

ENTREPRENEURSHIP SKILL ACQUISITION AND YOUTH EMPOWERMENT: A PANACEA FOR REDUCING UNEMPLOYMENT IN NIGERIA

BY

Adedoyin Adebajo Obisanya: Department of Business Education, Tai Solarin College of Education, Omu-Ijebu, Nigeria. E-mail: Behoney2010@gmail.com

Adeolu O. Olatoye (Ph.D): Department of Business Education, Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun

&

Afolashade R. Abiola: Department of Business Education Federal College of Education (Special), Oyo. E-mail: sade.abiola01@gmail.com

Abstract

Nigeria's fiscal and monetary authorities have pushed massive expansionary programmes to counter the slowing effects of supply chain disruptions and a dip in production caused by COVID 19. Programs such as the proposed employment of 774,000 Nigerians under the Special Public Works Programme of the Federal government scheduled for October 2021, N-power, FarmerMoni, and TraderMoni under the Government Enterprise and Empowerment Programme (GEEP) have been initiated but this effort has refused to bring about positive result. There is need to look for other possible ways to meet this shortfalls, the study observed that one of the most efficient ways to tackle unemployment in Nigeria is through entrepreneurship skill acquisition and empowerment. The objectives of entrepreneurship education includes but not limited to equipping individual and creates in the person the mindset to undertake the risk of venturing into something new by applying the knowledge and skills acquired in schools. The paper took a critical look at the roles of entrepreneurship education such as provision of individual with adequate training that will enable creativity and innovative relevance to skill acquisition which encourages self-employment and self-reliant. It reviewed some techniques of acquiring entrepreneurship skills which includes industrial training exercise, workshop/seminar and this aid in the empowerments of youth and consequently eradication of poverty and extreme hunger. The paper identified some of the skills that can be acquired by youth through Entrepreneurship Education. The paper suggested that the curriculum at all levels of education should be entrepreneurial based in Nigeria.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship Education, Unemployment, Skill Acquisition, Youth Empowerment,

Introduction

It is common knowledge that about 80% of graduates in most Nigerian universities find it hard to get employment every year. This is largely due to the curricula of the universities and other tertiary schools with emphasis on training for white-collar jobs. Nigeria, a country with an estimated population of 211.4 million people (National Bureau Statistics, 2021) is well endowed with abundant human and natural resources and a favorable geographical location in the world map. The current global pandemic and financial crisis has impacted negatively on the macro and micro levels of the economy of Nigeria. As at present, the situation has poses serious threats and challenges to both government and well-meaning citizens. Nigeria like most developing nations of the world is faced with myriad of problems which include youth and graduate unemployment, high rate of poverty, conflict and diseases, insincerity, over-depending in foreign goods, low economic growth and development, lack of capacity and skills needed to move the economy forward and urbanization.

Unemployment has become a major problem bedeviling the lives of Nigerian youths causing frustration, dejection and depending on family members and friends. The high rate of unemployment among the youths in Nigeria has contributed to the high rate of poverty and insecurity in the country (Ajufo, 2013). More than half of the Nigerian population is under the age of 30 according to the National Population Commission (2013). Awogbenle and Iwuamadi (2010) observed from the excerpts of statistics obtained from the National Manpower Board and Federal Bureau of statistics that Nigeria has a youth population of eighty (80) Million representing 60 percent of the total population of the country. Sixty four (64) Million of them are unemployed while one million six hundred thousand (1.6 million) are underemployed.

According to Ossal and Nwalado (2012) the need for entrepreneurship education started emerging in the mid 1980s, when there were political instability and inconsistencies in the socio-economic policies of successive

government, high level of unemployment, large scale lay off of workers and early retirements as a result of structural adjusted policies and bad economic trends. In the face of these challenges there was no encouragement from the federal government for public and private investors to embark on entrepreneurial activities. These situations pose great challenges to the very existence of individuals and the national development. To salvage these situations there is need for the training of educated man and woman who can function effectively in their society in which they live in terms of self-employment and self-reliant which only entrepreneurship education can provide. Based upon this premise, the paper examined entrepreneurship skill acquisition and empowerment as a way forward amidst youth unemployment in Nigeria.

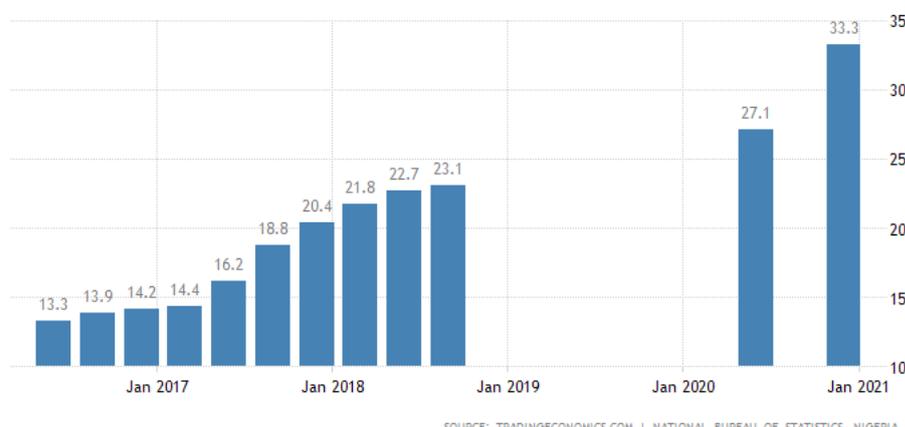
Efforts so far on Empowerment in Nigeria

Nigeria's fiscal and monetary authorities have pushed massive expansionary programmes to counter the slowing effects of supply chain disruptions and a dip in production caused by COVID 19. Programs such as the proposed employment of 774,000 Nigerians under the Special Public Works Programme of the Federal government scheduled for October, N-power, FarmerMoni, and TraderMoni under the Government Enterprise and Empowerment Programme (GEEP) have been initiated. Though these policies have meant well they have equally raised eyebrows concerning sustainability, equity and transparency. According to the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs Disaster Management, and Social Development "Over five million Nigerians have applied for the third batch of the N-Power programme" this statement reveals the worrisome state of unemployment in Nigeria. The CBN has also rolled out other measures to boost productivity, and by extension limit job losses. These include: An interest rate reduction on eligible CBN intervention facilities from 9% to 5%; the creation of a N50bn targeted credit facility through the NIRSAL microfinance bank for SMEs; and unspecified strengthening of the CBN loans-to-deposit policy, which has helped with boosting credit to the real sector.

An obvious beneficiary of the coronavirus outbreak has been the technology sector. Digitizing operational processes has assisted some companies with maintaining workflow activities, keeping productivity afloat and avoiding layoffs. The shortage of critically needed skills and competencies is one factor behind joblessness. This is likely to get worse as the future of work, which threatens to render skills of some employees and jobseekers obsolete, comes into play. The FGN should consider revamping curricula across all education levels to properly incorporate technology, since artificial intelligence algorithms will at some point become co-workers to humans (Aydin & Biyikli 2017).

To tackle similar unemployment problems governments around the world have embarked on various fiscal measures to ease the burden of the coronavirus on citizens. These measures include unemployment benefits, job retention schemes, grants to MSMEs, etc. Nigeria's government in July 2020 approved the creation of an N75bn Nigerian Youth Investment Fund (NYIF) to support enterprise among 68 million young Nigerian between the ages of 18 and 35, the Federal Government also announced plans to initiate an N2trn stimulus package and survival fund for Micro Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) to stay afloat during the COVID 19 crisis.

Fig. 1: Nigeria Unemployment Rate Percentage of the Labour force



Source: www.tradingconwoocs.com/National Bureau of Statistics 2021

On the issue of unemployment rate in Nigeria, fig 1 clearly shows the overall unemployment rate in Nigeria which has increased to 33.3 percent in 2021 compare to 14.2% percent in 2017 and 20.4 percent in 2018 respectively. Based on the unemployment ratio of 33.3 percent of the total population, it means that over 38 million Nigerians are presently unemployed of the total workforce; If the young people are not provided with employment opportunities, there is a chance that they risk becoming disaffected and also turn to crime and violence in order to survive or be co-opted by extremist groups to engage in terrorist acts. Ojo (2013) attributed the youth unemployment problems to four major factors: (i) high population growth it is estimated that there are approximately 6 million addition to the population every year, and 1.8 million new entrants to the labour market annually; (ii) low literacy rates - Nigeria has low education outcomes with high dropout rates; (iii) a poor investment climate; and (iv) a lack of targeted investment in key, youth-dominated sectors.

The Concept of Youth Empowerment

Youth according to Jega (2012) is a special group of people with strong stamina and passion for realizing certain set goals and objectives ". The way in which a nation defines its youth is related to the objective conditions and realities that exist on the ground especially historical and contemporary socio-economic and political issues that need to be addressed. That is why nations use different parameters and variables in defining their youth. According to Ezeanu (2012) sprang from the need to enable young people to have a say in decisions which affect them and to have lower and heard voices. This would give young people the economic, social and cultural advancement of their and countries, and to gain self fulfillment. Young people are empowered when they acknowledge that they have or can create choices in life, are aware of implications of these choices, make an informed decision freely, take action based on that decision and accept responsibility for the consequences of that action.

Youth empowerment is an altitudinal, structural, and cultural process whereby young people gain the ability, authority and agency to make decisions and implement change in their own lives and the lives of other people, including youths and adults (Sasaki, 2006). Empowering youth in this context means creating and supporting the enabling conditions under which young people can act on their own behalf, and on their own terms, rather than at the direction of others. These enabling conditions includes, economic and social base, political will, adequate resources allocation and supportive legal and administrative frameworks, a stable environment of equality, peace and democracy, and access to knowledge, information and skills and a positive value system.

Entrepreneurship Education

Entrepreneurship Education means many things to many people. Nwabuama (2004) views entrepreneurship education as the identification of the general characteristics of entrepreneurs and how potential entrepreneurs can be trained in management techniques needed for effective performance of persons for long time survival of an organization after the acquisition of occupational skills. Olawolu and Kaegon (2012) confirm that entrepreneurship education prepares youths to be responsible individuals who become entrepreneurs or entrepreneurial thinkers by exposing them in real life learning experiences where they will be required to think, take risks, manage circumstances and incidentally learn from the outcome. Ememe (2010) observes that entrepreneurship education enables youths to seek for success in ventures through one's effort.

To Ebele (2008) entrepreneurship education is the teaching of knowledge and a skill that enables the students to plan, start and run their own business. In the view of Swarland (2008), entrepreneurship education aims to stimulate creativity in students, enables them to identify opportunities for innovation and motivate them to transform the ideas into practical and targeted activities whether in a social, cultural or economic context. Amusan (2004) agrees that entrepreneurship education will provide opportunities for students to access their attitude, aptitude and skills relating to those necessary for developing and running business. Entrepreneurship education entails teaching students, learners and would-be businessmen, the essential skills required to build viable enterprises, equipping the trainees with skills needed for taking responsibility and developing initiatives of prospective trainees (Ezeani, 2012). Entrepreneurship education entails philosophy of self-reliance such as creating a new cultural and productive environment promoting new sets of attitudes and culture for the attainment of future challenges (Ogundele, Akingbade & Akinlabi, 2012).

Objectives of Entrepreneurship Education

Entrepreneurship education according to Paul (2005) in Ossai and Nwalado (2012) is structured to achieve the following objectives:

1. To offer functional education to the youths that will enable them to be well employed and self-reliant.
2. Provide the young graduates adequate training that will enable them to be creative and innovative in identifying novel business opportunities.
3. To serve as a catalyst for economic growth and development
4. Offer tertiary institution graduates with adequate training in risk management, to make certain learning feasible.
5. To reduce high rate of poverty
6. Create employment opportunities
7. Reduction in rural-urban migration
8. Provide the young graduates with enough training and support that will enable them to establish a career in small and medium sized businesses.
9. To incubate the spirit of perseverance in the youths and adults which will enable them to persist in any business venture they embark upon.

Entrepreneurial Skills Acquisition

Entrepreneurial skills acquisition are said to be the necessary set of skills required to be an entrepreneur. In other words, entrepreneurial skills acquisition are those necessary skills an entrepreneur needs to successfully run a business or add value to work. Agu, Chiaha and Ikeme (2013) argued that acquisition skills must be nurtured through proper education so that it can be directed to responsible and enriching small business endeavours that will benefit the individuals and the communities in which the entrepreneurs live. Formal descriptions/definitions characterize entrepreneurial skills acquisition as ability to have self-belief, boldness, tenacity, passionate, empathy, readiness to take expert advice, desire for immediate result, visionary and ability to recognize opportunity (Salgado-banda, 2005). Skill acquisition as basic ability is the means by which man adjusts to life (Adeyemo, 2003). Skill therefore is the rapidity, precision, expertise, dexterity and proficiency exhibited through mental and manual repetition of performance of an operation. Etonyeaku, Kanu, Ezeji and Chukwuma (2014) opine that skill is the capacity of a person to accomplish a task within desired precision and certainty. Skill involves a practical knowledge in combination with clearness, expertise, dexterity and ability to perform a function which could be acquired or learnt in the school or training centres through learning, experience. Various types of skills are required for the students to be successful entrepreneurs. The inclusion of these skills into education program will reduce the rate of dependence on government for job, instill in the students the right mindset, the ability to be creative, and innovative, and be able to create job out of their chosen career. Moemeke (2013) stated that innovative skills in science singularly can not only produce individuals with useable skills but also without the necessary initiative and impetus for utilizing them at the functional level enough to create wealth.

Entrepreneurial Skills Needed to be Acquired by Youth Entrepreneurs

Entrepreneurial skills encompass a large range of both soft and hard skills. Because of the many business roles entrepreneurs may take on, they may also develop a variety of different skill sets to accommodate the growth of their businesses and brands. As identified by Adendorff, Emuze, and Vilakazi (2013) they include:

Business management skills: Entrepreneurs will most often rely on their business skills to manage and run a business or brand. Developing business management skills can mean building up ability to multitask, delegate responsibilities to subordinates and making decisions regarding the health and profitability of business.

Teamwork and leadership skills: Becoming a successful entrepreneur can also mean taking on leadership roles and working as part of a team. Being a business owner means acting as both a supervisor and as part of a team, and relying on effective leadership skills to help motivate team.

Communication and listening skills: Business owners and entrepreneurs must develop effective communication skills. From active listening to discussions during meetings, being able to communicate

effectively can help working with others to build business. Likewise, effective communication can also translate to promoting awareness of brand.

Customer service skills: No matter the industry an entrepreneur venture into, effective customer service skills is very important. From talking with potential clients to discussing opening partnerships, effective customer service skills can help in connecting with customer.

Financial skills: Owning a business can also mean taking care of the financial aspects of organization. Entrepreneur can develop financial skills by learning from a financial planner, reading financial guidebooks and using financial software to help in organizing and keep track of the financial processes in business.

Analytical and problem-solving skills: Successful entrepreneurs may also have exceptional analytical and problem-solving skills. This is because there can be many aspects of building a brand or business that can require difficult decisions, finding solutions to obstacles and using creative thinking to develop plans and strategies that will help in achieving business goals.

Critical thinking skills: Critical thinking skills, like analytical skills, can be necessary for developing overall entrepreneurial skills. Being able to look at problems, situations, projects and operations from different perspectives can help in decision-making and problem solving. Critical thinking skills can also be necessary for strategic planning and evaluating the approaches using in making changes or improve business strategies as needed.

Technical skills: Because of the availability of software programs for financial analysis, planning, marketing and other business processes, it can be extremely beneficial to develop technical skills. Entrepreneurs with efficient technological skills can use software and other digital approaches for managing projects, tracking sales and revenue and measuring the performance of business growth.

Techniques for Acquiring Entrepreneurship Skills

The various techniques by which youth can acquire Entrepreneurship skills are discussed below:

Teaching Methods: Fayolle (2009), Lonappan and Devaraj (2011) classify the teaching methods into following categories: case study, group discussion, individual presentation, individual written report, group project, formal lectures, guest speakers, action learning, seminar, web-based learning and video recorded. Teaching methods are effective in terms of sending the relevant information to a broader population in a relative short time period.

Industrial Training Exercise: Skills does not depend solely upon a person's fundamental innate capacities but must be developed through training practice and experience. If the objective of entrepreneurship education is to equip individuals with entrepreneurial skills, which are applicable directly to work, then the best technique is industrial training exercise which would provide education and training that enable individuals to involve directly in the entrepreneurial process.

Experimental/Practical Technique: One of the objectives of entrepreneurship educations is to prepare individuals to act as entrepreneurs, one of the most efforts are ways/technique is to facilitate experiments by trying entrepreneurship out in a controlled environment, for instance through business simulation or role playing (Ahmad, Baharam & Rahman, 2004).

Excursion Technique: Excursion technique will facilitate first-hand information on a particular field of study. This will enable young entrepreneurs' opportunity to acquaint themselves with the various skills needed in accomplishment of their dream and aspirations as future entrepreneurs.

Co-operation or Group Learning Technique: This is a process of organizing young entrepreneurs into small groups so that they can work together to maximize their own and each other's learning. Team work is a contemporary form of collaboration. This technique will prompts a sense of mutual responsibility among the

entrepreneurs boost their self-esteem, improved social skills and offers greater comprehension of the subject matters.

Conclusion

Entrepreneurship skill acquisition and youth empowerment has been viewed in this paper as a veritable antidote to the endemic problem of poverty, hunger and youth unemployment. When youth are trained, they explore opportunities in their immediate rural environment instead of chasing shadows and uncertainties in the urban centres. The development of entrepreneurship education for skill acquisition will go a long way in creating employment, give young people the opportunity to develop their enterprising skills, empowering the young to be job creators and not job seekers and by providing them with the necessary skills and knowledge to raise their output; income and wealth. Entrepreneurship education would also contribute to improve the image and highlight therole of entrepreneurs in society.

Suggestions

The wheel of development of any country lies on the shoulders of how productive and creative the youths are. The government, parents and guardians have obligations to ensure that youth are empowered to discharge their obligations to the society and to better their life. In the light of the issues discussed above, the following recommendations are proffered.

1. Funding of entrepreneurship education should be taken seriously by the federal government. This can be achieved through increase in the budgetary allocation to educational sector.
2. Entrepreneurship education should be inculcated into the school's curriculum to promote human empowerment and development through entrepreneurial skill acquisition. It is a means of reducing unemployment since it is skilled oriented and employment motivated. All school programmes should be geared toward providing entrepreneurial skills.
3. The private partners and Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) should be encouraged to participate in entrepreneurship education through funding. This involvement should be seen by firms as a long term investment, and as an aspect of their corporate social responsibility to the nation.
4. To empower youth, federal government should provide enabling environment and all the necessary equipment and materials for easy teaching and learning entrepreneurship education needed for economic enhancement and youth empowerment in Nigeria.

References

- Adebayo, F.A. (2012). University education and poverty alleviation as mechanisms for enhancing youth development in Nigeria. *International Journal of Psychology and Counselling*,4(1), 1-5.
- Adendorff, C., Emuze, F. & Vilakazi, E., (2013). Evaluating the skills of emerging entrepreneurs in a developing economy. *International Journal of Social Entrepreneurship and Innovation*, 2(3), 240–252.
- Agu, R.A, Chiaha, G.T.U, & Ikeme A.I (2013). A paradigm shift in entrepreneurship education pedagogy in Nigeria: Issues that must be confronted to evolve best practice”. Paper presented at entrepreneurship seminar at University of Mkar, Mkar.
- Ahmad, S.F, Baharam, R & Rahman, S.H.A (2004). Interest in entrepreneurship: An exploratory study on engineering and technical students in entrepreneurship education and choosing entrepreneurship as a career, in project report. *Faculty of Management and Human Resource Development*,Skudai, Johor (Unpublished) University, Teknologi Malaysia Institutional Repository (online) Available: <http://eprints.utn.my/2668/>.
- Amusan, A.O (2004). Inclusion entrepreneurship into secondary school curriculum. *Journal of Business Administration Management (JOMAM)* 5(1): 21-30.
- Ajufo, B. I. (2013). Challenges of youth unemployment in Nigeria: Effective Career Guidance as a Panacea. *An International Multidisciplinary Journal*. 7 (1), 307-321
- Awogbenle, A. C & Iwuamadi, K. C (2010). Youth Empowerment: Entrepreneurship Development Programme as an intervention Mechanism. *African Journal of Business Management*. 4 (6) 831-835.
- Aydin, A., & Biyikli, F. (2017). The effect of Jigsaw technique on the students' laboratory material recognition and usage skills in general Physics laboratory-I course. *Universal Journal of Educational Research*, 5(7) 1073-1082

- Ebele, O.P (2008). Introduction of entrepreneurship education in Business education Curriculum at University Level in Nigeria. *International Journal of Ghana*. 3 (1), 30
- Ememe, O. N (2011). Entrepreneurship education in the University in the Eastern Nigeria; Implications for Higher Education Administration *Unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Port-Harcourt*.
- Etonyeaku, E. A. C., Kanu, J. A., Ezeji, H. A. & Chukwuma, J. N.(2014). Entrepreneurial skill needs of secretarial education graduates of colleges of education for self sustainability in Enugu State, Nigeria. *American Journal of Industrial and Business Management*. 4, 601-607
- Ezeani, N.S (2012). The teacher and skills acquisitions at Business Education:From the perspective of Accuracy skills: *Arabian Journal of Business and Management Remo (OMAH Chapter) 2 (4) Nov*.
- Fayolle, A. (2009). Entrepreneurship education in Europe: Trends and challenges, OECD, LEED Programme, Universities, Innovation and Entrepreneurship: good prentice workshop. (online) Available: <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/11/36/43202553>.
- Jega, B.M.B (2012). Nigeria youth and national development. *sahara reporters*. March 26, 28-59.
- Lonappan, J, &Devaraj, K. (2011). Pedagogical innovations in teaching entrepreneurship. in: *Eighth AIMS International Conference on Management*, pp 513-518.
- Moemeke, C.D. (2013). Innovating science education for technical entrepreneurship: The curriculum dimension. *Business & Entrepreneurship Journal*. 2(2), 39-46
- National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2021). *Poverty index in Nigeria*.
- National Population Commission of Nigeria and ICF International (2014) Nigeria demographic and health survey 2013. Abuja, Nigeria, and Rockville, Maryland, USA: NPC and ICF International, 94.
- Nwabuama, E.C (2004). Information technology (IT) and enhancement of entrepreneurship education in secretarial studies programme in polytechnics in Nigeria: A Paper presented at the Association of Business Education UNICAL Calabar 2nd – 6 th November.
- Ogundele, O.J.K, Akingade, W.A and Akinlabi, H.B.(2012). Entrepreneurship training and education as strategic tools for poverty alleviation in Nigeria. *American International Journal of Contemporary Research*. 2(1), 20-29.
- Ojo, L.B. (2013). *Foundation of Education. A Modern Approach*. Bluesign Publication Ltd.
- Olawolu, O.E and Kaegon, L.E.S. (2012). entrepreneurship education as tool for youth empowerment through higher education for global workplace in Rivers. A paper presented at the Seventh Regional Conference on Higher Education for a Globalized World. Organized by the Higher Education Research and Policy Network (HERPNET): holding at the University of Ibadan, Ibadan Nigeria between the 19th to 21st Sept., 2012.
- Ossal, A.G and Nwalado, E.N (2012). Entrepreneurship education: A panacea for sustainable development in Nigeria. *Journal of Resourcefulness and Distinction*. 1 (1), 25-35.
- Sasaki, S. (2006). Promoting youth employment through entrepreneurship education. http://www.110.org/public/english/religion/asro/beljing/download/speech/as_18_May_06.pdf. Retrieved on 03 October, 2019.
- Swarland, J. (2009). A study of Entrepreneurship Education in Botswana and the significance of Institutional Preparation. *Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA)- 2008 Biennale on Education in Africa*.