

CURBING GRADUATE UNEMPLOYMENT IN NIGERIA THROUGH ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION

Ezeanya, Stanley Arinze., Ofuase, Mama-J0e Ifeoma & Ezeanya, Adaeze Ngozi
Department of Educational Management, University of Port Harcourt, Choba

ABSTRACT

Nigeria is faced with a high rate of graduate and youth unemployment with its attendant spill-over effects in the form of poverty, increased crime rate, depression, violence, etc. The problem of unemployment demands an urgent and a lasting strategy to eradicate or atleast reduce the menace. It is on this background that this paper examines the role of entrepreneurship education in curbing graduate unemployment. The paper explained the concepts of unemployment, education, entrepreneurship, and entrepreneurship education. It looked at the objectives of entrepreneurship education, challenges hindering the success of entrepreneurship education was analysed. It was recommended among others, that there should be collective efforts by the government and private organizations in promoting entrepreneurship education.

Keywords: Education, Entrepreneurship, Entrepreneurship Education, Unemployment, Graduate Unemployment.

INTRODUCTION

Graduate unemployment has become one of the most challenging issues in Nigeria recently. The persistent global economic meltdown has caused many economies to experience a landslide recession with its resultant effect on the labour market, mostly affecting the under-developed and developing nations of the world. There has been a large-scale layoff of workers as a result of the bad economy coupled with the fact that thousands of graduates are turned out from our tertiary institutions on yearly basis no hope of being absorbed by government establishments or private organizations due to the unemployment trend in our society. Ochonma (2011) in his research reported that about 2.8 million fresh graduates enter the labour market yearly but only 10% Of this number are gainfully employed. Similar to the above observation, the Federal Ministry of Labour and Productivity Report (2008) observed that Nigeria has one of the highest levels of youth unemployment in the world, ranging between 60-65%. This trend shows that, without any plan to address this issue of unemployment the situation could further deteriorate. It is against this background that government needs to fashion out a means of making of making our education system more functional and practical. The paper will look at some terms in its bid to suggest lasting solutions to the problem of graduate unemployment.

Unemployment

Simply put, unemployment is a state of being unemployed though willing and able to work. It occurs when people are without work, ie not on a paid employment nor self-employment, and actively seeking for work. The International Labour Organization(ILO) defines unemployment as numbers of the economically active population who are without work but available for and seeking work, including those who have lost their jobs and those who have voluntarily left work.(WorldBank,2008). Ekanem(2011) defines it as a situation when people are able to work and

would willingly accept the prevailing wage paid to someone with skills but either cannot find or have not yet secured suitable employment.

Effects of Unemployment

Unemployment obviously has some negative effects on the unemployed, the family and the nation. Some of the effects of unemployment are:

- Unemployment can lead to social violence and crime.
- It reduces the living standard of the unemployed.
- It causes depression which can lead to suicidal attempts.
- It can cause family disintegration.
- Destruction of government properties.
- Reduction in the nation's Gross Domestic Products (GDP) and national income.
- Unemployment can lead to crimes such as armed robbery, kidnapping, thuggery, etc.

Education

The pertinence of education to every nation that desires to develop is hugely indispensable. The success of any nation is hinged on the quality and functionality of the education of her citizens. Infact, education has come to be seen as an instrument per excellence for effecting national growth and development for a sustainable economy. Agi and Yellowe (2013) opines that the goal of wealth creation or generation, poverty reduction and value re-orientation, can only be attained and sustained through an efficient education system which impacts the relevant skills, knowledge, capacities, attitudes and values. Education has come to be seen as the major mechanism for the upliftment and integration of the youths and other citizens of a nation at large into the social, economic and political fabrics of the society. No wonder, one of the national educational goals is the “acquisition of appropriate skills and the development of mental, physical and social abilities, and competences as equipment for the individual to live and contribute to the development of the society.” (FRN, 2004:8). Further, Ezeanya (2015) asserted that education is a veritable tool for the total emancipation and development of an individual, the family and the nation at large.

However, it has been argued that the type of education Nigeria inherited from her colonial masters is more “bookish” and theoretical than practical. It was oriented towards making graduates suitable for white collar jobs only. This explains why millions of our graduates waste at home due to the unavailability of white collar jobs. If what is learnt in school must be applied in real life, it therefore should be made more practical and relevant to the needs of the society of which education is a sub-system. It does not only have to address the discrepancy between the content of the education curriculum and what is obtainable in the real work life. It also needs to equip individuals with various skills that will enable them live a self-reliant life. In view of the deficiencies and resolve to reposition Nigeria's education to be functional, the federal government of Nigeria under the administration of the former president of Nigeria, chief Olusegun Obasanjo mandated that all university students in Nigeria regardless of the course of study to be exposed to entrepreneurship education.

Entrepreneurship Education: Entrepreneur

The word “entrepreneur” is coined from the French word “entreprendre” which means “to undertake”. It can be deduced from the meaning that an entrepreneur is an individual who identifies a particular need in the society, sees the need as an opportunity to maximize profits and therefore undertakes a new venture to introduce a method of meeting the society’s needs and at the same time making some profits. Mbaegbu(2008) is of the view that there is no one best definition for the word entrepreneur. He however noted that anyone who creates a business, establishes it, and nurses it to growth and profitability qualifies as an entrepreneur. In the words of Igwe(2009), an entrepreneur is that person who conceives of an idea, utilizes identified opportunities by employing the factors of production: land, labour, capital and time towards productive ends by way of bringing about appropriate innovation either in the production process by revitalizing an existing business or beginning an entirely new business. Hassan(2013) sees entrepreneurs as individuals who recognize opportunities where others see chaos or confusion. From the foregoing, one can conclude conveniently that entrepreneurs are opportunists, risk takers, innovators, initiators, producers and profit-driven individuals.

Entrepreneurship

Omolayo(2006) sees entrepreneurship as the act of starting a company, arranging business deals and taking risks in order to make profit through the education skills acquired. Uche and Adesope(2007) are of the opinion that entrepreneurship is the ability to perceive profitable business opportunities; willingness to act on what is perceived and the necessary organizing skill. To Nwangwu(2007), entrepreneurship is the 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. Entrepreneurship in this work will however be seen as act of identifying a need in the society and taking necessary steps to introduce methodologies or putting mechanisms in place towards meeting the society’s needs while at the same time maximizing profit. Entrepreneurship and education have been critically examined separately; it will suffice to look at the two together here.

Entrepreneurship Education

Entrepreneurship education comprises the totality of all the training processes designed to equip its recipients with necessary skills, values, experience and orientations needed to be self-reliant and contribute to a nation’s development. Akinboye (2005) sees entrepreneurship education as a kind of education that attempts to inject values of creativity, innovation, entrepreneurship, emotion, character, needed skills, competence, knowledge, attitude and heart. According to Tamuno and Ogiji (1999), entrepreneurship education is the education that has the ability to impact on the growth and development of an enterprise through technical and vocational training. Nwosu and Ohia (2009) sees entrepreneurship education as that aspect of education which equips an individual and creates in the person the mindset to undertake the risk of venturing into something new by applying the knowledge and skills acquired in school. One salient point noticeably present in the definitions given so far is empowerment, in other words, entrepreneurship education empowers the recipients with skills and abilities for self development and contribution to the nation’s general development.

Objectives of Entrepreneurship Education

Entrepreneurship education according to Paul (2005) in Arogundade(2011, p.27) is structured to achieve the following objectives:

- To offer functional education to the youths that will enable them to be self employed and self-reliant.
- Provide the young graduates 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 learning feasible.
- To reduce high rate of poverty.
- Create employment opportunities.
- 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 businesses.
- To inculcate the spirit of perseverance in the youths and adults which will enable them to persist in any business venture they embark upon.
- Create smooth transition from traditional to modern industrial economy.

Entrepreneurship Education as a Tool for Curbing Graduate Unemployment

The urgency to address the unemployment rate and its attendant poverty level among the graduates of our tertiary institutions calls for an immediate paradigm shift from the general education to a more practical and entrepreneurial education. There is seeming consensus on the importance of entrepreneurship education in reducing some socio-economic problems especially unemployment and all other sort of social vices in the society. Therefore, the focus of teaching and learning especially in underdeveloped and developing countries where unemployment is predominant demands for a new approach. This lucidly indicates the need for reorientation towards inculcating the kind of skills, values and competencies that will encourage self reliance, graduate empowerment and gainful engagement.

Entrepreneurship education has shown to be the most visible alternative in the face of heightened unemployment occasioned by non-existence of jobs or the negligible quantity of available ones compared to the quantity of unemployed graduates roaming the streets. Entrepreneurship education provides training that imparts skills and abilities which can be positively directed to establishing businesses that will further foster job creation and thereby reducing the unemployment rate. Alaba, Alanana and Bahal(2014) asserted that entrepreneurship education among graduates will lay a 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 markets, explore new sources of materials and ensure the organization of new industries. Through this process, there would be an emergence of small units of businesses that would flourish into bigger industries in the future via the application of managerial skills learnt through entrepreneurship education. The economies of most Asian countries that can now comfortably compete with the economies of America, Germany, United Kingdom etc attained their present level of development through the

entrepreneurial activities of individuals and groups with the support of their government by providing the needed framework and enabling environment for such entrepreneurial ventures to thrive. In China for instance, the private businesses and organizations employ the majority of the nation's workforce. If effectively managed, entrepreneurship education will reduce general unemployment and even ensure a private sector driven economy. Entrepreneurship education can train graduates to gain extra skills that can engage them as competent plumbers, electricians, auto mechanics, truck drivers, computer technicians, system programmers, web designer etc. This will not only make them self employed, but further provides jobs for others, creates 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.

Challenges of Entrepreneurship Education

The full entrenchment of entrepreneurship education in Nigeria is fraught with several constraints. Among these constraints are:

Inadequate Funding: Nigeria's educational system has always been bedevilled with challenges of inadequate funding. The importance of adequate funds in the implementation of any educational programme cannot be over-emphasized. In the words of Ezeanya(2015), adequate funding is a critical factor for any worthwhile educational programme to be achieved. The procurement of equipments and facilities needed for entrepreneurial training sessions is a function of money. However, the issue of poor funding has been recurrent. Nigeria has not been able to meet up with the 26% recommendation by UNESCO for developing countries to allocate to their education sector in the annual budgetary allocation(Ezeanya, 2015). The table below shows the federal government allocation to education from 1994 to 2014.

Federal Government Annual Percentage Budgetary Allocation to Education:

Year	Percentage allocated to education
1994	7.83
1995	12.83
1996	12.32
1997	11.50
1998	10.72
1999	11.12
2000	8.71
2001	7.13

2002	6.90
2003	7.75
2004	5.24
2005	8.21
2006	10.43
2007	9.75
2008	10.04

2009	8.79
2010	7.39
2011	9.32
2012	9.86
2013	10.21
2014	10.7

Source: Adapted from Nwakudu (2014, p.157) with modification.

The beautiful dream of entrepreneurship education and its benefits becomes far fetched in the face of inadequate and in some cases unavailability of funds for smooth running of the programme.

Government's Indifference: Bad governance is the banes of development in Nigeria. Nigerian leaders seems to be more interested remaining in power by all means than in the welfare and well being of Nigerians. They have little or no interest in the empowerment of the citizenry.

Poor Infrastructure: The state of infrastructures in our institutions of higher learning is already deplorable coupled with the extra demands of entrepreneurship education. Such infrastructures like electricity, good roads, and other necessary installations which would aid the successful implementation of entrepreneurship education are not adequate and in the cases where you even have them, are usually in poor condition.

Student's Indifference: in most occasions. The students lack interest in learning entrepreneurial skills such as auto mechanic, sewing, welding, carpentry, plumbing, masonry etc which they usually see as demeaning.

Entrepreneurship education is still trying to secure its academic credibility which ofcourse can create challenges in the efforts to entrench entrepreneurship education into the school system.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

It is believed that the development of entrepreneurship education will develop in the learners the right skills, knowledge and competencies necessary for them to take their destinies in their own hands, and at the same time contribute to the development of the country. The solution to the persistent graduate unemployment is the introduction and development of entrepreneurship education, and strict compliance by all institutions of higher learning to the course of developing a vibrant economy, where unemployment is eradicated or atleast reduced to the barest minimum via entrepreneurship education. It is therefore against this background that the following recommendations are considered germane:

- Nigeria's government should take education, especially entrepreneurship education serious. Efforts should be made to increase the annual budgetary allocation to the education sector.
- There should be a collective effort by both the government and private organizations to tackle the unemployment problem in Nigeria through the promotion of entrepreneurship education.
- There should be a total reorientation of undergraduates on the need to become job creators after graduation instead of looking for jobs.
- Government should make loan facilities accessible to encourage graduates that may want to venture into businesses but lack the required capital.
- Government should ensure that there is an enabling environment for businesses to thrive.

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