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The Development of Entrepreneurship in Nigeria Is the Gateway to Youth Empowerment

Okafor Benjamin Onuorah

Department of Quantity Surveying, School of Environmental Studies
The Federal Polytechnic, ILaro, Ogun State, Nigeria

Abstract:

High unemployment rate in this part of the world cannot be underestimated as its effects are having adverse impact to the economic growth of the continent and particularly in Nigeria. The Nigerian Immigration interviews that happened recently in 2014 in major cities of the country are eye openers to many people on the state of unemployment in the country. Therefore, the need for self employment is increasing and could offer more job opportunities for young graduates. The concept of entrepreneurship is being developed over the years, thus individual can learn the basic skills involved in entrepreneurship to help him set up his own business or enterprise. This paper therefore is to examine the importance of entrepreneurship development in Nigeria as a gateway for youth empowerment. Field survey was conducted using structured questionnaire. A total of sixty questionnaires were distributed among staff and students of the Federal Polytechnic, ILaro, Ogun State, Nigeria, out of which fifty of them were returned. The study showed that proper exposure of the youths to entrepreneurial skills will stimulate fresh school leavers and others towards different job opportunities beside wage employment. This paper therefore recommends that the development of entrepreneurship will help our youth to gain self confidence and develop personal dreams based on job opportunities and “need gaps” that can be exploited through critical thinking, analysis and focused planning so as to develop a plan of action for it's eventual realization.

Keywords: Unemployment, entrepreneurship, skills, wage employment

1. Introduction

Youth empowerment is a process whereby young people gain the ability and authority to make decisions and implement change in their own lives. Unemployment, particularly of the active youthful population is no doubt a social problem plaguing Nigeria. This requires the rethinking of strategies to tackle this challenge. Despite the high number of graduates been turned out every year, it is unfortunate that many remain unemployed for many years after graduation because of the few vacancies available and because of the type of training they were exposed to which seems not to favour self employment. It could be as a result of the disequilibrium between labour market requirements and lack of essential employable skills by the graduates as stated by Diabalen, Oni and Adekola (2000) as well as faulty interaction between the educational sector and the economy. Economic empowerment of citizens as posited by Ifedili and Ofoegbu (2011) is the primary goal of any nation. It is a key way to ensure that individuals are empowered so as to lower the unemployment level. When graduates set up small businesses in application of their knowledge of entrepreneurship, it ensures prosperity and competitiveness. Gone are the days when graduates remain unemployed for several years with no knowledge of available alternatives. Today, graduates are well equipped to face the world of unemployment. This is in terms of having a compulsory course on entrepreneurship education while in the tertiary institutions. This Entrepreneurship Education cuts across all disciplines in the tertiary institutions. The Nigerian government in her effort to ensure job opportunities for students after graduating from the tertiary institutions established a compulsory entrepreneurship education course. With this knowledge, students can set up small business enterprises rather than remain jobless for a long period after graduation. This however, does not mean that entrepreneurship is synonymous to small business enterprise. However the relationship between the two is such that one cannot study one without mentioning the other.

Entrepreneurship education is essential not only to shape the mindsets of young people but also to provide the skills and knowledge that are central to developing an entrepreneurial culture. Entrepreneurship education provides students motivation, knowledge, and skills essential for launching a successful venture company (Cho, 1998). Entrepreneurship education is not just about teaching someone to run a business. It is all about encouraging creative thinking and promoting a strong sense of self-worth and accountability. Through entrepreneurship education, students learn how to create a business, but they also learn a lot more.

1.1 Literature Review

Entrepreneurship education seeks to provide students with the knowledge, skills and motivation to encourage entrepreneurial success in a variety of settings. Entrepreneurship, according to Omolayo (2006) is the act of starting a company, arranging business deals and taking risks in order to make a profit through the education skills acquired. Also, according to Nwangwu

(2007), entrepreneurship is a process of bringing together the factors of production, which include land, labour and capital so as to provide a product or service for public consumption

Youth empowerment is an attitudinal, structural, and cultural process whereby young people gain the ability, authority, and agency to make decisions and implement change in their own lives.

Self employment is the act of generating one's income directly from customers, clients or other organizations as opposed to being an employee of a business (or person). In the same vein, a situation in which an individual works for himself or herself instead of working for an employer that pays a salary or a wage. Therefore, a self employed individual earns their income through conducting profitable operations from a trade or business that they operate directly.

Wage employment is also known as paid employment, which is a type of employment in which remuneration is paid by an employer to an employee.

The importance of entrepreneurship development and its impact on youth empowerment cannot be over emphasised. According to Adegun and Akomolafe (2013), the economic importance of the entrepreneur in world history has been recognized for several decades. Entrepreneurship is a key driver of any economy. 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 maximize 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 as early as elementary school and progressing through 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 expertise to successfully start and manage their own businesses to take advantage of these opportunities.'

Entrepreneurial activities and the resultant financial gain are always of benefit to a country. Therefore, having entrepreneurial skills will enable one recognize a genuine opportunity when it comes across. Entrepreneurial skills and attitudes provide benefits to society, even beyond their application to business activity. Obviously speaking, personal qualities that are relevant to entrepreneurship, such as creativity and a spirit of initiative, can be useful to everyone, in their working responsibilities and in their daily existence.

There are many important strategies for implementation of entrepreneurial education for youth empowerment. Youths are believed to be the reservoir of the nation's strength, leadership and productivity. Hence, youth empowerment will in no small measure re-channel their energies towards worthwhile and productive activities needed for self and national development. In this wise, according to Adegun and Akomolafe (2013) the following strategies can be employed to empower youths for increased performance and productivity:

1.1.1. School Curriculum Reform

Entrepreneurship education should be made compulsory in schools at all levels. This will inculcate in students from an early age, the qualities required of them to take up positions of responsibility. Schools, especially universities and polytechnics should provide their students with the fundamental tools to succeed academically and in life. It is high time more attention is paid to the problem of mismatch between teaching in our educational institutions and the needs of the labour market which usually create unemployment among the youths. To this end, school curriculum should be updated and restructured to meet the demands of the economy. New curricular and teaching methods should be introduced that will engage the students and build a closer connection between school and work. The curriculum should be taught by teachers who engage their students in the discovery and development of their entrepreneurial talents. The curriculum should be certified to meet national testing standards, content, rich and well organized. Moreover, more opportunities should be given to students to acquire practical experience in the use of machinery, equipment and tools in their chosen career. More qualified teachers should be available to teach vocational, innovative entrepreneurship and job skills. Teaching resources and models should be developed to ensure students centered learning and teachers should be adequately prepared to administer lessons on entrepreneurship and innovation.

1.1.2. Developing Entrepreneurship Culture

Promoting entrepreneurship among youths requires going beyond the school curricula to engage and empower youths. A strong entrepreneurship culture should be built in the youth. This should be done through non-governmental organizations, community based organizations and institutions like the family, churches and uniform groups. They should openly support the agenda of wealth creation, innovation and entrepreneurship "code ethic" in a more sustainable way to provide that basis upon which a new paradigm can be created. This would complement the state agenda, which is to create a conducive environment where entrepreneurship can thrive. Therefore all sectors of our society must participate in promoting entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship education, especially to our youth.

1.1.3. Improving Technical and Vocational Education

The government should refocus its attention on technical and vocational education as a sustainable means for improving entrepreneurship education, self employment and youth empowerment. This should be in terms of improved facilities and making the curriculum to reflect the current needs. The curriculum should promote a culture of enterprise and entrepreneurship as a viable career option, inspire and equip young people in the local community to learn and succeed through enterprise, stimulate entrepreneurship thinking amongst young people, enhance leadership skills and increase community awareness as well as enhance

the educational experience of future leaders. If these are accomplished it will reduce the apathy towards technical education by youths and thus initiate youths into the culture of self reliance.

1.1.4. Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

Technology has the capability of enhancing quality of life and economic performance. When youths do not have the knowledge or skills to use the latest technology, it affects their outlook of life. The internet and other Information and Communications Technology (ICT) infrastructure are not available in rural area where the majority of the Nigeria youth reside. This solution denies them an alternative means of skill acquisition, information access and other advantages. The government should be aggressive in providing ICT education at all levels of education while out of school training should be given to the dropouts. There should be adequate funding of education; every school teacher must be computer literate; ICT education should be integrated into the curricula of all levels of education and implementation. Through this, the youths will be ICT literate and will be integrated into the global village and explore the various opportunities offered by ICT.

1.1.5. Youth Entrepreneur of the Year Award:

Youth Entrepreneur of the year award program could also be organized as an encouragement to get young people excited about entrepreneurial careers. This could be organized by the government to encourage entrepreneurial skills. Awards are an effective marketing tool to raise interest, educate young people about the benefits of starting and running their own businesses. They also provide a platform where successful young entrepreneurs are show-cased and become role models for other young people to emulate and thus contribute towards an interest for young people to get involved in business. The awards can consequently contribute towards the growth of youth owned enterprise and contribute towards the social upliftment of society. Thus competition could be at the National, State and local government levels. Teams of business people at national and state leaders should be made to attend the events and patents could be facilitated for the best products. This could be a great challenge to others.

In order to move forward, an effective and efficient entrepreneurial education for better results on our youths at large was proposed according to Aja-Okorie and Adali (2013) as follows:

- There should be regular seminars, workshops and conferences for staff, students and the general public to strengthen and refocus on entrepreneurial education. Strengthening research and capacity of researches into evidence based researches will promote participatory methods. This will encourage synergy among governments, private sectors and the general public on the need for encouraging and developing entrepreneurial spirits among students.
- Educational planners and administrators need to ensure that class sizes are broken down into manageable size. By so doing learners are better supervised on their practicals and results become more achievable.
- Continuous assessment should be properly administered to students without failure and monitored by trained professionals. There should be adequate provision of infrastructural facilities. Instructional materials should be adequate and in good condition.
- Only well informed lecturers should be employed to teach and head entrepreneurship centres recently approved by NUC and NBTE on the tertiary institution campuses. Government should in addition encourage private bodies to establish good study centres with well qualified personnels to educate and train the prospective entrepreneurs in the country.
- Government should increase the budget for the implementation of this government policy on mandatory entrepreneurship education and the budgeted sum should be released in order to actualize the purpose of the funding.
- Youths should be introduced to entrepreneurial activities at their early stage to enable them grow alongside with it in and out-of-school programmes. Government should incorporate practical/field training scheme in the existing mandatory entrepreneurship curriculum of tertiary institutions.
- Entrepreneurship subjects should be introduced as one of the compulsory subjects in all secondary schools in the country. Through these methods, students who transcend into tertiary education level would have become conversant with the tenets of entrepreneurial demands.
- Entrepreneurship lecturers, teachers/trainers should periodically be retrained and encouraged in the area of research to update their skills in order to be relevant in today's era of dynamic and globalized environment.

2. Research Methodology

This study was carried out using the following methods:

2.1. Literature Review

Text books, the internet, journals and conference materials were used to carry out a wide literature review in order to articulate existing knowledge on the subject.

2.2. Field Survey

Field survey was carried out using structured questionnaire as the instrument of the study. Fifty questionnaires were well completed and returned. Staff and students of the Federal Polytechnic, ILaro, Ogun State, Nigeria were the focus of this field survey.

3. Results and Discussion

The data that were obtained from the field survey are presented below under different headings:

3..1. Details of the Respondents

A total of 50 questionnaires were returned and properly completed, which represented 83.33% of the overall questionnaires distributed. Details of the respondents were as follows: Management Staff were 6%(3), Academic Staff were 36%(18), Non Academic Staff were 24%(12), HND Students were 20%(10), OND Students were 14%(7).

The educational background of the respondents were as follows: WASC/NECO/GCE holders were 14%(7), National Diploma holders were 20%(10), Higher National Diploma holders were 18%(9), Bachelors Degree holders were 20%(10), Masters degree holders were 24%(12) and Ph.D holders were 4%(2).

Factors that possibly affect the growth and development of entrepreneurship in Nigeria were assessed using the following factors:

- Finance.
- Education.
- Information Technology.
- Corruption.
- Political bottleneck.
- Inadequate infrastructural facilities (Roads, Electricity, Water supply, etc).
- Inconsistent government policies.
- High cost of social amenities (Health Facilities, Bills on Electricity & Water).
- Enabling environment (Security, Armed Robbery, Kidnapping, Terrorism etc).

Factors affecting the growth and development of entrepreneurship in Nigeria were assessed by the respondents as regards how they perceive them using likert scale. The scales are Poor (P), Fair (F), Average (A), Good (G), and Very Good (VG) and were assigned a value of 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 respectively.

S/N	FACTORS THAT WERE ASSESSED	FREQUENCY							
		1	2	3	4	5	F	Fx	Mean (X)
1	Finance	1	2	2	10	35	50	226	4.52
2	Education	1	3	1	15	30	50	170	3.40
3	Information technology	1	1	3	13	32	50	224	4.48
4	Corruption	1	1	1	10	37	50	231	4.62
5	Political bottleneck	2	3	6	8	31	50	213	4.26
6	Inadequate infrastructural facilities (roads, electricity, water supply etc)	-	2	3	12	33	50	226	4.52
7	High cost of social amenities (health facilities, bills on electricity & water)	1	2	5	17	25	50	213	4.26
8	Enabling environment (security, armed robbery, kidnapping, terrorism etc)	-	1	2	8	40	50	240	4.80

Table 1: Assessment of Factors Affecting the Growth and Development of Entrepreneurship in Nigeria.

Source: Field Survey, 2014

3.2. Discussion of Results

It is very obvious from the analysis of the respondents that the growth and development of entrepreneurship in Nigeria are being hindered by a lot of factors such as shown above such as:

- Enabling environment which was 4.80 out of 5 on likert scale. Security, armed robbery, kidnapping, terrorism and such like other vices tend to affect entrepreneurs adversely. If the enabling environment is not created, many of the entrepreneurial ventures will be hindered.
- Corruption with 4.62 out of 5 is like a monster that has eaten deep into the heart of Nigeria that sometime past we were almost at the bottom of the ladder of Transparency International assessment. Many of our leaders past and present have not given corruption the attention that is needed. This challenge is majorly leadership issue that even the 'War Against Indiscipline' had not eradicated it. This cannot help any entrepreneurial venture to grow and be sustained.
- Finance and inadequate infrastructural facilities are key factors with 4.52 out of 5. It is unfortunate that most entrepreneurs cannot go very far unless these two factors are in place.
- Other factors are important as they affect entrepreneurial development in Nigeria but their mean values are below 4.50 out of 5.

4. Conclusion

Finding opportunities for young people is a critical challenge for a nation where 78.8 million (2011) youths aged between (15 and 24) were unemployed (Eroko, 2012). Youth empowerment can also be both process and outcomes oriented, *empowering* youth with skill development and opportunities, and creating *empowered* youth who have greater control in organizational and community decision-making. It is therefore concluded that, youth empowerment through entrepreneurship education is the door to equipping the nation's active population with the necessary skills to survive in today's uncertain environment.

5. Recommendations

As a result of the discussions above, it is thereby recommended that:

- Youth economic empowerment should be aligned to government policies, strategies and programmes.
- Financial support, training and facilities. need to be provided in order to ensure the youth active participation.
- The spirit of entrepreneurship among Nigerian youths should be promoted through seminars and workshops on corporate leadership and entrepreneurship.
- The higher institutions should focus on curriculum that is aimed at a growing job market and expanding the production of qualified professionals most required by industries.
- Pedagogy and facilities must be upgraded to deliver the quality education and training necessary to prepare youth properly for the entrepreneurial education experience.
- Youths must be ready to imbibe the entrepreneurship culture at school and when they are out of school as a possible remedy for unemployment.

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