

The Role of Entrepreneurship Education on the Empowerment of Nigerian Youths for National Economic Development

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Abstract: All over the world especially in the capitalist world, entrepreneurship has been promoted as an effective means of stimulating economic growth through the generation of greater employment opportunities, the development of local technological base and source of foreign exchange earnings. The focus of this study is on the mandatory entrepreneurship course for undergraduate youths in the Nigeria's tertiary institutions. The researchers used structured entrepreneur readiness questionnaire to elicit responses from respondents who were undergraduates. It was hypothesized and found with the aid of test of proportion that entrepreneurship education imparts entrepreneurial skills and attitudes to students as well as favourably disposes them towards establishing own businesses. This will empower them to contribute positively toward the nation's economic development. The researcher recommended that the federal and state governments should provide a more conducive environment in the form of quality infrastructural facilities and start-up financial support to consummate this initiative of entrepreneurship education.

Key words: Education • Empowerment • Nigeria youths and Economic development

INTRODUCTION

Education is the key to national development. This is because it unlocks the economic potentials of the people; empowers and equips individuals in society to participate in, and benefit from their national economy; facilitates economic development and provides the basis for transformation. Education is the essential tool for sustainability. Entrepreneurship education as part of the total educational system is the type of education that involves the acquisition of skills, ideas and management abilities necessary for job creation. An entrepreneur promotes employment rather than seeking for an employment. Therefore, there is a need to embrace this type of education and provide all the necessary resources needed to make functional. Quality entrepreneurship education could be used as a tool for fighting the war against poverty and unemployment in Nigeria.

Education is said to be qualitative when the input such as students, teachers, finance, facilities and equipment and all these are converted through teaching and learning (theory and practical) and produce a desirable output. The output is better equipped to serve

themselves and the society. The quality of input influences to a large extent the quality of output. In other words, the quality of the input of entrepreneurship education such as teachers, students and infrastructural facilities will influence greatly, the input of the output [1]. Therefore, quality entrepreneurship education will enhance job creation which will subsequently reduce unemployment, poverty and social vices in Nigeria. This will also help to improve the standard of living; hence promote social economic and political development in Nigeria which is the cardinal objective of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Also, for the recipient of entrepreneurship education to be a job creator rather than job-seeker, he might acquire essential basic skills and attitudes which will enable him to function as an entrepreneur. However, there are some challenges militating against the production of quality entrepreneur in Nigeria. These may come from the government, parents or even from certain unpredictable environmental forces which are external. Unless these problems are looked into, the realization of the aim and objectives of quality entrepreneurship education in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Nigeria will be a mirage. It

is therefore, against this background that this paper examines quality entrepreneurship education: A panacea for job creation in Nigeria.

There is now a very serious attention paid to entrepreneurship education in tertiary institutions in Nigeria and the world-over. [2], defined entrepreneurship 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. The reason for this of course is obvious, Nigeria educational system that turns out graduates from about 150 Universities and 50 Polytechnics and Monotechnics have not trained our graduates to be self reliant, but to depend solely on white collar jobs for sustenance. As a result, there are several graduates from Nigerian Universities today who are not gainfully employed. Apart from the book knowledge that they gained there are no requisite skills to make them self dependent. There is therefore the need to engage the youth who constitute over 60 percent of the population in meaningful engagement to avoid unhealthy alternatives for this group of people.

Purpose of Study: The study focused on the mandatory entrepreneurship education programme for undergraduate students of tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The fear that this initiative may fail like others of its kind has necessitated an inquiry into its effectiveness in instilling entrepreneurial consciousness among Nigerian youths. Thus, the purpose of the study is to achieve the following:

- To determine the strength of entrepreneurship education in imparting the right skills and attitudes to talented and non-talented students alike.
- To determine the extent to which students exposed to entrepreneurial education are willing to undertake the establishment of their own enterprises.

Research Questions: The following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

- How effective is entrepreneurship education in the impartation of the right entrepreneurial skills and attitudes on the students?
- To what extent do students exposed to entrepreneurship education willing to establish their own business enterprises?

Research Hypotheses: Based on the purposes of the study, the following hypotheses are proposed:

Ho1: Entrepreneurship education does not impact entrepreneurial skills and attitudes in students.

Ho2: Entrepreneurship education does not favourably dispose students towards establishing own businesses.

Literature Review: The word, entrepreneurship is derived from the French word "entreprendre" meaning "to undertake". Thus entrepreneurship is commonly defined as the process of creating a business. In the same vein, an entrepreneur is defined as one that creates a business. As stated by [3], although the creation of business is certainly an important facet of entrepreneurship, it is not the complete picture. The characteristics of seeking opportunities, taking risks beyond security and having the tenacity to push an idea through to reality combine into special perspectives that permeate entrepreneurs. To capture the above perspective, several authors have attempted a comprehensive definition of an entrepreneur. According to [4], "Entrepreneurs are people who have the ability to see and evaluate business opportunities, to gather the necessary resources to take advantage of them and initiate appropriate action to ensure success". For [5], "Entrepreneur is an innovator or developer who recognizes and seizes opportunities; convert these opportunities into workable and marketable ideas: add value through time, effort, money or skills, assures the risks of the competitive market-place to implement these ideas and realizes the reward from these efforts". Entrepreneurship is the purposeful activity (including an integrated sequence of decisions) of an individual or group of associated individuals, under-taken to initiate, maintain, or aggrandize a profit-oriented business unit for the production or distribution of economic goods and services [6]. Entrepreneurship at least in all non-authoritarian societies constitute a bridge between society as a whole, especially the non-economic aspect of that society, and the profit oriented institutions established to take off its economic development and to satisfy, as best they can, its economic desires. [7], defines entrepreneurship as the ability to perceive and undertake business opportunities, taking advantage of scarce resource utilisation. In simplest form, entrepreneurship is the willingness and the ability to seek out investment opportunities and to run an enterprise for profit. In this later sense, entrepreneurship takes premium over capital. It is equally more fundamental than capital because capital formation is the result of entrepreneurial activity. Entrepreneurs are therefore regarded as central figures in economic development. Their contributions run through

labour actions, movement of capital goods and conversion of raw materials into finished products, and ultimately, effectual distribution of the products to final consumers. Entrepreneurs are therefore those who search and discover economic opportunities, marshal the financial and other resources necessary for the development of the opportunities, evaluate alternatives available in the environment and allocate resources to the most profitable ones and as well take the ultimate responsibility for the management and/or successful execution of opportunities. An Entrepreneur is somewhat comfortable with taking and assuming risks which are impassioned with the dream being pursued. He or she knows where to get help, and when it is needed, and as well as being ever ready to receive changes in the business surrounding environment [7].

Consequently, universities should be able to train high level manpower whose characteristics are usually obsessive, focused, articulate, and resourceful. In this way graduates will turn out typically charismatic leaders, and tend to be introspective in the skills of job creation, wealth generation and innovative skill utilization. Empowering the Nigerian people towards wealth creation, employment generation, poverty reduction and value re-orientation [8], is a foremost cardinal point for strategic macro-economic framework. This also reflects in the recent increase in the demand for educational programmes in entrepreneurship in the country's tertiary institutions, parastatals and non-governmental paradigms. If fully satisfied, this new vision and values would shine the spotlight on small medium scale business activities in Nigeria. Thus, increased education on entrepreneurial skills would create that perfect opportunity to stimulate economic growth. Institutions are therefore to properly train individuals who will have the right tools necessary to commence and grow successful businesses with reduced risk of failure.

Entrepreneurial Education: Despite the critical importance of entrepreneurs in the economic development of a country, less developed nations especially Sub-Sahara African (SSA) countries have not fully developed strategies to take advantage of this resource [9]. What the countries have, are haphazard policies, which do not actually reflect the importance of entrepreneurship to the economic development. National programmes have been developed for the purpose of increasing entrepreneurial activity through various reforms, but these have proven abortive. There are several management training programmes that have been

developed to strengthen finance, marketing, personnel, and management skills, but these do not constitute entrepreneurship education.

There appears to exist a consensus among scholars that entrepreneurship education and training has a vital role to play in the development of entrepreneurial attitudes, abilities and related skills [10]. According to [11], about 93 percent of scholars are of the opinion that entrepreneurial skill can be developed via education and training. Thus, the establishment of entrepreneurial education is seen as a possible measure to promote entrepreneurship [12].

According to [13], entrepreneurship education is "a programme or part of the programme that prepares individuals to undertake the formation and acquisition of small-business". Entrepreneurship Development Programme/Education is a planned, systematic and sustained effort at inculcating and nurturing the entrepreneurial spirit among Nigerians so as to produce a pool of willing, able and successful entrepreneurs.

Entrepreneurial education is the purposeful intervention by an adult (the teacher) in the life of a learner to impact entrepreneurial qualities and skills to enable the learner to survive in the world of business [14]. It aims at equipping learners with skills, knowledge and dispositions that can help them develop or implement innovative social or business plans [15].

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 society. In fact, it is a tool through which social, economic and political development could be achieved. If it is properly planned, fund and implemented. The objectives of entrepreneurship education are spelt out by [13] as:

- To provide meaningful education for youth which could make them self-reliance and subsequently encourage them to drive profit and be self independent
- To provide graduate with the training and support necessary to help them establish a career in small and medium size business.
- To provide graduates with training skills that will make them meet the manpower needs of the society.
- To provide graduates with enough training in risk management to make uncertainty bear in possible and easy.
- To stimulate industrial and economic growth of rural and less developed area.

- To provide graduate enough training leer will make them creative and innovative in identifying new business opportunities.
- 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 the business centre.

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

The Concept of Youth Unemployment: Unemployment and poverty were strange to the country before the 1980's. It was therefore not a headache to the nation as to how to solve these problems. But after the 1980's, the need for entrepreneurship education started to rear its head because of political instability and also because of the inconsistencies in the social-economic policies of successive governments which in part led to the unabated unemployment situation in the country today. In the mid 80's the Nigerian economy collapsed while youth and graduate unemployment in Nigeria hit the roof. Workers were laid off and early retirement was the in-thing as a result of Structural Adjustment Programme and bad economic trends in the country. It was then observed that the philosopher of self-reliance such as creating a new cultural and productive environment that will promote pride in primitive work and self discipline was lacking in tertiary institutions. [16] opined that the failure of tertiary education to inculcate the above philosophy in students has led to the wastages in both human and natural resources. This is because the youth and the graduates from tertiary institutions are not equipped with the skills with which to exploit the natural resources that abound in Nigeria.

Challenges of Entrepreneurship Education in Nigeria:

Quality Entrepreneurship Education could played a vital role in equipping individual with necessary intellectual capacity, skills and right type of work habit and attitude to be able to create jobs for the growth of the Nigeria economy. However, what is quite essential is the extent to which the entrepreneurship Education programme can be implemented to realize these goals.

The programme is confronted with a lot of challenges which brought a setback in the attainment of its objectives. These challenges have not enable Nigerian to enjoy the benefits of this programme as expected. This would limits the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Nigeria. Some of the challenges have been pointed out by eminent scholars such as [13, 14, 16] and they include:

- Poor funding by government and Non-governmental organizations.
- Poor or ineffective planning, supervision information and evaluation of the programme across the board.
- Inadequate teaching materials, equipment and infrastructural facilities.
- The challenges posed on globalization, information and communication technology (ICT) have effect on curriculum, methodology, facilities, staff and equipment.
- Inadequate qualified teachers and instructors as well as supporting staff at all level.
- Inadequate motivation for available teaching and non teaching staff which affects staff efficiency, retention, creativity and initiative.
- Emphasis on theoretical Knowledge rather than practical knowledge due to lack of entrepreneurship education centre.
- High level of corruption and very poor maintenance culture in the system.
- Poor enabling business environment, access to credit/ loan, infrastructural decay, mass poverty, inflation, technological infraction, political instability and insecurity of lives and properties which hamper economic and business activities.

Methodology: This study made use of a descriptive survey design. The purpose of using descriptive surveys was to collect detailed and factual information that describe the role that entrepreneurship education plays in the impartation entrepreneurial skills, attitudes and disposition on the recipients. The population of study comprises students of the faculties of Management Science, Social Science and Education in all the

universities in Enugu State, Nigeria. The entrepreneur readiness questionnaire developed and validated by [17] was used to elicit response from the students. The questionnaire was modified to reflect local conditions. To this end, some of the questions were rephrased without losing their meanings. 370 questionnaires were administered to students in the pre-entrepreneurship class in 2016/17 session but 300 questionnaires were returned and useable. A new set of 388 questionnaires were administered to the same students at the end of the entrepreneurship class. The questionnaires were returned and useable. The respondents', comprising respectively 203 male and 185 female and male students, were of average age 19. The questionnaire consisted of 25 items describing the character traits of successful entrepreneurs and soliciting responses on the disposition of the students to own enterprises. The responses were measured on a four (4) point Likert scale of strongly Agree (SA) 4 point, Agree (A) 3 point, Disagree (D) 2 points, and Strongly Disagree (SD) 1 point and data were analysed using weighted mean (\bar{x}) as the statistical tool. The criterion mean value of 2.5 was used to determine acceptance while values below 2.5 showed rejection. The set of questionnaires was analyzed using weighted mean (\bar{x}) as the statistical tool while the hypotheses were evaluated through the test of proportions.

Hypotheses and results

Hypothesis one:

H₀₁: Entrepreneurship education does not impact entrepreneurial skills and attitudes in students.

The questionnaires were administered to the students before being exposed to the mandatory entrepreneurship class. 15 students or 5% of the sample obtained above average score in the pre exposure test and the post class exposure above average scores was 48 students or 16% of the sample.

$$H_{01}: P = 0.05$$

$$Z = \frac{P_n - P_o}{\sqrt{\frac{P_o(1 - P_o)}{n}}}$$

$$P_n = 0.16$$

$$P_o = 0.05$$

$$n = 300$$

$$Z = \frac{0.16-0.05}{\sqrt{\frac{(0.05)(0.95)}{300}}} \quad Z = 11$$

Decision Rule: Accept H₀ if calculated Z is less than table Z otherwise, reject.

Calculated Z = 11

Table Z = 2.65 at 0.05 level of significance

Decision: Since Calculated Z (11) is greater than Table Z (2.65), H₀ is rejected. Thus entrepreneurial education imparts entrepreneurial skills and attitudes in youths.

Hypothesis Two

H₀₂: Entrepreneurship education does not favourably dispose students towards establishing own businesses.

The pre-exposure test score was 10% or 30 students while the post exposure score was 17% or 50 students.

$$H_{02}: P = 0.10$$

$$Z = \frac{P_n - P_o}{\sqrt{\frac{P_o(1 - P_o)}{n}}}$$

$$P_n = 0.17$$

$$P_o = 0.10$$

$$n = 300$$

$$Z = \frac{0.17-0.10}{\sqrt{\frac{(0.17)(1.0.10)}{300}}} \quad Z = 10.69$$

Decision rule: Accept H₀₂ if calculated Z is less than table Z, otherwise, reject

Calculated Z = 10.69

Decision: Since Calculated Z (10.69) is greater than Table Z (2.65), H₀ is rejected. Therefore, entrepreneurship education favourably predisposes students towards establishing own businesses.

CONCLUSION

Entrepreneurship development is the rave of the moment. Any country left behind in this race will remain perpetually undeveloped. This underscores the recent attention given to entrepreneurship development among undergraduates of tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The belief is that when students are exposed to the concepts, principles and theories of entrepreneurship, their entrepreneurial spirits will be fired to propel them into thinking of how to create jobs for others instead of being job seekers. The course will open their eyes to see

the latent entrepreneurial talents within them and enable them to spot and exploit business opportunities. Having been armed with the knowledge of the theories, concepts, and principles of entrepreneurship, students develop the confidence that a successful application of these will enable them succeed in business. Based on the findings of this study, the paper concludes by stating that entrepreneurship education increases the awareness and understanding of the process involved in initiating and managing a new venture as well as to enhance learners of small business ownership as serious career option. It also helps to identify and stimulate entrepreneurial drive, talent and skills; to undo the risk-averse bias of several analytical techniques; and to devise attitudes towards change. Furthermore, entrepreneurial education to contribute to job creation, economic growth, skill enhancement and the development of an entrepreneurial culture; business expects entrepreneurship education to create an understanding of basic business issues, creative work attitude and an entrepreneurial approach among learners; and learners expect entrepreneurship education to assist them in their quest to start their own businesses one day and to develop skills that will enable them find work in large firms as well. Entrepreneurial education is expected to focus on delivering the skills and knowledge imperative for business entry on the other hand; practicing entrepreneurs acquire entrepreneurial education to assist them in solving the unique problems in their businesses.

Recommendations: There is no argument that the technique of entrepreneurship is a discipline that can be taught or learned. However, the environment plays an important role in putting readiness into action or reality, and hence based on the results of this study the following recommendations are made:

There is an urgent need for the government to provide an enabling environment in the forms of efficient and available basic infrastructural facilities, especially electricity. Also venture capital should be provided through micro-finance banks and other specialized agencies to adequately empower young entrepreneurs.

Lastly, the present method of teaching entrepreneurship as a subject should be replaced with teaching entrepreneurship as an activity. As subject, abstract concepts of entrepreneurship are taught to students without practical supplements, while entrepreneurship activity combines teaching with experiential exercises. Gladly the second course in entrepreneurship has a mandatory industrial training programme. This should be extended to the first course.

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