

# PROMOTING SELF RELIANCE AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS THROUGH ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS

***Dr. Fidelia N. Iwuamadi***  
***Curriculum Studies Department,***  
***Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education,***  
***Owerri.***

And

***Johnson Ofoegbu***  
***Education Foundations Department,***  
***Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education,***  
***Owerri.***

## **Abstract**

*Unemployment is one of the problems that is facing the Nigerian society which has led to many societal vices and one of the ways to solve the problem is to make the secondary school students self-reliant by promoting entrepreneurial skill acquisition among them. The paper thus seeks ways of achieving this by looking at the following issues: the state of unemployment in Nigeria, the need to promote the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills at the secondary school level of education and problems militating against the acquisition of these skills. Conclusion was reached and suggestions made.*

## **Introduction**

The unemployment situation in Nigeria today has become a source of concern to both the government and the populace at large. Unemployment arises where able bodied and willing persons who are qualified and capable for a job at a given wage do not find the employment opportunity to do the job. Keynold (1990) is of the opinion that unemployment could be voluntary or involuntary. Voluntary unemployment occurs when there is a job available but the unemployed person is not willing to accept it at the giving wage rate. Involuntary unemployment is a situation which exists when members of the labour force are willing and able to work but does not find paid jobs.

Drighon, (1971) in Nwana (2009) described unemployment as a situation where those who have no employment are available for work and have engaged in job-seeking activities. Total labour force according to the National Population Commission (NPC), comprises all persons aged 15 to 64 years, excluding students, home-keepers, retired persons, stay at home parents and persons unable to work or not interested in working.

The genesis of unemployment in Nigeria can be traced back to the pre-independence era. This period witnessed the type of education that was British-oriented grammar schools aimed at producing white collar-job seekers. Fafunwa (1974) called it formal education that was of the liberal arts viz: Reading, Writing and Arithmetic - the 3Rs. Nwana (2009) added that the curriculum was not for all round development of the learner because the aspects of science and technology which would have created entrepreneurial skills for self reliance were ignored. He further noted that the curriculum kept on producing subservient Nigerians who were tied to the white collar jobs such as gardeners, stewards, interpreters, catechists, clerks, house-keepers etc. The education made them parasitic consumers and not effective producers.

With independence from 1960, this form of education was discovered to be non-functional hence, there was a shift to the vocational form of education. The Ashby report on investment in education as reported by Fafunwa (1974), recommended the inclusion of vocational subjects such as, Agriculture, Accounting, Home Economics, Introductory Technology, Typing etc. into the secondary school curriculum in Nigeria. This also led to the establishment of vocational and technical colleges, and comprehensive high schools. These efforts were geared towards providing learners with entrepreneurial skills but the ability of the students to imbibe, develop, use these entrepreneurial skills to establish and sustain businesses is a problem. Igbo, (2001) noted that entrepreneurship implies the willingness and ability of an individual to seek investment opportunities in an environment and be able to establish and run an enterprise successfully based on identified opportunities.

The Nigerian government recognized the need for entrepreneurial skills that was why the National Policy on Education (2004) emphasized that secondary education should aim at inspiring students with the desire for achievement and self-improvement both at school and in later life. Students who acquired these entrepreneurial skills are capable of becoming gainfully self-employed and subsequent employers of labour.

The issues discussed in this paper include the following:

- The state of unemployment in Nigeria.
- The need to promote the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills at the secondary level of education
- Entrepreneurial skills at the secondary level of education
- Problems militating against the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills.
- Conclusion and suggestions.

### **The State of Unemployment in Nigeria**

Every year, large number of graduates is produced from Nigerian universities but very few are gainfully employed. The reason for this is not far-fetched as the 1970s witnessed an era of oil boom when emphasis shifted from agriculture to petroleum-based economy and little or no effort was made towards the industrialization of the economy.

Statistics on the national labour force released by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) (2009) indicated that about 9,969,649 Nigerians were unemployed as at March 2009. The report further revealed that the total unemployment rate constituted about 19.7% of the entire labour force put at 50, 607,213 and that unemployment was

highest in Bayelsa State, one of the states in the Niger Delta region followed by Katsina State and then Akwa Ibom also a Niger Delta State. However, Plateau State recorded the lowest rate of unemployment followed by Ogun State, then Benue. The Bureau further reported that the highest number of the unemployed fell within 22 and 44 years age bracket, indicating that the young and vibrant Nigerians suffered more unemployment challenges. Following closely were those between 15- 25 years while the elderly classified into 45 years and above has the least unemployment level. Gender analysis also showed that males were more unemployed than females.

There are also greater concerns that the number of people without jobs now may have increased considerably following mass sack especially in the banking sector prompted by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) reform of that particular segment of the economy. Additionally, the introduction of Universal Basic Education (U.B.E) which gave rise to increase in enrollment in the school system subsequently gave rise to an increase in the number of students graduating from school each year. Some other causes of unemployment as listed by Nwana (2009) include:

1. Low level of industrialization/lack of essential raw materials.
2. Poor technology
3. Population explosion
4. Rural-urban migration
5. Geographical immobility of labour (statism, tribal, and ethnic affiliation)
6. Seasonal nature of some industries
7. Subsistence Agriculture
8. Over-dependence on one source economy e.g crude oil
9. Obnoxious quota system.

The consequence of unemployment is enormous both on individuals and the society at large. Nwana (2009) also highlighted some of these effects to include:

1. Loss of personal income
2. Fall in national revenue/income
3. Internal and external brain drain
4. Increase in social vices and crimes such as armed robbery, prostitution, abortion, kidnapping, thuggery, rape and cultism
5. Poor standard of living (poverty)
6. Political instability/protest

It is the opinion of the writer that with functional entrepreneurial skill acquisition programme in the school system in general and in secondary level in particular, the level of unemployment will reduce drastically.

### **The Need to Promote the Acquisition of Entrepreneurial Skills at the Secondary Level of Education**

Thousands of graduates are being produced every year and all these graduates compete for very few or nonexistent job opportunities. As has been explained earlier unemployment has adverse effects such as anti-social behaviours and thus the situation calls for a reappraisal of the education programmes and has underscored the need for

## Academic Scholarship

---

functionality in education. Making a case for functional education, professor Obioma, the executive secretary of Nigerian Educational Research Development Council (NERDC), stated that education being regarded globally as an instrument for social and economic reconstruction is intricately linked to nation building. Those nations in which citizens have gained functional education have a comparative that the central focus of functional education is huge investment in Technical/Vocational Education and Training (TVET), inclusive education, access, equity and quality assurance as well as the need for government and relevant stakeholders to key in to the new dynamics of education through curriculum diversification, ICT, life-long learning, networking and social responsibility.

Educationists are challenged with designing effective learning opportunities for entrepreneurial skill acquisition from the secondary level of education. These programmes as suggested by Sexton and Uplon (1984) should emphasize individual activities over group activities, be relatively unstructured and present problems that require a novel solution under conditions of ambiguity and risk. Additionally, students must be prepared to thrive in the unstructured and uncertain nature of entrepreneurial environment. This is capable of developing individual student's entrepreneurial acumen or ability.

Iloeye (1999) in Iwuamadi (2009) sees an entrepreneur as a person who makes money by starting or running a business especially when this involves taking financial risks. He further listed some characteristics of entrepreneurship to include: reasonable risks, self confidence, hard work, patience, tenacity, stability, accepting success or failure, setting plans for goals as well as initiatives while Kuratko and Hodetts (2004) added that the essential ingredients of entrepreneurship include, the willingness to take calculated risks in terms of time, equity or careers, the ability to formulate an effective venture, the creative skill to harness needed resources, the fundamental skills of building solid business plan and finally, the vision to recognize opportunities where others see chaos, contradiction and confusion.

Ijere, (1991) also added that entrepreneurship is not limited to any cultural, geographical or racial group, or the only preserve of large or small scale industries but rather it ranges from peasant farmer, palm wine tapper, oil miller etc, to the highly astute business men and women engaged in small, medium and large scale industrial, commercial and agricultural enterprises with modern and sophisticated technologies.

It has become imperative that these entrepreneurial skills should be taught in the secondary school level so that those who could not progress to the universities could establish small scale enterprises, manage them, progress in them and make a living out of them.

In order to make the curriculum of Senior Secondary Education responsive to the needs and aspirations of the society among which is the creation of employment opportunities for the teaming graduates, there is serious move to restructure the curriculum to make it functional. To this effect the National Education Research Development Council (NERDC) organized a round table dialogue on the Senior Secondary Education Curriculum in April 2010. This dialogue was attended by deans of faculties of education, rectors of polytechnics, provosts of colleges of education and the

minister of education. The minister, Prof. Ruqayatu Rufuai while addressing the roundtable dialogue, explained the rationale for restructuring the Senior Secondary Education Curriculum (SSEC) which she said was based on global acceptable practices and the inclusion of skills and competencies such as civic education, computer studies/ICT and other 34 Trade/entrepreneurship subjects like GSM maintenance, photography, cosmetology, tourism, etc.

The crux of this paper is to seek ways of ensuring that the Vocational and Technical programmes enshrined in the secondary education curriculum are effectively implemented to promote the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills. Some of the areas in the SSE curriculum in which students are expected to develop entrepreneurial skills as enshrined in the Nigerian Policy on Education (2004: 21) at the junior secondary education level include: Agriculture, Business Studies, Home Economics, Local Crafts, Computer Education and Fine Arts while at the senior secondary they are: Agriculture, Applied Electricity, Auto Mechanism, Book-keeping and Accounting, Building construction, Commerce, Computer Education, Electronics, Clothing and Textiles, Food and Nutrition, Home management, metal work, Technical Drawing, Woodwork and Shorthand.

### **Challenges Associated with Promoting Entrepreneurial Skills among Secondary School Students**

Promoting entrepreneurial skills among secondary school students is not without challenges. Some of these challenges are identified below.

**Poor Funding:** Poor funding has been identified as one of the challenges that face many Nigerian educational programmes. United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) recommended that 26% of each nation's annual budget should be allocated to education but the National the psyche of Nigerian youths to a great extent.

**Inadequately Trained Teachers:** Lack of Vocational and Technical manpower has constituted the major problem with promoting student's interest in entrepreneurial skills. This is so because teachers cannot give what they don't have. . It may be difficult for any teacher to teach any skill he does not possess no matter how good he may be in teaching methodology. In some cases, equipments were left to rot away because there are no trained teachers to handle them.

**Lack of Maintenance:** Government spent large sums of money in the purchase and installation of various equipments and machines required for effective implementation of the vocational skills in the technical secondary schools across the nation while the schools were starved of the fund to maintain them. The effect was that the equipments and tools were recklessly abandoned and in some cases, they were carted away by thieves due to lack of security.

**Poor Attitude of Students/Poor Public Image:** Vocational and entrepreneurial programmes do not attract the kind of glamour that goes with other professional courses like Engineering, Medicine, Law, Accountancy, Banking and Finance etc. This is because the perception students /parents have about vocational skill acquisition is that they are for less able or less intelligent students who are not succeeding in academic programmes or for children from poor families.

**Lack of Industrial Work Experience (SIWES):** This industrial work experience is a programme organized for students to expose them to the practical experience in industries relevant to their areas of specialization before they are awarded diplomas, degrees or NCE in their relevant fields. It is noteworthy that learners learn better by doing or practice but presently the few industries and factories find it difficult to absorb these students. Even when they do, adequate supervision is not given.

**Prospects/Suggestions.**

All hopes are not lost in the quest to ensure that students at the secondary school level develop interest in entrepreneurial skills. But a lot needs to be done in the areas suggested below.

1. Adequate infrastructure, tools, technical and vocational equipment required for the programmes should be supplied to schools in large quantities to cater for the increasing population of students.
2. More vocational teachers should be recruited and the existing ones should also be retrained from time to time through workshops, seminars and conferences to enable them learn to handle and operate the tools, equipments and machines used in vocational training.
3. There should be serious value re-orientation among youths to create awareness about the value in honest labour. Furthermore, more recognition should be given to hard work than ill gotten wealth.
4. Proper guidance and counseling is needed to channel students' interests to the areas where their skills and potentials can be properly tapped.
5. Career oriented associations, such as horticulture clubs, science clubs, technology clubs, young farmers clubs etc, should be encouraged in our secondary schools. These clubs and associations have a way of bringing students with common interest and potentials together to embark on worthy projects and competitions which will help the members to express their inherent potentials.
6. Exhibitions of technical products, skills and innovative ideas should be organized either on termly or yearly basis. This will encourage healthy competition among students and help them practice the various skills they have learnt in the classroom.
7. Students should be taken out on excursions and field trips to various industries and factories. This will offer them the opportunity to see some of the equipments which they do not have in their schools workshops and laboratories and also avail them the opportunity to see the various manufacturing processes and interact with the manufacturers.

8. Career week should be incorporated in the school calendar during which public lectures, seminars and workshops involving business consultants, small and medium scale entrepreneurs and industrialists will feature. This will expose students to the job opportunities in their vocations and also the various business ventures they can go into on graduation.

### **Conclusion**

It has been observed that the problem with Nigerian educational system has never been with policy formulation but with the effective implementation of such policies. A closer look will reveal that the secondary education curriculum is well articulated to equip the learners with entrepreneurial and life-coping skills, and if strictly and effectively implemented will lead to the production of people who are equipped with one skill or the other that will enable them live independently as an entrepreneur rather than job seekers. This underscores the need to encourage students of secondary school level to develop interest in entrepreneurial skills acquisition as it will not only make them self-reliant and self-employed but independent and job creators. This will also go a long way to reduce the crime rate in the country.

### **References**

- Adenipekun, O. (2010) Stakeholders seek evolution of education policy, *Vanguard* 3<sup>rd</sup> February, Pg 14
- Fafunwa, A.B. (1974), *History of education in Nigeria*. London George and Union..
- Igbo, C.A. (2001). Towards inculcating entrepreneurship skills in senior secondary schools home economics. *Journal of Home Economics Education* 1 (1) 46 -51
- Iloeje, I.C. (1999). Incorporating entrepreneurial skills into home economics curriculum for Nigerian Tertiary Institutions *Nigerian Journal of Curriculum Studies*. 5(3)
- Iwuamadi, F.N. (2009) Integrating Entrepreneurial Skills in Social Studies Teacher Education. *Approaches in International Journal of Research Development* 8 (3) 173 -179
- Kuratko, D.F. & Hodgetts, R.M. (2004). *Entrepreneurship: Theory, Process Practice* Mason, OH; South Western Publishers.
- Keynold, S. (1990). *Macro-Economic for Colleges*. Britain: Cambridge University
- Nwana, S. (2009) Technology Education: A panacea to Unemployment in Nigeria. *Multidisciplinary Journal of Research Development*. 12 (3) 31 -37

Academic Scholarship

---

- Nwachukwu, O. (2010) Nigeria Unemployment rate rises to 10 million file:/// E: / increase of unemployment. Htm
- Obioma, G. (2010) *Nigerian educational research and development council* Abuja.
- Onwuachu, W.C. Integrating entrepreneurial skills in biology teacher education. Unpublished Seminar Paper Presented to Faculty of Education, Abia State University, Uturu.
- Olubuisuyi, H. (2010). Government drives tertiary institutions to develop new teacher education programmes *Vanguard* 29<sup>th</sup> April Pg 14
- Sexton, D.L. & Upton, N.E (1984) Entrepreneurship education: Suggestions for increasing effectiveness. *Journal of Small Business Management* 22 (4) 18 -25.