

THE ROLE OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION IN REDUCING THE RATE OF YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Youth unemployment is an ill wind in any society where it exists. The paper discussed the importance of education in the development of nations. Education is the bedrock of any development. Entrepreneurship education was defined and discussed. The role it plays on youth unemployment was fully explained. The paper also discussed the factors militating against the roles of entrepreneurship education in reducing the rate of youth unemployment. The paper concluded by suggesting that parents' and students' negative attitudes towards entrepreneurship education should change and that entrepreneurship education programme be effectively implemented and sustained. Suggestions were equally made on how to sustain entrepreneurship education in Nigeria.

Education remains the most fundamental force for advancing socio-economic development of any country. Education is the bedrock of any development. Functional education may lead to all round development because each sector complements the other. According to Rufai (2012), education is critical for the long-term success of Nigeria. Education is central to the actualization of the Federal Government Transformation Agenda because of its crucial role in developing skills to drive other sectors of the economy. Education in Nigeria is an instrument “par excellence” for effective national development (FRN) (2004).

In as much as education is important, more important is the type and system of education. The nation’s former education system turned out graduates who cannot engage themselves in entrepreneurial activities because they lack the skills and competencies required to become successful entrepreneurs. The former education system was concerned with training people for paid employment which is in short supply compared with the number of graduates seeking for employment.

According to Uzoagulu (2012), a viable option for the unemployment situation in Nigeria is entrepreneurship education which fundamentally will prepare individuals for self-employment and self-reliance. Entrepreneurship education prepares individuals to be properly equipped with saleable skills and competencies needed to manage business, as well as develop positive attitudes and innovation for self-reliance rather

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than depending on the government for employment (Uzoagulu 2012). The current experience of various social vices in Nigeria calls for a functional education. Our education system needs to be re-structured and re-oriented towards entrepreneurial education.

Wiki (2012), identified four major education challenges to include “lack of functional skills in school graduates particularly in areas of trade/ entrepreneurship”. This challenge has given rise to the ever increasing number of youth unemployment in the country. The four cardinal points of National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) include:

- Wealth creation
- Employment generation
- Poverty reduction, and
- Value re-orientation

Nigeria recognizes education as playing a functional role in empowering the people to attain the four cardinal points of NEEDS. It should however be noted that it is an instrument that empowers youths to be in control of their future. According to Nnamani (2007), entrepreneurship education is a key that opens the way to economic growth and development. Entrepreneurship education is about individual’s ability to turn ideas into action, to be innovative, take the initiative, take risks, plan and manage projects with a view to achieving set objectives. For individuals to possess the right kind of skills that will enable them to be self-employed, they need more than understanding of entrepreneurship as a mere factor of production. National Directorate of Employment (NDE) (1988) describes the entrepreneur as the man who perceives business opportunities and take advantage of the scarce resources to use them profitably. According to this concept and philosophy, it is not enough to be an entrepreneur just managing an enterprise, rather the entrepreneur must be an originator of profitable business ideas, possess the ability to gain command of and combine resources in a new and better way to make it more profitable, and he will be prepared to risk his personal energy and financial resources to achieve unpredictable results. Entrepreneurship involves taking advantage of opportunity before it becomes known to everyone else. Furthermore, Osuala (1999), states that an entrepreneur possess a willingness to take risk while others stand to talk, identify opportunities to which others are blind, and develop optimum confidence in themselves well beyond that of others.

What then is Entrepreneurship Education?

Entrepreneurship education according to Oduma (2012) is learning directed towards developing in young people those skills, competencies, understanding and attributes which will equip them to be innovative to be able to identify, create, initiate and successfully manage personal, community business and work opportunities including working for themselves.

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Ashmore cited in Oduma (2012), noted that entrepreneurship education seeks to prepare people especially youths to be responsible, enterprising individuals who become entrepreneurs of entrepreneurial thinkers and who will contribute to economic development and sustainable community. It is not just about teaching someone how to run a business, but also encouraging creative thinking and promoting a strong sense of self-worth and accountability. Students learn how to create business through entrepreneurship education. Entrepreneurship education is a force that mobilizes other resources to meet the unmet demands; it is the process of creating value by pulling together a unique package of economic resources to exploit a business opportunity. Entrepreneurship education equips the recipients with the necessary skills, knowledge, ability, characteristics, interest and motivation to be effective entrepreneurs. It assists the beneficiaries in expanding their individual skills, talents, knowledge and competencies and makes them become successful entrepreneurs.

A critical analysis of the various definitions of entrepreneurship education indicates that it enhances self-employment and promote national development.

Youth Unemployment

Unemployment is a state of joblessness and or idleness of one with labour requirements, potentials, skills and competencies, Bosa in (Oduma, 2012). Unemployment is a phenomenon that rises when members of a country's labour force are unable to obtain their goals of participation in gainful occupation due to a situation in which supply of labour significantly exceeds demand for it (Okafor, 2005). Due to declining growth and global economic meltdown, the employment situation in Africa, especially in Nigeria has become critical. Graduate or youth unemployment is one of the serious socio-economic problems confronting many developing countries in Africa. Some of the major causes of youth unemployment are skills miss-match and lack of employment opportunities. Nigeria's formal education system in the recent past seem to be continuously turning out people who are ill prepared to help in the development of the country. The education system is a process of preparing the recipients for non-existent white-collar jobs. The International Labour Organization (ILO) cited in Oduma (2012), defined unemployment as when people are without jobs and they actively looked for work within the past four months. It is a situation where people that are willing to work and be able to accept wages, find no jobs. Entrepreneurship education is the panacea to youth unemployment in Nigeria.

Entrepreneurship Education is a Panacea to Youth Unemployment

Entrepreneurship education enables its beneficiaries stand on their own because of the business knowledge, skills and creative abilities they have gained which are also needed for self-employment. Entrepreneurship education is a functional education centered on making the graduates to be job producers rather than job seekers. Entrepreneurship education provides meaningful education for the youths which could make them self-reliant and subsequently engage them to drive profit and be self-independent. Entrepreneurship education equips the recipients with skills, attitudes, aptitude and competencies to become job creators or employers of labour by identifying opportunities and properly harnessing them for employment creation.

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It creates jobs through the formation of new enterprises, especially small and medium scale enterprises. Entrepreneurship education gives information on where and how to get financial and technical assistance when the need arises. This type of education gives the youths the financial literacy skills needed to start their businesses. Entrepreneurship education develops specific entrepreneurial skills in a specific vocation in the students while they are in school. These skills enable the newbie entrepreneur to gain entry into a new business and progress in it. Oduma (2012) states that there exists a wide range of vocational skills from which students can avail themselves the opportunity to develop their skills in readiness for entrepreneurial venture.

It equips the beneficiaries with business skills. Youths/graduates need to understand business strategies like planning, proper financial recording, office management, investment and saving skills that enable them visualize and utilize business opportunities within their environment.

It builds the spirit of being entrepreneurs in the mind of the recipients which makes them find new opportunities in business or more opportunities in an existing business. Entrepreneurs perceive a need and gather together the necessary inputs like capital, manpower and utilizes them to solve the need.

Factors Militating Against Entrepreneurship Education Reduction of Youth Unemployment

Unemployment is a phenomenon that arises when members of a country's labour force are unable to fulfill their goals of participating in gainful occupation due to a situation in which supply of labour significantly exceeds demand for it (Okafor, 2005). Entrepreneurship education is not entirely a panacea for youth unemployment. This is because one can acquire the skills and the knowledge but in a situation where there is no initial capital to start any form of business enterprise such an individual becomes unemployed especially in Nigeria where poverty, sickness and ignorance are the order of the day.

If the government i.e. federal, state and local don't create conducive economic environment for entrepreneurs to operate, unemployment will continue to be the order of the day, the governments should create conducive atmosphere for business enterprises to thrive. Governments' economic policies should be such that will encourage youths with entrepreneurial skills to stand on their own.

If the interest in business is not in the youths, the entrepreneurship education given in the schools is meaningless. Some youths are not interested in small and medium scale enterprises or in certain crafts because of the certificates they possess. They are interested in white collar jobs that are not in existence or inadequate for the job seekers.

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Consequently, if the societal attitude towards entrepreneurs don't change positively, unemployment will continue to increase yearly.

In the 1930s people like Eyo Ita who went abroad for studies in America embraced entrepreneurship education and they came back with the message and even set up schools like Hope Wadell Training Institute and West African Training Institute (WAPI) all in Calabar to train youths in entrepreneurship education but parents and the society had negative attitudes towards that. They wished their children and wards graduates as lawyers, engineers, medical doctors, and other high sounding professions rather than carpentry, tailoring, brick-laying, etc, so the dreams or visions of these early elites were aborted. It is also to be noted that governments have been encouraging entrepreneurship education over the years but the mentality of the youths and parents have not allowed the objective of reducing unemployment be achieved.

Another strong factor is the inadequacy of entrepreneurship education teachers at the secondary school level. It is at the junior secondary schools that the seed of business education sown at the primary school level germinates and is nurtured. Unfortunately, teachers who play this role are lacking. Business education teachers supplied by the colleges of education is very low. Even the few that are produced are not employed in many states because of embargo on employment. This situation gives rise to a kind of vicious cycle. Moju in Tenebe (2014), observed a general shortage of NCE Teachers in some subjects including Business Education.

Conclusion and Recommendations

No nation can grow above her educational system economically, socially, politically and otherwise. There is astronomical increase of youths unemployment in all advancing nations especially Nigeria. This is manifested in the number of youths that are graduating from institutions yearly without any hope of getting employment. The big question is, are these youths employable? Answers to the above question may reveal the causes and solutions of unemployment among the youths in Nigeria. Most of these youths graduate with certificates but lack the skills, knowledge, attitude and aptitude and interest that are required in the world of work. Inegbenobor cited in Ojeaga and Owolabi (2011), states that young men and women leave the universities, polytechnics and colleges of education every year with no hope of securing jobs. They noted that the slow growth of the nation's economy has complicated the problem of youth unemployment.

Garba (2010), opined that Nigeria government is very worried over the increasing rate of unemployment, poverty and general economic crunch in the country. There is general economic melt down globally and is manifesting in various ways. This economic condition has led the past and present administrations to introduce/adopt various economic and developmental strategies like:

National Directorate of Employment (NDE), National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (NEEDS), National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP),

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Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to tackle the ugly situation.

If the present entrepreneurship education at all levels of education is sustained and effective implementation ensured, youth unemployment will be highly reduced if not eradicated. Entrepreneurship education might create the spirit of enterprise in the minds of youths and they may desire to become entrepreneurs rather than waiting for white collar jobs.

It is also recommended that the few vocational and technical teachers produced should be employed. The current scholarship scheme for business education in the universities should be sustained to encourage the business education students. The three tiers of government should make fund (in form of loan) available to encourage entrepreneurs in their business.

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