

ENTREPRENEURIAL EDUCATION AS A MEANS OF GENERATING EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR TECHNICAL EDUCATION GRADUATES

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Abstract

The paper critically examines unemployment and the graduate of technical education. It discusses the concept of entrepreneurship as a way of generating employment opportunities. Therefore, this paper focus on developing entrepreneurial skills with particular reference to the Nigerian economy, by increasing the number of educated young technical education graduates in our society, thus making themselves self sufficient and employer of labour. Based on the analysis of entrepreneurial skills development, the following recommendations are made: that the Federal Government should make entrepreneurship compulsory in all higher institutions of learning. Technical educators, who are not competent, should be encouraged to further training, entrepreneurship skills should be built into the curriculum of the different levels of education in the country.

Introduction

The high rate of crime and other social vices in Nigeria can be largely linked to the ever-rising level of unemployment. Unemployment has gradually crept into the long list of economic problems faced by most developing countries of which this nation is one.

Unemployment occurs when a person who is willing and able to work is without a job. The number of unemployed graduates roaming the streets in search of jobs is alarming. With this case unresolved

tertiary institutions in the country yearly turn out more graduates into the labour market thereby increasing the population of street roaming job mongers. The future of every nation is believed to be in the hands of its youths. Therefore these youths have to be well equipped and groomed to be able to face the trials of tomorrow. Tomorrow belongs to the people who prepare today, says an adage, making this future leaders unemployed is surely not the best form of preparation and experience they need.

Current statistics puts unemployment rate in Nigeria at 3.6 million out of a population of 140 million. If children and those outside the working class age are deducted from the total population, it will shock minds to know what percentage that will be represented. Development and growth will remain in dream for any economy with such a figure of unemployed citizens. These unemployed citizens have all it takes to positively contribute to the growth of the nation but in the absence of job opportunities, they engage themselves in anti-social activities like robbery, drugs and human trafficking, cyber fraud (yahoo-yahoo) and the like. Their quest for survival drives them into these acts. However, that is not enough to justify such behaviours and those caught should be made to face the wrath of the law.

Industrialization is the driving force of developed economies and for Nigeria to develop the government must toe their line and invest in the establishment of industries that will side by side create jobs for the unemployed. Agencies like the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) should be better equipped with the necessary finance and resources to function at the state level. This will help in registering all unregistered persons so that whenever a vacancy opens up the qualified ones will be contacted. The registered members of this agency receive allowance monthly for their upkeep. Even though the provided amount seems meager it is very encouraging and commendable. At least the government is starting from

somewhere, as is the case in the west. This largely discourages them from getting involved in crime.

Moreso, the onus to reduce unemployment is not on the government alone, Nigerians have to start thinking of what they can do on their own and stop over depending on the government, self-entrepreneurship must be encouraged. If one person creatively starts something, he gets self-employed and by extending others who will work as employees. Vocational training should be included in school curricula to equip youths with vocational skills that can sustain them in the absence of white-collar jobs. Members should also have this training in their programme. Apart from reducing unemployment, it will serve as a source of revenue generation. What West African neighbours, Ghana, recorded as earning in vocational trade is no small figure, Nigeria tourism will also be boosted through this avenue especially in a society like this richly endowed with natural resources.

Thus, the task of reducing this acute unemployment must be a combined effort and not left to the government to shoulder. If job opportunities are created, crime will reduce, government will get more revenue from taxes and economic growth and development will be faster than imagined. The frequency of youths migrating to European countries will also be managed because what they are going there in search of will be available. It is risky losing these brilliant and talented youths to others who end up using their skills to develop the economies of their

host countries. Records are there to speak for themselves.

Nigeria is a great country enriched with all varieties of natural and mineral resources, manpower and population. Like China which is changing the world through the positive and quantitative contributions from its large population thereby making it a force to reckon with internationally, Nigeria and Nigerians should do same and become the China of Africa.

Unemployment and Technical Education Graduates

One of the strategic objectives of Technical Education is to produce graduates of international standard with appropriate and adequate knowledge and skills in their field of study who will be highly employable and to employ themselves. The question is: have we achieved the objective? Many technical education graduates today are unemployed, though they have paper qualifications. These unemployed graduates and non-graduates roam around in the big cities and towns. The trend is that these youths, without jobs engage in all types of gengstarilism. Any little problem within the social systems, these groups of persons would be seen around and before you know it, constitute themselves into miscreants to cause trouble and sometime claim lives. Besmart-Digbori (2001) observed that most of these graduates and non-graduates lack the willingness and ability to seek out investment opportunities in an environment and be able to establish and

run an enterprise successfully based on the numerous opportunities abound in the country. Furthermore, it is well known fact that majority of graduates of institutions lack the expected technical, communicative skills, conception and human relation skills and competencies, required for self reliance and nation building which find expression in entrepreneurship.

The unemployment situation, which also causes youth restiveness in the nation, especially in the Niger-Delta, has prompted the Federal Government in encouraging entrepreneurship and in order for the Federal Government to curb the unemployment situation which led to mass impoverishment of the people and calm youth restiveness has initiated poverty alleviation and economic empowerment programmes. The question is: how long would this last without proper educating the youth?

According to Obi (2004), "might, it has been observed, is not when you subdue many combats but might is when you subdue your soul" and something worth doing, they say, is worth doing well. Therefore, successful entrepreneurship has some rules and principles as entrepreneurial endeavour if not mastered and followed, can mar your business career and future. Hence entrepreneurship should be introduced as compulsory courses in all departments in every tertiary institution by government and other agencies in charge. If the technique of doing something could be learnt informally through training, students would not have problems when they are

out of school. A majority of them can be self-employed, and employable, this would reduce unemployment situation in Nigeria.

The Concept of Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship has emerged over the past two decades as one of the most vital or powerful economic force the nation has ever experience. The growing importance of Entrepreneurship demonstrates the diversity of definitions as attempts to explain what entrepreneurship is all about. Therefore, the concept of entrepreneurship is very broad and a number of perspectives are applicable with range of meanings as follows:

Entrepreneur is a process of creating and running ones own business. The act of entrepreneur is referred to as entrepreneurship. According to Ojarikue (1999) Entrepreneurship is the willingness and ability to identify business opportunities through creativity and innovation and establishing necessary machinery to run business enterprise successfully. Entrepreneurship is usually about small business. A small business is that business that is owned and managed by an individual, influenced in decision making by family members, risk bearer, has a similar organizational structure as big organization, having a small marked share and do not have more than 50 staff. Entrepreneurship is creating and building something of value from practically nothing, creation and distribution of something of value and of benefits to individuals, groups, organizations and society. Timons (1987), Also sees Entrepreneurship as the process of

planning and organizing of small business venture, the marshalling of people and resources to create, develop and implement solution to problem to meet people's needs.

Towards a broad definitions Entrepreneurship concerns the persistent pursuit of opportunity to create wealth through innovation, creation of a product or services that meets customer's needs, using scarce resources in a way that results to the growth of an enterprise, which satisfies the expectation of stakeholders whose roles sustain the business.

However, recently entrepreneurship has been emphasized in the educational instruction of higher institutions of learning in Nigeria. Its relevance is captured in the National Policy for Education (2004), when it emphasizes such things as shared responsibility for the common good of the society and acquisition of competencies necessary for self-reliance FRN (2004). It is therefore; not surprising that entrepreneurship education is receiving a lot of attention due to challenges of living posed by global economic recession. There is no doubt that one has to create something new with different and attractive values in order to increase one's financial status and to have a decent living. Being entrepreneurial means combining personal characteristic with financial resources within your environment and taking advantage of then for rewarding outcomes Meredith, Nelson and Neck (1991:1). It also means having the ability to fund and evaluate business opportunities for rewarding outcome.

Entrepreneurship development means training the trainees to equip them with necessary skills, knowledge, ability, character, interest and the motivation to be effective entrepreneur.

Furthermore, entrepreneurship can be described as a process, which involves the transformation of innovative and creative ideas into profitable activities especially outside an existing organization. The concept of entrepreneur has been associated with several activities concerned with the establishment and operation of business enterprise. These activities include:

1. Identification of investment opportunities.
2. Decision-making regarding available opportunity to exploit.
3. Organisation and management of human and material resources for the attainment of the objectives of the enterprise.
4. Aggregation of the scarce resources for production and distribution of goods and services.
5. Promotion and establishing business enterprise.
6. Innovation and risks bearing.

However, the effective performance of the above activities will lead to growth and survival of business enterprise. Hence, entrepreneurship therefore is imperative for self-reliance and economic development of any nation.

The Entrepreneur

Entrepreneur is a person who foresees needs, organized factors of production, capital, land, labour, ensuring

optimal combination of them to maximize profit. It can be seen as an individual who has foresight of profitable opportunities, willing to take risk in attaining them and having to recognize the needed resources to start and run a business successfully. Inegbenebor (1998), explains that Entrepreneur is single individuals or a group people who gather resources for the purpose of exploiting a market opportunity in order to make profit for themselves. Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) sees small business, as one that is total assets does not exceed 1 million. National Economic Reconstruction Funds (NERFUND) defined small business as one whose annual turnover is not more than 10 million. In my own opinion, it is a business owned and managed by one or more people in order to create goods and services or profit making. Small business in its outfit is categorized into the following:

- a. Partnership
- b. Sole proprietorship
- c. Co-operative society.

Conclusion

The economic success of nations the world over is the result of encouraging and rewarding the Entrepreneurial instinct. It is the Entrepreneur who serves as the spark plug in the economic and social engine, activating and stimulating all economic and social activities. This suggests that Entrepreneurship is a significant factor in the process of any country's economic and social development and occupies a central position in a market economy. The role of

Entrepreneurship in socio-economic development involves more than just increasing per capital output and income, it involves initiating and constituting change in the structure of business and society, which is accompanied by growth and increased output. Many theories have emerged to indicate the link between entrepreneurship and economic growth and socio-economic development of a nation, which make it necessary to examine the role of entrepreneurship in the socio-economic development of a nation.

Recommendations

This paper recommends that:

1. The Federal Government should make entrepreneurship compulsory in all higher institutions and ensure that they implement fully the instruments made and as to assist entrepreneurs in terms of funds.
2. Technical educators, who are not programmatic in their approach to entrepreneurial skill development, should be encouraged to further training to enable them fit into the technical education environment.
3. Entrepreneurship skills should be built into the curriculum of the different levels of education in the country.

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