

Entrepreneurship Education: A Tool for Job Creation and Youth Empowerment in the 21st Century

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Abstract

The role of entrepreneurship education as a tool for job creation and youth empowerment cannot be overemphasized. In emerging economy like Nigeria, entrepreneurship offers a great potential for growth and job creation. As a result of the ongoing economic crisis in Nigeria, entrepreneurship education is the most ideal or recommended educational approach for youth empowerment because, it will provide the young people with information and other assets that will inspire innovation and creativity in them. The purpose of this paper is to see how entrepreneurship education will empower young people and create jobs in the 21st century. This paper recommends among others that the Federal government should create an enabling environment that is suitable for entrepreneurship education and make available all required tools and resources to empower young Nigerians for job creation. The paper concludes that young people who are privileged to acquire entrepreneurship education should explore opportunities in their surroundings rather than chasing shadows by looking for non-existing white-collar jobs.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, Entrepreneurship Education, Youth Empowerment, Employment generation

Introduction

Entrepreneurship education is closely linked to the concept of initiative and action. Those individuals with an entrepreneurial spirit possess, the ability to innovate and to do things efficiently or at least experiment with new ways of doing things. Entrepreneurial training or education should not be confused with business or economic studies, or even with co-operate studies, as the main focus of entrepreneurship is to promote creativity, innovation and self-employment (European Commission, 2019). The rate of unemployment in the country today is at an alarming proportion. While Nigeria's tertiary institutions produce millions of graduates every year, there are no jobs to cater for the increasing number. That is why Okolo (2010) in Kolo (2013) is of the opinion that the present state of insecurity in Nigeria is closely related to the rate of unemployment of graduates and other youths in the country. Furthermore, Arene, J. and Imam, H. (2012), supports the above opinion by saying that the fact that our Universities, Colleges of Education and Polytechnics graduates turn into the labour market where there are no jobs in existence for them leads to general frustration and idleness, which eventually graduates into social insecurity for the nation. However, Dawodu (2005) in kolo (2013) pointed out that entrepreneurship can solve the problem of youth unemployment since it creates jobs opportunities, transforms traditional industries, and can stimulate investment and increase the nation's per capital income and output, thus, bringing the need for entrepreneurship education.

In the words of Iwu, A and Nzeakor R. (2012), entrepreneurship education is defined as a conscious training geared towards the education and development of entrepreneurial knowledge, skills and ability which are to be applied in the management of any economic venture. Such knowledge and skills may include setting up salons, beads making and marketing, graphics designs, textile design, fabric designs, operating business centres etc. Consequently, entrepreneurship in this sense refers to an individual's ability to turn ideas into action. It also includes creativity, innovation, showing initiative and risk-bearing, as well as the ability to plan and manage projects in order to achieve objectives. This supports everyone in the day- to-day life at home and in the society, makes employees more aware of the context of their work and better able to seize opportunities, and provides a foundation for entrepreneurs establishing a social or commercial activity. (Abubakar, 2014).

Concept of Entrepreneurship Education

Entrepreneurship education is a lifetime work-based skill that equips individuals to run their businesses in the future. Conman (2008) sees entrepreneurship education as the primary enabling conditions for future change.

According to Alain (2009), entrepreneurship education encompasses all activities aimed at cultivating entrepreneurial mindsets, attitudes, and skills and covering a variety of or aspects such as generation of ideas, startup, growth, and innovation. In this regard, he believes higher education institutions should serve as role models of sustainability, with fairness in their social policy and economic interactions. Entrepreneurship education prepares and develops people to be responsible, enterprising, and capable of deep entrepreneurial ideas that promote long-term economic growth. It focuses on the information necessary to develop and advertise business opportunities. In the light of global economic crisis, Nigeria particularly needs graduates who would be employers of labour rather than job seekers. Unachukwu (2009), in Igbongidi (2022) and Garba (2010), claims that entrepreneurship education is a strategy or tool for shifting Nigerian students' critical efforts away from employment towards self-employment.

According to Unachukwu (2009), education in entrepreneurship is crucial, particularly in current periods of high unemployment. People can better prepare for self employment by developing their entrepreneurial abilities. It is a unique and creative response to the environment (Onyemah and Ebiloma, (2011) in Igbongidi, 2022). According to Osuala (2009) graduates of entrepreneurship education should be able to start their enterprises, work for themselves and hire other people to accomplish this goal. Entrepreneurship education includes all activities attempting to promote entrepreneurial mindset, attitudes and abilities as well as variety of business elements such as idea generation, start-up, growth and innovation. This viewpoint is supported by Jones and English (2004), who define entrepreneurship education as the process of providing people with the insight, self-esteem, knowledge and abilities to act on economic opportunities. Entrepreneurship education significantly increases the likelihood of success as an entrepreneur. This is so because education is all-inclusive, whereas training still has a goal in mind and is focused on reaching it. Making significant progress toward the goal of educating people to be entrepreneurs is critical to boosting economic development

and growth, (Maina, 2013). An entrepreneur is seen to exhibit qualities such as bravery, confidence, personal leadership skill, and force, (Ugochukwu, 2015).

Youth Empowerment

Youth empowerment is the process in which youths are assisted to overcome obstacles that might prevent them from achieving their potentials. When youths are unable to actualize their dreams up to the level of their potentials as a result certain barrier created by individuals or groups or by the society, they need assistance (Olakulein and Ojo 2006) in (Olusegun and Adebisi 2017). Youth empowerment is regarded as an attitudinal, structural and cultural process where young people gain ability, authority and agency to make decisions and implement change in their own lives as in the lives of other people, including youths and adults (Nnedi, Chikaire, Atoma, Egwuonwu and Echeta 2012). The poor people in any society also need power to live better lives. Page and Czube (1999) observe that power is often related to people's ability to make others do what they want regardless of their own wishes. Power manifests in relationship that is capable of changing, hence it is possible for power relationship to change, and if that is possible, our youths can be empowered and changed. Empowerment is a phenomenon that can expand people's choice and action to shape their lives. It implies control over resources and decisions (Olusegun and Adebisi 2017). Youth empowerment may mean creating supporting enabling environment under which young people can act on their own behalf, and on their own terms, rather than after direction of others. It is a process through which the youths can be assisted to overcome the difficulties that might prevent them from achieving their potentials. With very sound and balanced education, our youths can become employers of labour rather than pursuing non-existing employment opportunities.

Benefit of Entrepreneurship Education

In recent times, Nigerian government having realized the ever-growing problem of unemployment in the country has introduced entrepreneurship education as a way of harnessing the teeming youths as assets for economic growth of the country. Entrepreneurship education is a concept that evolved many centuries ago and has formed the bases for economic growth and development. It is considered as a creative and innovative response in the economic and social ventures which have to do with exploring opportunities and run such investments successfully. It involves combining resources to increase value

and introduce change and innovation into the production process thereby creating wealth and employment opportunities.

Education is a veritable tool for achieving development in any society because it is through education that knowledge and skills are transferred to individuals and consequently their competencies and abilities developed.

Entrepreneurship education has been found to be a source of inspiration to young people, to do all things that are necessary to gain financial literacy and strive for financial independence. Through this same effort individuals are able to explore their talents.

Challenges of Entrepreneurship Education

Juliana (2012) highlighted the following as the major challenges facing entrepreneurship development in Nigeria.

1. Poor Infrastructure

Services and facilities necessary for an economy to function are in a very poor condition, power supply, roads and communication are the worst hit.

2. Inadequate Entrepreneur Development

Until of recent, Colleges and Universities had so little or no programme to expose graduating students to the concept of entrepreneurship that will turn them to be self-employed.

3. Corruption

As corruption is everywhere and seem to be institutionalized, one cannot undertake a task without paying something to the person who is already paid for the job. The cost of doing business in Nigeria because of corruption is high.

4. Insecurity

Too frequent social unrest found in all the states/geographical zones. It is either Niger Delta militants are attacking oil installations in the and Boko Haram in the North is becoming public or private set ups.

Objectives of Entrepreneurship Education

The objectives of entrepreneurship education clearly show that it is concerned with the development and survival of both the individual and the society. In fact, is a tool through which social economic and political development could be achieved if properly planned, funded and implemented. The objectives of entrepreneurship education according to Eucharia, Emeka, Obiageli and Okparaocha (2018) are as follows:

1. To provide meaningful education for youth which could make them self-reliance and subsequently encourage them to drive profit and be self-independent.
2. To provide graduates with training and support necessary to help them establish a career in small and medium size business.
3. To provide graduates with training skills that will make them meet the manpower needs of the society.
4. To provide graduates with enough training in risk management to uncertainly bear impossible and uneasy tasks.
5. To stimulate industrial and economic growth of rural and less developed area.
6. To provide enough training that will make them creative and innovative in identifying new business opportunities.
7. To provide small and medium sized companies with the opportunity to recruit qualified graduates who will receive training and tutoring in the skills relevant to management of business centres.

From the above objectives, it is evident that if entrepreneurship education is given all it deserves it will produce quality graduates that will foster job creation and reduce poverty in Nigeria. This could be realized when the graduates are self-reliant by establishing their own businesses, small medium scale enterprises. Job is one of the cardinal objectives of Millennium Development Goals. Where job opportunities are created, it will invariably help to reduce poverty and enhance better standard of living of an individual in Nigeria

Role of Entrepreneurship in Job Creation

Job creation is an act of making work in which one receives regular payment available to the citizenry that is creating an enabling environment for ample employment opportunities in the society. This is done by establishing small/medium scale enterprises in Nigeria.

Entrepreneurs are often the driving force behind innovation in the economy. They identify new opportunities and develop new products and services that meet the needs of consumers. This innovation can lead to new markets and industries which lead to the creation of new job opportunities. Entrepreneurship has the potential to create jobs and boost economic growth in a sustainable way. At this juncture it is imperative to explore the role entrepreneurship plays in job creation and how it can contribute to national development.

Entrepreneurship creates new job opportunities: Entrepreneurs have the ability to create new job opportunities, which is vital for the growth of any community. They are able to identify gaps in the market and come up with innovative solutions to fill them. For example, a person who starts a new restaurant creates jobs for chefs, waiters, and other staff members. This in turn has a positive impact on the economy.

Entrepreneurship encourages innovation which is essential for sustainable job creation: Entrepreneurs are often at the forefront of technological advancements and are able to create new products and services that meet needs of consumers. This can lead to creation of new industries which can provide employment opportunities for the teeming populace.

Entrepreneurship education can boost economic growth by creating new businesses and industries: This in turn leads to the creation of new jobs an increase in revenue for the government, for example the rise of the technology industry has led to the creation of many high-paying jobs in the country.

Entrepreneurship education creates self-employment opportunities. People who start their own businesses have the freedom to work on their own terms and be their own bosses. This can be particularly beneficial for people who have difficulty finding work in the traditional job market.

Entrepreneurship education plays crucial role in job creation and economic growth.

Conclusion

The Nigerian society today more than ever needs an integrated and articulate entrepreneurial education programme to put our youths out of the streets in search of non-existent jobs but rather make them self-employed and employers of labour. It therefore requires the collective efforts of all stakeholders to realize this laudable vision. Most importantly, designers and implementers of our entrepreneurial education programme must realize the importance of an interface of cognitive and psychomotor learning with effective learning.

Recommendations

1. The government should hasten the power sector reforms and reestablish the power sector to end the looming energy crisis in Nigeria. This is to encourage entrepreneurial activities on the country as power is a major factor in the economy, in terms of enterprise activities.
2. There should be a process of or a program geared towards training youths in Nigeria in the act of entrepreneurship through introduction of entrepreneurial courses in all higher institution's curriculum in Nigeria.
3. Successful entrepreneurs especially those who started small should be made to give motivational talk to the trainee entrepreneurs.
4. Curriculum experts, subject matter specialist, evaluators and guidance counselors should be involved in fashioning an integrated curriculum for entrepreneurship education programme.

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