
YOUTH EMPOWERMENT THROUGH ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION

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Abstract

The high rate of unemployment among the youths is a major source of worry to well meaning citizens of the country. The curriculum of the Nigerian Technical Colleges contains many courses that can equip youths with requirements for self employment if properly implemented. This paper discussed basic characteristics of youth, empowerment and entrepreneurship education. It also highlighted available courses in technical colleges and business opportunities which youths can engage in. Since youths can acquire necessary skills and attitudes that can make them self reliant economically through entrepreneurship education, the youths should be motivated to acquire these necessary skills and attitudes to reduce youth unemployment and improve national security and development.

It is common knowledge that there exists high rate of unemployment among the youths in Nigeria today. The present educational policies highlight self-reliance, self-employment, gainful-employment etc. A person can only be self- employed and gainfully employed when he/she has acquired the necessary skills. These skills can only be acquired through entrepreneurship education. This paper discusses the concepts of youth, empowerment, and entrepreneurship education and suggests ways of empowering Nigerian youths through entrepreneurship education. Many courses and business opportunities are listed as guides to the youths.

Youth

Youths in every society form a significant segment that cannot be ignored. They are considered to be the future leaders and also the bedrock to sustainable development. Nigerian youths are faced with many problems bothering on poverty and unemployment due to lack of skill in the needed areas, drug abuse and poor health among other things. Youths are the most active and most energetic group of the country's population in whose hand lies the destiny of the nation. (Ojaleye 2005).

The new Webster's Dictionary of the English language (2005) defines youth as the period from childhood to maturity. Youths exhibit certain characteristics in the way

they think, speak, dress, walk and relate with themselves and others. Many of them are always in a hurry and very impatient, hardly seek advice, believe in their physical strength and are easily lured to commit crimes because of their desire to get rich quick or to attain adult standards in a hurry. It is also said that an idle man is the devils workshop. In other words, getting the youths engaged in useful activities will help to reduce crime in the society.

Empowerment

The word empowerment comes from the word "power". Thus to empower someone means to give authority to enable a person or group of persons gain power (Chaba in Victoria 2004). Empowerment means getting the power to make ones voice heard, to contribute to plans and discussions that affect one, to use ones expertise to improve ones performance (Foy, 1997).

Bhasin (1984) in Victoria (2004) noted that empowerment cannot mean power over others, power to control more than our share; it should mean power to be, power to control one's own greed, avarice and violence, power to nurture, heal, care for others, power to fight for justice, ethics, morality, power to achieve inner growths leading to wisdom and compassion. He also noted that the process of empowerment is a political process, because it aims at changing existing power relationships.

Youth Empowerment

Youth empowerment means providing an enabling environment for youths to develop their true potentials so that they can contribute to the development of the society. The major instrument needed to empower youths is education. As already stated in the introductory part of this paper, entrepreneurship education gives necessary skills to individuals to make them self-reliant economically. This paper will discuss empowerment of youths to enable them become self-employed, gainfully-employed and self-reliant citizens that can contribute to the development of the society.

Entrepreneurship

The term entrepreneurship was derived from a 17th century French word "entrepredreil" which refers to individuals who undertook the risk of new enterprise. They were contractors who bore the risk of profit or loss. Many early entrepreneurs were soldiers of fortune, adventurers, builders, merchants and funeral directors (Oliver, Okafor, Nwagwu and Okojie 2006).

An entrepreneur to others may mean a self-employed person with a tolerance for the risk he believed was inherent in providing for one's own economic well-being. It is also seen as a process which acts as a catalyst for moving from the present or actual situation, to some desired future possibility.

Types of Entrepreneur Quality

1. **The Improver:** Improvers usually have an unwavering ability to run their business with integrity and ethics.
2. **The Advisor:** This entrepreneurial type will provide an extremely high level of assistance and advice to customers. The emphasis is that the customer is right and we must do everything to please him.
3. **The Superstar:** The business in this case is centred around the charisma and high energy of the superstar chief executive officer. A person with this personality often builds his business around his own personal brand.
4. **Artist:** This personality is often found in businesses, which demand creativity such as web design and advertisement agencies. Thus, this personality type tends to build his business around the unique talents and creativities he has.
5. **The Visionary:** The business that is built by a visionary often reflects the future vision and thoughts of the founder.
6. **The Analyst:** A business that is run by an analyst is focused on solving problems in a systematic way. Analysts thus, excel at problem solving.
7. **The Fireball:** A business that is owned and managed by a fireball is full of life, energy and optimism. This makes customers to feel that the company has a get-it-done attitude.
8. **The Hero:** This personality type is seen in one who has an incredible will and ability to lead the world and his business through challenges. He is the essence of entrepreneurship and can manage great companies.
9. **The Healer:** An entrepreneur that is a healer provides nurturing and harmony to his business. He has the ability to survive and persist with an inner calm. Sometimes, the healer may tend to avoid outside realities and use wishful thinking because of his caring and healing attitude towards his business (Zahorsky, 2004 in Okhawere, 2005).
It is important to help the youths to know where they belong in the above group as to improve of any shortfall.

Creative Skills and Competencies Needed for Success in Entrepreneurship

A business succeeds only if it is capable of satisfying human needs. Success in entrepreneurship requires adequate planning which involves research, design,

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development and evaluation. planning involves the use of land, capital and labour to ensure that only viable businesses are established.

Research: Research is a systematic process of finding out things that are beneficial to a system. it is a search for solutions to problems or answers to questions. An entrepreneur ought to, among other issues, find out such things as the best method of conducting effective meetings, how to manage time and meet job schedule, factors involved in inventory control and turnover, knowledge of good human relationship.

Design: Design is the art and science of creating goods and services for the purpose of satisfying human needs. a design is either a concept presented on paper by graphic methods or the product itself. It could be an original concept or invention, or a copied one. Any good design must meet three major characteristics namely; aesthetics, function and cost-effectiveness. This means that it should be beautiful, perform the function it is supposed to perform and make profit.

Development: the scope of development shall depend on the type and size of the planned enterprise. All factors of both production and distribution should be taken into account by an expert team of developers with good knowledge of management and supervisory skills.

Evaluation: Okoro (1994) defined evaluation as a process of determining the worth of a thing. It shows the desirability of the venture and services as a pointer to the result of the business at the short run. The result of the evaluation exercise shall be processed and channelled to the appropriate subsystem in the planning system.

The knowledge of the above skills will help the youth to engage in any entrepreneurship. Youths are free to get involved in any type of entrepreneurship of their choice so far as it is legitimate.

Entrepreneurship Education

Functional entrepreneurship education makes her recipients to be exposed to saleable skills which will make them to be self-reliant. Entrepreneurship education is a specialized training given to students to enable them acquire the skills, ideas and the managerial abilities and capabilities for self-empowerment rather than being employed for pay. Entrepreneurship education also means a programme or part of the programme that prepares individuals to undertake the formation or operation of small-scale business (Paul in Ezema , Paul, Anioke, Okwuolise, Eheli & Anih 2005). This includes franchise operations for the purpose of performing all business functions relating to product/service with emphasis given to the social responsibilities, legal requirements and risk for the sake of profit involved in the conduct of private business. It creates awareness on how factors, both internal and external affect the future of the business. In

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other words, entrepreneurship education provides somebody who is planning to start a business enterprise with the necessary managerial skills, that is, relevant knowledge, appropriate skills, competency and attitudes required to run a business enterprise. The acquisition of entrepreneurship education will help to solve unemployment problems among college graduates in Nigeria because it will help the youths to set up businesses of their own.

Objectives of Entrepreneurship Education

The objectives of entrepreneurship education are:

- a. To provide meaningful education for the youths to be self-reliant and encourage them to derive profit and be self-independent and self-employed.
- b. To provide graduates with enough training that will make them to be creative and innovative in identifying new business opportunities.
- c. To provide college graduates with enough training in risk management; to make uncertainty bearing more possible and easy.
- d. To give the young graduate training and support to establish a carrier in small and medium sized businesses.
- e. To provide the graduate with training in skills that will enable them meet the manpower needs of the society.
- f. To stimulate industrial and economic growth of rural and less developed areas.
- g. To provide business enterprises both small and medium, the opportunity of recruiting graduates who will be trained and tutored in the skills relevant to the management of small business centres. (Paul in Ezema et al 2005)

Courses /Business Opportunities for Self Employment

Courses that enable individuals acquire relevant skills for self employment/private business are mainly done in technical institutions.

The Federal Government of Nigeria, National Policy on Education (FGN 2004) listed the following thirty-two (32) courses in the curriculum of the Nigerian technical Colleges.

1. Agricultural Implement and Equipment Mechanics Work.
2. Automobile Engineering practice - Auto body repair and Spray Painting.
3. Automobile Engineering practice - Auto Electric Work
4. Automobile Engineering practice - Auto body Mechanic Work.
5. Automobile Engineering practice - Auto body Building.
6. Automobile Engineering practice part - Merchandising.
7. Air-Conditioning and Refrigeration - Mechanics Work
8. Mechanical Engineering - Craft Practice.
9. Welding and Fabrication - Engineering Craft practice.
10. Foundry Craft practice.
11. Instruments Mechanic Works.

12. Electrical Installation and Maintenance Work.
13. Radio, Television and Electric Work.
14. Building, Bricklaying and Concrete Work.
15. Painting and Decorating.
16. Plumbing and Pipe-fitting.
17. Machine Woodworking.
18. Carpentry and Joinery.
19. Furniture Making.
20. Upholstery
21. Catering Craft Practice.
22. Garment Making (Ladies/Men Dress) .
23. Textile Trade.
24. Dyeing and Bleaching.
25. Printing Craft Practice.
26. Cosmetology.
27. Leather Goods Manufacturing including Shoe Making and Repair.
28. Stenography.
29. Type Writing.
30. Data Processing.
31. Store Keeping.
32. Book Keeping.

Relevance of Entrepreneurship Education towards Youth Empowerment

The ultimate objective of any national development policy is to improve the quality of life of citizens of that country. Entrepreneurship education is considered a strong strategy for poverty alleviation because it is geared towards producing self-reliant citizens through the acquisition of appropriate attitudes and skills.

Unemployment is a serious feature of underdevelopment which is responsible for high crime rate in the society, low capacity utilization, low Gross National Product (GNP) and low per capital income culminating into a vicious circle of poverty. But entrepreneurship education seeks to offer solutions to unemployment, social vices and poverty rate reduction because entrepreneurship education prepares individuals to be responsible, enterprising and employers of labour.

Cyril, Akiang, Asinde, Ofem, Donal (2010) outlined the following as the importance of entrepreneurship to national development.

1. Preparation of individuals to meet the manpower needs of relevant occupations through acquisition of useful knowledge, skills and attitudes required in the field work.

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2. Elimination of poor attitude to work, low performance on the job and lack of job satisfaction as individuals will be helped to acquire the right attitude to work and respect for dignity of labour.
3. Enhancing employment through self-reliance and self-employment as Nigerian youths equip themselves with adequate knowledge, skills and attitudes which make them more productive.
4. Reduction in professional and vocational prostitution as skilled and unskilled are prevented from using other vocations as a discovering ground. This will go a long way in promoting a positive attitude towards entrepreneurship for the development of the nation.
5. Entrepreneurship creates a formal and non-formal capacity and redirection of educational provision towards the world of business producing skilled citizens for self-sustenance and independence.

When the potentials of youths are well tapped, the economic stability of the country becomes boosted and this leads to improve national security and development.

Conclusion

One obvious fact is that the various traditional manpower approaches to educational planning have not solved the problem of increasing joblessness among Nigerian University graduates. The prospect of employment for an average Nigerian graduate is bleak and could even become more bleak. This situation poses a lot of threat to the nations security and development. It is therefore expected that there should be judicious management of the country's abundant human and material resources to eliminate youth unemployment. Training in entrepreneurship is one of the strategies that can help solve the problem.

Recommendations

Entrepreneurial education is very important as a means of equipping young graduates for self employment. There is, therefore the need to ensure that all the necessary information required for success in entrepreneurship are provided. These includes

1. Entrepreneurship education should be made a general course in all higher institutions so that knowledge and skills so acquired can strengthen the students' confidence in the business world.
2. Nigerian youths should be motivated to rise for the challenges ahead. They should be encouraged to pursue courses in technical education.
3. Government at all levels should provide technical colleges with needed human and material resources to implement their curricula.

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4. Teachers should be equipped through workshops and in-service training to acquire the necessary competence and innovative approaches to the entrepreneurship education.
5. Skill acquisition programmes can be organized periodically where talks on entrepreneurship and practical participation will be carried out. Workshop on capacity building and skill acquisition will go a long way to ensure technological advancement and rapid growth/development of the society.
6. Government should as a matter of national policy remove all constraints that contribute to high production costs in industries. This would enable the private sector to absorb more labour.
7. Nigeria is an agricultural country. The agricultural sector should be promoted through a package of incentives to encourage young graduates to take up careers in agriculture. All the tiers of government should be involved in the development of the sector.

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