



Entrepreneurship Education: A Veritable Tool for Youth Empowerment Through Skills Acquisition Programmes for Sustainable Security in Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper examines the positive effects of empowering Nigerian youth through entrepreneurship education by reducing poverty, in order to achieve sustainable security in Nigeria. It argues that, if Nigerian youths are empowered, they will have the potentials to serve as instruments of peace and security, then, socio-economic and political development of the country will be achieved. The paper also observes that Nigerian youths are faced with several problems, such as poverty, unemployment, insecurity among others, which impede their contributions to the country's security architecture. Thus, addressing these problems through entrepreneurship education, are the best strategies for them to contribute their own quota to the task of nation building, as leaders of tomorrow. This paper recommends that unless the problems confronting the youth are properly addressed through entrepreneurship education and empowerment in form of acceptable moral family values, equal educational opportunities, skills acquisition programmes, effective political participation and the right mentorship by the older generation, job creation, among the recommendations of this paper are also the need for proper funding, engaging qualified personnel to train the youths in skill acquisition programmes, introduction of youth friendly policies, exposing the youths to vocational and technical education skills acquisition programmes, sincerity on the part of government among others. Thereafter, the quest for sustainable peace and security will eventually be achieved in Nigeria, through entrepreneurship education, and the poverty level of Nigerian youths will be reduced to the barest minimum.

Keywords: entrepreneurship, youth empowerment, security

Introduction

Youth empowerment is basically incorporating into young minds who are the future pillars of the society, and how to become productive. It also involves the process of preparing them to manage the society (Abednego, 2021). We should see them as individuals with the ability to contribute to the overall well-being of the community. In



other words, youths should be engaged in some productive ventures, in order not to be parasites. Youth empowerment ensures that each person is a productive entity within the community (Akanbi, 2021). That is one aspect of it. It further entails inculcating values, that is, the overall social values. Its also to prepare them for positions of responsible leadership in future. Every young person believes in the future, but even being a follower is part of leadership, because you influence others to follow you by example. It is appropriate to state here that, the quest for security in Nigeria is indeed a noble goal. However, we must not shy away from the fact that how a nation handles the welfare of her youths goes a long way in determining whether or not this goal will be achieved (Sadiq,2020). Abednego (2022) observed that any country that fails to plan for the empowerment of her youths is definitely sitting on a dangerous time bomb. In fact, we cannot achieve sustainable security in Nigeria, if our youths are not empowered. Any government policies and programmes which are geared toward empowering the youths to positively contribute to the achievement of sustainable security in Nigeria, must be aggressively pursued and sustained (Paul, 2020). Therefore, this paper will be discussing entrepreneurship education as a veritable tool for youth empowerment through skills acquisition programmes, in order to achieve sustainable security in Nigeria. The youth must be introduced to programmes that can take them off our streets and engage their minds, intelligence and creativity toward meaningful ventures which could also lead the youth to make meaningful contributions to peace and security of our nation; and in the long-run, some form of self-employment for the youth will be achieved (Simon,2021). Entrepreneurship education for youth empowerment through skills acquisition programmes, therefore, becomes a veritable tool for channeling energies of these youth, it will provide educational development programmes which will empower the youth (Tochukwu, 2017). It offers opportunities for development of personal entrepreneurial and manipulative skills.

Entrepreneurship Education

Entrepreneurship education is a programme of human capital development and a requirement for instilling and preserving entrepreneurial climate in an economy. It is a



programme of integrating interactive development inputs aimed at increasing the supply of adequately trained entrepreneurs who are motivated to make success out of their own business ventures (Tochukwu, 2017). According to the National Business Education Association (2021), entrepreneurship education focuses on recognizing business opportunities and ideas, starting a business based on the recognized opportunities and ideas, operating and maintaining that business. Through entrepreneurship education, people learn organizational skills, which include time management, leadership development and interpersonal skills, which are employment strategies that can lead to economic self-sufficiency (Stanley, 2022). Oscar (2019) stated that entrepreneurship education is a specialized training given to students of Vocational and Technical Education (VTE), to acquire skills, ideas, knowledge and managerial abilities/capabilities for self-employment, rather than being employed for payment. Entrepreneurship education prepares students to undertake the formation and operation of small business enterprises for the purpose of performing all business functions relating to a product or service. In an entrepreneurship education setting, emphasis are usually laid on social responsibilities, legal requirements and the risks involved in running a private enterprise.

Objectives of Entrepreneurship Education

The **major objectives** of entrepreneurship education are to develop profitable entrepreneurial skills in individuals, and also to make them self-reliant and self-sufficient in the economic environment they may find themselves.

Oscar (2019) stated that the objectives of entrepreneurship education include the following:

- a) Providing students with meaningful education to make them self-reliant.
- b) To foster creative expression and responses in students.
- c) To train perpetual, manipulative and organizational skills for life-long vocation, leading to self-reliance.
- d) To develop mental and physical capabilities.
- e) To awaken and develop the creative urge and divergent way of thinking.
- f) To enhance personality growth and self-esteem.
- g) For transmitting, upholding and enhancement of appreciation for cultural heritage.
- h) To stimulate interest for developing future vocation in entrepreneurship education.
- i) To develop understanding, respect and appreciation for other people's culture.



- j) Providing graduates with the training skills that will make them meet the manpower needs of the society.
- k) Providing graduates with enough training in risk management that will make them develop the spirit of uncertainty bearing, possibilities, impossibilities, risks and uncertainties.
- l) To stimulate industrial and economic growth of rural and less developed areas.

These objectives can in turn be the expected outcome of a deliberate and sustained government policy. These empowerment programmes which are geared toward equipping the youth with practical skills for practical production and self-employment, if sustained or continued over a long period of time by the government, it can lead to sustainable youth empowerment for achieving lasting peace and security in Nigeria (Omotere, 2021).

The Role of Entrepreneurship Education in Youth Empowerment

According to Oscar (2021), entrepreneurship education provides graduates with enough training that will make them creative and innovative in identifying new business ideas and opportunities. The managers of small and medium size companies are also produced through entrepreneurship education, with the opportunity to recruit qualified graduates who have received training and tutoring in the skills relevant for managing small business centres (Okhawere, 2021). The contributions of entrepreneurship education to general economic growth and development of the society encompasses profit making, job creation, facilities and infrastructural development, new product development, quality service delivery and creative attitudes for technological innovations. Akintola (2021) stated that entrepreneurship education and training should content such topics as basics of small business management, business law and risk protection, marketing and sales, financial management and record- keeping, purchasing, inventory control, advertising and marketing strategies as well as computer appreciation and application.

Entrepreneurship education system is critical to the long term success of our great country. It is responsible for developing the skills and competencies to drive diverse sectors of the economy. It is also in the forefront of promoting research and innovations



to enhance society's drive towards dynamism. Over the years, Nigerian educational institutions have demonstrated commitment to innovations to support social and economic progress. Most of these innovations are rarely put to use so that they can enhance the well-being of the population within and outside Nigeria. For these to be properly put into use, they must be linked to organizations that provide opportunity for mass production and marketing. Entrepreneurship education also gives room for National Education Innovations Exhibition (NEIE) to bring to public attention, innovations from educational institutions. In order to provide opportunity for the private sector to be aware and partner with the institutions for the purpose of commercializing their products.

The Concept of Youth Empowerment

Youths are individuals who are young, strong, physically fit and full of creative ideas. Youths in advanced countries are no doubt the vanguards of most innovations and discoveries (The Nation, 2021). Their overall efforts toward national development cannot be underestimated. Therefore, Nigerian leaders, irrespective of political, religious or ethnic affiliation, must as a matter of necessity, initiate and sustain programmes that can empower the youths to positively contribute their own quota toward nation building, especially at a time when our country is going through serious unemployment and security challenges (Emsaro, 2021). There are many youth organizations listed by Wikipedia, according to free encyclopedia (2012), the organizations are both national and international youth organizations. Their objectives in summary, are to reduce poverty and stimulate entrepreneurial spirit among the youths. It is meant to provide them with long life skills training and leadership development. A few of these organizations are as follows: Civil Society Leadership, Common Action, Global Youth Action, Global Youth Empowerment Movement, International Youth Council, Kwara State Youth Assembly Nigeria, National Youth Foundation India. Pan-African Youth Union Project, YES in Niger State Nigeria, National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), to mention but a few.



Youth Empowerment in Nigeria

In order to address the overall development of the youths in Nigeria, the federal government created the Federal Ministry of Youth Development in January, 2007. The Ministry has two (2) agencies, namely: (1) National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) and (2) The Citizenship and Leadership Training Centre (C<C). The Nigerian youth constitute a sizeable asset for the labour force. Their contribution to national development particularly at the grassroots entails involvement in active community programmes to reduce violence and social vices such as armed robbery, kidnapping, raping, house breaking and theft, cultism among others, these are often occasion by poverty. It is for this reason that skills acquisition programmes have been designed to engage the youth in productive activities. The inability of the community to absorb many of the graduates and lack of foreseeable employment opportunities lead the youth to unwholesome practices.

Sadiq (2020) defined sustainability as the ability to provide enough of what somebody or something needs in order to live or exist. He also sees the term ‘‘empowerment’’ as meaning to give people more control over their own life or a situation that they are in. The inability of successive administrations to sustain various youth empowerment schemes in Nigeria, continue to give rise to youth unemployment and social vices such as poverty, crimes, prostitution, armed banditry, kidnapping, protest, raping, cultism, house breaking and theft, armed robbery among others. Paul (2010) stated that the former governor of Katsina State, Hon. Engr. Shehu Shema, admitted that youth empowerment remains the country’s greatest challenge in her match towards the attainment of sustainable development goals (formerly known as millennium development goals). Shema argued that, ‘‘developed countries did not develop because everybody has a white collar job, but this happens as a result of deliberate policies formulated toward addressing youth empowerment’’. He advised the then, Director General of National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) scheme in Katsina State, to create an empowerment training programme that corp members will depend on, for self-reliance after passing out. He also encouraged the setting up of cottage industries that can generate employment for the youth.



Simon (2021) also reported a training programme for Women and Youth Empowerment in Lagos State, during which Jimoh said ‘’ The training is another affirmation for our conviction that youth empowerment is the greatest form of development.’’ In a country like Nigeria, where crime rate is high, government cannot afford to neglect the youth. One of the key aspects of training was in Bead and Soap Making, Tailoring, Piggery, Livestock Management, Barbing/Hair Plating Saloon, Welding, Carpentry and Joinery, Motor Vehicle Mechanics, Plumbing and Pipe Fitting, Refrigeration and Air conditioning among others. These obviously are areas of vocational and technical education (VTE) skills acquisition. Without much dispute, basic training in the area of vocational skills acquisition for self-reliance remains a panacea in the face of contemporary challenges to the youths. In a country where youths form about 60% of the unemployed (Akanbi, 2021). Entrepreneurial form of education should be the programme that government must lay emphasis on, in order to empower our youth.

Various Government Intervention Strategies/Youth Empowerment Programmes in Nigeria

The federal government of Nigeria came up with the following as empowerment programmes of intervention aimed at empowering her citizenry, they are as follows: National Directorate of Employment (NDE), Work For Yourself Programme (WFYP), Youth Employment and Vocational Skills Development Programme (YEVSDP), Better Life for Rural Women Programme (BLRWP). Small and Medium Entrepreneurial Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) and others, which this paper has mentioned below, these serve as promotional strategies for implementing practical programmes for self-employment (Okhawere, et al 2021).The thrust of Nigerian government policy on youth development during the period 2011-2015, was focused on empowering the Nigerian youth to become self-reliant and socially responsible. This entails providing a sustainable framework for integrated planning and collaboration among stakeholders for the development of policies and programmes, laws and other initiatives that promote and enhance the development of the Nigerian youth and the



protection of their interests. During the period 2011-2015, the following strategies were employed to facilitate Youth development in Nigeria:

- a) Opening of zonal offices to monitor and evaluate youth development activities in each of the six (6) geo-political zones in Nigeria;
- b) Construction of Youth Development Centres by government in the six (6) geo-political zones to serve as a platform for vocational and technical education training, entrepreneurship development, referral/counseling and out of school training for young people.
- c) Liaison with National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) for accreditation of programmes run by the Youth Centres;
- c) Implementation of the revised National Youth Policy to address the problems of street youth, unemployment, youth in drugs and other areas.
- d) Domestication of African Youth Charter;
- e) Reforms to facilitate the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC);
- f) Repositioning of the Citizenship and Leadership Training Centre (C<C);
- g) Help professionalize youth work;
- h) Implementation of the revised National Youth Employment Action Plan to address the issue of unemployment among the youth, which include female youth, youth in drugs and other anti-social behaviors;
- i) Implementation of the Nigerian Youth Entrepreneurship Development Programme (NYEDP) to provide employment for ten thousand (10,000) Nigerian Youth in three (3) years (2012-2014) during pilot stage.
- j) Establishment of the National Youth Development Fund;
- k) Mainstreaming of youth issues in government decisions and their development in all Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) and other stakeholders;
- l) Strengthening of youth parliament to expose youth to leadership training and provide a platform for youth participation in decision making and governance, and
- m) Establishment of a data bank.

Source: (National Transformation Agenda, 2011-2015).

The federal government intervention programme such as You WIN! Project, of which it is reported that the federal government included the sum of N50 billion in the year 2012 national budget for youth empowerment (Daily Times Nigeria, 2011). The report said it will launch an annual business plan competition for aspiring young entrepreneurs in Nigeria, in line with the federal government's drive to create about 40,000 to 50,000 new jobs for unemployed Nigerian youth over the next three (3) years. This is largely in the area of vocational and entrepreneurial skills acquisition. There is also the Public Works and Women/Youth Employment (PW/WYE) project, targeted at generating about



370,000 jobs across the country in few months. Former President Goodluck Jonathan also said his administration places a premium on youth development, and stressed that the federal government sees youths as strategic partners in national development (Emsaro, 2012). In spite of this, governmental and non-governmental efforts, even with the report of Akanbi (2012) that recent data from National Bureau of Statistics indicated that Nigerian economy expanded by 7.2% during the year 2011, the rate of growth and various government efforts are not reflected in the ever expanding labour market.

Challenges of Youth Empowerment Programmes in Nigeria

It is relatively easy to diagnose the problems of our youths and to suggest or design programmes and solutions to these problems. The major hindrance to youth empowerment is implementation and sustainability of these programmes. Omotere (2011) listed the following as hindrances: Poor monitoring and supervision of youth programmes, lack of funding, inadequate infrastructural facilities, inadequate qualified personnel or resource persons to train the youth, poor management of youth recreational facilities and vocational centres. Another major challenge to youth empowerment is that reported by the YSMedia Group (2012), in which the internal wrangling mar attempts to unite the youths in order to pursue a common goal. There were also accusations and counter accusations within the leadership of the National Youth Council. Former governor of Katsina State, Hon. Alhaji Aminu Tambuwal, as reported by the YSMedia Group (2012), appealed for immediate resolution of the leadership crisis, so as not to make nonsense of government efforts at developing the youth (Onwudiwe and Berwind-Dart, 2023)ss. Tambuwal pledged support for budgetary allocations by the house to help implement youth development programmes. He further asserted that ‘the youths have the right to education’, good health and gainful employment, regretting that the nation has failed the youths. Thus, Youth empowerment programmes are facing the following major challenges in Nigeria:

- 1) Insufficient and late release of funds
- 2) Land availability and other problems associated with land allocation within the areas where centres are to be built
- 3) Policy continuity and coherence



- 4) Peripheral involvement of the Federal Ministry of Youth Development in Youth Empowerment programmes; that is YOUWIN, SURE, skills acquisition programmes by the Federal Ministry of Employment, Labour and Productivity, ITF etc.

Source: (National Transformation Agenda, 2011-2015).

Conclusion

Youth empowerment must be taken seriously by every government, if such government wants to have peace, security, stability and sustainable national development. Government can only neglect the youth at their own peril. For any meaningful empowerment of the youth to take place, attention must be given to vocational and technical education, as well as entrepreneurial system of education. Most especially, areas of skills acquisition. Tochukwu (2017) stated that youths are the leaders of tomorrow. And that every good government formulates national policies geared toward present and future development, which demonstrates its efforts in ensuring that the youths of today will have a better tomorrow. He also emphasized that “it is only lack of implementation of youth empowerment schemes/policies being introduced by federal and state governments that result in youth unemployment and political thuggery, among other social vices in the society”. Nowadays, graduates are faced with the problem of unemployment among other invisible eventualities inherent in the job market. It is quite frustrating and devastating to hear about what unemployed graduates suffer in the hands of recruiting firms, agents and organizations. A question that readily comes to mind is: What use is an amassed knowledge when one is not given the opportunity to experiment for the advancement of the society? Is the very essence of knowledge and skills acquisition not defeated when one cannot use it to fulfill his/her dream? Education universally, has undoubtedly proven essential for the development of a country. It plays a crucial role in the growth of all other sectors of the economy, socially and politically. It is unfortunate to observe that while most civilized countries continue to invest largely in their education sector, Nigeria stands aloof and watch, occasionally using a peace meal approach to solve the serious problem of illiteracy. With the unemployment level and associated poverty, it is no longer logical that education serves as the root and backbone



of success. It is high time, the political leaders and elite of this country who have knowledge of the pivotal role that qualitative education plays in national development rise up to this challenge and proffer a lasting solution to unemployment and poverty in the society. It is obvious that the high rate of unemployment in our society is linked to a lot of ills and abnormalities in the society. Little wonder, the sophisticated, hi-tech criminalities, popularly known as “cyber crimes”, are in and around us today. How would the society be exited from this Egypt? What is the possible way-out? Our society is not highly industrialized, SMEs are not encouraged, vocational and technical education skills are challenged by inadequate infrastructure and all that. The Nigerian education sector has become a playground where inept, weak and fraudulent leaders display their status symbols, sponsoring graduates on pages of newspapers and Television and social media platforms, mostly 80% for publicity and 20% for goodwill, corporate organizations have followed suit, they embarked on 15% CSR projects and launch it open on 85% budget, with subsequent all-ages free adverts on such locations. All they care much is their media reach and patronage. Though the efforts of some state governors to ensure that education is free and compulsory at the grassroots to certain levels, as of old, are commendable; how these efforts would be sustained in years to come, remains the big issue as Nigeria suffer the problem of sustainability of projects in all sectors of the economy, due to political instability. Therefore, governments at all levels are enjoined to fight the problem of unemployment in the society; utilize this high human-capacity to better individual lives and society. It is then and only then that the essence of entrepreneurship education for youth empowerment would lead to the achievement of sustainable peace and security in Nigeria, through skills acquisition programmes, unlike the N-Power scheme of former President Buhari, which enabled the youth to benefit from the programme for only two years, it is not sustainable, because it did not address the issue of skills acquisition, which is life-long. When you look at insecurity in Nigeria today, in a systematic way, unemployment is clearly one of the ingredients of the problem, especially when you have thousands of university and polytechnic graduates that are not employed. The prevailing socio-economic condition exacerbated by the national financial crisis has not helped matters. Agencies responsible for ensuring



security in the country also have some challenges that need to be addressed. These are some of the things and of course, when criminals do not see any deterrent being served to others in a significant way, they become bolder in their actions. The insecurity situation in Nigeria has assumed graver dimensions, in the sense that you have ethno-religious crisis on one side; the Niger Delta Militants in South-South Nigeria, MASSOB and IPOB in South Eastern Nigeria, Area boys in South Western Nigeria, Armed Banditry in North Western Nigeria and Boko Haram in North Eastern Nigeria, on the other hand, though happily, the situation in the Niger Delta region is being vigorously addressed. When you look at the rate of kidnapping, killing of Journalists, even the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) agents, criminals are going after them. There is need to encourage Nigerian youth to embrace entrepreneurship education through youth empowerment for sustainable security as a new approach to deal with the issue of insecurity in Nigeria, apart from dragging the perpetrators of the barbaric acts to court for trial and execution, which has worsened the security situation in the country, due to slow dispensation of justice being characterized by bribery and corruption in our judicial system.

Recommendations

For any youth empowerment programme to become sustainable in order to succeed in Nigeria, some strong interventions are needed so as to achieve results. The following recommendations are necessary for youth empowerment in Nigeria.

- 1) Emphasis should be given to vocational and technical education as well as entrepreneurship education system. The youth cannot be empowered without vocational and technical education skills through entrepreneurship education which can lead to self-employment.
- 2) The various youth organizations in Nigeria should be properly funded by government and the well to do in the society.
- 3) Vocational and technical education as well as entrepreneurship education should be properly funded, and qualified teachers should be employed to teach these courses in our institutions of learning, this will go a long way in creating jobs for the youth, and will also reduce armed robbery cases and other forms of social vices that cause insecurity.
- 4) Corruption and in-fighting among youth leaders must be brought to a halt. Once there is lack of focus and unity, there will be no achievement.



- 5) The youth must develop a positive mindset to embrace vocational and technical education subjects, if they want to become enterprising and make meaningful contributions to the development of the society.
- 6) Government should introduce youth empowerment programmes and policies that are practically oriented and consistent. Because lack of consistency is the bane of youth empowerment programmes in Nigeria.
- 7) Standard facilities and equipment should be provided at youth recreational centers. There should also be sincerity and transparency on the part of government and administrators, as far as supervision of these empowerment schemes is concerned.

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