

Developing Entrepreneurial Skills through Business Education to Curb Unemployment amongst Youths in Nigeria

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Abstract

Unemployment has been one of the current issues threatening the economic development of our country Nigeria. It is one of the root causes of youth unrest. As a matter of fact, the problem of unemployment has caused the loss of many lives, and the government has not really identified a sustainable approach towards tackling the issue. Business Education, however, is an educational programme whose primary objective is to prepare people for roles in enterprises as employees and employers of labour. It provides the learner with adequate knowledge, attitude, and skills to become self-reliant through its entrepreneurial competence. It is based on these that this theoretical study critically reviewed the topic - developing entrepreneurial skills through Business Education to curb unemployment amongst youths in Nigeria. It x-rayed unemployment in Nigeria, the entrepreneur and entrepreneurial skills, the concept of Business Education, Business Education and entrepreneurial development, and curbing unemployment in Nigeria by developing entrepreneurial skills through Business Education. Of a truth, becoming one's own boss, or an entrepreneur, is the coveted career choice of the 21st century, and Business Education is the programme that can grant such opportunity. Therefore, the study concluded that to curb unemployment in Nigeria, the youths (students and graduates) should embrace entrepreneurial skills as made available through Business Education. It suggested amongst others that, students should be encouraged to study Business Education in order to develop the needed entrepreneurial skills to curb unemployment, Business Education curriculum should be enriched to meet the skillset demand of the 21st century, government should collaborate with Department and Schools of Business Education to establish entrepreneurship resource centres where entrepreneurship skills development of youths can be achieved without them needing to attend universities or colleges of education.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial skills, Business Education, Unemployment

Introduction

Amongst the challenging issues burning in countries of the world, both developing and developed, is youth unrest, and this youth unrest is often tied to unemployment. To this end, Alamieyesegha (2000) identified unemployment as one of the root causes of youth unrest in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. The 2011 mass riots in the United Kingdom that led to the looting of shops were linked to the increasing rate of unemployment in the kingdom (Taylor et

al., 2011). In the United States, reducing unemployment through job creation was one of the 2016 Presidential debates. In Nigeria also, the major campaign promise of both the presidential and gubernatorial election candidates of various parties of past elections, have been on job creation. These go a long way to show the prevalence of unemployment globally, and its negative effects.

The problem of unemployment has caused the loss of many lives because the government has not really identified a sustainable approach towards tackling the issue, although every successive administration in Nigeria is concerned about ways to curb unemployment. It was based on this that, in the past, various government agencies were established to tackle unemployment problems such as the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) and Rural Employment Promotion Programme (REPP). Under the NDE, various schemes were developed such as Vocational Skill Development Programme, National Open Apprenticeship Scheme, School on Wheels, while under REPP there were Rural Agricultural Training Scheme, and Rural Handicraft Scheme. The establishments of these schemes were to enable the Federal Government to tackle the growing rate of unemployment in the country, through the acquisition of various requisite skills needed for obtaining good jobs. Nonetheless, unemployment is still soaring high in the country, as several young men and women enter the labour market with limited employment opportunities. Hence, solving the problem of unemployment has become a major issue (Ogele, 2019).

Developing entrepreneurial skills is a systematic process of creating something of value, by way of exposing youths to the world of work through education, in order for them to acquire skills that will make them self-reliant and able to contribute meaningfully to the growth and development of the society. It remains a force that triggers social economic development, and reduces drastically youth unemployment. It is an integral part of Business Education, which is an educational programme whose primary aim is to prepare people for roles in enterprises as employees, employers, entrepreneurs, or self-employed. It is a programme of study that houses the knowledge, attitude and skills that are needed for promoting entrepreneurial culture, as well as managing business enterprises. Amaewhule (2000) affirmed that Business Education has a role to play in entrepreneurial development, stating that enterprising roles are provided as options in Business Education.

Succinctly, unemployment is a universal problem which the world is contending with. It is a situation where people are capable and willing to work, but there is no work for them to do. Youth restiveness, armed robbery, kidnapping and so on are traceable to it. However, benefits

of Business Education are enormous in curbing unemployment. Therefore, Business Education remains a vehicle through which unemployment can be a thing of the past.

Unemployment in Nigeria

Unemployment is a situation in which persons who are ready and qualified to work cannot get any paid job to do. Fajana as cited in Bankole and Oyeibisi (2020) defined it as a situation where people who are willing and capable of working are unable to find suitable paid employment. It has been one of the acute problems challenging Nigerian youths, and has always impacted, negatively, the lives of young school leavers (graduates) who take to armed robbery, kidnapping, militancy, cyber-crime, and others for survival. According to Emeh (2012, p. 4) “lack of employment makes crime a more attractive option for some Nigerian university graduates.” This is so because in Nigeria it is possible to see graduates wandering the streets, ten-fifteen years after graduation, seeking for paid jobs. This is statistically proven in the third quarter 2018 study of the Nigerian National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) which indicates that unemployment rose to 23.1 percent while underemployment was given at 16.6 percent (NBS, 2019). According to them, in that third quarter of 2018, Akwa Ibom State for example reported the highest unemployment rate of about 37.7 percent, followed by Rivers State with 36.4 percent. From the statistics, it becomes obvious that unemployment in Nigeria is at the increase. Before the discovery and exploration of crude oil in Nigeria, majority of her people (both youths and older people) were predominantly farmers and fishermen. However, from the inception of the exploration of crude oil, the agricultural sector that once accommodated many of the youths and older people became obsolete. Nigerians lost increase in farming and fishing, as they moved from the rural areas to the urban centres in search of white collar jobs hence, increasing the rate of unemployment. Addressing this, the Rivers State government for instance, through one of her agencies, in 2019 advertised for a limited vacancy, of which over thirty thousand applicants applied, whereas only about less than 20 percent of the applicants were offered employment. More so, just recently, another employment window was opened by the state government, although not concluded, yet with all these efforts unemployment has continued to be a major challenge in Rivers State, as it has made the youths vulnerable to criminal acts.

Similarly, in most developing countries like Nigeria, government and policy makers are increasingly finding it difficult to contend with youth unemployment. No doubts, the rate of unemployment in Nigeria has grown tremendously that employers are faced with lots of application for few jobs. It is to buttress this that Kumuyi (2010) asserted that it is difficult to

get a paying white collar job in recent times in Nigeria. This increasing rate of unemployment in Nigeria can be attributed to inadequate provision of employment opportunities in the development plan, the ever expanding educational system, and the desperate desire on the part of youths to acquire university education. Hence, the solution is self-employment. Therefore, Oluwadare (2015) concluded that entrepreneurship is a panacea to the problem of graduates unemployment and poverty in Nigeria.

The Entrepreneur and Entrepreneurial Skills

An entrepreneur is a person who undertakes a business venture and assumes risks for profit maximisation. The entrepreneur, according to Amaewhule (2000), is someone who visualizes business opportunities and uses available resources to fill the gap arising from such opportunities in order to make profit. He is visionary; sees opportunities to create something new or improve an existing one. He is an optimistic thinker, and an initiator. Schumpeter (1943) defined entrepreneur as an individual whose function is to carry out new contributions called enterprise. By this, the function of an entrepreneur is to establish a new, or improve on an existing business unit.

Entrepreneurship, on the other hand, according to Iheonunekwu (2003) refers to the attitude, skills and actions of an individual or individuals starting a new business. It is using skills and initiatives necessary to satisfy needs, and bring new ideas into the market. According to Igwe in Adeyeye (2008) entrepreneurship has to do with the process of bringing together creative and innovative ideas, as well as management and organisational skills, so as to be able to integrate men, machineries and other organisational resources for the purpose of satisfying the identified needs of the customer, thereby creating wealth. Entrepreneurship provides adequate knowledge and skills to encourage business growth.

According to Indeed (2021), if you are considering becoming an entrepreneur, there are several essential skillsets that you can develop to increase your entrepreneurial success. Hard skills like technical and financial skills can be extremely important to managing a business, while soft skills like communication and leadership skills can also ensure your development. These skills are as explained below:

Technical Skills: In this 21st century there are availability of software programs for financial analysis, planning, marketing and other business process. It is beneficial for an entrepreneur to develop technical skills. An entrepreneur with technological skills can use software and digital tools to manage business.

Financial Skills: This skill is an essential part in entrepreneurship hence, the sole aim of an entrepreneur is to maximise profit. An entrepreneur needs this skill to keep record of the financial processes of his business.

Leadership and Teamwork Skills: To be a successful entrepreneur you need to take leadership roles and form a team spirit. To own a business you must act as a supervisor and as part of a team, as well as rely on effective leadership skills to help motivate your team.

Communication and Listening Skills: Effective communication and listening skills can help an entrepreneur work with others to build his business brand. It can also help him to know how to create awareness, promote his brand through social media, e-mails and other advertising media, in order to reach the target market and get hold of the market.

The Concept of Business Education

Business Education is a course of study in both secondary and tertiary levels of education in Nigeria. At the secondary level it is called Business Studies which comprises the following subjects: Office Practice, Commerce, Book Keeping, Typewriting, and Shorthand. According to Abdullahi (2002), Business Education is an aspect of total educational programme which provides the recipient with knowledge, skills, understanding and attitude needed to perform well in the business world as a producer or consumer of goods and services. Koko (2010) is of the view that Business Education is a programme of study which emphasizes the production of graduates who will engage in professional studies in business, and strong advocates and promoters of viable industries and business enterprises. Business Education is a programme in education that prepares students with business skills for entry into, and advancement in jobs. It is an educational programme which involves acquisition of skills, knowledge and competencies which makes the beneficiary proficient in business and work. Njoku (2006) defined Business Education as an educational programme that equips an individual with functional and suitable skills, knowledge, attitude and value that will enable him/her operate in the environment he/she finds himself/herself. From the definitions given, we can assert that Business Education is a programme of study which is capable of giving an individual the needed skills and knowledge required to be prolific and resourceful in any field.

In addition to the definitions given, the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN, 2008) defines Business Education as an aspect of vocational education that equips people with necessary skills and theoretical knowledge needed for performance in business world either for job occupation or self-employment. To this end, Njoku (2006) gave the following as the objectives of Business Education as listed by NOUN:

1. To empower people with desirable skills, knowledge and value to perform specific functions so as to become self- reliant.
2. To help people appreciate the world around them and contribute maximally to the social and economic development of the nation.
3. To empower people in such a way that they will develop your intellectual capability that will help them to make informed decisions in all spheres of life.
4. To help people understand the political framework of a nation so that they can contribute to the national economy and development of their country.
5. To help people become judicious spenders and develop proper values for achievement or healthy living, and growth of the nation.

Business Education and Entrepreneurial Development

Business Education has a significant role to play in the entrepreneurial development of a nation. This is as it promotes life-long career development for youths and adults. Business Education, according to Amaewhule (2000) provides the framework for career education which accomplishes the following:

1. Introduction of elementary school child to the world of careers.
2. Provision of exploration, guidance and counseling for career choice for secondary and post- secondary education levels.
3. Provision of specific skills training for cluster of skills.
4. Provision of retraining and upgrading for adults.
5. Provision of programme flexibility to enable youths and adults to make career choice.

Obviously, developing and sustaining entrepreneurial skills via Business Education remain the foundation and efficient way through which a nation can remedy any employment imbalance like unemployment and underemployment. Achumonye (2006) opined that technical skills from Business Education remain an efficient and effective way to curb youth restiveness and unemployment. Business Education prepares people, not only with technical skills, but with broad rays of knowledge, attitude, and skills that are now recognised as indispensable for meaningful participation in work and life. The challenge of unemployment the nation is witnessing today is because youths are not well equipped with business knowledge in our schools. The most important aspect of Business Education is the development of business skills for self-reliance. Business Education trains people to become business conscious, as well as acquire business skills, of which, skills and knowledge remain an engine room for economic growth and social development of any country (Goel, 2010). Business Education, thus, holds

the key to training the skilled and entrepreneurial workforce needed for the changing technological workforce (Affeti, 2010). Therefore, there is need for qualitative business schools for education and training, to produce school-leavers that can perform completely in their chosen career of business.

Curbing Unemployment in Nigeria by Developing Entrepreneurial Skills through Business Education

The Federal Government of Nigeria through her relevant tertiary institutions supervisory agencies, such as National Universities Commission (NUC), National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) and National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE), mandates the study of entrepreneurship by every tertiary education student (Okoro, 2015). The aim of the Federal Government is to produce graduates that will be self-reliant and self-employed. However, the integration of entrepreneurship into tertiary institutions' curriculum has not in any way solved the unemployment problem, because many youths are still roaming the street of Nigeria, vis-à-vis Rivers State, with the same old story of no job. As a matter of fact, many students do not take the entrepreneurship course serious because to them it wasn't part of their course of study hence, they see it as irrelevant. However, Agomuo (2012) posited that for effective service delivery in today's highly competitive business world, every student requires entrepreneurship skills in order to see opportunities for innovation where others see chaos. Therefore, studying entrepreneurship through Business Education makes an individual self-reliant, independent, and inculcates in the learner the right attitudes and values that will make him perform excellently in the world of business (Silas-Dikibo & Nmehiella, 2014). Thus, studying Business Education will grant the learner the opportunity to become innovative and creative. Of which, when the mind is creative, it will not wait on government, or for paid employment, after graduation, but will think and create something valuable to do for oneself as well as others.

Consequently, entrepreneurial skills can be developed through Business Education to reduce unemployment in Nigeria, when the skills of entrepreneurship are integrated into the Business Education curriculum at all levels of Nigerian education, and when Business Education is included as one of the compulsory subjects to be studied in Basic and Senior Secondary Schools in Nigeria. According to the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2004), as contained in the National Policy on Education, one of the goals of basic education is to provide the child with diverse basic knowledge and skills for entrepreneurship, wealth generation and educational advancement. Thus, teaching Business Education at the Basic and Senior Secondary levels of

Nigerian education will promote to a large extent this goal. Therefore, when pupils and students are thoroughly educated on entrepreneurship through Business Education from Basic One (1) to Nine (9), they will willingly desire to study Business Education in higher institutions of learning, pursue an entrepreneurial career, and engage in entrepreneurial activities. More so, as reported by Akpan and Okiridu (2017), entrepreneurship development through Business Education equips students with entrepreneurial skills such as social, analytical, communication, decision making, technical, business management, record management, multi-tasking, innovative and interpersonal skills. Hence, it is expected that when these skills are learnt through Business Education, the graduates, which are youths of Nigeria, will function effectively, even in a chaotic, turbulent, and competitive business environment, as independent and self-reliant persons who will not wait for government or other employment, but will create employment for themselves, as well as generate same for others.

Conclusion

In Nigeria, government is finding it difficult to employ all graduates, and same thing applies to the organised private sector. Hence, the recent focus has been on channeling all efforts towards producing graduates that will be self-reliant, self-employed, and self-sustaining. Therefore, it is expedient that graduates cum youths of Rivers State should embrace the entrepreneurial skills made available through Business Education in order to strive and thrive economically, as well as function effectively in the society, rather than indulge in anti-social activities and perpetrate vices. Conclusively, it has being ascertained that the development of entrepreneurial skills through Business Education is veritable in curbing unemployment amongst youths in Rivers State.

Suggestions

1. Students should be encouraged to study Business Education in order to develop the needed entrepreneurial skills to curb unemployment.
2. Business Education curriculum should be enriched to meet the skillset demand of the 21st century.
3. Business Education should be introduced in the lower basic curriculum content in a play way method so that the pupils will have the fundamental knowledge of the course (subject).
4. Departments and Schools of Business Education in institutions of higher education should adopt the unbundling of the curriculum to run short professional certificate courses, to allow for career advancement and development of entrepreneurial skills by graduates of other professions.

5. Government should collaborate with Department and Schools of Business Education to establish entrepreneurship resource centres where entrepreneurship skills development of youths can be achieved without them needing to attend universities or colleges of education.
6. Special emphasis should be given to Business Education by the government, in order to support the economy.

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