

Entrepreneurship Education and Sustainable Youth Empowerment in Nigeria

Livinus Ogbondah (Ph.D)

Department of Educational Foundations and Management
Faculty of Education
Ignatius Ajuru University of Education
Nkelivy2002@Gmail.Com

Godspower A. I. Nwogu (Ph.D)

Department of Educational Foundations
Rivers State University of Science and Technology
Nkpolu, Port Harcourt

Abstract

One of the greatest social challenges in Nigeria today is large scale youths unemployment due to non-empowerment of the youths through entrepreneurship education. The youths are the foundation of any society. The energy, vigour, inventiveness, character and orientation define the pace of development and security of any society as such any neglect is devastating. The Nigerian National Youth Development Policy classified all persons of ages 18-35 years who are Nigerians as youths. Entrepreneurship education if fully implemented is a panacea to societal menace perpetrated by the youths. This paper carefully examines the historical perspective of entrepreneurship in Nigeria, conceptual clarification of entrepreneur, entrepreneurship, entrepreneurship education and youth, the rationale for entrepreneurship education in Nigeria, the Nigerian educational system and youth empowerment, entrepreneurship education for sustainable youth empowerment, the danger of non-empowerment of the youths, constraints to entrepreneurship education in Nigeria and proffer some recommendations which include among others that there is need to redesign school curriculum for practical youth empowerment.

Keywords: *Entrepreneurship, Entrepreneur, Youths, Entrepreneurship Education, Empowerment*

Introduction

Entrepreneurship education is a process of training our students at the secondary, undergraduate and post-graduate levels to acquire resourceful skills to enhance productivity and self-reliance in Nigerian society. It is the fulcrum of this paper to examine entrepreneurship education and sustainable youth empowerment in Nigeria. The study tackles the issue at stake from various dimensions such as entrepreneurship in Nigeria: a historical perspective, who is an entrepreneur? What is entrepreneurship? What is entrepreneurship education? who is a youth? The need for entrepreneurship education in Nigeria, the Nigerian educational system and youth empowerment, entrepreneurship education for sustainable youth empowerment, the danger of non-empowerment of the youths, constraints to entrepreneurship education in Nigeria and recommendations for enhancing youth empowerment.

Entrepreneurship education is therefore a veritable tool for empowering youths, elicits sustainability, enhances national development, and prepares the youths for world of work and self-employment.

Entrepreneurship in Nigeria: A Historical Perspective

We shall look at this from two epochs viz:

i. Pre-independence Era:

As early as 1952, Nigeria began to make an unprecedented effort to encourage private investment for economic growth and development with the introduction of Aid to Pioneer Industries Ordinance (APIO). This ordinance provided certificates of recognition to certain industries and granted profit taxation exemption for some industries for two years. In 1957 and 1958, the import relief taxation was granted to foreign companies while in 1959, the Nigerian Industrial Development Bank (NIDB) was founded to purposely support the weak entrepreneurs in industrial production, commerce and agriculture (Osaat, 2012).

ii. Post-independence Era

After independence, the various Nigerian governments introduced several programmes in order to promote entrepreneurship development. They include:

- a) First National Development Plan:- 1962-1968
- b) The Second National Development Plan:- 1970-1975
- c) The Third National Development Plan:-1975-1980
- d) Operation Feed the Nation (OFN): 1976-1979
- e) Green Revolution: 1979-1983
- f) The Fourth National Development Plan:- 1981-1985
- g) Austerity measures: 1983
- h) Directorates of Food, Road and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI): 1985-1993
- i) Better Life for Rural Women: 1985-1993
- j) The Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP): 1986-1992
- k) National Directorate of Employment (NDE): 1986-till date
- l) Open Apprenticeship Scheme: 1987-1996
- m) People's bank of Nigeria (PBN): 1989
- n) Agricultural Development Project (ADP): 1989-2008
- o) Family Support Programme (FSP): 1993-1998
- p) Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP): 1998-2000
- q) National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP): 1999
- r) National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS): 2003
- s) Entrepreneurship Education in Schools from Primary to Tertiary
- t) Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES) 2013-2015
- u) Green Alternative: 2016

However, the impact of these programmes is yet to be felt by Nigerians especially the youths due to policy nurturing and puncturing, hence many youths are unemployed or underemployed.

On the whole, these schemes or programmes would spearhead the government's ambitious programme of eradicating absolute poverty- a condition where the youths are unable to satisfy their most basic requirements for survival in terms of food, clothing, shelter, health, transport, education and recreation. Duplication of functions by a myriad of agencies involved in

anti-poverty schemes and programmes in the past had been blamed for their ineffectiveness and abysmal failure.

Conceptual Clarification

The following concepts will be clarified for better understanding.

i. Who is an Entrepreneur?

The word entrepreneur originated from French language. The word was first used to describe people engaged in military expedition in 16th century. Later in the 18th century, entrepreneur was frequently applied by the French to contractors handling government projects and later used for architects. In another development, entrepreneur was first applied to business by Richard Cantillio an Irish man who lived in France in 1755. Cantillio said that the essence of the function of the entrepreneur is to bear risk (Akanbi, 2002). Successful entrepreneurs seek out investment opportunities in an environment, create jobs, add more value to society's well-being, lead to greater utilization of both human and material resources, indeed contribute to society's advancement and empower individuals. Akanbi further identified the following personal characteristic of an entrepreneur which includes:

1. Commitment
2. Motivation
3. Taking-risk
4. Making decisions
5. Financial situation
6. Family situation
7. Self confidence;
8. Drive and energy;
9. Task (result) orientation
10. Leadership; and
11. Taking personal responsibility

Nwangwu (2007) defined an entrepreneur as a person who possesses the ability to recognize and evaluate business opportunities, assemble the necessary resources to take advantage of them and take appropriate action to ensure success. Centre for Entrepreneurship and Development Research (CEDR) (2007) opined that an entrepreneur possesses the analytical and ICT skills required in work place, problem solving/decision making skills, technical skills as exhibited by his ability to appropriately apply required knowledge to the workplace, proficient in the use of instrument due to adequate practical experience, sound mind that easily comprehends problems and high solution profferability.

Nwangwu further stressed that an entrepreneur is a creative person and risk taker who can:

- a. Recognize a business opportunity
- b. Critically analyze such opportunity
- c. Take a decision to act upon the analysis
- d. Assemble the required human and material resources.
- e. Execute a programme resulting to a new business enterprise and profits

The Nigerian educational system is expected to produce youths with the above characteristics, who upon graduation will be employers of labours and not job seekers.

i. **What is Entrepreneurship?**

The concept of entrepreneurship is a contemporary issue in Nigeria. A dictionary of economics in Osaat (2012) defines entrepreneur as “owner manager” of a firm. Entrepreneurship, therefore, becomes the process of enterprising – bold or forward to undertake new projects, resolute, active, or prompt to attempt great or untried schemes. Webster Dictionary (1979) informs that entrepreneurship is a process of carrying out final initiation for the purpose of making profit.

In a quest to stem the staggering unemployment rate in the country, the Federal Government in 1987 set up the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) which was saddled with the following responsibilities:

1. To reduce unemployment among youths and university graduates in the country by creating employment opportunities.
2. To provide enabling atmosphere for self-reliance.
3. To foster entrepreneurship.
4. To encourage the culture of maintenance and repair.

Since then, NDE has been making frantic efforts to discharge these responsibilities by providing the youths and young graduates the facilities to set up their own businesses. But unfortunately, youths do not possess basic and sound knowledge of entrepreneurial education. Nwangwu (2007) asserted that entrepreneurship transcends skill acquisition. It is the acquisition of skills creativity, confidence, drive, courage in order to create employment for self and others. It involves exploring, evaluating, exploiting business opportunities and pursuing such opportunities to a successful end in the form of business enterprise.

It is a concept that is focused on learning for achievement and desire to build and surmount obstacles in order to achieve success irrespective of seen and unforeseen difficulties. Oladejo (2012) posits that entrepreneurship is a process of change where innovation is the most vital function of the entrepreneur. It is the basic requirement for economic development in a free enterprise or mixed economy.

ii. **What is Entrepreneurship Education?**

According to Osaat (2012) entrepreneurship education deals with the process of undertaking or business initiatives as the application of knowledge acquired competently for the purpose of self-reliance, self-sustenance and for the overall society’s development. Williams (2006) views entrepreneurial education as acquisition of practical knowledge and skills which are imparted simultaneously for self-employment and self-reliance. Entrepreneurship education is a process of training secondary, undergraduate and postgraduate students to acquire resourceful skills to aid productivity and self-reliance in society.

In the same perspective, Ayeduse (2011) supports that entrepreneurship education will provide meaningful education for undergraduates which could make them to be self-reliant and provide them with creative and innovative skills necessary for identifying new business opportunities. Ivowi (2009) emphasized that educating an individual entrepreneurially makes him to be equipped with enabling skills to live peacefully and productively in a dynamic society. Entrepreneurship education as a programme of study has been proved to be a useful and practical system of education that provides immediate employment for young school leavers. It will therefore, prepare undergraduates adequately to be resourceful and to have full initiative for managerial competencies.

iii. **Who is a Youth?**

Hornby (2001) defines youth as the state of being young, that is, the period between childhood and adult age. Adewoye (2005) describes a youth as an individual between the age of 15 and 24 years but the Nigerian National Youth Development Policy classified all persons of ages 18-35 years who are Nigerians as youths.

Youths constitute the most significant part of the world population. They are the most active, diligent, creative, contributive, innovative and energetic people. They can prove more productive and constructive in any field of life but the irony is that a large portion of them around the world are unemployed and they cannot find any suitable job (Olaleye, 2012). Young people represent one-fifth of the world's population and half of the total unemployed global workforce (Adebowale, 2012).

Youths are said to be the foundation of any society. The energy, vigour, inventiveness, character and orientation define the pace of development and the security of any society through their creative talent and labour power, a society makes giant strides in economic development and socio-political attainments.

In their dreams and hopes, a society finds motivation on their energies; she builds her vitality and purpose. And because of their dreams and aspirations, the future of any society is assured (Agina-Obu, 2008). Uzoeshi (2006) describes the youths as those who are no longer adolescents but who do not hold full adult status in the society. Kinanee (2004) opines that the youthful period is an important phase in career development process characterized by educational pursuit with far-reaching vocational implications.

The youths constitute a critical reference group in a community or nation and cannot be ignored, Okorosaye-Orubite (2008) states that the youths are characterized by:

- Imaginative ideas on how things should be and not how they are. The more articulated the ideas, the chances of their appeal to enterprising youths.
- Youths have intensive and sincere desire to conquer their environment and subject it to their will. In order to realize this goal, the youths are ready to risk everything to exploring all perceptible realities.
- The youths are impatient when faced with seemingly insoluble obstacles to their realization of cherished goals and aspirations.
- Youths tend to be violent to perceived opposition and may use any means fair or foul to destroy opposition; and
- Youths do not reflect deeply and globally on the consequences of their action before execution. They may make mistake, some of which may be irredeemable and may have terrible consequences on their lives and that of their community or nation.

Similarly, Alimba, Momodu, Abba and Bello (2010) express that the youthful age is a promising age in which a young man has the energy, will courage and strength to be actively involved in adventures. Hence, Benjamin Disraeli once remarked, and quite aptly too, youths are the trustees of any nation. In Indonesia, they are described as “the hope of the future” in Libya “future partners” and in Nigeria, “leaders of tomorrow”

Therefore, it becomes pertinent to prepare and equip the youths with necessary skills and abilities that will enable them adequately fit for the world of work and thereby preventing them from becoming social misfits.

The Rationale for Entrepreneurship Education in Nigeria

The justification or need for entrepreneurship education cannot be over-emphasized, specifically the rationale behind entrepreneurship education according to Nwangwu (2007) include to:

- a. Produce youths who are job creators and not job seekers.
- b. Reduce unemployment among youths.
- c. Inculcate in the youths the spirit of entrepreneurship which will enable them to be creative and innovative to exploit business opportunities.
- d. Inspire and encourage these youths to establish career in small and medium scale enterprises.
- e. Expand economic activities to rural and less developed areas.
- f. Equip the youths with the skills that will enable them compete favourably in a technologically driven society.

In similar development, Olorumolu and Agbede (2012) highlighted the following objectives of entrepreneurship education as stated below:

- i. To provide meaningful education for youths which could make them self-reliant and subsequently encourage them to derive profit and be self-independent.
- ii. To provide graduates with the training and support, necessary to help them establish a career in small and medium size business.
- iii. To provide graduates with training skills that will make them meet the manpower needs of the society.
- iv. To provide graduates with enough training in risk management to make uncertainty become possible and easy.
- v. To stimulate industrial and economic growth of rural and less developed areas.
- vi. To provide graduates with enough training that will make them creative and innovative in identifying new business opportunities.
- vii. To provide small and medium size companies with the opportunity to recruit qualified graduates (manpower) who will receive training and tutoring in the skills relevant to management of the business centre.

It is pertinent to note that Nigeria with her abundant resources requires all hands to be on deck to productivity in order to eliminate poverty from the economy, empower the youths and enhance sustained growth of the economy. It is against this background that entrepreneurship education is imperative in the school system and a pathway to national development.

The Nigerian Educational System and Youth Empowerment

Education is very vital for achieving environmental and ethical awareness, value, attitudes, aptitudes, skills, abilities and behaviours consistent with sustainable development and both formal and non-formal education are indispensable (UNESCO, 2002). The National Policy on Education (NPE) provides the necessary platform for educational development in Nigeria. According to the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013) the philosophy of Nigeria's education is based on the development of the individual into sound and effective citizens, the full integration of the individual into the society and the provision of equal access to educational opportunity for all citizens of the country.

The national goals of education in Nigeria are the attainment of a free and democratic society, a just and egalitarian society, a united, strong and self-reliant nation, a great, vibrant and dynamic economy, a land full of bright opportunity for all citizens. The NPE outlines the

national goals of education in Nigeria, as spelt out in the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013), they include:

- i. The inculcation of national consciousness and national unity.
- ii. The inculcation of right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society.
- iii. The training of the mind in the understanding of the world around.
- iv. The acquisition of appropriate skills and the development of mental, physical and social abilities and competencies as equipment for the individuals to live in and contribute to the development of the society.

Entrepreneurship education therefore is a veritable tool for empowering youths, elicit sustainability and national development. The Nigerian educational system is aimed at empowering and developing the citizenry, especially the youths to acquire skills, competencies and knowledge for preparation for the world of work and self-reliant.

Entrepreneurship Education for Sustainable Youth Empowerment

Entrepreneurship education will enhance sustainable youth empowerment through the following:

1. **Self-Employment:** The main aim of this programme is to encourage and train graduates of universities, polytechnics, colleges of education and secondary school to take up self-employment (Jimoh-Kadiri, 2006).
2. **Ability to Overcome Obstacles:** It is obvious that only people with entrepreneurial capacities can bulldoze through the formidable restrictive bottlenecks in the way of effective foreign technology transfer.
3. **Acquisition of Right Attitude:** Through entrepreneurship education, Nigerian youths will be able to comprehend all activities and interest of the organization with the acquisition of right attitude, habits, saleable skills, entrepreneurial skills as well as managerial skill and evaluation of entrepreneurship performance. It exposes the recipient to imaginative, adaptability and innovative abilities.
4. **Enthusiasm and Common Sense:** Entrepreneurship education will equip the youths with enthusiasm or zeal and common sense after establishing a business of their own and now looking forward to increasing their earnings and the freedom of self-employment. This would make them to organize their time at work in order to make them perform their job according to plan.
5. **Leadership:** Entrepreneurship education will enable the youths to induce subordinates to work in the realization of goals with confidence and keenness.
6. **Competence and Skill-Based Hard work:** Entrepreneurship education will inculcate into the youths competence and skill-based hard work for efficiency and flourishing of the business.
7. **Morale and Discipline:** Morale deals with the feelings of the individual while discipline ensures obedience to rules and conditions. Entrepreneurship education will achieve these in the youths to encourage high morale and discipline.
8. **Time Management:** Entrepreneurship education will consciously inculcate the ability to manage time effectively. Hence, the target set for the accomplishment of goals will be realized.
9. **Keeping Financial Control:** Entrepreneurship education will expose the youths with the knowledge of financial accounting in order to eliminate drastically over-spending.

10. Secret of Staying in Self-Employment: Entrepreneurship education will teach the youths secret of patient and gradual growth for their businesses to thrive.
11. Appropriate Choice: Entrepreneurship education will assist the youths make appropriate choice of vocation or occupation.
12. Utilization of Technologies: To sustainably empower the youths, entrepreneurship education will enhance the utilization of information and communication technology for self-emancipation and development.
13. Utilization of Potentials: Entrepreneurship education will enable the youths to fully utilize their potentials in diverse sectors of the economy.
14. Preparation for Useful Living: Entrepreneurship education will prepare the youths for useful living within the society.
15. Increased Productivity and Poverty Alleviation: Entrepreneurship education will empower the youths with essential and versatile technological skills for increased productivity and poverty alleviation.

The Danger of Non-Empowerment of the Youths

The danger or effect of non-empowerment of the youths is devastating. Adebowale (2012) catalogued some of them. They are:

1. Youth non-empowerment can generate frustration and low self-esteem.
2. It can lead to increased vulnerability of young people making them take to drugs and crime. Youths can resent the society through deviant behaviour, trying to show that they are not pleased with the hardship occasioned by non-empowerment.
3. Youth may not be accorded recognition meant for them, just as the women are said to have been marginalized in so many areas. If the youths are not careful, they may not be reckoned with in the labour market. They may go to the state of oblivion.
4. Youth non-empowerment can also expose them to greater risks of lower future wages. Due to the non-empowerment siege, youths can desperately jump at any offer with very low wages; the low wages can in turn force them out of employment which may eventually lead to poverty.
5. Youth non-empowerment will surely not force them out of the society, they will continue to consume and not contribute to the economy but living at the expense of the public.
6. The cost of packaging training programmes and social intervention fund will be too heavy for the government when the unemployed youths are numerous.
7. Some researches and correlations have been found between unemployment with mental and physical/health problems, due to isolation that often come with unemployment.
8. Unemployment and lack of an adequate income generally means being dependent on others, family, relatives, friends, a partner or the state.
9. The society usually perceives the unemployed youth as useless and unproductive. Unemployed youth that has no money cannot think of marriage talk less of having children.
10. They are faced with financial problems.
11. There is a correlation between unemployment and crime and that joblessness is a major motivator of engaging in theft, burglary and violent crimes.

From the above, non-empowerment of the youths through gainful employment have led to diverse economic, social and political problems which have given rise to the depreciation of our Naira, high rate of unemployment, crime, hunger, poverty, frustration, militancy, kidnapping,

armed robbery, prostitution, human trafficking, terrorism and insurgencies. Thus, the clarion call for a functional entrepreneurship education in Nigerian schools.

Constraints to Entrepreneurship Education Nigeria

The constraints to entrepreneurship education are myriads including the followings:

1. Malfunctioning of the educational system.
2. Inadequate facilities.
3. Poor management.
4. Attitudinal barriers.
5. Inadequate expert.
6. Lack of access to information.
7. Hostile government policy.
8. Poor credit and financial system.
9. Population growth.
10. Under development in the third world.
11. Inadequacies between education and training.
12. Inadequate school curriculum.
13. Inadequate counseling.
14. The retirement age is not favourable for the youths.
15. Technological advances.
16. Epileptic power supply.
17. Insecurity.

All these are cog in the wheel of a successful entrepreneurship education in Nigeria.

Recommendations

In order to regenerate entrepreneurship education for sustainable youth empowerment, the following recommendations are proffered, viz:

1. Governments both at the federal and state levels should equip the schools with adequate facilities.
2. There is need for proper management of the entire programmes by school administrators.
3. The Nigerian educational system should be reorganized to function adequately.
4. There is need for attitudinal change by the students and graduates concerning self-employment.
5. Government at all level should recruit qualified personnel with technical know-how.
6. There is need for adequate information on lucrative business ventures.
7. Government policy should be friendly driven.
8. The would-be entrepreneurs should have access to credit and loans with single digit interest rate.
9. There is need for governments at all levels to adequately provide for various segments of the population.
10. The third world countries should assiduously work hard to eliminate all obstacles to development.
11. School administrators at the secondary and tertiary levels should close the wide gap or mismatch between education and training.
12. There is need to redesign school curriculum for practical youth empowerment.

13. There is need for adequate counseling to the youths for proper guidance.
14. Governments at all levels should ensure that the retirement age is not falsified and there should be proper disciplinary action against offenders.
15. School administrators should ensure that their schools do not lag behind in terms of technological advancement in information and communication technology.
16. There is need for steady power supply in our schools to enable the machines function for practicals.
17. Governments at all levels should ensure that security of lives and properties are guaranteed.

Conclusion

The danger of non-empowerment of the youths through gainful employment have adverse economic, social and political implications which have resulted to the depreciation of our Naira, high rate of unemployment, crime, hunger, poverty, frustration, militancy, kidnapping, armed robbery, prostitution, human trafficking, terrorism, and insurgencies. Therefore, Nigeria with her enormous natural and human resources requires all hands to be on deck to productivity in order to eliminate these vices from the society, empower the youths and enhance sustained growth of the economy. It is against this backdrop that entrepreneurship education is imperative in the Nigerian school system and a pathway to national development, peace and security.

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