ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION: A STRATEGY FOR YOUTH EMPOWERMENT AND EMPLOYMENT GENERATION

Nnaji Florence Oluchi
Olunna20@yahoo.com
Department of Office Tech., and Mangement.
Federal Polytechnic, Bali Taraba State

Bagudu I. Ahmed
Department of Office Tech and Management,
Federal Polytechnic, Bali Taraba State

Abstract
Entrepreneurship is a term that has brought hope to developing country like Nigeria because of its ability and capacity to create employment and in turn improve the economy. Entrepreneurship education is the right system of education in this time of fierce economic crises. It is a strategy for youth empowerment and employment generation because through this type of education the youth will be equipped with skills, capabilities, competencies, knowledge and other traits that will encourage innovation and creativity in them. Gone are the days when education is meant to equip recipients with knowledge of office work to be responsibly employed by another. The issue in the current education system is education for self-reliance which entrepreneurship education is all about. This paper titled Entrepreneurship Education: a Strategy for Youth Empowerment and Employment Generation discussed the concept of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship education, entrepreneurship education as a strategy for youth empowerment and as a strategy for employment generation. It also looked at the roles and objectives of entrepreneurship education in youth empowerment and employment generation. The paper concluded that entrepreneurship is a veritable tool for youth empowerment and employment generation but this cannot be achieved without given the youth a direction which can only be achieved through entrepreneurship education. The paper recommended amongst others that to empower youth for employment generation federal government should provide enabling environment and all the necessary equipment and materials for easy teaching and learning of entrepreneurship education needed for economic enhancement and youth empowerment in Nigeria.

KEYWORDS: Entrepreneurship, Entrepreneurship Education, Youth Empowerment and Employment Generation.

Introduction
Entrepreneurship is a word that has been given attention to in the recent years. Entrepreneurship was seen as economic activity of those who are educationally unintelligent, because of this reason Nigerian graduates never wanted anything entrepreneurship. Today both the government and the individuals have realized that this is a wrong perception. In any developing nation like Nigeria whose economic strength is weak, entrepreneurship is a strong force that could strengthen the economy and improve the standard of living of the people and also create employment opportunity for the youth. This is the reason why Nwaokolo (2007) defined entrepreneurship as the ability to set up a business enterprise as different from being employed. This means that this ability
should be different in some respects from the abilities required to obtain white-cola employment. It must involve the acquisition of skills, ideas and managerial abilities necessary for self employment.

Entrepreneurship education is needed in this time of fierce economic meltdown and unemployment to empower the youth to generate job. Entrepreneurship education is important because it provides strategies of ensuring that individuals are trained to meet up with the skills needed to survive in the society. It prepares learners for self-employment which goes further to empower them economically and socially by providing recipients with generic lifelong and life copying skills, knowledge and understanding. Nigeria as a developing country has the need of entrepreneurship education as offered in the nation’s tertiary education system. It is very imperative especially with the ever increasing population of graduates’ unemployment. According to Onojetah (2012) the rationale for entrepreneurship education is provided for in the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS). The National Policy on Education (FRN 2004), Vision 20:2020 as outlined by Soludo (2007) and Vision 20:2020 (CDD). Education at all levels including entrepreneurship education has been recognized as a means of youth empowerment and employment generation that promotes national growth at all levels and in all fields as observed by the Center for Democracy and Development (CDD; 2007). Entrepreneurship education is a strategy for youth empowerment because it inculcates in youth the skills, knowledge and abilities for self-employment thereby encouraging employment generation in the youths. Entrepreneurship education aims at empowering the youth by giving them an understanding of economics and business, as well as encouraging them to be “enterprising” and to view business as “positive and worth doing” (Beder, 2009).

Concept of Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship has been defined in various ways by various scholars. Entrepreneurship can be defined as “the willingness and ability of an individual or group of persons to search for investment opportunities, establish and run a business unit successfully.” Entrepreneurship can also be defined as “the process of generating ideas and venturing into business risks created by dynamic environment and making the best of opportunities for profit purpose.” Entrepreneurship connotes action rather than static events. It involves taking action necessary to analyze business opportunities to launch and/or grow a business, to finance the venture and possibly to harvest it. Entrepreneurship as a concept has a lot to do with how several activities are carried out in an organization for effective operation such as to identify business opportunities, to make choice of business opportunities, to decide on the form of business organization, selection and blending of the enterprise resources for maximum utilization, good leadership,
motivation of employees, coordination and monitoring, assumption of risk of different dimensions, and so on. Garba (2010) described entrepreneurship as a means of providing employment and income generation in the country. Looking at this definition entrepreneurship is a system of creating employment in a country and through this employment the economies of the nation is increased. Entrepreneurship encourages ownership of business by individuals. It is important to note that a country that has many entrepreneurs will not suffer from cross unemployment because entrepreneurs create job opportunities for the citizens of a country and this in turn improves the income.

Entrepreneurship contributes in an immeasurable ways towards the creation of new job, wealth, poverty reduction, and income generation for both government and individuals. Entrepreneurship is very significant to the growth and development of economies (Keister, 2005, and Dickson, Solomon, and Weaver, (2008). Okpara (2005) corroborates this view when he stated that entrepreneurship is the ability to create something (usually a business entity) from practically nothing. It is initiating, building and watching enterprise rather than watching someone. Falabi and Olatunji (2014) opined that entrepreneurship is the knack for sensing opportunities where others see chaos, contradiction and conclusion; it is the ability to a founding team to complement one’s own skill and talent. It is know-how to find, marshal and control economic/business resources. Nwagwu (2007) views it, as a process of bringing together the factors of production, which include land, labour and capital so as to provide a product or service for public consumption. Ajani and Ayelotan (2011) suggested that the definitions of entrepreneurship are generally expressed in terms of identification of investment opportunities, decision making as to opportunities to exploit, promotion and establishment of the business enterprise, aggregation of scarce resources required for production and distribution, organization and management of human and material resources for attainment of enterprise’s objectives, risk bearing, creation of an innovative economic activity, and the bringing about improvement on the methods of doing things.

**Entrepreneurship Education**

Entrepreneurship education is a lifelong and work based learning that prepares learners to be future business owners. Alain (2009) described entrepreneurship education as all “activities aiming to foster entrepreneurial mindsets, attitudes and skills and covering a range of or aspects such as idea generation, start-up, growth and innovation”. Coman (2008) viewed education and entrepreneurship as the main enabling conditions for future change. In this regard, he maintains that institutions of higher education should function as role models of sustainability, with fairness in their own social policies and economic interactions. Entrepreneurship education prepares and builds persons to be responsible and enterprising individuals capable of deep entrepreneurial thinking that
contribute to economic and sustainable development. It focuses on expertise that is needed and used to conceive and commercialize business opportunities. Nigeria especially in the face of the global economic crisis requires graduates who will be job “creators” and not job “seekers” (Unachukwu 2009). Garba (2010) stated that entrepreneurship education is a strategy or instrument for channeling necessary energies of the Nigerian students away from paid employment to self employment.

Entrepreneurship education is a need especially in this time of extensive unemployment condition. Entrepreneurship skill acquisition prepares individuals for self employment. It is a creative and innovative response to the environment (Onyemah and Ebiloma, 2011). Osuala (2009) argued that in pursuance of this goal, trainees who complete entrepreneurship education should be able to set up their own business, become self employed and be able to employ others. Alain (2009) defined entrepreneurship education as all “activities aiming to foster entrepreneurial mindsets, attitudes and skills and covering a range of or aspects such as idea generation, start-up, growth and innovation”. Jones and English (2004) supported this view by seeing entrepreneurship education as the process of providing individuals with the ability to recognize commercial opportunities and the insight, self-esteem, knowledge and skills to act on them. Entrepreneurial education serves as a tremendous advantage to increasing the chances of success as an entrepreneur. This is because training is still focused and directed at achieving a purpose while education is all encompassing. Thus, great strides are required to be made towards the goal of educating people to become entrepreneurs to enhance economic growth and development (Maina, 2013). Ugochukwu (2015) citing Okojie (2009) observed that an entrepreneur is believed to possess some traits such as boldness, confidence, personal leadership ability and force.

1.3 The Roles of Entrepreneurship Education in Youth Empowerment

Lucas, Alaka and Odozi (2014) observed that entrepreneurship education plays numerous roles in the life of individual including the youth and these roles are as follows:

1. Entrepreneurship education can positively impact a learner at all levels on a wide number of contexts. This may explain why there are such a wide entrepreneurship education programs, all of which can provide important outcomes at various stages of a learner’s life.

2. Entrepreneurship education is a key driver to economy, wealth and a high majority of jobs are created by small business started by entrepreneurially minded individuals. Thus it would make learners to be relevant in today’s economy.

3. Entrepreneurship education equips people with traits of creativity, innovation, independence and foresight or promoting local technology. National Directorate of Employment (NDE), Industrial Development Centres (IDC), National...
Association of Small Scale Industrialists (NASSI), National Association of Small and Medium, Scale Employees (NASME), Manufacturing Association of Nigeria (MAN) etc provide platform for people to appreciate local technology. Training in entrepreneurship has been used by many nations e.g. Germany set up unique engineering oriented business programmes in the University where their potential engineers are encouraged to seek out ideas and subsequently develop the promising ones from invention phase to commercialization. A nation like Norway has also used entrepreneurship education to inculcate innovation spirit, deliberately targeted at the youths. This assertion is in line with the study conducted by Oviame (2010) which states that “entrepreneurship education will enable potential entrepreneurs create avenues for people to: manage innovation; manage entrepreneurial process, and develop their potentials as managers of creativity in given fields.

4. Entrepreneurship activities are a real-life vehicle for developing academic skills. Hence, trained entrepreneurs are always empowered to tap from local resources in their immediate environment. This is a phenomenon that has been demonstrated in China, Japan, India and other emerging economies of the world.

5. Entrepreneurship education enables employees to be more successful as a result of understanding the operations of a small business and the problems of their boss.

6. Entrepreneurship education inculcates in learners the mentality of hard work, one of the keys to unlock poverty doors and developing rural areas. Entrepreneurs are trained to work hard to be able to run businesses profitably and successfully.

7. Youth/Young people can build confidence in their abilities to become entrepreneurs in their future as a result of a variety of entrepreneurial activities provided throughout education.

8. Entrepreneurship education provides a guide to empower the youth based on the belief that young people are themselves the best resources for promoting their own development in meeting the challenges and solving the problems faced in today’s world and in the new millennium.

9. Entrepreneurship education develops good support skills including commenting, decision making, interpersonal abilities, economic understanding, digital skills, marketing, managerial, and financial skills.

10. Entrepreneurship education also provide individual with adequate training that will enable creativity and innovative relevance to skill acquisition which encourages self employment and self-reliant.
Entrepreneurship Education as a Strategy for Youth Empowerment in Nigeria

The formal system of education laid efficiencies on paper qualification and white cola jobs. The government offices and companies had enough employment for the graduates then, but this is not true of the government offices and companies of today. The increasing unemployment condition in the country became a disturbance to both the government and individuals therefore; the need to provide an educational system that has the ability and strategy for youth empowerment. This is found in the Federal Republic of Nigeria Policy on Education (2004) which emphasized the need for technical education which enhances acquisition of practical and applied skills as well as basic scientific knowledge for youth empowerment”. The objectives of entrepreneurial education laid emphasis on the preparation of students as participants for career success, increasing their capacity for future learning, realizing participant’s personal fulfillment, and contributing to society (Ebiloma, 2011).

According to Ugochukwu (2015) one of the major concerns of most contemporary societies is how to reduce the ever rising tide of unemployment and achieve appreciable success in wealth creation and poverty reduction and foster socio-economic development.

Quality entrepreneurship education is a strategy for the reduction of unemployment in the Nigerian society. Redirecting the minds of students from focusing on white cola-job to being innovative and creative is important at this time. The formal system of education which emphasized less on self-employment has made it difficult for graduates to be entrepreneurs. The best and relevant education which both the government and individuals have realized is the kind of education that will enable the recipient to be self-reliant. The ethical orientation that gave the graduates the impression that one cannot survive without working for government or for another person has proved to be wrong and lacking the strategy for youth empowerment. Domiciliation of entrepreneurship in higher institutions is another strategy for youth empowerment. The Nigerian graduates should be empowered by providing them with the kind of training that is filled with the necessary entrepreneurial competencies, abilities, exposures, skills, knowledge and values that will enable them adapt and integrate in the world of business.

Ugochukwu (2015) added that the kind of skills acquired by young graduates from the various tertiary institutions will to a large extent influence entrepreneurial abilities and will favourably affect them in the world of business. She upholds that stakeholders in education have constantly lamented the unfortunate trend in which our tertiary institutions annually turn out graduates who roam our streets daily in search of non-existing jobs. They have placed this ugly phenomenon on a dysfunctional educational system that has structurally failed to capture the dynamic nature of education as agent of transformation and catalyst for individual and societal self-reliance. To empower graduates for self-reliance the government in 2007 revised the curricula of
universities, polytechnics and colleges of education to include entrepreneurship education in order to equip Nigerian graduates for self-employment. The curriculum for Nigerian secondary schools has also been revised to include entrepreneurship education because it has been agreed that quality entrepreneurship education at all levels of education is the only strategy for youth empowerment, employment generation and economic growth.

The method of teaching entrepreneurship education is another strategy for youth empowerment. European Commission (2009) recommended that the most successful method of teaching entrepreneurship to empower the youth is the one that recognizes and focuses on the personality of the learner, and that this type of education should of necessity encourage creativity, initiative, risk taking and other attributes and skills which form the basis of entrepreneurship. Onojetah (2012) added that there is the need to distinguish from the domain of operational abilities, between what may be regarded as general entrepreneurial competencies that every student acquire, and those specifically needed for social and commercial purposes. Students –centered learning is one of the strategies that can have profound impact on the students while teaching entrepreneurship education. The teaching of entrepreneurship which aims at empowering the youth should be anchored on the concept of out-sourcing and in-sourcing of personnel for effective teaching of entrepreneurship in the institutions. Dominguez (2006) opined that out-sourcing concerns hiring functional or practicing experts/entrepreneurs to handle some particular aspects of the teaching programme that are outside the resident teacher’s core area of specialization. In-sourcing on the hand, relates to the process or act of bringing an activity or service such as internship back into an institution where the activity had been provided by an external person.

In order to allow entrepreneurship education serve as strategy for youth empowerment school based enterprises like cooperative society, table water factory, bread industry among others, where the students can identify potential businesses, plan, create and operate them using the school as mini-incubators is necessary. There is also the use of small school businesses to teach students and community members’ entrepreneurship education as well as the development of entrepreneurship internship programmes that are used to match students with locally successful entrepreneurs with established entrepreneurship education programmes. Also, entrepreneurship education should always involve practical aspects such as the teaching of trades like barbing, tailoring, bid making, tie and dye, soap making, hairdressing amongst others so that graduates will be motivated and equipped with abilities and capabilities for entrepreneurship. Ayodele (2006) in Lucas, Alaka, and Odozi (2014) suggested the following strategies as measures for entrepreneurship education and youth empowerment in Nigeria.
1. Government should establish small business schools where interested students and community members can participate. This will make students to be self-reliant.

2. Government should develop entrepreneur internship programme by matching students with locally successful entrepreneurs with clearly stated education programmes.

3. The government should establish an enterprise college aimed at fostering the specific skills required for entrepreneurship. This will serve as skill-acquisition centre for the youths.

4. Government should create an economic friendly environment. This center on reduction of taxes on small scale businesses.

5. There should be enough incentives for students of vocational and technical schools. This will motivate them to establish their businesses after school.

6. 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.

7. There should be school-based enterprises where students identify potential business, plan, create and operate small business by using the school as mini-incubators.

**Entrepreneurship Education as a Strategy for Employment Generation**

Quality Entrepreneurship Education plays important role in the social, political and economic development and economic sustainability of any Nation. This is possible when jobs are created for the citizens by establishing a lot of businesses that will accommodate the unemployed youth. A good graduate of entrepreneurship education would have acquired enough skills relevant to management of small business centre. This is the reason why Okolie (2011) stated that the objectives of entrepreneurship education are as follows:

1. Development of skills of trainees to successfully start, manage diversify and expand business enterprises

2. Facilitation of easy access to start-up capital for trainees, especially funds from banks and allied financial institutions for students and society at large.

3. Generation of employment opportunities for youths in line with the goal of the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy
4. Compliance with the National Universities Commission and National Board for Technical Education guidelines which stipulated that entrepreneurship education centre be established in Nigeria universities and polytechnics etc.

Osuala (2010) supported this by observing that the objectives of entrepreneurship education include:

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 the 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 make uncertainty bearing possible and easy.
5. To stimulate industrial and economic growth of rural and less developed area.
6. To provide graduate 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 centre.

From the above objectives, it is evident that entrepreneurship education when given all it deserves and properly implemented will produce quality graduates that will foster employment generation and reduce or eliminate poverty in Nigeria. This could be realized when the graduates are self-reliant by establishing their own business (small/medium scale) enterprises. Employment generation is one of the cardinal objectives of Millennium Development Goals. When an ample of job opportunities is created it will invariably help to reduce poverty and enhance better standard of living of an individual in Nigeria (Maina, 2013). Entrepreneurship education is a strategy of encouraging employment generation in the youth because the youths are trained to be innovative and creative in business. Employment generation is an act of making work in which one receives regular payment available to the citizenry either by self-employment or by the government. This can be done by creating an enabling environment for ample employment opportunities in the society. This also can be achieved by establishing cottage, small/medium scale enterprises in Nigeria.

**Challenges of Entrepreneurship Education in Nigeria**

Entrepreneurship education programme is confronted with a lot of challenges which has made the attainment of its objectives difficult. These challenges have not
enabled Nigerians to enjoy the benefits of this programme fully. Some of the challenges have been pointed out by eminent scholars such as Gana (2000), Aiyeduso (2004), Osuala (2010) and Maina, (2013) and they included:

1. Poor funding by government and Non-governmental organizations.
2. Poor or ineffective planning, supervision information and evaluation of the programme across the board.
3. Inadequate teaching materials, equipment and infrastructural facilities.
4. The challenges posed on globalization, information and communication technology (ICT) have effect on curriculum, methodology, facilities, staff and equipment.
5. Inadequate qualified teachers and instructors as well as supporting staff at all level.
6. Inadequate motivation for available teaching and non teaching staff which affects staff efficiency, retention, creativity and initiative.
7. Emphasis on theoretical Knowledge rather than practical knowledge due to lack of entrepreneurship education centre.
8. High level of corruption and very poor maintenance culture in the system.
9. 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.
10. Poor knowledge based economy and low spirit of competition
11. Poor enterprising culture
12. Poor societal attitude to Technical and Vocational Education development

Conclusion

Entrepreneurship is a veritable tool for youth empowerment and employment generation but this cannot be achieved without given the youth a direction which can only be achieved through entrepreneurship education. Entrepreneurship education is a viable tool to youth empowerment. When youths are well trained they explore opportunities in their environment instead of chasing shadows and uncertainties in the urban areas.

Recommendations

1. To empower youth for employment generation federal government should provide enabling environment and all the necessary equipment and materials for easy teaching and learning of entrepreneurship education needed for economic enhancement and youth empowerment in Nigeria.
2. In order to allow entrepreneurship education serve as strategy for youth empowerment school based enterprises like cooperative society, table water factory, bread industry among others, where the students can identify potential
businesses, plan, create and operate them using the school as mini-incubators should be provided by all institutions.

3. Entrepreneurship education should always involve practical aspects such as the teaching of trades like barbing, tailoring, bid making, tie and dye, soap making, hairdressing amongst others so that graduates will be motivated and equipped with abilities and capabilities for entrepreneurship

References


Education + training. 46(8) 416-423


