

Entrepreneurship and Employability Among Nigerian Graduates

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Abstract

Over 80% of graduates in Nigeria are unemployed, in spite of their qualifications, they are employable yet they are not employed. The inability of the higher educational institutions to meet the needs of these graduates as well as promotion of economic self reliance and self sufficiency has resulted into youths joblessness (unemployment). These have added to increase in restiveness among Nigerian youths. This research is therefore undergone to investigate the relationship between entrepreneurship and employability among Nigerian graduates. The paper, discussed the concept of entrepreneurship and employability. Since employability is the act of having qualification that enables someone to employ you, the research also looked at the basic skills that can make one employable and at the same time becoming self reliant. Also discussed are ways forward in promoting entrepreneurship among Nigerian youths and how teaching of creativity and problem solving skills can help reposition Nigerian graduates.

Keywords: *Entrepreneurship, Employability, Unemployment, Poverty*

Introduction

This research is about the relationship between entrepreneurship and employability among Nigerian graduates. Nigeria like most developing nations of the world is faced with myriad of problems and harsh realities which include poverty, unemployment, conflicts and diseases. These situations pose great challenges to the very existence of individuals in most developing nations thereby calling for the training of educated men and women who can function effectively in the society in which they live in. available information by National Universities Commission (2004) reiterate the massive unemployment of Nigerian universities graduates in the country. This problem is said to be traceable to the disequilibrium between labour market requirements and lack of essential employable skills by the graduates (Diajomal and Orimolade, (1991); Dabelen and Adekola, (2000). This obvious critical skill gaps inhibits the development of youths and the entire development of the nation.

The world is facing a very hard time and Nigeria as a nation cannot runaway from it, rather we are to provide solutions to some of these problems facing us. Some of the major problems facing Nigeria today as a developing country include unemployment, poverty, poor healthcare services, youth restiveness, insecurity, etc. Nigeria cannot easily make headway, when we neglect or have not developed capacity for entrepreneurship which will help in the employability of our youths. An idle soul is a devils workshop.

This paper addresses the mass graduate unemployment in Nigeria, and also the inability of graduates to use tacit and explicit knowledge gained from their studies in an entrepreneurial way.

The ideas in the paper are expected to help reduce unemployment among Nigeria graduates and foster ways of improving Nigeria's economy since youths are the bedrock of every country's economy. Apart from the objectives of reducing unemployment among Nigerian graduates, entrepreneurship has many potential benefits, as it plays a crucial role in development and growth of the economy. It also helps to promote innovation which encourages graduates to find new ways of doing things through experience based learning.

More than half of the Nigerian populations are under the age of 30 according to the National Population Commission (2001). Therefore it can be asserted that the economy of Nigeria is a youth economy. Expectedly, today's youth will become in a short decade tomorrow's parents, leaders, labour force and armies. However, the Nigerian youths are said to be confronted with poverty, unemployment, urbanization, lack of capacity and skills needed to move the economy forward. Poverty which is a force for HIV/AIDS is very common. This is because the youth faces unemployment and lack of necessary productive skills to keep body and soul together. This reality leaves them without any meaningful means of sustainable livelihood. To make ends meet, they simply indulge in prostitution (both male and female).

Okoro (1998:11) quotes Cicero as saying that "Any systematic treatment of a subject should begin with a definition that everyone may understand the subject of enquiry". Therefore, the beginning of any discussion or argument lies the clarification of definition of relevant terms.

Concept of Entrepreneurship

The term entrepreneurship is difficult to define. Review of available literature shows that there are no generic definitions. This creates a problem of conceptual clarity. However, over the years scholars from different background have tried to offer a working definition of this complex phenomenon. Anugwom (2002) says, Entrepreneurship is concerned with innovation and management. He sees entrepreneurship as either a creative innovator that is creating something new that is capable of satisfying consumer's wants or an adaptive innovator who can modify an existing or similar products or services for better performance while also engaged in managerial activities of planning, controlling, organizing, directing and co-ordinating his business to achieve the objectives of the enterprise.

Entrepreneurship, according to Timmons in Onu and Ikeme (2008) is the process of creating or seizing an opportunity and pursuing it regardless of the resources currently controlled. Onuoha (2007) defined entrepreneurship as the practice of starting new organizations or revitalizing mature organizations particularly, new businesses in response to identified opportunities. Richard Brason (2008), defined entrepreneurship as something we are born with because it is about turning what excites us in life into capital. So that we can enjoy it even more. Suleiman (2006) defined entrepreneurship as the willingness and ability of an individual to seek investment opportunities to establish and run an enterprise successfully. From the above, we can deduce that entrepreneurship deals with transformation of ideas which is economic goods. The most critical of entrepreneurship is creation of new business. Creation of new business is the force behind the introduction of certain entrepreneurial skills in the university.

Entrepreneurship is a developmental or creative process. That is development of something new and value to both the entrepreneur and the audience (market). Entrepreneurship involves risk taking. This is predicated upon the fact that the future is often unseen, and unpredictable. There is no comprehensiveness in reasoning and decision making rather the entrepreneur operates under

self bounded rationality in dynamic environment with so many key players. The risk may be financial, social or psychic or combination of them.

However, in a way of summary entrepreneurship refers to the process of creating or developing wealth through such investment of resources and assuring psychic and financial risk and reward, associated with the investment, a process of taking advantage of need gap to create and assuring the associated psychic and financial risk and reward in such an investment. The correct application of these numerous skills makes someone an entrepreneur. [Therefore who actually is an entrepreneur?

According to Anyanwu (2008), Entrepreneurs are people who search out the needs of the society and device ways of meeting those needs.

Psychologists see entrepreneurs as innovative creators occasioned by need to obtain or attain something, need to experiment, need to accomplish or perhaps need to escape the authority of others for a businessman. With an itinerant knowledge of the concept, an entrepreneur appears as a threat, an aggressive competitor or an ally, a source of supply, a customer of someone who creates wealth for others, who finds better ways to utilize resources and reduces waste and who produces jobs others are glad to get (Vester, 1980:2).

Hope Eno (2005:31) observed that put an entrepreneur in a desert, he will create water out of sand dunes, give him a mountain, he will create tunnel, give him forest, he will turn it into a city, give him a vast land, he will turn it into an estate, give him a swamp, he will build sky scraper, give him dumping site he will turn it into a garden, push him into a river, instead of drowning he will come out with fishes.

Onu and Ikeme (2008) noted that Entrepreneurs are those who bring ideas from the world of forms to the world of reality. They are those who dream and never go back to sleep until their dreams become real. They are people who give life to ideas and create wealth from nothing. They are people who put everything they have in order to get everything they desire. Entrepreneurs are those who can easily discover the talent in others and harness it to the maximum. They are those who employ the best heads even when they did not even see the four walls of the university. They pay professors salaries and keep a lot of graduates on the pay roll.

Employability is being capable of getting and keeping fulfilling work. Employability refers to a person's capability of gaining initial employment, maintaining employment and obtaining new employment if required (Hillage and Poland, 1988). In simple terms, employability is about being capable of getting and keeping fulfilling work. More comprehensively, employability is the capacity to being more self-sufficiency within the labour market to realize potential through sustainable employment. For individuals, employability depends on the knowledge, skills and abilities they possess, the way they use those assets and present them to employers and the context (e.g. personal circumstances and labour market environment) within which they seek work.

Furthermore, Arukwe (1990) explained that graduates employability depends on the knowledge, skills and attitude they possess, the way they use those assets and present them to employers, and the context (e.g. Personal circumstances and labour market environment) within which they seek work.

Employability is a two-sided equation and many individuals need various forms of support to overcome the physical and mental barriers to learning and personal development (i.e. updating their assets). Employability is not just about vocational and academic skills. Individuals need relevant and usable labour market information to help them make informed decisions about the labour market options available to them. They may also need support to realize when such information would be useful, and interpret that information and turn it into intelligence.

Graduate Employability

Skills shortage remains a serious constraint in Nigeria. Over 80% of graduates in Nigeria are unemployed, yet they have the qualifications. Unemployment in Nigeria appears to be a labour market paradox, and is attributed to prevailing skills deficit and skills mismatch. The skills deficit among graduates (from higher education) is considered to be constraint to long run economic growth and a contributing factor to incidence of graduate unemployment. Graduates lack generic competencies and are not work place ready.

University students require stronger and more creative linkages between student life and world of work in regard to the nature of the higher education curriculum in Nigeria. There is a calling for greater application and practice in conjunction with a clear emphasis on economic and social relevance. An individual's employability asset comprises their knowledge (i.e. what they know) skills (what they do with what they know and attitudes (how they do it). There are a number of detailed categorizations in the literature which, for instance, distinguish between:

1. Baseline assets such as basic skills and essential personal attributes (such as reliability and integrity).
2. Intermediate assets such as occupational specific skills (at all levels) generic or key skills (such as communication and problem solving) and key personal attribute (such as motivation and initiative) and
3. High level assets involving skills which help contribute to organizational performance (such as team working, self management, commercial awareness etc).

Apart from the objective of reducing unemployment among graduates, youth entrepreneurship has many potential benefits example:

- (1) Youth run enterprises have a direct effect on employment if new young entrepreneurs hire fellow youths which could help address some of the social psychological problems and delinquency that arise from joblessness.
- (2) The enterprises may also create linkage between youth entrepreneurs and other economic factors, such as those sub-contracting and so on.
- (3) In addition, youth entrepreneurship promotes innovation and resilience as it encourages young people to find new solutions, ideas and ways of doing things through experience based learning.

Moreover, one of the aims of this research is to inculcate a new orientation of excellence that will empower the graduates to become men and women of influence not only in educational pursuits but also in the field of work.

Only this shift can effectively lead to a moral rearmament and a society free from job seekers, poverty, anarchy, tyranny and profligacy. A society where opportunities exist for the forthcoming generation, where a long awaited African Intellectual Rebirths can be midwived.

Roles of Educational Institutions to Employability

The world of business is fast moving and perfectionist-oriented. The masses are sharp and quick to judge, hence an entrepreneur must be calculating and deliberate. The market place where the entrepreneur operates has little tolerance for miscalculation, lack of commitment or incompetence. The foregoing make the education of a youth who is a would-be entrepreneur an essential ingredient for success.

Educational institutions have carefully planned process that eventuates into the acquisition of entrepreneurial competencies. They have entrepreneurship education in the curricular, which will help equip the learners with skills on decision making, acquisition of new ideas, methods of raising and maintaining conversations and establishing business relationships. Through this entrepreneurship education, qualitative ability that facilitates computation and record keeping are further learnt.

Entrepreneurship education is the type of education where the learner is exposed to cognitive affective and psychomotor abilities that will enable the learner be self sufficient, self reliant and sustainable. Entrepreneurship education offers a solution. It seeks to prepare people, particularly youths, to be responsible and enterprising individuals who will become entrepreneurs or entrepreneurial thinkers by immersing themselves in real life learning experiences where they can take risks, manage the results, and learn from the outcomes.

These educational institutions have centres where people are trained to develop and acquire skills. E.g. Centre for Entrepreneurship and Development Research, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. These youths are equally given opportunities to gain experiences as they are linked with mentors, get access to information and are given opportunity for growth. This implies that they are provided with information, knowledge, skills and attitudes that would enable them perform well as business men and women. They will turnout to be business men and women who have developed business capabilities and are learning to make money. These competences will in turn help them deploy their zeal for nation building in a very efficient manner. Anything short of these realities will be handling Nigerian problems of repositioning the youths with kid gloves.

Ways Forward in Promoting Entrepreneurship Among Nigeria Graduates

Nigerian youths face series of problems - poverty, unemployment, conflicts and diseases is not an easy task. These problems therefore will need that the youths be empowered with creative problem-solving skills. The training of educated individuals who can function effectively in the society for the betterment of self and the society will require special attention. The system will be deliberately set to concern itself with the development of sound human capital required for national development (Ocho, 2005). Practically speaking therefore, he/she must do the following:

1. Ensure that schools deliberately provide sector specific skills needed for the development of human capital, use professional and entrepreneurs as instructors and mentors.
2. Teach entrepreneurship and creativity at an early age.
3. organize for curricular integration of education, entrepreneurship and community development
4. plan program to transform Nigerians

Finally, in Nigeria repositioning youths for the eradication of unemployment, there would be need to transform them into confident, aggressive and purposeful individuals. The ideal profile for emerging professionals (products of our ivory towers) with respect to entrepreneurial education, this would include a strong scientific, technical and factual base with good background information and research skills. The individual who opt for non-degree training in skill acquisition will think about the future and relate these ideas to his/her business. The "dream-youths" should have strong skills in business planning, finance and accounting, as well as ability to create new and innovative marketing plans that utilize modern communication technology. Desired attitudes for Nigeria would-be entrepreneurs include a respect for democratic principles and the legal processes of our nation and the highest level of integrity and ethics.

The Nigerian youth therefore need to learn that life is partnership in which the individual strives to fulfill himself/herself with the active support of others. That is, he/ she needs to realize the fact that he /she needs to develop his /her potentials and to contribute his/her talents to the common good of all (Etuk, 2000). With the spirit of collaborating, inter-existence and the desire for collective survival of all there will be a steady growth of development, mutual support and networking.

Conclusion

Handwork and skill acquisition is the fastest moves to talent discovery. When the youths in schools, higher institutions and universities are groomed to learn the skills needed in their future self employment and sustenance, the end result would be reassurance and future self employment. The era of white collar jobs have gone, when graduates lookup to government for employment. The major problem is that youths are not exposed to have the background study of the business they want to set up when they leave school. Money is not the first thing when one wants to set up a business, money comes later when they must have had enough knowledge of business. Desirous entrepreneurs should first of all wear their thinking cap and come up with very good ideas that will scale through any test and thereafter plan how to use the idea to make money. Good business idea generates its funding.

Conclusively, entrepreneurship and employability go hand in hand because entrepreneurship education will help to facilitate the acquisition of skills competence and ability by the graduates. When these graduates are equipped they will help to reduce, unemployment, help to generate income, contribute to gross domestic product, faster innovation and incubate potential large industries that will boost technological development and identify business opportunities in Nigeria.

Recommendation

One of the reasons of graduate unemployment in Nigeria is that Nigerian educational system emphasis is laid more on the value of the certificate rather than the holder himself. For this reason, undergraduates struggle hard to obtain just the certificate rather than the knowledge and skills which would make them self reliant. Entrepreneurship development is one of the functional elements in addressing job creation. Entrepreneurship education/training should be made increasingly important in the country.

From the foregoing therefore, the following recommendations are made;

- (1) Establishment of small and medium scale enterprises and skill acquisition centres will go a long way to providing employment to most graduates in Nigeria, thereby, keeping them busy and away from crime.
- (2) Networking events among graduates is good such that workshops, seminars, symposia, lectures and so on be organized so that cross fertilization of ideas could take place.
- (3) Training in creativity would help in developing problem solving skills based on recent technological advances. Creativity will ensure that the individual learns to produce practical solution.
- (4) Teaching of entrepreneurship as a subject should be made compulsory in secondary schools in Nigeria.

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