

RETHINKING ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION AS A REMEDY FOR GRADUATES UNEMPLOYMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Over the last two decades, Nigeria has witnessed an upsurge in graduate unemployment occasioned by the lack of industries and proliferation of tertiary institutions churning out thousands of graduates every year to compete for the few available job space. The astronomical rise in the unemployment rate amongst Nigerian graduates however, is principally assumed to be the defective curricula of the universities and other tertiary institutions whose focus is on training for white-collar jobs. Although graduate unemployment has become a global

scourge, its adverse economic impact is believed to be more in developing economies like Nigeria with a huge young population within the working age who cannot seem to find gainful employment to eke out a respectable livelihood. Thus, higher institutions especially Universities found itself under pressure and intense competition to produce graduates who can think outside the box and create jobs; hence there was the need to focus on instilling hands-on practical job skills into their students that will make them job creators rather than job seekers upon graduation. In the same vein stakeholders' in education have continued to lend their voices to the philosophy that the undergraduate curricula should completely be overhauled to accommodate the development of hand-on practical skills and innovative capacity relevant to creating solutions to societal problems. In a bid to correct this anomaly, the Federal Government of Nigeria in conjunction with the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment inaugurated a programme tagged "University Entrepreneurship Development Programme" (UNEDEP) whose objective was basically to promote self-employment among the youth right from the institutions of higher learning. But the question is whether the objectives of the programme have actually been achieved. Despite the inclusion in Nigerian educational curriculum for close two decades now for job creation, one wonder if the essence has been aborted. Thus, the paper focused on the concept of entrepreneurship education, objectives of entrepreneurship education, Graduates unemployment, rethinking entrepreneurship education programme in tertiary institution for employment generation, role of entrepreneurship in job creation, challenges of entrepreneurship education in tertiary institution in Nigeria, conclusion and recommendations were drawn accordingly.

Keywords: Rethinking, Entrepreneurship Education, Remedy, Unemployment, Job Creation

Introduction

The pivotal role of Education as the most fundamental force for advancing socio-economic development of any country has continued to gain an increasing awareness the world over in recent times. Education thus remains the bedrock on which the development of any nation can thrive. In as much as the important of education is concerned, more important is the nature and system of education. Nigerians are faced with myriads of local and global problems which include poverty, unemployment, among others (Ikeme, 2012). This situation poses great threat to the very existence of individuals in most developing countries like Nigeria. The nation's formal education system turned out graduates who cannot apply or engage themselves in entrepreneurial activities because they lack the skills and competencies required to become successful entrepreneurs. The formal education system in Nigeria appears to concern itself with the training people for paid employment which is in short supply compared with the number of graduates seeking for employment.

In order counter-balance these stated anomalies, educational systems at all levels especially at the universities level would need to be rearranged to concern themselves with the development of sound human capital required for national development (Ikeme, 2012). These problems and situations, therefore, call for training of educated individuals who can function effectively in the society through provision of sector-specific skills by establishing a base of capable professionals and entrepreneurs (Ocho, 2005). This reality presently lacking in Nigeria, is substantiated by the urgent need for and the current move to bring back professionals to create a knowledgeable work force with practical skills demanded for by employers of labour (FME, 2007).

Unemployment occurs when someone is willing and able to work but does not have a paid job neither is he

able to create one. The astronomical rise in the unemployment rate amongst Nigerian graduates however, is principally assumed to be the defective curricula of the universities and other tertiary institutions whose focus is on training for white-collar jobs. Although graduate unemployment has become a global scourge, its adverse economic impact is believed to be more in developing economies like Nigeria with a huge young population within the working age who cannot seem to find gainful employment to eke out a respectable livelihood. Thus, higher institutions especially Universities found itself under pressure and intense competition to produce graduates who can think outside the box and create jobs; hence there was the need to focus on instilling hands-on practical job skills into their students that will make them job creators rather than job seekers on graduation. In the same vein stakeholders' in education have continued to lend their voices to the philosophy that the undergraduate curricula should be completely be overhauled to accommodate the development of hand-on practical skills and innovative capacity relevant to creating solutions to societal problems.

According to Uzoagulu (2012), a viable option for the unemployment situation in Nigeria is entrepreneurship education which fundamentally will prepare individuals for self-employment and self-reliance. Entrepreneurship education therefore ought to prepare individuals to be properly equipped with saleable skills and competencies required to manage business, as well as develop positive attitudes and innovation for self-reliance rather than depending on the government for employment or relying heavily on paid jobs that are not realistic in nature. The current experience of various social vices in Nigeria calls for a functional education. Our education system especially entrepreneurship education needs to be repositioned and re-oriented towards effective entrepreneurial education graduates.

Wiki (2012), noted four major education challenges to include “lack of functional skills in school graduates particularly in areas of trade/ entrepreneurship”. This challenge has given rise to the ever-increasing number of youth unemployment and societal unrest in the country. The four cardinal points of National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) include:

- Wealth creation
- Employment generation
- Poverty reduction, and
- Value re-orientation

Nigeria recognizes education as playing a functional role in empowering the people to attain the four cardinal points of NEEDS. It should however be noted that it is an instrument that empowers youths to be in control of their future. According to Nnamani (2007), entrepreneurship education is a key that opens the way to economic growth and development. Entrepreneurship education is about individual's ability to turn ideas into action, to be innovative, take the initiative, take risks, plan and manage projects with a view to achieving set objectives. For individuals to possess the right kind of skills that will enable them to be self-employed, they need more than understanding of entrepreneurship as a mere factor of production. National Directorate of Employment (NDE) (1988) describes the entrepreneur as the man who perceives business opportunities and take advantage of the scarce resources to use them profitably. According to this concept and philosophy, it is not enough to be an entrepreneur just managing an enterprise, rather the entrepreneur must be an originator of profitable

business ideas, possess the ability to gain command of and combine resources in a new and better way to make it more profitable, and he will be prepared to risk his personal energy and financial resources to achieve unpredictable results. Entrepreneurship involves taking advantage of opportunity before it becomes known to everyone else. Furthermore, Osuala (1999), states that an entrepreneur possess a willingness to take risk while others stand to talk, identify opportunities to which others are blind, and develop optimum confidence in themselves well beyond that of others.

Entrepreneurship Education Defined

Entrepreneurship education is now widely accepted as a field of study as it provides students with motivation, knowledge and skills necessary for launching successful business venture. According to Obierika in Uge and Iyoha (2015), the word “entrepreneurship” originated from the word entrepreneur which means to “undertake”. In the business contract, it means to start a business. Entrepreneurship education on the other hand, according to Gibson (2001), is defined as the process of using private initiative to transform a business concept into a new venture or to grow and diversify an existing venture or enterprise with high great potential. Entrepreneurial education is a lifelong process, starting as early as the elementary school and progressing through all levels of education, including adult education. It is seen as a tool which equips an individual to be an entrepreneur (Antoncic & Hisrich, 2003). Emaikwu (2011) succinctly put it that entrepreneurial education focuses on developing understanding and capacity for pursuit of entrepreneurial skills and attributes. It enhances all-round development of body; mind and spirit.

Entrepreneurial education involves opportunity recognition, commitment of resources and creation of a business of value to deliver goods and services. Moreland (2006) stressed that the inculcation of entrepreneurial education which leads to the acquisition of skills in the students of tertiary institutions will lead to the creation of awareness and understanding of the socio-economic and environmental situation for sustainable national development. It will also enhance job creation to reduce unemployment among graduates upon graduation. It will ensure stable national growth in the provision of employment options for Nigerian graduates. Entrepreneurial education could lead to capacity building of the beneficiaries mentally, physically and intellectually thereby placing them on the advantage of acquiring, interpreting, extrapolating information and consequently applying such capacities in building self in particular and the nation in general.

Entrepreneurship education is essential not only to shape the mindsets of young people but also to provide the skills and knowledge that are essential to developing an entrepreneurship culture. Entrepreneurship education seeks to provide students with the knowledge, skills and motivation to encourage entrepreneurial success in a variety of settings (Wikipedia, 2013). It is made of all kinds of experiences that give students the ability and vision of how to access and transform opportunities of different kinds (UNESCO, 2008). It goes beyond business creation. It is about increasing students’ ability to anticipate and respond to societal changes. It is also seen by UNESCO as education and training which allows students to develop and use their creativity and to take initiative, responsibilities and risks.

The above views show that entrepreneurship education by its scope, nature and characteristics is a rebranding

education culture meant to guarantee a comprehensive educational system re-engineering arising from the obvious deficiencies of the existing education system (Enu,2012). It is aimed at equipping the students with academic knowledge, requisite skills of creativity, innovative and risk taking, ability to turn ideas into action and capacities needed in the world of work, as well as the ability to plan and manage projects in order to achieve objectives. It develops in the learners the mindsets, generic attributes and skills that are the foundations of entrepreneurship. Fostering entrepreneurship attributes and skills in schools at the early age raises awareness of career opportunities, as well as of ways young people can contribute to the development and prosperity of their communities (Karen, 2009). An education of such quality helps young people realize their full human potential and take their place in society as productive, responsible and democratic citizens.

Objectives of Entrepreneurship Education

The introduction of entrepreneurship developmental policy in tertiary institutions particularly in Nigeria is to foster the development of human capital and enabling graduates to possess the attributes and values of entrepreneurship ([Prepelita-Raileanu & Pastae, 2010](#)). Entrepreneurs performed the role of change agents, as they engage various factors of production to provide something new and novel to the community by means of their innovative and creative ideas ([Pinki, 2013](#)). The continual transmission of entrepreneurship development benefit is a greater task that as successive government in knowledge, skill, behaviour and attitudinal development of persons to assume the role of entrepreneur ([Osemeke, 2012](#)). Entrepreneurs production transformation embodied the ability to identify business opportunities and harness the necessary resources in utilising the opportunities identified.

According to [Paul \(2005\)](#), entrepreneurship education is designed to achieve the following objectives:

1. A functional education that brings about youth self-employment and self-reliance.
2. Provide the youth graduates with adequate capacity and equips youth graduates to be creative, innovative, and capable of identifying novel business opportunities.
3. Entrepreneurship education acts as a catalyst for economic growth and development.
4. It also empowered graduates with the requisite skills in risk management, and employment generation, which create results in rural-urban drift.
5. Through entrepreneurship education, university graduates are able to pursue a career in small and medium scale business.

From the above objectives, it is evident that this type of education if given the necessary attention and properly implemented will produce quality graduates that will foster job creation and reduce unemployment and alleviate poverty in Nigeria. This could be realized when the graduates are self-reliant by establishing their own business small/medium scale enterprises.

Similarly, Lekoko, Rankhumise and Ras (2012) posited that entrepreneurial education is aimed at equipping learners to be able to establish their own businesses as soon as they complete their studies. Its objectives are to:

- a. provide opportunity for students to learn about entrepreneurial orientation.
- b. increase students' awareness of entrepreneurial as a career option and
- c. increase self-efficacy among the students.

The objectives is promising towards reducing unemployment and boosting the economy of the nation. Although, Uzoagulu (2012) argued that in practice, some universities simply design one or two entrepreneurial courses, taught by some lecturers who have no practical experience of entrepreneurial while students take such courses as a requisite for graduation.

Graduates' unemployment

Graduates' unemployment remains a key global issue, having a significant impact on societies and governments, particularly in modern times. Oguejiofor and Ezeabasili (2014) stated that youths and graduates from various institutions looking for employment opportunity increase by the day. Unemployment is a state of joblessness and or idleness of one with labour requirements, potentials, skills and competencies, Bosa cited in (Oduma, 2012). Unemployment is a phenomenon that rises when members of a country's labour force are unable to obtain their goals of participation in gainful occupation due to a situation in which supply of labour significantly exceeds demand for it (Okafor, 2005). Due to declining growth and global economic meltdown, the employment situation in Africa, especially in Nigeria has become critical. Graduate unemployment is one of the serious socio-economic problems confronting many developing countries in Africa. Some of the major causes of youth unemployment are skills miss-match and lack of employment opportunities. Nigeria's formal education system in the recent past seem to be continuously turning out people who are ill prepared to help in the development of the country. The education system is a process of preparing the recipients for non-existent white-collar jobs. The International Labour Organization (ILO) cited in Oduma (2012), defined unemployment as when people are without jobs and they actively looked for work within the past four months. It is a situation where people that are willing to work and be able to accept wages, find no jobs. Unemployment causes poverty, community decay, and social unrest Entrepreneurship education is the remedy to graduates unemployment in Nigeria.

Rethinking Entrepreneurship Education for Employment Generation

Globalization has negatively affected the graduates of tertiary institutions in different countries particularly in Nigeria, as evidenced by the competitive demand of expertise workforce and result-oriented graduates in either taking up appointment or setting up a business. According to [Norasmah, Harinder, Poo, and Noorasiah \(2012\)](#), globalization challenged higher educational institutions to undergo revolutionary changes to ensure that human capital is "produced" not for a product-based economy, but for knowledge-based economy ([Norasmah et al., 2012](#)), contingent on the foregoing, Several contending factors have been observed to have constrained

Nigerian tertiary institutions in developing entrepreneurial capacity of global competitiveness in their graduates. Accordingly, the outcome of this inability has resulted in:

1. Many Nigerian graduates' roaming the streets without employable skills-sets.
2. Many Nigerian higher institutions that have entrepreneurship as a course are theoretically taught, having the output to be product-based without hands-on practical instructions.
3. Inability to develop result oriented entrepreneurial curricula in Nigerian tertiary institutions that meets global standards.
4. There exist a disconnect between industry expectations of graduates and the training instilled at higher institutions in terms of practical training of undergraduates on entrepreneurship, however this does not ignore the efforts of tertiary institutions on students' compulsory industrial training (SIWES) placement in firms and corporate organizations, without a genuine recourse to knowledge acquisition, but fulfilment of academic demands.

Contingent on the above is a necessity for tertiary institutions in Nigeria to create an environment that fosters entrepreneurial mindset and entrepreneurial culture across various disciplines. However, in order to reposition entrepreneurship education in tertiary institutions in Nigeria, the following strategies should be taken into account as identified by Nwangu in (Chukwurah & Attah, 2019):

- a. There should be some form of genuine school-work-based learning incorporated in some studies as part of the national economic development strategies. This implies enriching the curriculum to incorporate more vocational and technical training. The development of apprenticeship scheme would give new graduates some work skills and experiences.
- b. There should be school-based enterprises where students identify potential business plans, create and operate small businesses by using the school as mini-incubators.
- c. The government should establish small business schools where interested students and community members can participate. This will make students to be self-reliant.
- d. The government should develop entrepreneur internship programme by matching students with local successful entrepreneurs with clearly established education programmes
- e. The government should establish an enterprise college aimed at fostering the specific skills required for entrepreneurship. This will serve as a skill-acquisition centre for the youths.
- f. The government should create an economic friendly environment. These centres on the reduction of taxes on small-scale businesses.
- g. There should be enough incentives for students of vocational and technical schools.
- h. Sensitizing students that creating a new venture can be an alternative to employment.
- i. Develop entrepreneurship intensive programmes by attaching students to locally successful entrepreneurs with clearly established education programmes

In addition, the researchers equally noted the following tips in which entrepreneurship education can be repositioned in tertiary institutions for employment generation in developing country like Nigeria;

- a. Redesigning the curriculum for practical acquisition
- b. Training and retraining of lecturers for quality instruction delivery

- c. Effective School-industry collaboration
- d. Adequate provision of equipment and infrastructural facilities for learning
- e. Building synergy of programmes with other developed countries.

Role of Entrepreneurship in Job Creation

Job creation via entrepreneur education is one of the cardinal means of solving the numerous problems facing Nigeria. When ample job opportunities are created, it will invariably help in taking the youths away from criminality, prostitution, drug use and drug abuse, violence, crime and civil unrest among others (Olorunmolu, 2008). Creating an enabling environment for ample employment opportunities in the society through establishing cottage, small/medium scale enterprises in Nigeria would help in achieving these objectives.

According to the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2005), the “aims of various governments to combat poverty through the establishment and creation of poverty reduction programmes failed because graduates of the education system lack practical skills”. Many stakeholders and political leaders however, believe that fostering a robust entrepreneurial culture and education through entrepreneur education will maximize individual and collective economic and social success on local, national and global scales. Oguejiofor and Umeh (2017) noted that the introduction of entrepreneurship education in institution of higher learning is not just a welcome development but also a major step towards solving the economic problems through employment generation.

Entrepreneurship education among graduates will ensure solid foundation for the emergence of a generation of innovators willing to apply necessary capital into the production process for new products, open and expand new markets, explore new sources of materials and ensure the organization of new industries. Through this process, there would be an emergence of small unit of businesses that would burgeon into bigger industrial or business concerns with the application of the right managerial skills. The economies of Asian countries that are now competing favourably with the economies of America, Germany, United Kingdom etc, attained their present levels of development through the entrepreneurial activities of individuals and groups with their governments providing the appropriate framework and policies for the thriving of entrepreneurial ventures.

By building entrepreneurship culture into Nigerian educational system and instilling entrepreneurship spirit in our graduates, Nigeria would have laid a strong foundation for reducing general unemployment and associate social problems and ensuring a private-sector driven economy, increasing productivity and enlarging the market-base of the economy. Entrepreneurship education will produce graduates who will provide jobs, create wealth, enlarge and fast-track the economy to attain the status of one of the twenty most developed economies of the world by the year 2020.

Entrepreneurship Education plays a vital role in the social, political and economic development of any nation. This is possible when jobs are created for the citizenry by establishing a lot of businesses that will accommodate the unemployed youth in the country. A qualified graduate of entrepreneurship education is expected to have acquired enough skills relevant to the management of small business centre. - Creation of

self-employment. An entrepreneur provides job for himself by establishing small business centre. This, according to Olorunmolu (2008) helps to reduce the problem of unemployment and other social vices in Nigeria. The entrepreneur does not only provide jobs/employment for him/herself alone, but provides for others too. This in turn helps the individual to increase per capital income and improve the standard of living.

The entrepreneur identifies the specific wants of the people and the type of goods and services that will fulfil those wants most appropriate. Emeruwa (2005) asserted that the entrepreneur does not only identifies but mobilizes and organizes the resources to tap the opportunities by assisting men, materials, money and machines to explore the opportunity. - production of goods and services that is important to the well-being, comfort and happiness of individuals in the society at large.

Through functional entrepreneurship education, Nigeria could produce a lot of entrepreneurs who could establish and manage businesses on their own. Based on the above merits, it is no doubt that entrepreneurship education could be used as major weapon in reducing the worrisome, untamed and ever rising problem of unemployment and poverty in Nigeria.

Challenges of Entrepreneurship Education in Tertiary Institution in Nigeria

One of the major challenges now confronting entrepreneurship education in Nigeria is identifying and recruiting the qualified lecturers/teachers who have the appropriate knowledge and pedagogy to impart entrepreneurial skills and competences on the students. Entrepreneurship education requires the use of active learning methods that place the learner at the centre of educational process and enable them to take responsibility for their learning experience and learn about themselves. Such methods have been shown to make learning experiences richer and to have positive benefits for students in terms of improving their motivation with positive effects from their engagement with learning and long-term attainment. Teachers therefore need the professional competences to be able to guide students through the learning process rather than the traditional talk-chalk method of communicating knowledge and information.

Also, identifying a wide range of entrepreneurship ventures and building comprehensive curricula is yet another critical area of concern for educators in Nigeria. Entrepreneurship education involves a comprehensive learning process and outcome that should key into the national development plans. Hence, a far-reaching strategic document and curricula on entrepreneurship education would not materialize unless a holistic approach is taken towards the plan and implementation of entrepreneurship education.

Inadequate skilled manpower- Nigerian higher institutions do not have adequate and high-level manpower for effective teaching and learning of entrepreneurship education in the country. The available teachers drafted from the existing faculties do not seem to have relevant skills to cope with the challenges of the new curriculum. Since one cannot give what one does not have, the expected products of the new entrepreneurship education may not perform any miracles if they are lectured by the same old lecturers. Stumpf (1999) opined that this 'traditional models of education fall short in their ability to link the knowledge and concepts covered in the classroom to the skills and practice of entrepreneurship.

Poor State of Infrastructure- The poor state of infrastructure in Nigerian universities is worrisome as the new entrepreneurship education will only worsen the situation. Obeleagu-Nzelibe and Moruku (2010) and NEEDS (2012) have noted that the state of infrastructure in Nigerian university system is, to say the least, embarrassing. Hence, Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) has argued in several negotiations with the Federal Government that those infrastructures, such as: electricity, roads and telecommunications network should be provided which will enable entrepreneurs to access to resources.

Conclusion

The issue of entrepreneurship education as concerns remedy for job creation especially in the developing nations like Nigeria is no doubt of great importance. The role of entrepreneurship education in economic growth and development, as well as employment generation and poverty alleviation in any nation especially in the face of the global economic meltdown cannot be underestimated. Entrepreneurship education should afford the learners the right skills, knowledge and competences necessary for them to be useful members of the society. The era of graduates picking up their certificates and roaming the streets looking for jobs that are not there should be made to be a thing of the past. The aim of Nigerian education at all levels especially at the university level should be to produce graduates who have the skills to use their heads and hands to provide job for themselves and for others and also create wealth.

Recommendation

Based on the critical issues arising from the study, it is therefore recommended that:

1. Government should make concerted efforts to ensure its full development in Nigeria the vision enshrined in NEEDS which include graduates/youth empowerment, employment generation and poverty alleviation
2. There should be an enabling access to funds by the youths and this will pave way for other necessary prerequisites to fall into place.
3. Government should set all necessary machinery in motion to ensure that an enabling environment for success of entrepreneurship education is created for the growth of the economy and the development of the nation.
4. Government should build entrepreneurship culture into Nigerian educational system and instilling entrepreneurship spirit in our graduates, this would help laid a strong foundation for reducing general unemployment and associate social problems and ensuring a private-sector driven economy, increasing productivity and enlarging the market-base of the economy
5. Entrepreneurship education in Nigeria should be taught by qualified lecturers/teachers who have the adequate knowledge and pedagogy to impart entrepreneurial skills and competences on the students. Entrepreneurship education requires the use of active learning methods that place the learner at the centre of educational process and enable them to take responsibility for their learning experience and learn about themselves.

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