

ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION: A PANACEA TO GRADUATE UNEMPLOYMENT IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Nigeria like most developing nations of the world is faced with myriad of problems ranging from poverty, unemployment, ethno-religious conflicts, to diseases among others. These situations pose great challenges to the very existence of individuals in most developing nations thereby calling for the training of educated men and women who can function effectively in the society in which they live. Information from media and day to day experiences reiterates the high rate of graduates unemployment in Nigerian. This problem is said to be traceable to the disequilibrium between labour market requirements and lack of essential employable skills by the graduates. This paper therefore examines the importance of entrepreneurship education as tool for reducing the alarming trend of graduates' unemployment in the country. The methodology of research adopted is content analysis. The paper concludes by suggesting ways of boosting job and wealth creation through entrepreneurship education in Nigeria among which include: Nigeria need to reposition her graduates and young people in general into aggressive motivated and enterprising individuals in a way that will bring drastic reduction of unemployment and job creation.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, Education, Graduate Unemployment, Job Creation and Empowerment.

INTRODUCTION

One of the major concerns of most societies in the modern time is how to stem the ever rising tide of unemployment and achieve appreciable success in wealth creation and poverty reduction and foster socio-economic development. Stakeholders in education have constantly lamented the unfortunate trend in which our tertiary institutions annually turn out graduates who roam our streets daily in search of non-existing jobs. They have placed this ugly phenomenon on the door step of a dysfunctional education system that has structurally failed to capture the dynamic nature of education as agent of transformation and a catalyst for individual and societal self-reliance. In a positive reaction to this development, federal government in 2007 revised the curricula of university education to include entrepreneurship education in order to equip the Nigerian graduates in an effort to reduce the growing unemployment and to create more jobs as well as wealth.

Taking an analytical approach, this paper shed more light on the role played by entrepreneurship education in stimulating entrepreneurial spirit and job creation among Nigerian graduates.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

There is no consensus on the exact meaning of entrepreneurship as scholars and practitioners have tried to define it in various forms. Entrepreneurship is the term used broadly in connection with innovative and creative modern industrial business leaders (Emeruwa, 2005). It is often defined in respect to the functions of an entrepreneur as the man who perceives business opportunities and takes advantage of the scarce resources to use them profitably (Akinbode, 2009).

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. Entrepreneurship education training could be given to interested individuals both adults and students through workshops, classes, and conferences thereby learning the basic ideas of starting their own businesses and managing it well.

Owoseni (2009) asserted that entrepreneurial education is a specialized training given to students of vocational and technical education to acquire the skills, ideas and managerial abilities and capacities for self-employment rather than being employed for pay. Okojie (2009) contended that the entrepreneur is believed to possess some traits which includes; boldness, confidence, personal leadership and force. An entrepreneur is also defined as a person who has an inclination to foresee uncertain events in pursuit of profit rather than bringing about a change in the economy. Kirzner (1979) supported by Brown (2003) adds to the argument by defining an entrepreneur as someone who is alert to opportunities for profit. Carson (2003) brought together the most essential elements in these theories and thus defined an entrepreneur as someone who specializes in taking judgmental decisions about the coordination of scarce resources.

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.

Entrepreneurship education is a lifelong learning process, starting as early as elementary school and progressing through all levels of education, including adult education. The standards and their supporting performance indicators are a framework for teachers to use in building appropriate objective learning activities, and assessment for their target audience. Using this framework, students will have more progressive challenging educational activities; experiences that will enable them get the insight needed to discover and create entrepreneurial activities, and the expertise to successfully start and manage their own businesses to take advantage of these opportunities (Wikipedia, 2010)

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. Basically, to them, entrepreneurship education is oriented towards four methods or practical results. These methods include:

Regular entrepreneurship: which is most popular and suitable for opening of a new organization or starting a new business;

Corporate entrepreneurship: which is suitable for promoting innovation or introducing new products or services or markets in existing firms;

Social entrepreneurship or social venturing: which involves creating charitable organizations that are expected to be self-financing in addition to doing their usual activities; and

Public sector entrepreneurship, designs to improve innovation and customer service delivery

OBJECTIVES OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION

The objectives of entrepreneurship education clearly show that it is concerned with the development and survival of both the individual and society. In other words, it is a tool through which socio-economic and political development could be achieved if properly planned, funded and implemented. Among other things, the objectives of entrepreneurship education as spelt out by Osuala (2010) are:

1. To provide meaningful education for young people which could make them self-reliance and subsequently encourage them to drive profit and be self-independent;
2. To provide graduate with the training and support necessary to help them establish a career in small and medium size business;
3. To provide graduates with training skills that will make them meet the manpower needs of society;
4. To provide graduates with enough training in risk management to make uncertainty bearing possible and easy;

5. To stimulate industrial and economic growth of rural and less developed area;
6. To provide graduate enough training which will make them creative and innovative in identifying new business opportunities; and
7. To provide small and medium sized enterprises with the opportunity to recruit qualified graduates who will receive training and tutoring in the skills relevant to management of the businesses.

From the above objectives, it is evident that this type of education if it is given the necessary attention and properly implemented will produce quality graduates that will foster job creation and reduce unemployment and alleviate poverty in Nigeria. This could be realized when the graduates are self-reliant by establishing their own business small/medium scale enterprises.

Job creation through entrepreneur education is one of the cardinal means of solving the numerous problems facing Nigeria. When ample job opportunities are created, it will invariably help in taking the youths away from criminality, prostitution, drug use and drug abuse, violence, crime and civil unrest among others (Olorunmolu, 2008). Creating an enabling environment for ample employment opportunities in the society through establishing cottage, small/medium scale enterprises in Nigeria would help in achieving these objectives.

IMPORTANCE OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION

According to the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2005), the “aims of various governments to combat poverty through the establishment and creation of poverty reduction programmes failed because graduates of the education system lack practical skills”. However, many stakeholders and political leaders believe that fostering a robust entrepreneurial culture and education through entrepreneur education will maximize individual and collective economic and social success on local, national and global scales.

Akpomi (2009) stated that “entrepreneurial skills and attitudes provide benefits to the society even beyond their application to business activity”. She further stated that “personal qualities that are relevant to entrepreneurship such as creativity and a spirit of initiative can be useful to everyone in their responsibilities and in their daily existence”. Emeruwa (2005) opined that by teaching entrepreneurship education, we are using the framework of education to initiate specialized learning activities that will create a class of graduates with the right experiences and insights to discover and create entrepreneurial opportunities and also gain the expertise to successfully start and manage their own businesses to take advantage of existing opportunities.

Entrepreneurship education among graduates will lay solid foundation for the emergence of a generation of innovators willing to apply necessary capital into the production process for new products, open and expand new markets, explore new sources of materials and ensure the organization of new industries. Through this process, there would be an emergence of small unit of businesses that would burgeon into bigger industrial or business concerns with the application of the right managerial skills. The economies of Asian countries that are now competing favourably with the economies of America, Germany, United Kingdom etc, attained their present levels of development through the entrepreneurial activities of individuals and groups with their governments providing the appropriate framework and policies for the thriving of entrepreneurial ventures.

By building entrepreneurship culture into Nigerian educational system and instilling entrepreneurship spirit in our graduates, Nigeria would have laid a strong foundation for reducing general unemployment and associated social problems and ensuring a private-sector driven economy, increasing productivity and enlarging the market-base of the economy. Entrepreneurship education will produce graduates who will provide jobs, create wealth, enlarge and fast-track the economy to attain the status of one of the twenty most developed economies of the world by the year 2020.

Entrepreneurship Education plays a vital role in the social, political and economic development of any nation. This is possible when jobs are created for the citizenry by establishing a lot of businesses that will accommodate the unemployed youth in the country. A qualified graduate of entrepreneurship education is expected to have acquired enough skills relevant to the management of small business centre. - Creation of self-employment. An entrepreneur provides job for himself by establishing small business centre. This, according to Olorunmolu (2008) helps to reduce the problem of unemployment and other social vices in Nigeria. The entrepreneur does not only provide jobs/employment for him/herself alone, but provides for others too. This in turn helps the individual to increase per capital income and improve the standard of living.

The entrepreneur determines or identifies the specific wants of the people and the type of goods and services that will fulfil those wants most comfortably. Emeruwa (2005) asserted that the entrepreneur does not only identify but mobilizes and organizes the resources to tap the opportunities by assisting men, materials, money and machines to explore the opportunity. - production of goods and services that is important to the well-being, comfort and happiness of individuals in the society at large.

The entrepreneurs are usually motivated in their activities not only by the need for material contributions to the welfare of the communities but also the desire to make profit (Akinbode 2009). This uplifts the dignity of labour. Through entrepreneurship education, utilization of local resources are made possible. The graduates of this specialized education set up their small/medium scale business, which will enable them to utilize the local resources available in their vicinity. The uses of local raw materials are discarded by products of large firms as primary input in their production processes. Olorunmolu (2008) asserted that in terms of their economic benefits small firms can be said to be greater in local resources maximizes than their large counterparts. The provision of raw materials for the big firms help them to increase their production hence employ more personnel thereby creating jobs for unemployed youth in the country.

Through quality entrepreneurship education, Nigeria could produce a lot of entrepreneurs who could establish and manage businesses on their own. Based on the above merits, it is no doubt that entrepreneurship education could be used as major weapon in reducing the worrisome, untamed and ever rising problem of unemployment and poverty in Nigeria.

CONSTRAINT TO ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

Though entrepreneurship education has been part and parcel of educational activities in many countries of the world for over 100 years, it has just been introduced in the Nigerian tertiary institutions. Entrepreneurship education, therefore, is not without its challenges. There are several factors that hinder entrepreneurship education in Nigeria. They include:

In a country where money is concentrated in few hands and given the difficulties in assessing bank loans due to some strident conditions, graduates of entrepreneurship education faced the challenges of raising funds to begin their own businesses. Also, identifying a wide range of entrepreneurship ventures and building comprehensive curricula from there

is yet another critical area of concern for educators in Nigeria. Entrepreneurship education involves a comprehensive learning process and outcome that should key into the national development plans. Hence, a far-reaching strategic document and curricula on entrepreneurship education would not materialize unless a holistic approach is taken towards the plan and implementation of entrepreneurship education.

One of the major challenges now confronting entrepreneurship education in Nigeria is identifying and recruiting the qualified teachers who have the appropriate knowledge and pedagogy to impart entrepreneurial skills and competences on the students. Entrepreneurship education requires the use of active learning methods that place the learner at the centre of educational process and enable them to take responsibility for their learning experience and learn about themselves. Such methods have been shown to make learning experiences richer and to have positive benefits for students in terms of improving their motivation with positive effects from their engagement with learning and long-term attainment. Thus teachers need the professional competences to be able to guide students through the learning process rather than the traditional talk-chalk method of communicating knowledge and information.

Lack of sufficient and skilled manpower- Nigerian higher institutions do not have adequate and high level manpower for effective teaching and learning of entrepreneurship education in the country. The available teachers drafted from the existing faculties do not have relevant skills to cope with the challenges of the new curriculum. Since one cannot give what one does not have, the expected products of the new entrepreneurship education may not perform any miracles if they are lectured by the same old lecturers. Stumpf (1999) noted that this ‘traditional models of education fall short in their ability to link the knowledge and concepts covered in the classroom to the skills and practice of entrepreneurship.’

Poor State of Infrastructure- The poor state of infrastructure in Nigerian universities is worrisome as the new entrepreneurship education will only worsen the situation. Obeleagu-Nzelibe and Moruku (2010) and NEEDS (2012) have noted that the state of infrastructure in Nigerian university system is, to say the least, embarrassing. Hence, Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) has argued in several negotiations with the Federal Government that those infrastructures, such as: electricity, roads and telecommunications network should be provided which will enable entrepreneurs to access to resources.

Faulty Foundation- Education is a continuous process, but the introduction of entrepreneurship education in the universities without first doing so at the secondary and primary levels, tend to suggest that the new curriculum lacks the necessary foundation. Entrepreneurship education should have commenced at the lower levels before moving to the tertiary level, so that their products, skills and experiences should form the fulcrum of the university entrepreneurship education.

STRATEGIES FOR TACKLING THESE CONSTRAINTS

The world of business is fast moving and perfectionist-oriented. The masses are sharp and quick to judge, hence an entrepreneur must be calculating and deliberate in their quest of meeting market demand. The market place where the entrepreneur operates has little tolerance for miscalculations, lack of commitment or incompetence. The foregoing make the education of a youth who is a would-be entrepreneur an essential component of human capital development.

Entrepreneurship education is a carefully planned process that eventuates into the acquisition of entrepreneurial competencies. The education is a set of very valuable skills needed by the entrepreneur to avoid future trial and errors

(Osuala, 2004). By implications, the stage learning is the stage to make most of the mistakes and learn from them. Entrepreneurship education equips the learner with skills on decision making, acquisition of new ideas, methods of raising and maintaining conversations and establishing business relationships. Through entrepreneurship education, qualitative ability that facilitates computation and record keeping are further learnt. It starts with developing programs in entrepreneurship centres where people are trained to develop and acquire skills. The youths should equally be given opportunities to gain experiences as they are linked with mentors, get access to information and are given opportunity for growth. This implies that they are provided with information, knowledge, skills, and attitudes that would enable them perform well as business men and women. They will turn out to be business men and women who have developed business capacities and are learning to make money.

These competences will in turn help them deploy their zeal for nation building in a very efficient manner. Anything short of these realities will be handling Nigerian problems of repositioning the youths with kid gloves. The world of business is facing increasing pressure on a variety of ways. They are faced with the challenges to release new-products, find market, while distributing and servicing their customers efficiently. These challenges have equally prompted the need for them to examine how they function. The bureaucratic approach to business currently employed by the developing world have been found not to be effective, instead, a creative ways of responding that will move the entrepreneurs towards the idea age that has characterized the world of business is the in-training. This challenge therefore of utilizing ideas has made many companies to turn to creativity training. Creativity is defined as the ability to develop ideas that are unique, useful and worthy of elaboration. It involves the use of ideas (working on ideas) until something comes out of it. Creativity is the ability to solve problems, fashion products, and define new questions in a particular cultural setting. This implies that what is considered creative in one setting may be a regular occurrence in another. The key word to creativity therefore is insight which emphasizes the might or ability to see a new thing (Woolfolk, 1998). The question then is will people with insight automatically become creative? The answer is that the possession of creative ability ensures that an individual might exhibit creative behaviour to a noteworthy degree. However, the individual's motivation, temperamental traits and willingness to learn will also count. It also includes the urge to engage in new things, tendency to favour or not to favour objects, self-confidence and willingness to take risks. These are all contributing factors that determines who will exhibit creativity (Onu, 2006). Training in creativity can help the individual view problems from different perspective. It is also useful in generating unique solution.

Also, for it to make the required impact in our economy, the Ministry of Education, and the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) should work together with all other relevant institutions and agencies to design new curricula on entrepreneurship education. Also, Government should create Institute of Entrepreneurship Education that would from time to time review the curricula and ensure standard in implementation and in providing financial and technical assistance to graduates of the programme. The institute could focus on four main areas:

- I. Providing a strategic framework which will include the vision of entrepreneurship education;
- II. Reviewing and redesigning entrepreneurship education curricula in line with our developmental needs;
- III. Implementation of the programmes and providing technical assistance to entrepreneurship education graduates who want to go into some businesses;
- IV. Assessing and evaluating the success of the programme.

Finally, for Nigeria to reposition her graduates and young people in general for the reduction of unemployment there would be need to transform them into confident, aggressive and purposeful individuals. The ideal profile for emerging professionals (products of our ivory towers) with respect to entrepreneurial education, this would include a strong scientific, technical and factual base with good background information and research skills.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, education programmes are believed to afford to the learners the right skills, knowledge and competences necessary for them to take their positions as useful members of the society. The era of graduates picking up their certificates and roaming the streets looking for jobs that are not there should be made to be a thing of the past. The aim of Nigerian education at all levels especially at the tertiary level should be to produce graduates who have the skills to use their heads and hands to provide job for themselves and for others and also create wealth. Hence, the solution to this lies in the introduction and teaching of entrepreneurship education to students of all disciplines in Nigerian tertiary institutions.

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