



Enhancing Graduates Self-reliance through Entrepreneurship Training by Nigerian Universities

Nsini Akpan (PhD) & Umoeka, Emmanuel Edet

Department of Business Education

University of Uyo, Uyo.

Abstract

Self-reliance has become a key concept in the education, training and preparation of youths for living in the present Nigerian society. This is due to the prevailing economic experience in the country marked by rising unemployment and excessive poverty. This article attempts to examine ways of enhancing graduate's self-reliance by Nigerian Universities through entrepreneurship education. It was found that entrepreneurship education instills in students the motivation, orientation, skills and knowledge to identify and evaluate opportunities around them, and effectively turn them into profitable ventures. Entrepreneurship education provides students with capabilities and motivation to pursue self-employment rather than preparing their minds for white-collar job. It was concluded that entrepreneurship education is capable of enhancing graduate's self-reliance upon graduation. It was suggested that the programme should be given adequate attention by government and other stakeholders through proper funding, collaboration between higher institutions and other agencies such as the National Directorate of Employment and the National Open Apprenticeship Scheme for effective implementation of the programme.

Keywords: Enhancing, Graduates, Entrepreneurship, Training, Self-Reliance, Universities.

Introduction

One major definition commonly used to describe the concept of education is "preparation for life". An important function of education in any society has been economic function where individuals are equipped with the potentials and opportunities to exploit his environment to provide food, shelter and other basic necessities of life for himself and his dependents. The core purpose of education is to prepare young people for life after school, helping them to build up the mental, emotional, social and strategic resources to enjoy challenges and cope well with uncertainties and complexity of life. According to Ibia (2009), the essence of schooling is to be employed on graduation. Economic function seems to gain priority over other functions because without being economically self-reliant, individuals cannot live meaningfully and contribute to his society. It is increasingly important that schools should instill self-reliance on students by equipping them with the skills, knowledge and competencies for self-employment instead of waiting for white-collar employment.

Education is about the cultivation of competencies, and it is what a society does to enable children succeed in the world they will inhabit. Okon (2012) observes that the aim of every society is to prepare citizens to take his or her place functionally in the society. One of the social responsibilities of governments the world over is to provide employment to her citizenry. This is either directly through paid employment or indirectly by building self-reliance on citizens. However, the present education system in Nigeria seems to be deficient in this respect. Graduates are seen today roaming the streets, unemployment has become a

common phenomenon in the society and opportunities for white-collar job continue to be disproportionate to the increasing number of graduates. Self-reliance among graduates can be enhanced through entrepreneurship education.

Entrepreneurship Education is a form of that seeks to provide knowledge, skills, attitudes and motivation to students for entrepreneurial success in any setting. It is the type of education fashioned out to prepare learners for innovative ventures which leads to self-reliant and economic emancipation. Entrepreneurship Education was introduced into the Nigerian school system as a pathway for reducing unemployment in the society and encourage self-employment and self-reliance. Self-reliance is synonymous with the self-efficiency. It means doing things for ourselves rather than having things done for us. According to Adams (2013), self-reliance is the personal initiative in the ability and effort to identify, harness, 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. Self-reliance discourages dependency syndrome and promote an individual's ability to rely on one's own efforts and abilities. A self-reliant person is one who possesses great creative abilities, one who is functional, resourceful and one who has acquired some values and skills to improve not just himself, but people around him.

The concept of self-reliance gained importance in Nigerian educational system due to the adverse economic experiences in the country in particular and the world over. As noted by Harrison and Patrick (2011) in recent time, there has been increasing global concern over the continuously expanded rate of unemployment around the world, particularly in most developing countries, where 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.

One major human capital assumption is that after finishing 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. According to Desmond (2014), for a country striving to attain self-reliant economy and for its citizens, its educational system should be designed to involve robust entrepreneurship curriculum and to achieve viable entrepreneurship education that will enhance self-reliance. Education planning must be geared towards eradicating imbalance in skills formation through meaningful attention to the enhancement of individuals technical skills and artisanal training. In the context of this paper, self-reliance means the ability to create and manage successfully and independently any economic venture. It can be used synonymously with self-employment and economic independent. Self-reliance would encourage each graduate to pursue goal of self-employment rather than waiting for paid employment. This would hopefully reduce the spate of unemployment in the society.

The Role of Education in Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship is the process of seeking out opportunities in the market place and arranging resources required to exploit the opportunities for life-long gains. According to Emmanuel (2013), entrepreneurship is the ability to perceive and undertake business opportunities, taking advantage of scarce resources utilization. It is a process of creating something new with value by devoting the necessary time and assuming the accompanying financial, psychique and social risk and receiving the resulting rewards of monetary and personal satisfaction and independence (Hisrich & Letters, 2011 in Babatunde, 2017).

Entrepreneurship is a process and actions of an entrepreneur who is always in search of something new and exploits such ideas into gainful opportunities by accepting the risk and uncertainties of the new enterprise. The word "entrepreneur" is derived from the french verb *entreprendre*, which means "to undertake". It refers to those who undertake the risk of new enterprises. According to Macaulay (2014), an entrepreneur is someone who always search for change, respond to it, and exploits it as an opportunity. The process of performing the role of an entrepreneur is called entrepreneurship. It describes the art of turning a business idea into a profitable venture. Some attributes associated with successful entrepreneurship include: creativity, motivation, vision, versatility and risk tolerance.

Entrepreneurship Education seeks to inculcate entrepreneurial spirit in students and prepare them towards becoming entrepreneurs and enhancing their self-reliance. Entrepreneurship education is the type of education fashioned out to prepare learners for innovative ventures which leads to self-reliant and economic emancipation. A broader definition of entrepreneurship education according to the European Commission (2011) is the process by which learners are equipped with a wide set of competencies that can bring about greater individual, social and economic benefits. It is the type of education which seeks to provide students with the knowledge, skills and motivation to encourage entrepreneurial success in various settings.

According to Maina (2014), the introduction of entrepreneurship education in Nigerian school system was basically to reduce unemployment in the society and encourage self-employment and self-reliance. At the secondary level of education, the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) in the National Policy on Education (NPE, 2013), listed what it called "Trade & Entrepreneurship Subjects", consisting of thirty-four subjects from which a student can identify passion, acquire the skills and pursue a career as entrepreneur. Some of these trades are listed as auto body repair/ spray painting, auto electrical/mechanical work, air conditioning/ maintenance, electrical installation, welding & fabrication, painting & decoration, plumbing & pipe lifting, carpentry & joinery, garment making, catering, photography, among others.

At tertiary level of education, the general objectives of entrepreneurship education according to Manina (2014) are as follows:

1. To encourage higher institutions to generate knowledge and other competencies that will build an entrepreneurship human capital for national development
2. To help build an innovative and entrepreneurial culture in order to create a productive and socially responsible generation of graduates
3. To address the problem of unemployment and under- employment in the society.

Entrepreneurship education aims at enforcing a mind-shift of every graduate towards self-employment and self-reliant. A graduate may pursue a career in an existing trade, or alternatively, may identify, evaluate, and initiate a new line of business. Ultimately, entrepreneurship education aims at equipping graduates with the potentials to succeed and make difference in the business world.

As part of the training programme in entrepreneurship in Nigerian higher institutions, every student is normally required to undertake a field training experience in his or her chosen occupation. The aim is to encourage students to identify a skill where they have passion and talent and attach with any approved training organization to develop skills in the chosen trade. Through this means, the universities provide avenue and motivation for entrepreneurial skills development among students for self-reliance.

Guides to Successful Entrepreneurial Initiative

A significant factor that often discourages individuals from undertaking entrepreneurial ventures is fear of uncertainties and possibility of failure. High motivation back up with sound knowledge of what to do and steps to take towards successful entrepreneurial initiative can go a long way to reduce this fear and enhance graduates confidence in their entrepreneurial pursuit. This is the role of entrepreneurship education.

Akpan (2021) put forward the following guidelines which can be followed to identify, evaluate and successfully initiate a profitable venture.

1. Identification of business opportunity
2. Formation of business idea corresponding with the identified opportunity
3. Conducting Feasibility Study to determine the viability of the proposed idea, and
4. Preparation of business plan for the take-off of the business.

These steps ensure the success of an entrepreneurship venture and reduce the chances of failure, thus, increasing the confidence of a potential entrepreneur.

1. **Identification of Business Opportunities:** Business Opportunities exist where there is "inefficiency or imperfection" in the market. This could be a situation where there is absent of a particular goods or service, inadequate supply of a particular goods or service or supply of different goods or service at the same or lower price. A source business opportunity can come from provision of a new goods or service, enhancement of an existing goods or service, finding a new market for an existing product, finding a new application for an existing product, finding a new and better ways of doing anything.

To identify business opportunity, an entrepreneur must observe the market around him and see whether there is imperfection. Such imperfection can be as a result of technological, social, economic and political changes. Therefore, an entrepreneur is expected to be on the look for these changes in order to identify business opportunities.

2. **Turning business opportunities into ideas and then to tangible product or service:** Once a business opportunity is identified, the next thing is to turn such opportunity into business idea corresponding to the identified opportunity. Turning the business idea into tangible product or service takes the form of producing the actual goods and supplying it to expected customers.

However, it should be noted that it is not every business idea is worthwhile. Therefore, determining whether a certain business idea is worthwhile or not calls for a "feasibility study".

3. **Conducting Feasibility Study:** Feasibility Study is an assessment or analysis of a proposed project, plan or venture to determine its practicality and profitability, and whether it is likely to succeed. It is designed to assess the viability of an idea with the emphasis to identify potential issues and problems. The end product of a feasibility study is "a feasibility study document", analysing how the business world operate, its potential customers, financial analysis, technological requirements and organization.

Feasibility Study provides entrepreneur with quality Information for decision making and reasons whether or not to proceed with the idea. It helps in the development of

marketing strategy and can be used to convince investors or banks that investing in the business is a wise choice.

4. Preparation of a business plan: When an entrepreneur is convinced that the proposed idea is viable given the outcome of the feasibility study, the next stage is the preparation of a business plan. Business plan is a guide to managing the business to ensure its growth and progress. It consists of the executive summary which is a brief and general overview of the business, intended to introduce the business to outsiders, business analysis which describes the business, its mission and objectives, history and ownership, product or service, and operating plan among others. Also included in the business plan are market analysis, management summary, financial plan and appendices.

Armed with the above knowledge, a graduate of entrepreneurship education is highly motivated to pursue any entrepreneurial career with confidence. Entrepreneurship education trains graduates to become skillful and sensitive to business opportunities around them, effective in analysing a business idea and turning them into profitable ventures. This increases graduate's self-reliance.

Repositioning Entrepreneurship Education for Graduates Self-Reliance

Entrepreneurship education has been adopted by Nigerian government as a programme whose objective is to address the issue of unemployment in the country and enhance self-reliance among citizens. Therefore, it is appropriate that the programme should be given priority by government and all stakeholders involved. According to Babatunde (2017), the introduction of entrepreneurship education into the Nigerian higher education system came with a policy that mandated all Nigerian universities to establish Entrepreneurship Development Centres (EDC) and Enterprise Resource Centers (ERC) latest by the end of 2008 academic session. These centres were to be involved in the promotion of Entrepreneurship education through curriculum review, promotion of innovation and technology, provision of incentives to students and lecturers to encourage the programme, advocacy programme as well as mobilization of support and funding for the programme. It has been observed that very little has been done in this respect. According to Babatunde (2017), many public universities in Nigeria complain of lack of matching capital grants and difficulties associated with accessing grants from the Education Trust Fund (ETF). It is unarguably that the establishment of these centres would enhance the implementation of the programme by Nigerian Universities and reposition entrepreneurship education to achieve its objective. Universities must actively be involved in the task of equipping graduates with entrepreneurial skills. Entrepreneurial Skills Development Centers are crucial in this respect and every university in Nigeria should ensure that these centres are available and functional.

In an attempt to address the issue of unemployment, the federal government of Nigeria has from time to time established other agencies such as the National Directorate of Employment (NDE), National Open Apprenticeship Scheme (NOAS), National Industrial Development Bank (NIDB). It is appropriate that these agencies should work in collaboration with the institutions of higher learning in the country to the implementation of entrepreneurship education towards tackling unemployment in the country. This would further reposition entrepreneurship education for graduates' self-reliance.

Conclusion

In the face of rising unemployment in Nigeria, especially among graduates of Nigerian higher institutions, self-reliance has gained importance in the education, training and preparation of individuals for living in the present society. Entrepreneurship education is a means of enhancing graduates self-reliance. Entrepreneurship education develops in students the motivation, orientation, skills and knowledge which give them confidence to pursue entrepreneurial ventures through proper identification of opportunities, development and evaluation of business ideas and converting a viable opportunity into profitable ventures, thus encouraging self-employment and self-reliance. It is concluded that entrepreneurship education should be given proper attention through funding by government and support by relevant agencies to ensure effective implementation of the programme to enhance graduate's self-reliance and self-employment.

Suggestions

In order to further enhance graduate's self-reliance through entrepreneurship education by Nigerian universities, the following suggestions are provided:

1. Entrepreneurship education should be given adequate attention by government through adequate funding, other stakeholders including university authorities to facilitate the implementation of the programme.
2. Other agencies such as the National Directorate of Employment and the National Open Apprenticeship Scheme should collaborate with the Nigerian higher institutions for the training of students for self-employment and self-reliance.
3. Schools and the relevant authorities that adequate to promote the implementation of entrepreneurship education are available in schools such as Entrepreneurship Development Centres and Entrepreneurship Resource Centers as provided by the programme's policy. This ensure that the objective of programme is achieved.
4. There should be proper orientation for all students on need for self-reliance through entrepreneurship education. Students should also be encouraged through incentives by government and other authorities to adopt entrepreneurship education to increase their skills, knowledge and motivation for self-reliance.
5. Government should set up a special trust fund to provide empowerment for graduates of entrepreneurship education as a transition programme to enable them establish themselves independently in their chosen entrepreneurship career.

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