

Entrepreneurship Education and Youth Development in Nigeria: Challenges and Prospects

¹Nwaokwa Emilia Okechi, ²Umar Ndagi Mohammed & ³Onuigwe Gladys Chiebonam

^{1&2}*Department of Office Technology and Management*

Federal Polytechnic Nasarawa, Nasarawa State

³*Department of Accountancy, Federal Polytechnic Nasarawa, Nasarawa State*

Abstract

The youth population everywhere is on the increase, Nigeria in particular with profound presence of unemployment and restiveness challenging global peace and economic growth. Entrepreneurship education is viewed as an engine of economic growth and development, an education which enables students to use their creativity, and be able to take initiative, and appropriate actions to succeed in every aspect of life. Entrepreneurship education is essential not only to shape the mind sets of young people but also to provide the skills and knowledge that are required to developing an entrepreneurship culture. The study seeks to assess the challenges of entrepreneurship education and youth development and identify the importance and prospects of entrepreneurship education Nigeria. Secondary data were obtained through books, journals, and internet. Findings indicate that inadequate funding to promote entrepreneurship education in tertiary institutions and poor infrastructural facilities are the challenges of entrepreneurship education in Nigeria. A dynamic economy, which is innovative and able to groom young people who will launch and successfully develop their own ventures, or become innovators in the wider society in which they live, is definitely what Nigeria needs at this critical time to survive her challenges. The study recommends that the value system should be re-engineered to instill in the Nigerian youth virtues of patriotism and true nationalism.

Keywords: *Entrepreneurship, Entrepreneurship Education, Economy, Youth*

Corresponding Author: Nwaokwa Emilia Okechi

Background to the Study

The Nigerian economy collapsed in the mid 80's with youth and graduate unemployment hitting the roof. Workers were laid off and early retirement was common as a result of the Structural Adjustment programme and worst economic trend in the country. Before then, unemployment and poverty were strange to the country. After the 80's, entrepreneurship education began to gain prominence because of political instability and the inconsistency in the social-economic policies of successive governments which in part led to the unabating unemployment and youth restiveness situation in the country today.

This could be as result of the Nigerian educational system that churns out graduates from the universities and polytechnics and monotechnics who are not trained to be self-reliant, but to depend on white collar jobs for sustenance. Aside the book knowledge that they received; there are no requisite skills to make them self-dependent. This scenario has eaten deep into the fabric of our society that the need to curb this menace has become necessary. This must have informed why NUC and NBTE decided to introduce entrepreneurship education into our educational system. Within the umbrella of potential efforts and strategies to boost employment and job creation for young people, entrepreneurship is increasingly accepted as an important means and a valuable additional strategy to create jobs and improve livelihoods and economic independence of young people (Nwaokwa and Ile, 2017). There is therefore the need to engage the youths who constitute over 60 percent of the Nigerian population meaningfully to avoid unhealthy alternatives for this group of people since according to Henry (2003) in Ojeifo(2013), entrepreneurship is the engine driving the economy of nations, creating new industries, young entrepreneurs, employment and wealth.

Jega (2012) defined youth as a special group of people with strong stamina and passion for realizing certain set goals and objectives and comprises of all young persons of age 18-35 who are citizens of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. This category represents the most culture, the most volatile and yet the most vulnerable segment of the population, socio-economically, emotionally and in other respect.

Youth unemployment is a major developmental issue in many developing countries especially Nigeria (Diji, Adeniji & Anam, 2015). Hence Okafor (2011) asserts that the consequences of this unpleasant situation are that it has become a source of sustained social and political instability, increased drug use and violence against women. Growing youth unemployment threatens economic and political stability. Countries with high youth demographic profiles are even more at risk. Even more, negative growth means decreasing work opportunities and the need for alternative means of job creation. Entrepreneurship education can be part of the solution. In the opinion of Nwachukwu and Nwamuo (2010), when the youths are not gainfully employed either in the formal or informal sector of the economy, they become vulnerable to criminal tendencies such as kidnapping, armed robbery, stealing, political thugs among others which are a menace to society.

Albert, Scisca and Poli (20 04) defined Entrepreneurship education as the structured and formal conveyance of entrepreneurship competencies which in turn refer to the concepts, skills and mental awareness used by individuals during the process of starting, developing

and managing their growth oriented ventures. The objective of entrepreneurship education are to help shape individual abilities, ideas, beliefs and need in the classroom situations so that students can develop skills and behavior patterns that will later help in the achievement of personal and corporate goals. Ojeifo (2013) opined that entrepreneurship education in Nigeria amongst other things seeks to provide students with the knowledge, skills and motivation to encourage entrepreneurial success in a variety of ventures. Entrepreneurship education is a long life process as it is offered at all levels of schooling in Nigeria, from primary to secondary schools through tertiary.

The Nigerian government having made entrepreneurship education a compulsory general studies for students in tertiary institutions across the country should be seen as a positive step in the right direction as it will serve as a panacea for youth restiveness, unemployment and so on. The development will also inculcate in the youths the spirit of self-reliance and address the problem of unemployment and underemployment and ensure entrepreneurial human capacity for national growth and development. This paper assesses the challenges of entrepreneurship education and youth development and identifies the importance and prospects of entrepreneurship education Nigeria.

Entrepreneurship Education

Entrepreneurship education is seen as teaching students, learners and would be businessmen, the essential skills required to build viable enterprises, equipping the trainee with skills needed for taking responsibility and developing initiatives of prospective trainees. Atakpa (2011) asserts that entrepreneurship education is an aspect of education which equips an individual and creates in the person the mindset to undertake the risk of venturing into something new by applying the knowledge and skills acquired in school. In the same vein, Abefe-Balogun (2012), entrepreneurship education involve a dynamic process of creating wealth through the process of creating something new and in the process assumes both attendant risk and rewards. Entrepreneurship education has been acknowledged worldwide as a potent and viable tool for self-empowerment, job and wealth creation (Okereke and Okorafor (2011). Suleiman (2010) believes that entrepreneurship education seeks to prepare people particularly the youths to be responsible, enterprising individual who became entrepreneurs or entrepreneurial thinkers by immersing them in real life learning experience whereby they can take risks, manage result and learn from the outcome. Entrepreneurship education entails teaching people that they can either take or create a job. This will enable them to be self-employed and not relying on other job security. Often, it creates new job for others at the same time. Ememe (2010) noted that entrepreneurship education enables youths to seek for success in ventures through one's effort. Thus, the overall objectives of entrepreneurship education are to develop expertise as an entrepreneur.

Osuala (2010) opined that entrepreneurship education is a programme or part of a programme that prepares individuals to undertake the formation and or operate small business enterprises which also includes franchise operations for the purpose of performing all business functions relating to a product or service with emphasis on social responsibilities, legal requirement and risks for the sake of profit involved in the conduct of

private business enterprises. From the foregoing, it is evident that entrepreneurship education could turn around the economic fortune of Nigerians by providing jobs and reduce the unemployment rate in Nigeria and reduce the poverty level. It could also help an individual to identify investment opportunities and help them to harness untapped natural resources in Nigeria in order to produce the goods and services needed in the country. These will no doubt reduce or alleviate poverty and help to increase per capital income in the country.

Arvanites, Glasgo and Stumptf (2009) share the above views when they state that innovative educational methods are needed to develop the entrepreneurial spirit and talents that are necessary to function effectively in an environment of strong market forces and divergent people. They added that for entrepreneurship education to be most useful, it must address and develop in students, the skills necessary as an entrepreneur

Challenges of Entrepreneurship education in Nigeria

Despite the laudable aims and objectives of entrepreneurship education in solving youth problems such as unemployment, restiveness crime and so on is inhibited by a number of challenges. Some of the challenges has been pointed out by scholars such as Osuala (2010), Saheed, Taiwo and Alebiosu (2014), Okon and Uke (2015) and include among other as:

1. Poor funding by government and non-governmental organisations
2. Inadequate facilities, equipment and teaching materials
3. Much emphasis on theoretical knowledge rather than practical knowledge as a result of inadequate entrepreneurship centres.
4. High level of corruption and poor maintenance culture embedded in the Nigerian system.
5. Poor business environment, access to credit, inflation, mass poverty, political instability, insecurity of lives and properties and others.
6. Poor state of infrastructure such as electricity, roads and telecommunication network.
7. Nepotism, favouritism and god-fatherism.

Prospects/Roles of Entrepreneurship Education and Youth Development in Nigeria

Entrepreneurship education can provide important outcomes at various stages of a learner's life. The major prospect or role of entrepreneurship education however, is to control unemployment and poverty alleviation, train individuals, the youths particularly, to become self-reliant. Evey, Aklang, Asride, Ofemi, and Donald, (2010), Shaibu and Mmermikwu (2017), Okon and Uke (2015), Okon and Uke (2015) saw the following as the roles and prospects of entrepreneurship education:

- 1 Entrepreneurship education is a key to wealth and job creation as entrepreneurially minded individuals can create jobs, thus making them relevant in today's economy.
- 2 Entrepreneurship education builds in learners the mentality of hard work. The mentality of hard work will help eliminate poor attitude to work, incidences of low performance on the job and lack of job satisfaction as individuals will acquire the right attitude to work and respect for dignity of labour.

- 3 Entrepreneurship education will enhance employment opportunities through self-reliance and self-employment as Nigerian youths would equip themselves with adequate knowledge, skills and attitudes which make them more productive.
- 4 Entrepreneurship education will empower the youth based on the belief that young individuals are themselves the best resources for promoting their own development in meeting the challenges and solving the problems they face in today's world.
- 5 Entrepreneurship education imbibe in individuals the acquisition of useful knowledge, skills and attitude required in the field of work hence prepares them to meet the manpower needs of relevant occupations.
- 6 Entrepreneurship education will help control the rate of idle youths in the society thereby reducing the number of available youths that could be tools for thuggery, armed robbery, kidnapping, bombing, human trafficking among others.

Conclusion

Education programmes are believed to afford to the learners the right skills, knowledge and competencies necessary for them to take their positions as useful members of the society. The inclusion of entrepreneurship course in all disciplines will to a great extent, assist in solving this problems of high unemployment, underemployment and youth restiveness which include armed robbery activities, prostitutions, kidnapping, bombings and so on.

Entrepreneurship education has been recognized as driver in encouraging wealth and job creation among graduates and promotes and improves innovative activities and capabilities, which empower beneficiaries to become self-reliant, gainfully employed thereby advancing the course of national development.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are proffered for effective entrepreneurship education in Nigeria.

- 1 Government should provide adequate funds to promote entrepreneurship education in tertiary institutions.
- 2 Government should provide essential infrastructural and instructional facilities for entrepreneurship education.
- 3 Youths must be trained particularly to shun unethical practices and behaviour. In this case, the overall value-system in the country needs to be re-engineered by instilling in the youths the virtues of patriotism and true nationalism. In addition, youths must be encouraged to embrace moral decencies such integrity, freedom, justice, truthfulness, responsibility, compassion and reflect the normative standards of human beings discovered and developed through living together peacefully.

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