

REPOSITIONING ENTREPRENEURSHIP SKILLS IN EDUCATION: AN ALTERNATIVE WAY TO COMBAT YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT IN EBONYI STATE

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Abstract

This study serves as a remedy to unemployed youths having posed serious threats and challenges to the nation. These socio-economic unrest calls for different approaches and action for it to be ameliorated. There is need for job creations that will take their mind away from white collar jobs. Three research questions were formulated to guide this study. Descriptive survey was also adopted in the study. The population of the study was one hundred and twenty (120) unemployed graduates. The data collected were analyzed using SPSS versus 20 software. Result of this revealed that there is no significant difference between the employment status of youth and available entrepreneurship skill in education, and also there is no significant difference between the acquisition status of youths and the available skills acquisition before graduation. Results also revealed that youths' attitudes towards technical and vocational education is independent of whether they were employed or not. This is a revelation of an interesting trend among youths of Ebonyi State, who are encouraged to venture into available entrepreneurship skill irrespective of one's employment or acquisition status in order to reduce dependence on government etc. government can also enhance this by making the National Youth Service corps (NYSC) service year skill-acquisition intensive and also make available soft loan to encourage willing and ready youth.

Rapid economic and social development remains the basis for third world countries and indeed remains the hallmark of the goals of the western communities. However, as for Nigeria and other African counties the economies are in terrible condition. The harsh economic situations have been causing social and political tension in

the country. In a developed country, citizens expect their government to provide them with employment opportunities, healthcare, shelter and other basic needs. Unexpectedly, Nigeria is experiencing insecurity, illiteracy, balance of payment deficit, corruption, poor health records, abject poverty, extremely hunger, arson, social disorder, kidnapping, insurgency, crimes political disturbances. The high rate of dependence on white collar jobs is still in fashion.

However, such lucrative jobs are not easy to secure. People who eventually secure such jobs are paid peanut as salary. The impression in the society is that every graduate must get government work and when the reverse is the case it seems that all hope is lost and which discourage youth from furthering their education. Our educational institutions keep on producing jobless graduates every year. The aforementioned situation calls for an alternative way to combat youth unemployment be embracing entrepreneurship skills in education which will serve as a relationship between entrepreneurship education, self-reliance, socio-economic growth and national development. This paper disagrees with policy makers to implement the policies. It will help in national development, which according to Eya and Eya (2015), request for the expunging of major sources of restriction like poverty, unemployment, disrespect to public facilities and prejudice. Can Nigeria be like developed countries without the people acquiring the basic skills and developing the critical and creative

minds needed to manage her country? In this circumstance entrepreneurship skills education assumes a vital tools in the education of the youth to have capacity to provide a lasting solutions to their individual barrier, make them to become entrepreneurs, in real life learning experiences in time of taking risks, manage the results, and learn from the outcomes. Entrepreneurship skills are important in promoting productivity, healthy competition and innovation, creating jobs for teeming unemployed youths and revitalizing economies (Ritche and Lam in Eya and Eya 2015).

Conceptual Framework

Meaning of Entrepreneurship

The word “entrepreneurship” has a history that dates back to 1732, when the Irish economist Richard Cantillon used the word entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship has been defined by various professions to mean many things since the middle age (Igbo, 2006). Defining entrepreneurship is complex and there is no universal acceptable definition. However, the summary of what entrepreneurship means will reflect the individual's definer's point as in (Oviawe and Ekhovbiye, 2008). According to Gana in Uzoma and Adali (2013), entrepreneurship is the ability to seek investment opportunities and establish an enterprise based on identified opportunities. The entrepreneur is the one who takes risks, is focused and energized by motive of making profits. Ochonogo in Uzoma and Adali (2013) defined entrepreneurship as the art which involves recognizing an investment opportunity, mobilizing resources and insisting to exploit that opportunity in a new way. In the view of Iromaka, (2006) Entrepreneurship is a person or individual with the capacity, ability and courage to take calculate risk, is innovative and who establishes and manages a business for purpose of profit, growth, and wealth creation in an economy. Most young people in Nigeria do not possess organizational skills, including time

management, leadership quality and interpersonal skills which are transferable skills sought by employers. They also lack problem solving skills, decision-making abilities and team spirit. Entrepreneurship is a key driver of any economy as wealth and most jobs are created by small businesses started by entrepreneurially minded individuals, many of whom go on to creates big investment.

What Entrepreneurship Education is about?

There was a consensus believe that Schumpeter, who was, perhaps, the first major economist to analyze the role of entrepreneurship in economic development argued that "to study the entrepreneur is to study the central figure in modern economic history." He attributed innovation to the entrepreneur. For instance, “entrepreneurship as any pedagogical programme or process of education for entrepreneurial attitudes and skills, which involves developing certain personal qualities. It is therefore not exclusively focused on the immediate creation of new businesses." (Fayolle, Kyroand and Ulijn, 2006).

According to Uzoma and Adali (2013) define entrepreneurship education as “the structured formal conveyance of entrepreneurship competencies which in turn refers to the concepts, skills and mental awareness used by individuals during the process of starting and developing their growth oriented ventures.

However, entrepreneurship education should not be mistake with general business and economic studies; its objective is to promote creativity, innovation, self-employment, and may include the following elements: and providing specific business skills and knowledge of how to start a company and run it successfully.

The Vitality of Entrepreneurial Skills in Education and Influences on Youth Employment

The economic importance of the entrepreneur in world history has been recognized for several decades. Entrepreneurship is a key driver of booming economy of any nation. Wealth and a high majority of jobs are created by small businesses started by entrepreneurially minded individuals, many of whom go on to create big businesses. People exposed to entrepreneurship frequently express that they have more opportunity to exercise creative freedoms, higher self-esteem, and an overall greater sense of control over their own lives. As a result, many experienced business people political leaders, economists, and educators believe that fostering a robust entrepreneurial culture will accelerate individual and collective economic and social success on a local, national, and global scale. Given this, it is important to prepare youth and adults to succeed in an entrepreneurial economy.

Entrepreneurship education should be a lifelong learning process, starting from primary school and progressing to all levels of education, including adult education. In this way, youths will have progressively more challenging educational activities; experiences that will enable them to develop the insight needed to discover and create entrepreneurial opportunities; and the skillful ones to successfully start and manage their own businesses to take merit of these opportunities. Entrepreneurial activity and the resultant financial gain are always of benefit to a state in particular and country in general. Thus, having entrepreneurial skills will enable one recognize real opportunity when it comes across. Entrepreneurial skills and attitudes provide benefits to society, even beyond their application to business activity.

In an attempt to ascertain the way forward and in response to the current socio-economic problems of the state as earlier

mentioned, questions were raised by various people as to what is the right education for Nigeria and what kind of education may be suitable in propelling economic development in the country?, so many suggestions were made in favour of refocusing the current Nigeria's skills in education system to reflect the present realities. It would be recalled that in Nigeria, technical and vocational education has received a lot of attention at both state and federal levels. Different tertiary institutions were found to offer technical education. Eya and Eya (2015), the aims of technical education are:

- (i) Providing the technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, industrial, commercial and economic development in the country;
- (ii) Giving an introduction to professional studies in engineering and information computer technology;
- (iii) To impact the necessary skills leading to the production of craftsmen, technicians and other skilled personnel who will be enterprising and self-reliant;
- (iv) Enabling young to have an intelligent understanding of the increasing complexity of technology.

Technical and vocational institutions where designed largely to prepare technicians to fit in the society after leaving school. According to Fakae (2005), "emphasis is on skill-acquisition and sound scientific knowledge, which gives ability to the use of hand and machine for the purpose of production, maintenance and self-reliant". Despite these well-articulated policies without full implementation, the youth unemployment remains so noticeable. The Ebonyi state government is very much worried about the increasing arte of youth unemployment rate, poverty and generally economic depression in the country. Many expertise are of the view that vocational skills training and technical education cannot provide the necessary remedy

to the problem of unemployment. Onifade (2008) has stressed that vocational education can never provide permanent solution to unemployment as some of us may think. Ojukwu in Abubakar (2010) observed that “the threat of job scarcity and growing unemployment creates doubts and pessimism on the programmes of vocational technical schools and the educational system in general”. As soon as Nigeria gained independence from Britain government so many questions came up whether the country is to maintain western way of doing things. Although some changes were made as time goes on to reflect changing demand, meager achievement has been recorded in ameliorating the difference socio-economic challenges in Nigeria.

The power that be, is expected to play a major functions in providing a conducive atmosphere and policy framework for getting good results of this transformation agenda. Students while in school need to acquire the necessary skills acquisition and training to self-reliant. The objective of the study is to investigate the various strategies government has adopted to combat youth unemployment which include NDE (National Directorate of Employment), Ebonyi state Governor’s Wife initiated Family Succor and Upliftment Foundation immediately after assumption of office. The Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency (SMEDA) the Nigerian Bank for Commerce and Industry (NBCI) and the Nigerian Youth Service Corps (NYSC), African development Bank etc. have had programmes for entrepreneurship skills development.

Ebonyi state government can only perform its economic function by making sure that the rate of youth unemployment in the country is drastically dwindled. One of the alternative ways is to initiate policies laws that student after graduation will choose skills acquisition related to courses. Secondly, introduce functional skills accusations like phone repairers, tailoring, carpentering, plumbers, block

molders, shoes makers, small farmer for every student, networking business, small scale industries, soap making workshop in every school, establishment of small businesses that will be insight for students on business to start up after school and others. The National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) scheme should be extended to three year purely of entrepreneurship training and equally increase their allowances by 50%. That cannot be achieved through providing employment to all or teeming number of all employable youths into its institutions, agencies and parastatals. Redeveloping entrepreneurship skills training education has been identified as an avenue for providing unemployment youth employment as tools to wipe poverty in Ebonyi State.

Statement of the Problem

The study sees youth unemployment as a major constraint to the country and a big threat to national security which Ebonyi state is not excluded. Regrettably, problems of unemployment as experienced by the educated youths and even the uneducated but skilled youths have become more pathetic in many developing economies, despite the neo-liberal strategies in addressing the issue of enhancing human capital. The aim of this paper is therefore to examine the constraints that impede young people in search of non-existing jobs and the urgent need to orient people of these affected economies particularly Nigerians on imbibing self-employment and entrepreneurship through vocational and entrepreneurial training programmes as a short-term intervention mechanism (Cyril and Chijioke, 2010)

There are several factors that hinder entrepreneurship education in Nigeria: poor knowledge based economy and low spirit of competition, poor enterprising culture, lack of entrepreneurship, teachers, materials and equipment, unavailability of fund, non-

inclusion of entrepreneurship programme in the school curricula, poor societal attitude to Technical and Vocational Education development, inadequate facilities and equipment for teaching and learning, insensitivity of government to enterprise creation and expansion strategy, poor plan and execution of processes of action, Isolated pockets of ineffective programmes and management incompetence (Oviawe and Ekhoobiye, 2008 and Jane, 2010).

The acquisition of right entrepreneurial skills is a mean to achieve success in life. Skills are acquired through training. The problem of this study is to ascertain the level of skills training needs of unemployed youths in Ebonyi State. The youth equipped with entrepreneurial skills acquisition can easily see alternative remedies to challenges or needs, and to adapt with a rising world. This paper is beneficial to policy makers, government, students, unemployed youth, parents, trainers etc. The purpose of this study is to determine the repositioning entrepreneurship skills in education: An alternative way to combat youth unemployment in Ebonyi State. Specifically, this study sets out to:

1. To ascertain the already existing entrepreneurship skills programmes for unemployed youth in Ebonyi State
2. To ascertain the societal attitude to Technical and Vocational Education
3. To find out the level of financing entrepreneurship skills education to tackle youth unemployment.

Research Questions

1. What are the existing entrepreneurship skills programmes for unemployed youth in Ebonyi state?
2. What is the societal attitude to Technical and Vocational Education
3. What are the levels of financing entrepreneurship skills in education to tackle youth unemployment?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated to guide this study and were tested at 0.05 level of confidence:

- Ho1: There is no significant relationship between acquisition status and existing entrepreneurship skills programmes.
- Ho2: There is no significant relationship between employment status and available skill acquisition before graduation.
- Ho3: There is no significant relationship between employment status and the levels of entrepreneurship skills in education.

Methods

The descriptive survey was used for the study. This study was conducted in Ebonyi State. The thirteen Local Government Areas in the state were divided into three zones Ebonyi Central, Ebonyi North and Ebonyi South. Forty (40) unemployed youth from each of the three zones were used for the study. The population used for the study was one hundred and twenty (120) unemployed youth. The questionnaire has 15 items on skills acquisition which face validation of the instrument was done by two experts in technical and vocational education and an expert in the entrepreneurship centre of Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki and Federal University, Ndufu-Alike Ikwo respectively. The questionnaire items had four response options of Very Interested, Interested Very Uninterested and Uninterested. Three Research Assistants were trained in collecting data from the respondents. A total of 120 questionnaires administered and 90 were also returned.

Results

Research Question 1: What are the existing entrepreneurship skills programmes for unemployed youth in Ebonyi state?

Table 1: Existing entrepreneurship skills programmes for youth in Ebonyi state.

Table 1: Existing entrepreneurship skills programmes

S/N	ITEMS	SIGNL. VALUE	DECISION
1.	Tailoring	0.667	Do not reject
2.	Handset repairing skills	0.276	Do not reject
3.	Computer Networking business	0.389	Do not reject
4.	Skills on soap making	0.162	Do not reject
5.	Shoe making skills	0.628	Do not reject

Result of table I above indicated that items number 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 items with the following significant Value of 0.667, 0.276, 0.389, 0.162 and 0.628 respectively. The youth are much very interested to technical and vocational education in Ebonyi state.

From table 1, all the individual null hypotheses was Do not reject at 5% level of significance.

Research Question 2: What is the societal attitude to Technical and Vocational Education?

Table 2: Actual skills acquisition training for students before graduation in Ebonyi State.

Table II: Available skills acquisition before youth graduation

S/N	ITEMS	SIGNL. VALUE	DECISION
6	Cropping	0.001	Reject
7.	Snailing	0.367	Do not reject

8.	Rearing of grass cutters	0.846	Do not eject
9.	Poultry	0.316	Do not eject
10.	Home management	0.423	Do not reject

In table 2 on item 6 showed that youth are not very much Uninterested to venture into cropping as available skills before graduation in Ebonyi State. While items 7, 8, 9, and 10 indicated that youth are interested to learn these skills before leaving school. In table 2, all the individual hull hypothesis (except for item 6) was accepted at 5% level of significance.

Research Question 3: What are the levels of financing entrepreneurship skills in education to tackle youth unemployment?

Table 3: levels of Entrepreneurship skills in education.

S/N	ITEMS	SIGNL. VALUE	DECISION
11.	Small Scale Business	0.915	Do not reject
12.	Soft Credit Loan	0.340	Do not reject
13.	Government Employment	0.177	Do not reject
14.	Skills acquisition Centres	0.604	Do not reject
15.	Motivation of creative youth	0.708	Do not reject

Data collected in table III showed that 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15 with significant value of 0.177 to 0.915 agreed that the above items can help to tackle youth unemployment in Ebonyi State. In table 3 also, all the individual null hypothesis was do not reject at 0.05 level of significance.

Findings

The study made the following findings:

1. Entrepreneurship skills in education can be use an alternative to combat youth unemployment, by making the existing skills compulsory to all students in higher institutions.

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2. The youth are very interested in entrepreneurship skills acquisition in education with sponsorship by the government, now country is passing economic instability.

3. Entrepreneurship skills in education appear on theory than practical in solving problem of youth unemployment in Ebonyi State.

Conclusion

The study identified the entrepreneurship skills are not properly handled by the government. That was the reason youth unemployment were everywhere in the state. In this study an alternative way to solve problems of youth unemployment was exposed. Appropriate measure should be taken to satisfy those needs and to include other skills acquisition in the curriculum for effective and efficient application of the skills in the economic development of the country.

Recommendations

The recommendations include:

1. Entrepreneurship skills in education should be compulsory in every department in the University in Ebonyi State.

2. Government should make the NYSC service year, skill-acquisition intensive especially for those posted to Ebonyi State.

3. National Policy on Education and curriculum should focus more on implementation than making policies by making Industrial Training (IT) to all the discipline.

4. Youths are encouraged to venture into entrepreneurship skills irrespective of their employment or acquisition status to reduce government dependency and upgrade self-sufficient life style.

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