

ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES AND YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

Victor, Tarelata, Ph.D
Department Of Business Administration
Niger Delta University, Bayelsa State, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

The study was captioned entrepreneurship education in Nigerian universities and youth empowerment. The aim of the study was to carefully examine the relationship between entrepreneurship education in Nigerian universities and youth empowerment. The study revealed that entrepreneurship education has relationship with youth empowerment in Nigeria University. The study will also guide policy makers in the education sector and the government on how to improve youth empowerment in Nigerian universities using entrepreneurship education. The study concluded that entrepreneurship education can be seen as a branch of education that teaches skills development to improve youth empowerment in Nigeria. Recommendations were made among others that entrepreneurship education curriculum should offer a foundation of professional knowledge, skills, values, ethics and attitudes to students which will enable them to continue to learn and adapt to changes throughout their professional lives.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship Education, Youth Empowerment, Wealth Creation, Self-Employment

INTRODUCTION

Among the goals of Nigerian education is to nurture young men and women with quality knowledge, acceptable moral values and innovative skills who will help to move the country forward. Certainly, a country's real power is measured using the standard of education provided for its citizens; particularly the youths. The more educated a nation is, the more prosperous it becomes. No country in the world can thrive without education; as it is the panacea for national development and sustainability; which is mostly realizable when a well detailed, packaged and educational programme is offered to the youths. Through education, the intellectual, moral, social and spiritual development of students are fulfilled. As a tool for change and stability, education assists people in acquiring and developing valuable knowledge, skills and abilities for their empowerment in order to be worthy and reliable members of the society.

Empowerment connotes assisting or encouraging someone to be self-employed or financially sufficient (Babalola & Fasiku, 2005). It is an increase in the economic, social, educational, political, gender or spiritual strength of individuals and communities. For this study, it implies the financial improvement of individuals for self-sustenance. Hornby (2020) further defined empowerment as giving someone the power or authority to do something. It demonstrates the ability to give people more control over their lives or the situation which they are in. It equally implies the measures designed to improve the degree of authority and self-determination in people as well as the society in order to make them represent their interests in a respectable and self-determined manner. Consequently, empowering people (youths) helps them to overcome their state of impecuniosity, powerlessness, limited influence and also to recognize and utilize their God given resources (Nelson, 2011; Soludo, 2005). Empowering youths is like savings in bank that will be useful in the immediate and in the future.

Going with present realities in the Nigerian society and Edo State in particular, it is evident that a major problem the State is facing is in employment, which has brought untold hunger and hardship in-spite of its rich mineral resources. Many youths are roaming the streets frustrated, some have joined criminal gangs, cults and other bad groups just to survive. If youths are properly empowered,

the level of crime in the society will likely drop. This study therefore intends to investigate Accounting Education in Nigerian Universities in connection to youth empowerment.

Objectives of the Study

1. consider the relationship between entrepreneurship component of accounting education and job creation among youths in Edo State.
2. investigate the relationship between entrepreneurship component of accounting education and wealth creation among youths in Edo State.
3. assess the relationship between entrepreneurship component of accounting education self-employment among youths in Edo State.

Ways Nigerian Universities Can Improve Entrepreneurship Education

These days, global business changes at such a stunning pace, that entry-level professionals barely have time to adjust themselves to a new company, new competitive environment or new operational requirements. The challenges faced by young workers/entrepreneurs include lack of experience, a complex corporate world, and business education that is too theoretical and out of sync with companies' day-to-day needs (Ashoka, 2014). Nevertheless, business schools should not be part of the problem; higher-learning institutions can make their degrees more engaging and hands-on by blending the traditional economic and business dogmas with real-world, practical experiences and operational challenges, which will help to enhance students' preparation for the working world. Some measures that can be adopted thus, to empower students effectively, in universities for productive careers include:

1. Focus More on Case Studies

Case studies are an effective method to spur students' curiosity, putting them face-to-face with real-life business situations (Sani, 2016). By studying past or present corporate success stories and operational hiccups, students can dig deeper into processes and procedures that executives follow to make decisions. This is what a business degree should offer the thinking pattern a manager formulates to analyze a situation, evaluate alternatives, choose a solution and track progress over time.

2. Link Curricula to Real-World Business Challenges

Universities can jumpstart their business degrees by linking their curricula to real-life business challenges. For instance, when teaching social media marketing, a lecturer can point to how companies like Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter have become the promotional fulcrum for many businesses around the world. Similarly, a finance professor can use the 2008 mortgage crisis to instill in students' notions as diverse as quantitative easing, inflation and monetary policy (Nelson, 2011).

3. Create Opportunities for Students to Participate in Social Entrepreneurship Contests

There is nothing more engaging and hands-on than letting students participate in some type of entrepreneurship contests (Dada, 2006). This includes both social entrepreneurship business that may focus more on a social cause and tech startup ventures. Ideally, an entrepreneurship contest can pit two or several student groups against each other – if the contest is sponsored by a single university. Alternatively, a group of institutions can get together and sponsor such contests for students' betterment.

4. Partner with Businesses

Prominent universities already have partnership agreements with businesses, whereby they regularly send students to work temporarily as interns at specific organizations. Entrepreneurship-in-residence is also an innovative way to foster practical knowledge and enable young professionals to rub elbows with established and experienced entrepreneurs (Okafor, 2012). Entrepreneurship-in-residence programme facilitate pairing of successful entrepreneurs and startup founders – who

serve as mentors and give lectures – with campuses to offer students a real-world perspective of business and entrepreneurship. As Michael Simmons, co-founder and partner of impact, asserted, colleges and universities can now contribute the most by serving as the glue that connects and links students to the rest of the ecosystem (Uche, 2007).

5. Invite Business Executives to Deliver Lectures

Some institutions have found new ways to make entrepreneurship teaching more engaging, vibrant and effective. They occasionally invite business executives and ask them to teach a full course, make a presentation or share their experiences with students (Ashoke, 2014). Such initiatives have produced excellent results so far; since students can quickly learn and grasp real-world insight that tomes and tomes of business literature might not deliver so pointedly.

6. Provide Consulting Services to Small Businesses and Nonprofits

Universities can make money – and make business courses engaging – by providing consulting services to small businesses and nonprofit agencies. Conceptually, a professor would lead the consulting team of students, formulating operational priorities and directing students throughout the consulting engagement (Soludo, 2015). This scenario is a win – win for all parties involved. Students learn practical stuff and how to cope with business tedium and nonprofit leaders; universities and faculty members make extra cash; and small businesses and nonprofits pay affordable rates for high – quality consulting services.

7. Help Students Launch their own Businesses

In a global economy plagued by high levels of unemployment, it is fascinating helping students launch their own businesses. Universities can work in partnership with students – entrepreneurs – and institutions to conduct market research, obtain financing and create viable businesses. The student – entrepreneur learns in the process and his classmates also expand their practical knowledge.

8. Emphasize Technology Topics in Curricula

Technology has asserted its supremacy on today's global economy. Higher-learning institutions can jumpstart their students' careers by incorporating and inculcating more technology topics in curricula. The idea is not to clog academic programmes with coding, programming and computer-hardware courses but to teach strategic ways companies and entrepreneurs are using technology to innovate, communicate, advertise and make money (Nelson, 2011).

Youth Empowerment

Youth empowerment is a process where young individuals are encouraged to take charge of their lives. They do this by addressing their situation and then take action in order to improve their access to resources and transform their consciousness through their beliefs, attitudes and values. It aims at improving quality of life and acquired through participation in youth empowerment programmes. There are numerous initiatives and models for youth empowerment programme that assist youths to achieve empowerment (Edralin, Tibon & Tugas, 2015).

Youth empowerment can equally be considered as a way of giving strength to the existing capabilities of youths in order for them to be more productive in their endeavours. It also connotes the development of mental and physical capacity, power and skills in youths for them to function meaningfully in their social milieu, thereby experiencing a more favourable level of social recognition and subsequently boost their economic status (Akomolafe, 2006). Youth empowerment extends a change of mind-set to incorporate a demonstration of that change which the world is forced to acknowledge and respond to. It should commence from within to involve learning about oneself from many perspectives and learning to develop one's rational and emotional resources to achieve desired ends. Empowering youths is conceived as awareness-building; in view of building capacities

and developing skills required for continued decision-making and prospects (Dominique & Dominique, 2014).

An empowered youth is an individual who has transformed himself into a subject rather than an object; one who has access and control over resources such as land, assets and money. Such a person controls economic, health, social, cultural and psychological situations. Youth empowerment thus entails equipping youths through capacity building programmes (such as Accounting education) so that they can contribute meaningfully to themselves and their society (Nelson, 2011). In this view, it is important to understand properly who a youth is and how to empower him.

Young people in Port Harcourt today are conscientiously investing in formal education to attain higher academic qualifications such as Ordinary National Diploma (OND), Higher National Diploma (HND), First Degree, Masters Degree, Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D). The idea of educational advancement is hinged on the assumption that the higher the educational attainment of an individual, the higher his chances of succeeding faster. It is also necessitated by the fact that as people progress on their job, they begin to face tasks and responsibilities that their basic educational attainment did not adequately prepare them for (Ameh, 2012). Youths who enroll and complete higher educational programmes are truly advancing educationally. The teeming population of youths enrolling and completing advanced educational programmes across the three major institutions of higher learning in the city of Port Harcourt point to the fact that youths are advancing educationally. Youths in Port Harcourt City also advance professionally. Professional advancement within the context of this work refers to movement of a worker to higher position or area of specialization, mastering the operations at a higher level, and being able to function work more efficiently and effectively on their job. Professional advancement is not just about obtaining a higher professional certificate in a field, it is about developing and maximizing higher specialized skills, attitude, and competencies of worker (The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland, 2013).

Procedures for Empowering Youths for a Better Society

Youths which constitute the largest percentage of Nigeria's population, who are also at their productive age are important to the economy and sustenance of democracy. The major argument is that the durability of the new democracy will depend, not only on their institutional structure and ideology of the political forces, but also to a large extent on their economic performance (Landrieu & Pierson, 2015). The better performance of a democratic regime in producing and broadly distributing improvement in living standards, the more likely it is to endure. Youth empowerment processes must be a collective effort of all since they may either be your son, daughter, brother, sister, in law and so on. It is not supposed to be left in the hands of government alone. The following processes can thus be employed to empower youths in Edo State and reduce employment in the process: -

- i. **Modification of Educational System:** The education system must be modified and refocused to meet the immediate and future needs of youths. Entrepreneurship, innovative, technical and vocational education and trainings must be encouraged. Financial support such as bursary and scholarship should be made available to the students while both State and Federal own institutions including the private ones should address the issue of exorbitant school fees imposed on students putting in mind that education is a right and not privilege.
- ii. **Skills Acquisition Centres:** Skills acquisition centres are where youths can be stationed to acquire necessary skills of their choices. The establishment of skills acquisition centers, where youths can be trained with basic skills which makes them relevant in the society is very important. Government should embark on intensive industrialization to generate employment for the ever increasing population of unemployed youths.
- iii. Rehabilitation centres should be established to help the miscreant youths become useful in the society. The centres should focus on educating, equipping and empowering them.

- iv. Farms and farm settlements should be established while necessary incentives such as soft loans or take off grants, tools and equipment should be provided to encourage young farmers. This in turn will refocus an economic base from over dependence on crude oil.
- v. Necessary infrastructural facilities must be provided to encourage youths who are in trade. Also, adequate and regular electricity supply at minimum tariff should be provided.
- vi. Cottage industries can be established at some locations to cater for farm products available during harvest season in order to retain the youths in farming.
- vii. Corruption and corrupt practices must be reduced to the barest minimal. Severe consequences should be spelt out to check corrupt practices and the guilty should be given severe punishment such as life imprisonment.

Some Current Notable Youth Empowerment Programmes in Nigeria

There are some empowerment programmes for youths in Nigeria presently which include:

1. N- power

N- Power is a youth empowerment programme established under the administration of Muhammadu Buhari in 2015. It provides a structure for the acquisition of skills including personal and career development, thereby enabling the youths to work and earn. A major aim of N-power is to create an equitable distribution of resources to vulnerable citizens, particularly the youths. Beneficiaries are given job training and a monthly stipend of N 30,000.

N-power has two categories who are the graduate category and the non-graduate category. The N-power programme supports both graduates and non-graduate. The N-power graduate category includes programmes such as N-power Agro, N-power Teach, N-power health and Tax while the non-graduate programmes include N-power build and knowledge. The N-power programme was divided into these categories in order to accommodate almost every eligible person for each category (Sani, 2016).

2. Youth Enterprise with Innovation in Nigeria (Youwin)

Similar to N-power, Youwin is a youth development/ empowerment scheme geared towards empowering the young Nigerians. It was established by the Goodluck Jonathan administration. Youwin gives financial support to businesses or individuals with outstanding business plans (Ashika, 2014). It supports the goals of young and aspiring entrepreneurs. Furthermore, Youwin offers its empowerment in the form of grants. However, beneficiaries are expected to have a business plan for a company that has been registered with the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC).

3. Youth Empowering People (YEP)

YEP is a youth empowerment programme that facilitates and promotes skill acquisition, employment and entrepreneurship. It has made many youths self-employed and self-developed. This initiative assists in shaping young people's mindset in the country, particularly those in the Niger Delta. It has given youths jobs, thus reducing the rate of poverty and unemployment (Okafor, 2012).

4. Graduate Internship Scheme (GIS)

The GIS is an internship scheme that targets graduates who are having it difficult with securing a job after graduating from higher institution. It was established in 2012 and is fully funded by the Federal Government of Nigeria. It offers empowerment to about 50,000 Nigeria graduates in a yearly basis. There are three major goals of GIS which are to empower youths, to build up manpower for Nigeria and to provide young Nigerians with a bright future (Sani, 2016).

5. Tony Elumelu Foundation Entrepreneurship Program (TEF)

Unlike Youwin and N-power, TEF is a privately owned empowerment programme founded by one of the richest entrepreneurs in Nigeria- Tony Elumelu. Tony Elumelu is a popular business tycoon with a net worth of about \$700 million. He set up its multicycle empowerment scheme as a way to encourage young African entrepreneurs to come up with innovative business ideas. He goes further to give them grants to bring those business ideas to life. After submitting business proposals,

entrepreneurs who participated and got selected receive a seed fund of \$5000 (approximately 2 million naira); which is not bad.

6. African Youth Empowerment Nigeria (AYEN)

AYEN is a youth empowerment programme that enables youths to develop rapidly so that they can be a functional part of the society. It includes workshops, seminars and vocational programmes among others. Besides Training, AYEN gives financial and educational supports to young people, ensuring that they go to school and are in their classes. They make use of local donors and cooperative organizations in generating their funds.

7. Presidential Youth Entrepreneurship Support (P-YES)

The presidential youth entrepreneurship support is one of the schemes set up to address unemployment in the country and support entrepreneurship amongst youths. The Bank of Industry (BOI) implements this programme in collaboration with the minister of youth and student affairs. The programme trains youths and awards them loans to commerce small and medium enterprises. There is an age limit for enrollment into the P-YES programme. According to Calcified (2012), beneficiaries must be between the ages of 18 and 35. Such as individual will need to provide a valid means of identification and an official endorsement letter, among other things.

8. Youth Initiative for Sustainable Agriculture in Nigeria (YISA)

YISA recognizes that agriculture is one of the major lucrative business people can engage in and wants to get the youths involved. Thus, the YISA scheme offers encouragement to youths who are venturing into the business of agricultural production. YISA empowers youths in the field of agriculture by aiding them with the basic things they need to get started in the agricultural business.

9. Trader Moni

The Federal Government of Nigeria also funds this empowerment programme which empowers entrepreneurs by offering them interest-free loans. This means that under the Trade Moni scheme; youths can get loans without worrying about interest rates. Also, one does not need to provide collaterals before one gets a loan. Trader Moni offers money for a business startup to up to 5 million Nigerians.

10. Youth Empowerment and Development Initiative (YEDI)

YEDI is youth empowerment scheme for Nigerians. It was founded in 2011. It is an affiliation of CSI+, which is a consultation service provide. CSI+ offers consultation services to international and corporate bodies on social investments; and with YEDI incorporated, the programme uses sports as an avenue to empower young people. Beneficiaries are sports enthusiasts aged between 10 to 24 years (Akomolafe, 2016).

Present Challenges in Accounting Education in Edo State

As mentioned earlier, the academic mode of accounting education delivery is adopted in universities. The underlying conceptual argument for this approach is the need to expose the future accountants to a broad-based liberal education which provides for a mixture of major accounting courses with a sufficient dose of related courses to enhance the business decision making capacity of future accountants.

Most of the accounting education graduates of universities tend to pursue careers in the accounting profession. To accommodate this interest, university accounting programmes provide for a combination of undergraduate courses which not only qualifies students for university graduation but also maximizes the level of exemptions granted to the graduates in accounting professional examinations (Okafor, 2012). Besides, employers of labour expect universities to produce accounting graduates who have acquired reasonable levels of accounting skills to enable them add value to their future employers. The increasing need for collaboration between the university and the professional accounting constitutes in academic programme and curriculum development which should therefore be acknowledged.

The role of the accountant is now changing from that of maintaining accurate accounting processes to that of making proper financial decision making (Uche, 2007). Shortage of professional skills and proper ethics in the discharge of accounting functions in numerous corporate organizations, have contributed largely to most of the recent global financial crisis. For instance, Osisioma (2010) and Anao (2009) have implicated failure in accounting practice for corporate failures such as those of the energy giant like Enron, Texaco, Global Crossing, etc.

Nigeria has clearly had its fair share of financial scandals as exemplified in former Lever Brothers Nig. Plc (now Unilever Plc): The Union Dicon Salt Plc as well as the confectionary giant, Cadbury Nigeria Plc. There are many other instances of financial scandals in Nigeria and elsewhere which are not openly admitted. The collapse of these corporations arising essentially from failures in their accounting practices has far reaching consequences for accounting education in universities as well as for the accounting professional bodies. It is a clear indictment of the quality of the accounting education system and thus, a clarion call for researchers and universities to access the quality and essence of accounting education delivery in Nigeria (Anao, 2009; Enron, 2022).

Human Capital Theory by Adams Smith (1976), Developed by Gary Becker (1964)

The human capital theory was propounded by Adams Smith in 1776 and developed by Gary Becker in 1964. The theory states that man's capacity to perform various tasks is dependent on the skills and knowledge inbuilt in man and external forces such as education, training and incentives which help to enhance his qualities. Human capital theory connote the combined stock of competencies, social, knowledge and personal attributes embodied in an intrinsic measure of economic value. Human capital theory views people as economic units who are important in an economy.

The essential concept of human capital theory is that investments in individual can be measured based on the economic value that they are able to contribute to the society. Owmondah (2018) stated that, in every society, there is the urgent need for growth; hence, human capital theory establishes that there is a significant connection between the growth in the stock of a nation's human resources and the growth of national output. It is therefore beneficial that countries, which want to achieve a specific level of socio-economic manpower resources, invest in the country's human resources. The scholar further asserted that the educational system should be able to produce the right type of manpower (human capital) in the right proportion, quantity and time for national growth and development.

This theory is based on the assumption that skills and competences achieved by people (e.g. students) is a factor of production comparable to other factors of production such as machine and land. This proposal of human capital theory notes that human resources are invaluable assets to a society that tends to enhance her productive capacity, which follows that human capital forms the ingredients that enable all other resources to survive. Therefore, this can only be functional when students are optimally utilized. The theory also takes into cognizance the training and motivation of students as human capital in a system of education in the course of seeking for quality of education, which involves cost, attention, care and time. The students who has passed through effective training (including entrepreneurship education) is qualified as part of capital resources that should be appropriately utilized.

The education goal of every society is anchored on the development of individuals to be moral, effective citizen, equal access to a qualitative education, building up persons who can be totally integrated into their immediate environment and other environment as stipulated in the National Policy on Education (FGN, 2014). This can only be achieved when students are properly educated in key courses such as entrepreneurship education in order for them to be gainfully employed or self-reliant. A major problem students face in their institutions is poor academic infrastructure which has greatly affected their teaching output. This can be rectified if all education stakeholders can join forces to ensure their availability and sustenance.

This theory relates to the proper management of students in teaching and learning outcomes which will help serve as a tool in achieving education goals and objectives including students'

entrepreneurship development. Consequently, human resources will be effective when qualified educators who have experience in entrepreneurship education are employed and allowed to guide the students. This further helps in ensuring quality outputs in institutions of learning and the society benefits.

CONCLUSION

The study was on entrepreneurship education in Nigerian universities and youth empowerment in Edo State. In view of increasing changes that they will meet as graduates, it is imperative that students develop and maintain an attitude of learning to learn as well as maintain their competence. Entrepreneurship education curriculum should offer a foundation of professional knowledge, skills, values, ethics and attitude to students which will enable them to continue to learn and adapt to changes throughout their professional lives. The study concluded that entrepreneurship education should be seen as the branch of education in Nigeria university.

Youth empowerment can thus be considered as a process of giving "power" or "strength" to the existing capabilities of youths to be more productive in their endeavours. Youth empowerment goes beyond a change of mind-set to incorporate a demonstration of that change which the world is forced to acknowledge and respond to. It should commence from within to involve learning about oneself from many perspectives and learning to develop one's rational and emotional resources to achieve desired ends. Empowering youths is conceived as awareness-building; especially about building capacities and developing skills required for present and future decision-making and challenges.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were made:

- i. Entrepreneurs with basic accounting knowledge and entrepreneurial skills stand better chances of becoming self-reliant and attaining business success. The study recommended among other things that government should remove those obstacles that militate against entrepreneurial development in Nigeria.
- ii. Adequate attention should be given to entrepreneurship education, it has the roles of providing skills, curb unemployment, reduce poverty, thereby transforming nation economically and technologically advancement in her human resources to sustainable development potentials.
- iii. Management of the institution should intensify efforts to monitoring the implementation of entrepreneurship curriculum in the institution in order to continue turning out best quality accounting graduates.
- iv. Entrepreneurship educators should include the areas of deficiencies identified in this study in undergraduate curriculum of accounting education and focus attention on developing those skills

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