

## Entrepreneurship Education and Youth Empowerment in Nigeria

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### ABSTRACT

The paper focused on the imperatives of formal and non-formal education and the need to incorporate skill acquisition in every field of endeavor in order to empower the youths in Nigeria. In recent years, youth restiveness has been a thing of concern and it has posed a lot of threats to the peace and security that used to exist before in the country. Previous studies have been able to highlight entrepreneurship education and skill acquisition has a veritable tool in tackling unemployment and youth restiveness but it is worthy of note that purposeful and functional entrepreneurship which can identify related problems peculiar to different environments where people live is the only sustainable way out to empowering the youths. A cross sectional survey of youth empowerment programmes across the country revealed that the distribution of motorcycles and tricycles by politicians is not a way out of unemployment as it will only provide temporary succor because such cannot last for a lifetime. Therefore, the youth empowerment concept should be able to develop youths in specialized professions so that they can improve on their talents and set up businesses and probably become consultants in their professions. Recommendations were further made on how entrepreneurship education can sustain the unemployed youths

**Keywords:** Entrepreneurship, Empowerment, Education

## INTRODUCTION

Education is the process of acquiring knowledge through teaching and learning at school, college or university. It could be the teaching of a particular subject or skill which is an interesting experience in that it has taught someone something.

## TYPES OF EDUCATION

There is formal education which is acquired in a classroom setting with regulated or structural syllabus. It takes place within an established formal system. Informal education occurs in the process of the socialization of man within his community, most often outside classroom settings. This occurs every day of a man's life and it may happen frequently and everywhere. The non-formal type of education is any organized education activity outside established formal system, whether operating separately or as an important feature of some broader activity – that is intended to serve identifiable clientele and learning objectives (Coombs 1973). In their own definition, Mbagwu and Nwakire (2005) consider non-formal education as any organized educational or training activity for school dropouts, for illiterate rural and urban adults, for youths, women, or individual workers aimed at improving their employment and income earning potentials, or giving them general education, which, in some cases, as desired, may help them re-enter the formal system. There is good education which is entrepreneurial in nature as it involves acquisition of skills and ideas for the sake of creating employment for oneself and also for others its negative influence on the learner.

Whatever form of education, it must involve a change in human disposition of capability which can be retained, and which is not simply ascribable to the process of growth. In consonance with this observation, some scholars regard education as acquisition of knowledge that involves a relatively permanent change in the behavior pattern of human

organisms, occurring as a result of (previous) practice, training or experience.

Education, according to them, could also involve new ideas, skills, understanding, values and experiences through study, instruction and experiences that enable an individual to modify or alter his action or to realize his goal.

A major and very crucial type of education is the one acquired through the process of socialization of a child in the immediate environment and that begins right from child birth and runs through a man's life span.

In the process of socialization and integration into the society, a man is exposed to the norms and values as well as moral discipline of the society. This type of education constitutes what is commonly referred to as native intelligence which is very vital in the complete development of man because charity, they say, begins from home. Very sound native intelligence is a prerequisite for an all-round development of a worthy, responsible and reliable personality.

### **The Types of Education in Nigeria**

The various educational planning strategies adopted in Nigeria and in most of the developing countries in the 60s and 70s have been inadequate in that they have not taken into consideration the peculiarities of the different countries. That has led to unsatisfactory social, political and economic effects engendered on those countries.

It is in realization of this that various governments have, in recent times, taken bold steps to address the unfortunate trend and this has led to the emergence of an innovative and flexible educational concept of non-formal education as a system on its own or to complement the formal education that our youths might have acquired.

The non-formal education is intended to open people's intellectual capacity in the acquisition of competences and skills necessary to handle

effectively, the forces of nature. It is also meant to arouse and empower the spirit of research and entrepreneurship among Nigerians youths for self-reliance.

### **The Potential of Functional Education**

Considering the importance of education as the bedrock of national development and the fact that youths are supposed to be the future manpower needed for the facilitation of developmental activities, their education and empowerment represent the key to the development of a prosperous and sustainable society.

To this end, we must all continue to participate in a variety of initiatives that can educate and empower young people to take advantage of development opportunities that will allow them to support the growth and prosperity of their local communities. The older generation should continue to leverage their knowledge, resources and expertise to encourage these business leaders of tomorrow.

Our youths need balanced education that will give them access to different and varied social and cultural worlds, thus enhancing vertical and social mobility; increase their awareness of both the immediate and wide environments. The kind of education being advocated is such that can foster self-esteem, self-identity and more positive attitude to life in general. Higher educational achievement by the youths may enable better usage of human resources in the country's economy and less wastage of talents.

It must be emphasized that higher self-esteem ensures increased social harmony and peace which have eluded us in this country for a long time. For the fact that education is the key to national development, Nigerian youths deserve to have a sound and balanced education.

It is observed that more than half of the Nigerian populations are under the age of 30 years according to the 2001 National population commission. This shows that the economy of Nigeria is a youth economy and it is expected that the youths of today will become in the nearest future, parents, leaders and the labor force of tomorrow. However, these youths are said to be confronted with poverty, unemployment, lack of capacity and skills needed to move the economy forward. This is a reality that leaves them without any meaningful means of sustainable livelihood.

We have found ourselves in this mess because of the type of education available to our youths. The type of education received by the youths has not favored self-employment, hence there has been a kind of disequilibrium between labor market requirements and lack of essential employable skills by the graduates we produce (DiaBelon, Oni and Adekola 2000). There is also a kind of faculty interaction between the educational sector and the economy. It therefore means that the type of university education available to our youths may not have adequately solved the economic problems of the nation.

### **The Need for Entrepreneurship Education**

The Nigerian government in recent times, having realized the ever-growing problem of unemployment in the country has introduced entrepreneurship education as a way of harnessing the teeming youths as assets for the economic growth of the country.

Entrepreneurship is a concept that evolved many centuries ago and has formed the basis for economic growth and development. It is considered as a creative and innovative response in the economic and social ventures, involving to explore investment opportunities and run such investments successfully. It involves combining resources to increase value and introduce change and innovation into the production process thereby creating wealth and employment opportunities.

As earlier observed in this address, education is a veritable tool for achieving development in any society because it is through education that knowledge and skills are transferred to individuals and consequently their competencies and abilities developed.

Entrepreneurship education has been found to be a source of inspiration to young people, to do all things that are necessary to gain financial literacy and strive for financial independence. Through this same effort, individuals are able to explore their talents.

## THE CONCEPT OF YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

Entrepreneurship education is directly linked with empowerment.

Youth refers to all young person's between childhood and adulthood. Some scholars try to suggest the age bracket of youths as between 18 and 20 years (Ejiogu 2001). Some others maintain that youth refers to persons between 10 and 24 years (Oluwadare 2004). However, the United Nations and World Bank maintain that the age of youth is between 15 and 19. In Africa, youthful age begins from 18 years.

There are some peculiar characteristics that predominantly distinguish youths from adults. They are usually very energetic and full of life; generally fearless and, at times rebellious. Most often, they disregard social norms and ethics. Ejiogu (2001) describes youthful age as the age of discontent and rebellion. Youths are also regarded as the bedrock on which every development thrives. Among their other attributes are exuberance and sharp memory, innovative and healthy, all of which make them a potent driving force in any society. Apart from the above highlighted positive attributes of youths, there are also numbers of negative tendencies usually exhibited by them. Some of these are: being the most vulnerable, most deprived and most discriminated against, most marginalized and exploited. They can also be the most counterproductive and most endangered species in the society especially in black Africa (Adegun and Komolafe), 2013 quoting Del-Tumi 2011.)

## Youth Empowerment Concept

Youth empowerment is a process in which youths are assisted to overcome obstacles that might prevent them from achieving their potentials. When youths are unable to actualize their dreams up to the level of their potentials as a result of certain barriers created by individuals or groups or by the society, they need assistance (Olakulein and Ojo 2006).

Youth empowerment is regarded as an attitudinal, structural and cultural process where young people gain ability, authority and agency to make decisions and implement change in their own lives as well as in the lives of other people, including youths and adults (Nnedi, et al, 2012). The poor people in any society also need power to live better lives. Page and Czube (1999) observe that power is often related to people's ability to make others do what they want, regardless of their own wish(es). Power manifests in relationship that is capable of changing, hence it is possible for power relationship to change and if that is possible, our youths can be empowered and changed. Empowerment is a phenomenon that can expand people's choice and action to shape their lives. It implies control over resources and decisions.

According to Fletcher (2005), youth empowerment means creating and supporting the enabling conditions under which young people can act on their own behalf, and on their own terms, rather than at the direction of others. It is a process through which the youths can be assisted to overcome the difficulties that might prevent them from achieving their potentials. With very sound and balanced education, our youths can become employers of labor rather than pursuing non-existing employment opportunities.

## LINKING EDUCATION TO ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Purposeful and functional education is that which is well related to problems around the environment in which the educated people live.

When students write their final year project, efforts should be made to relate their projects to a particular problem in the community/society. If this is carefully considered, such projects can lead to many enterprises that will solve some problems in the areas worked upon. They could as well give rise to some enterprises that the researcher can turn into businesses or sell the ideas to people who have money and are looking for viable projects. This is the ideal thing in most developed countries of the world.

The goal of any functional education in any discipline is to apply the knowledge gained to generate self-employment. In recent times, we have witnessed our youths engaging in small-scale businesses like fashion designing, hair dressing, barbing, events planning and anchoring, soap making pomade and powder making, candle and match-stick production, beads making, photography, stage comedy actors, etc.

Before the discovery of oil in this country, the major source of economy was agriculture and now that people are going back to agriculture as a better alternative to improving the economy, our youths are now at an advantage to venture into small-scale agribusiness such as production of fruit juice, poultry keeping, snailry, rabbitry, fish ponds, production of pure pounded yam flour, production of medicinal plants, production of queen bees and production and distribution of pure water, etc.

Youths in specialized professions can also develop their talents and set up consultancy outfits in their professions. For example, computer experts can set up computer centers, pharmacists and pharmacologists can consult on herbal medicine, physiotherapists in consultancy horticulturists can grow fruits, flowers and vegetables, etc. Graduates of Theatre or Performing Arts can write, produce and act plays while graduates of Education can begin with coaching classes which may later metamorphose into full fledge schools. By the time our youths learn to venture out of the old tradition of strait-jacket and narrow



specialization, many of them will graduate from the class of job seekers to employers of labor. These are avenues for self employment.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

I do not subscribe to the propagandist and future damaging type of youth empowerment usually embarked upon by our politicians as they are never borne out of genuine love for the youths.

Distribution of motorcycles and tricycles to our youths as a way of empowering them is nothing but a way of providing temporary succor because such do not last for a life time not to talk of leaving it as a legacy for the future generation. Therefore, Politicians should think outside the box and ensure that youth empowerment programmes are more robust and should be such that can provide long lasting solution to the problem of poverty. Both Formal and Informal education should inculcate the culture of making youths acquire relevant skills in their own preferred areas of specialization.

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