurship. A well targeted training could go a long way in this regard.

Recommendations

Based on the Findings of this study, it is recommended as follows

1. More organizations should be established for the development of youth entrepreneurship education. The organizations should support the youth with training and development and provide soft loan to start their enterprises.
2. Young people could be linked with and learn from established entrepreneurs through professional networks and monitoring programmes. The government could play an important role in this regards, through advocacy and featuring successful young Nigerian entrepreneurs who could serve as role models and help establish entrepreneurship as viable livelihood strategy.
3. Given the vast unmet demand by youth for financing, more innovative financial instruments need to be created. These instruments should take into account higher uncertainty and risk, but also the greater aptitude for innovation and longer term horizon associated with this age group.
4. To establish enabling entrepreneurship framework conditions, government needs to continue and even accelerate the reforms of the business environment especially that aimed at easing regulations.
5. Soft infrastructure, including supportive value systems needs to be in place to even chances of business success of youth entrepreneurs.

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