

Strategies for Empowering Youth with Basic Entrepreneurship Skills for Self Employment in Nigeria

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Abstract

The paper examines strategies for empowering youth with basic entrepreneurship skills for self-employment in Nigeria. The purpose of the paper is to look at unemployment and unemployable graduates which have become a serious challenges to educators, educationists and the Nigerian government. The concept of entrepreneurship and entrepreneur education were discussed. Certain strategies for effective entrepreneurship skills training for youth were also explained. Factors affecting entrepreneurship education were explained and suggestion were made based on the militating factors of entrepreneurship for youth and self- employment.

Introduction

Unemployment and unemployable graduates have become a serious challenge to educators, educationist and the Nigerian government. Adegbenjo (2012) is of the view that this phenomenon constitutes a waste of resources in manpower development of this nation. He further stated that the type of education that is needed for self employment and national development has changed to include general reasoning, creative problem solving and behavioral skills as well as positive cognitive styles as against the narrow cognitive and occupational skills sought in more directed work environment. This need, explains why the Nigerian government stipulated in the national policy on education, the acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competencies; both mental and physical, as a pre-requisite for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of the

society (NPE, 2004). Entrepreneurship education, therefore, becomes imperative to help equip students with employable skills needed for self reliance, productive and functional life.

UNESCO (2003), while addressing the need for fostering entrepreneurship mind sets and promoting entrepreneurship education among the youth, recommended technical and vocational education training (TVET) as the only way out of poverty facing the youth worldwide today. This is the fact that the society needed men and women that are capable of establishing businesses that would help solve the adverse problems of mass unemployment and poverty which entrepreneurial skills in TVET could provide. Entrepreneurial studies allow the beneficiaries to consider various occupational possibilities, the work required, available rewards, necessary training and relative advantages and disadvantages of each (Nwoye, 2011).

Entrepreneurial skills in Technical Vocational Education and Training

It is no longer news that the world has become private sector driven, and economic prosperity in the 21st century requires the possession of entrepreneurial skills to function. The youth needs exposure in practical entrepreneurial work experience in order to be proficient in their chosen career and be useful to themselves and the society. Entrepreneurship which is a planned effort undertaken by an individual or groups, institutions or agencies to develop the required competencies in people which can easily be addressed through vocational options. Competencies of individual's entrepreneurial skill in TVET are designed to lead the beneficiaries' to self-employment, economic self-sufficiency, and employment generation through short or long-term training. This has lead African countries including Nigeria to realize that training in TVET is necessary to alleviate poverty through skill acquisition. TVET can be described as any form of education whose primary purpose is to prepare individual or beneficiaries for gainful employment in an occupation or group of occupations. The National Policy on Education (2004) explained the purpose of TVET as to:

Enable individuals acquire vocational and technical skills.

Expose the individuals to career awareness by exposing useable options in the world of work.

Enable youth acquire an intelligent understanding of the increasing complexity of technology, and

Stimulate creativity.

The NPE highlights Nigeria's desire to achieve national goal through quality education, hence the need for acquisition of appropriate skills and competence both mental and physical as equipment for the individual to live and to also

contribute to growth of the society. However, no society can develop to appreciable level without relevant functional and technologically based TVET programme. In Nigeria, the need for TVET cannot be over emphasized. Hence, Olaitan (1998) opined that Technical Vocational Education and Training should be included in the curriculum programme for all school beginners from the time a child enters the primary school till his/her graduation from the university. This would help develop sufficient skills in their chosen occupational skills so as to help them obtain and hold employment on graduation. It's important for Post-secondary Vocational Education in Colleges of Technology, Polytechnics and Universities to make provisions that would ensure that students who offer vocational courses in secondary schools are given the opportunity to increase their level of skill through further training. WET provides various opportunities for discovering and developing the individual's potentials for work. Accordingly, Oziengbe (2009) opined that WET has a broadening effect, which motivates learners to be more exploratory, realize their capability and develop their potentials for success in the workplace. In TVET, the youth undoubtedly have the opportunity of being productive and become useful to themselves and to the society.

In other to boost the entrepreneurship skills of youth vocational skills development should include programme that will provides: fashion designing, furniture work, carpentry, G S M repairs/maintenance, auto mechanic, laundry, metal work, iron bending and plumbing. To buttress this assertion the N P E (2004) stated that the federal government should provide technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, industrial, commercial and economic development. School counsellors should assist young adult prepare for workforce and chose the right course on their way to earning a living (Brown & Denga, 2011). This will provide the basic entrepreneurship skill for empowering youth for self-employment.

The Concept of Entrepreneurship

The concept of entrepreneurship and entrepreneur are being used interchangeably to mean the same. Though they may be closely related, the terms are not in any way the same. A sharp distinction exists between them. For instance, entrepreneur refers to a person. That is, who is he and what does he do that differentiate him from a non- entrepreneur? While, entrepreneurship refers to a process which seeks answers to what he does, how does it (an entrepreneur) do what he does? Entrepreneur can be defined as one who brings resources, labour, material among other into combinations that make their value greater than in the past, as well as been able to introduce changes, innovation and new ideas for the growth of its business. Similarly, Kitner (2007) viewed an entrepreneur as a special type of

labour that requires the assembling of all factors of production namely: land, labour, capital and tries to ensure optimum utilization maximum of profit. From the management angle, entrepreneurs are pictured as managers of small business. He/she organizes, manages, and assumes the risk of a business or an enterprise. In entrepreneur management, an entrepreneur does not only organize resources to create wealth but manages such resources efficiently in order to sustain his/her innovation and minimize possible risks that might affect the business. The success of an entrepreneur depends on the willingness to accept responsibility for one's own work as a process; Allawadi (2007) defined entrepreneurship as that which involves evaluating business opportunities, development of a business plan, and determination of the required resources as well as management of resulting enterprise. It is the practice of consistently converting goods and ideas into profitable commercial ventures. It is a continually pursuit of opportunities through innovations of various resources that are in every part of the society which are not controlled internally. Entrepreneurship refers to an individual's ability to turn ideas into action.

According to UNESCO (2003), entrepreneurial programmes and modules offer the beneficiaries the ability to think creatively and become effective problem solvers. Modern school of thought claims that the role of the entrepreneur is that of an innovator, even though the definition of innovation is still widely debatable. However, Kitner (2007) stated that the process of innovation is actually spontaneous "un deliberate learning". Meaning that the necessary characteristic of entrepreneur is alertness, and no intrinsic skills are involved. Through the idea that entrepreneurs are innovations that are largely acceptable, it is difficult to apply this theory of entrepreneurship to Less Developed Countries (LDCs). According to Allawadi (2007) entrepreneurs in LDCs rarely produce brand new products; rather they imitate the products and production processes that have been innovated in developed countries. Allawadi refers to this practice as "creative imitator". Creative imitation takes place when the imitators better understand how an innovation can be applied, used, or sold in their local market. The innovation process in LDCs in the world are often imitating and adapting, instead of the traditional notion of the new product or process discovery and development. Some individuals apply the concept of entrepreneur and entrepreneurship to the creation of any new business, while others may focus on intentions. Skill did not depend solely upon a person's fundamental, innate capacities but had to be developed through training, practice and experience an individual acquires. Skill according to Bolt-Lee and Foster (2003) was the art of possessing the ability to power, authority, or competency etc, to do the task required of an individual for a better job satisfaction. Two fundamental issues were used when a skill was to be acquired. According to Okoro and Ursula (2012), the first was the conditions

which promoted acquisition and the second being the change that would occur when the skill was acquired.

There were many processes of acquisition and development in achieving entrepreneurial skills. Okoro and Ursula (2012) outlined the four main stages of acquisition and development of entrepreneurial skills to include:

1. Analyze and identify the current and foreseeable skill needs in business, in terms of management, administrative and technical skills and relative importance of these.
2. Identify the entrepreneur's own personal goals, objectives and analyze and evaluate his/her own skills and resources in relation to these.
3. Produce a realistic personal development plan for the potential entrepreneur
4. Monitor on-going performance on follow-up of the entrepreneur once the business has started and progress made towards developing the new skills that had been previously identified as necessary for the success of the business.

Luthje & Frank (2002) put forward that a positive correlation exists between education and business creation. Based on Timmons & Spinelli (2004) and others who are of the opinion that entrepreneurship can be learnt, Kuratko (2003) observes the decision by many tertiary institutions in Nigeria to design and implement relevant entrepreneurship teaching programme. Entrepreneurial training and education encourages Nigerian to become jobs creator rather than job seekers. It also equips them with skills for constant improvement and innovations in their undertaken.

Strategies for Enhancing Entrepreneurship Education

1. Re-branding of Nigeria youth. According to Molokwu (2010) re-branding can help youth to stand out and achieve professional goals through renewing what is taught, what methods are used to teach to ensure what is taught is transferable and has value for the new times and new life.
2. Nwabuona (2005) suggests the inclusion of entrepreneurship education content areas such as small scale business, managing business opportunity, global market, business plan, marketing analysis, risk management and record keeping will enhance the functionality of the course to the benefit of the students there by making the youth more effective and efficient in practicing skills acquired through entrepreneurship training
3. Kanu (1995) suggests teaching methods that can be used to enhance creativity in the individuals. These methods identified are laboratory,

- inquiry, activity, brainstorming, problem solving. These methods of teaching emphasizes on the development of initiative and independent thought and divergent thinking. The emphasis is on allowing pupils to explore and find out things for themselves as a basis for developing creative abilities which will enable them become self independent.
4. Chidume & Emelue (2011) identified entrepreneur's networking, attendance of seminar on entrepreneurship, watching relevant television programmes, subscribing to relevant magazines, mentors providing practical guides to self employment as ways through which students can acquire creative entrepreneurship skills. Entrepreneurship education should provide opportunities for student to have this mentorship.
 5. Educators should make effort to improve themselves in the area of entrepreneurship education. A strategy for entrepreneur as a course that needs to be giving more emphasis in Nigeria schools. This can be done through public and private studies, seminars, workshops and other relevant activities

Factors Affecting Entrepreneurship Education

Base on the researchers experience and observation, they consider some of the factors that tend to affect entrepreneurship education in our schools and they include:

Lack of entrepreneurship workshop and motivation: Most of the technical and vocational education centre in Nigeria schools do have workshop were practical skills can be acquire that pave way of becoming self reliance and also the teachers who gave entrepreneur training are not motivated for they to give the training to trainees.

Lack of awareness on the current trends of labour market: This is one of the factors that affect the implementation of entrepreneurship education because the trainers lack knowledge of new innovations that are requiring in the labour market.

Parents tend to choose career for their children: The children are not allow to choose their career so as to be potential and self independence.

Inadequate training on Entrepreneurship Scheme: Trainees don't have access to workshop and seminar to improve their knowledge on latest entrepreneur skills

Negative perception of private investors: Because of the insecurity in Nigeria private investor are afraid of kidnapping and all sort threat.

Suggestions

This paper suggests on how to achieve entrepreneurial skills education through Technical Vocational Education and Training for employment to Nigeria youth:

Entrepreneurial skills and workshop on how to find business ideas should be integrated in school curriculum to encourage young people to start their own business. Policy actions in this regard would include: Giving priority to mathematics and science education at all levels of education and offering incentives to science teachers. - Providing adequate financing for vocational/technical training. - Linking vocational and entrepreneurial training with job centres to ensure that the skills profiles supplied match demand. - Encouraging out- of-school young people to be involved in vocational training to promote social inclusion as well as enhance employability.

The education system should provide the skills profiles required by the labour market to enhance employability of young people after graduation.

Government should encourage private sector's participation in the delivery of Technical Vocational Education and Training.

Due to the socio-cultural diversity inherent in developing countries like Nigeria, entrepreneurial policies that are unique and indigenous to the respective states should be vigorously pursued.

Given the likelihood of challenges, government should offer incentives such as "tax holiday", and adequate protection from foreign competitors, as well as patent rights to spur more desire for innovation. These suggestions if pursued vigorously would no doubt remove the youth and adult alike from the shackle of poverty holding the universe to ransom.

Conclusion

The paper concluded that unemployment and unemployable graduate's are serious challenge to educators, educationist and the Nigerian government. The youth needs exposure in practical entrepreneurial work experience in order to be proficient in their chosen career and be useful to themselves and the society. The concept of entrepreneurship and entrepreneur skills are discussed. Also, effective strategies for enhancing entrepreneurship skills for youth empowerment in Nigeria. Suggestions were made based on factors affecting entrepreneurship skills.

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