

# Entrepreneurship Education in Nigeria: A Panacea for Self Reliance among Institutional Graduates

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## Abstract

The unemployment situation in Nigeria poses serious threats and challenges to both government and well meaning citizens. The Nigeria government introduced entrepreneurship education as a pathway to stimulate self-sufficiency, self-sustainability and self-support culture in students. The aim is to ensure graduates take advantages of personal resourcefulness to be self-employed. This could only be possible when government educational policies are geared towards a functional education that can lead to job creation and also self reliance. This paper examines how the entrepreneurship education could serve as Panacea for Self-reliance and Job Creation to Nigeria Institutional graduates. The paper recommends that funding of entrepreneurship education should be taken seriously by the Government. This can be achieved through increase in the budgetary allocation to educational institutions.

**Keywords:** Unemployment, Entrepreneurship Education, Self-reliance, Job Creation, Institutional Graduates.

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## INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship education is a form of education that seeks to provide knowledge, skills, attitude and motivation to students for entrepreneurial success in any setting. It equips students with the ability to seek investment opportunities [3]. Entrepreneurship education – or enterprise education as it is sometimes called is that education which assists students to develop positive attitudes, innovation and skills as well as covering a range of aspects such as idea generation, start-up, growth and innovation. Entrepreneurship education seeks to provide students (especially those in tertiary schools) with the knowledge, skills and motivation to encourage entrepreneurial studies in a variety of settings.

Entrepreneurship Education is made up of all kinds of experiences that give students the ability and vision of accessing and transforming opportunities of different kinds. It goes beyond business creation. It is about increasing students' ability to anticipate and respond to societal changes. Besides, it is the type of education that seeks to provide students with the knowledge, skills and motivation to encourage entrepreneurial success in a variety of settings. It thus empowers students to develop and use their innate creative skills to take initiatives, responsibility and

risks. 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 millennium development goals (MDGs) [10]. According to him, for recipient of entrepreneurship education to be a job creator rather than job-seeker, he might acquire essential basic skills and attitudes which will be enable him to function as an entrepreneur.

Entrepreneurship education according to [16] is structured to achieve the following objectives:

- To offer functional education for the youth that will enable them to be self-employed and self-reliant.
- Provide the youth graduates with adequate training that will enable them to be creative and innovative in identifying novel business opportunities.
- To serve as a catalyst for economic growth and development
- Offer tertiary institution graduates with adequate training in risk management, to make certain bearing feasible.
- To reduce high rate of poverty

- Create employment generation
- Reduction in rural-urban migration
- Provide the young graduates with enough training and support that will enable them to establish a career in small and medium sized business.
- To inculcate the spirit of perseverance in the youths and adults which will enable them to persist in any business venture they embark on.
- Create smooth transition from traditional to a modern industrial economy.

Thus, entrepreneurship education would lead to self-reliance, improves the quality of life and the general standard of living of the masses. It reflects in the following economic indicators such as higher profit employers, more employment, higher productivity, promotion of innovative technologies, products and services and increase in local sourcing of raw materials [12].

### Self-Reliance

Self-reliance is synonymous with self-sufficiency. It means doing things for ourselves rather than having things done for us. Self-reliance is the personal initiative in the ability and effort to identify, harness and manage effectively and efficiently the personal and collective resources, human or natural in the immediate surroundings in order to uplift one's or a people's life quality, standard and condition of existence [14]. He noted that self-reliance cautions against dependency-syndrome on the government as the monopoly of development. Self-Reliance is an ability to rely on one's own efforts and abilities. A self-reliant person is one who possesses great creative ability, one who is functional, one who has acquired some values and skills to improve not just himself, but people around him/her; a resourceful individual. Self-reliance and its kin-terms accentuates people's primary role as principal agents of development and self-determination both on the individual and collective levels.

Therefore, for a country striving to attain self-reliance economy, its educational system should be designed to involve robust entrepreneurial curriculum. In order to achieve viable entrepreneurship education that will enhance self-reliance, education planning effort must therefore:

- Recognize the technological imperatives in modern industrialization and provide suitable arrangements for orientation of the labour force towards technology adoption;
- Ensure that the educational system is geared not only for quality, because high quality academic preparation is a prerequisite for the type of industrialization that will transform the nation;
- Eradicate imbalance in skill formation through meaningful attention to the enhancement of

intermediate technical skills and artisanal training.

### An Overview of the Nigerian Unemployment

Unemployment is an involuntary idleness of a person willing to work at the prevailing rate of pay but unable to find it. It is an economic situation of one who is capable of working, actively seeking work, but unable to find any work. Millions of able bodied Nigerian youths including a great multitude of institutional graduates roam the streets without job. Prior to the Oil boom era of the 70s, the Nigerian economy was purely dominated by export of primary agricultural commodities. However, buoyant oil revenue in the 70s relegated agriculture to the background, as crude oil became the main export product of the Nigerian economy. Political instability and inconsistencies in the socioeconomic policies of successive governments led to the emergence of high level unemployment in Nigeria. There was large scale layoff of workers and early retirements as a result of structural adjustment policies and bad economic trends in the country. In the face of this situation, entrepreneurship which would have salvaged the situation was not encouraged. More so, tertiary education has not properly included philosophy of self reliance such as creating new cultural and productive environment that will promote dignity in work and self discipline, encouraging people to take part actively and freely in discussions and decisions affecting their general welfare, promoting new sets of attitudes and culture for the attainment of future goals. This is because before this period, unemployment and poverty were not national concern as it is currently. In the mid 80s, the Nigeria's economy collapsed while youth and graduate unemployment hit the roof.

Although, unemployment statistics remain very unreliable, available evidence shows and indicates that while government programmes provided some avenues for new- employment the general picture was that of low employment and labour absorption. It is appropriate to say that the situation is much worse today given the rate of output from the educational system and the closure of many enterprises in the private sector. The general direction of unemployment rate in the country must obviously give cause for worry. The situation in Nigeria is of such concern that hundreds of unemployed university graduates mounted a demonstration in front of the presidential offices to express their concern. They demanded that government should provide them with jobs for them to cater for their essential need of life [6]. The Nigeria of the 21<sup>st</sup> century cannot afford the high rate of continuous unemployment among the institutional graduates. The problem of unemployment is particularly pathetic as the number of those coming out from various institutions and looking for employment opportunity is increasing day by day. In order to eradicate unemployment and poverty, the Nigerian government under the leadership

of President Olusegun Obasanjo reiterated the need to approach the issue of employment generation from a systematic point of view. Thus, the decision to institute entrepreneurship education started emerging in the mid 1980s.

### **The Nigerian Education System**

In Nigeria, the education system being practiced before the advent of the missionaries and colonialism can be said to be complete and relevant to the needs of the society. At that time, various indigenous skills (human development efforts) such as blacksmithing, carving, cattle-rearing, dying, farming, fishing, hair-plaiting, leather-working, pottery-making, sculpturing, weaving and so on were taught as part of the education of Nigerian child. However, the entrenchment of formal western education gradually changed the focus to emphasis on training of interpreters, clerks, teachers, evangelists and so on. This new focus of the Western education was criticized by educated Nigerians as being too bookish, too elitist and unrelated to the needs of the people [11]. This criticism prompted the setting up of various commissions on education. For instance, the Phepstones commission report on education in Africa 1920 – 1922, noted that, the education given to Africans was too literary and too classical to be useful. The commission further reported that, there have been over production of those who could write and talk and under supply of those who could till and repair. The commission proposed the development of vocational and technical education among other things.

The aim of every society is to prepare citizen to take his or her place functionally in the society. [4], observed that one major human capital assumption is that after finishing formal tertiary education, graduates should be able to afterwards make a successful transition from these institutions of higher learning to become productive workers, self-reliant entrepreneurs, responsible parents, good citizens, selfless leaders and live healthy lives.

However, in recent time, there has been increasing global concern over the continuously expanded rates of unemployment around the world, particularly in most developing countries, where the graduates have been identified as the most affected groups. In Nigeria for example, the problem of unemployment and poverty has become alarming. There are many graduates who are unemployed, and who cannot employ themselves. A survey conducted by the Federal Ministry of Education as reported by [5] indicated that 71% of unemployed youths in Nigeria are people who graduated from Universities, Polytechnics, and Colleges of Education. This may be partly due to the curricula of the Nigeria tertiary institutions of learning, which lay emphasis on training for white collar jobs. It is explicitly clear that no nation can survive in the face of successive job rates of

unemployment because of the attendant waste of human resources. As a result, and in order to survive, various governmental and non-governmental organizations have initiated policies through support agencies such as National Directorate for Employment (NDE).

A major defect in the Nigerian educational system, is its theoretical inclination. For one instance, most Nigerian higher institutions produce graduates who are at best only suited for white collar jobs and have little or no basic skills of any other vocational relevance. Naturally, such a situation will lead to high unemployment rate especially among tertiary institution graduates [7]. Nigeria educational system that turns out graduates from about 179 Universities and 219 Polytechnics and 139 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 Institutions today who are not gainfully employed. Apart from the book knowledge that they gained there are no requisite skills to make them self dependent. Presently, youths' unemployment is very high in Nigeria with its attendant social vices such as kidnapping, arm robbery, prostitution and hired assassination and so on. In view of this, Nigerian youths should be re-oriented to embrace entrepreneurship in order to create more employment opportunities.

That is why in 2006, the Federal Government directed Nigerian higher education institutions (HEIs) to include entrepreneurship education (EEd) as a compulsory course for all students with effect from the 2007/2008 academic session [1] which led to the inclusion of EEd in the curriculum of all universities and other higher education in Nigeria. Most of the universities and polytechnics in Nigeria now have a centre for entrepreneurship development (CED) in their respective institutions.

### **Entrepreneurship Education in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions**

Entrepreneurship education is the type of education designed to change the orientation and attitude of the recipients and the process will equip them with the skills and knowledge to enable them start and manage a business. However, the enforcement of the policy rested on the National Council on Education (NCE) through its respective agencies, National Universities Commission (NUC), National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) and National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE). The establishment of Entrepreneurship Development Centres in each of these institutions is mandatory because it is a significant component of the policy. The Centre for Entrepreneurship Development was established to prepare students to be proactive, flexible and able to adapt to the changing demands of the modern economy.

The tertiary institutions (university, polytechnic and colleges of education) were particularly established to train and prepare students for employment upon graduation. However [13] asserted that in the early Nigeria, tertiary institutions were regarded as the single most important industry for the production of high-level manpower needed for the transformation of Nigerian economy. Similarly [17] reported that tertiary education in general, is fundamental to the construction of knowledge economy in all nations.

One of the social responsibilities of government in the world over is to provide employment to her citizenry. However, the experience of Nigerian youths has shown that government alone cannot guarantee paid jobs to the teeming Nigerian youths. Employment opportunities as provided by government cannot keep pace with the number of youths leaving school (secondary and tertiary institutions) to join the labour market each year. In the words of [15] the rate of growth of students population may be described as being in geometric progression, while the growth of job opportunities have been in arithmetic progression. However, it becomes imperative for would-be entrepreneurs to have some useful knowledge on how to succeed in business. This should be a prerequisite to floating any business venture especially if sustaining the business is the guiding principle. This is where entrepreneurship education comes in. Given the enabling environment, entrepreneurship education enlightens and equips the youth with modalities for operating and managing enterprises. Therefore, as a means of empowering Nigerian youths for sustainable self-employment and wealth creation, the integration of entrepreneurship education in the curriculum of institutions of higher learning constitute the hub of this study.

Entrepreneurship competencies carry with it, the concept of skills and mental awareness which are needed to understand the functioning of an already existing business. Entrepreneurship education is made of all kinds of experiences that give students the ability and vision of how to access and transform opportunities of different kinds. Considering the importance of entrepreneurship education in the life of Nigeria citizens in general and tertiary graduates in particular, the National Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC), in the National Policy on Education, identified what it calls "Trade/Entrepreneurship subjects", and listed thirty-four (34) of them under section 38.2.5 of the policy. They include;

- I. Auto body repair and spray painting.
- II. Auto electrical work.
- III. Auto mechanical work.
- IV. Auto parts merchandising.
- V. Air conditioning and refrigeration.
- VI. Electrical installation and maintenance work.

- VII. Radio, TV and electronic servicing.
- VIII. Welding and fabrication engineering craft practice.
- IX. Block laying, brick laying and concrete work.
- X. Painting and decorating
- XI. Plumbing and pipe lifting.
- XII. Machine wood working.
- XIII. Carpentry and joinery.
- XIV. Furniture making.
- XV. Upholstery.
- XVI. Catering craft practice.
- XVII. Garment making.
- XVIII. Clothing and textile.
- XIX. Dyeing and bleaching.
- XX. Printing craft practice.
- XXI. Cosmetology.
- XXII. Photography.
- XXIII. Mining.
- XXIV. Tourism.
- XXV. Leather Goods Manufacturing and Repair.
- XXVI. Stenography.
- XXVII. Data Processing.
- XXVIII. Store Keeping.
- XXIX. Book Keeping.
- XXX. GSM Maintenance and Repairs.
- XXXI. Animal Husbandry.
- XXXII. Fishery.
- XXXIII. Marketing.
- XXXIV. Salesmanship [9].

This made NUC, NBTE, and NCCE to design an entrepreneurship course titled Entrepreneurship Education/Graduate Self Employment with the theory and practice components to be taught in the various Nigerian Tertiary Institutions. While it forms part of the general courses required all the students from 100 to 400 levels are made to register for, study and to be passed before graduating. Evans-Obinna R, N [8] opined that the rapid industrialization of any nation is tied to acquisition of knowledge and skill in science and technology for sustainable development; but unfortunately in Nigeria, the zeal to advance in these areas is bridged by change of government and disrupted policy. It is pertinent to note that irrespective of the government on board, there should be continuity in policies already established by the government for entrepreneurship education.

### **Sustainable Viable Entrepreneurship Education**

Human talent is the single most important productive factor in today's knowledge economy. Focusing on the development of entrepreneurship education, training, skills acquisition and lifelong learning is important for helping youths and graduates to be reliance. This will put the entrepreneur at a very competitive advantage.

In order to sustain viable entrepreneurship education that could serve as panacea for sustainable



graduate's self-reliance in Nigeria, the following measures according to [2] will help to be achieved in the country.

1. There should be some form of genuine school work based learning incorporated in some studies as part of the national economic development strategies. The development of apprenticeship scheme would give the graduates some work skills and experience to re-laid upon after graduation rather than waiting for government job.
2. Pool local public and private funds to create a small venture capital fund.
3. School based enterprises where students identify potential business, plan, create and operate small business using the school as mini-incubators.
4. Provide small business venture where interested students and community members can participate to run.
5. Develop entrepreneurship internship programmes matching students with locally successful entrepreneurs with clearly established education programmes.
6. Establishing an enterprise college aimed at fostering the specific skills sets required for entrepreneurship to serve as skill acquisition centres for the youths.
7. Creating an economic friendly political environment.
8. Improving on the government taxation on small scale businesses.

## CONCLUSION

Since early 1980's, Nigeria has a history of economic stagnation that has led to decline in white collar jobs. The inclusion of entrepreneurship education in all disciplines at tertiary institutions will to a great extent, assist in solving this problem of high unemployment rate in the country. Thus, Entrepreneurship education in this paper has been recognized as a key driver in encouraging institutional graduates to think of start up his/her own productive venture rather than seeking for job. There is no gainsaying that the great strides in economic development witnessed in countries in Europe and the Americas can be traced to the doors of entrepreneurship and large corporations. Individuals, societies, and policy makers has come to know that there should be a paradigm shift from general education to integrated entrepreneurship education in the present realities for the need to develop and empower post-graduation opportunities in the society and at same time ameliorate some socio-economic problems, unemployment and other social vices prevalent among unemployed youths.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has made an exposition on the vitality of entrepreneurship education as a panacea for job creators in the crucial Nigeria's business and

economic environment. The wheel of development of any country lies on the shoulders of how productive and creative the youths are.

In the light of the issues discussed above, the following recommendations are proffered.

1. Funding of entrepreneurship education should be taken seriously by the Government. This can be achieved through increase in the budgetary allocation to educational institutions. All school programmes should be geared toward providing entrepreneurial skills.
2. The private partners and Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) should be encouraged to participate in entrepreneurship education through funding or contributions in kind. This involvement should be seen by firms as a long term investment, and as an aspect of their corporate social responsibility to the nation.
3. To empower youth, government should provide enabling environment and all the necessary equipment and materials for easy teaching and learning entrepreneurship education needed for economic enhancement and youth empowerment in Nigeria.
4. The youth should shun joblessness and criminality through the cultivation of entrepreneurial spirit and acquisition of relevant skills that will launch them into enterprise greatness and economic independence.

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