ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION A TOOL AGAINST TERTIARY GRADUATES UNEMPLOYMENT IN NIGERIA: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN THE 21ST CENTURY

S. U. EL-YAKUB (PhD)
Division of Teacher Education, Institute of Education, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

Abstract
In the contemporary global world, the up-shoot of graduate unemployment has become an all reaching concern. The stack reality is that for university graduates and other professionals, job competition and unemployment are becoming stiffer and tougher. There is an urgent need to bring back the middle class in the society which has been lost for many years. It is a challenge that most economies are facing under the current economic circumstances (Oppong & Sachs, 2015). Even the developed nations have not shown exception to this frightful social problem, although the up-surge is more pronounced in the developing countries. In Africa and Nigeria in particular, graduate unemployment is a very daunting challenge in the labour market. Conservatively, Eneji, Mai-Laifa & Weiping (2013), put the rate of

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becoming stiffer and tougher. The only genuine channel of restoration is entrepreneurship.
Entrepreneurial Education is very important so as to equip graduates with entrepreneurial skills and abilities to make them become self-reliant upon graduation. This paper examined the concepts of entrepreneurship, Entrepreneurship Education, objectives of Entrepreneurship Education, importance of Entrepreneurship Education, curriculum for entrepreneurship education, concept of unemployment, how tertiary institution graduates can develop entrepreneurial skills so as to become self-reliant, and support of Government and Non-Governmental Organizations towards entrepreneurship development in Nigeria. It was recommended among others that; a new and workable education policy should be provided that favour the smooth implementation of Entrepreneurship Education at all levels of education; an Entrepreneurial Education Programme (EEP) should be formalized and integrated fully into the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) scheme in the same spirit of weekly Community Development (CDS) of the NYSC. This if applied will in turn assist graduates with ideal job generation, creation and development ability.

unemployed graduates at about 60% of the Nigeria labour supply market. Recent publication supplied by National Bureau of Statistics (2016), indicated that a total of 52 million citizens within the economically active population of Nigeria is jobless and this figure consisted mostly of newly qualified university graduates. According to Afolabi, Yusuf and Idowu (2014), of all the problems facing Nigeria in recent time, none is as virulent, persistent and agonizing as the problems of high unemployment among Nigerian graduates. The only genuine channel of restoration is entrepreneurship characterized by sustained job and wealth creation.

Tertiary education in Nigeria is the education given after Post Basic Education in Institutions such as universities and inter-university centres such as Innovation Enterprise Institutions (IEIs), Colleges of Education, Polytechnics, Monotechnics and other specialized colleges (Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2013). According to the National Policy, University education should make optimum contribution to national development by “making entrepreneurial skills acquisition a requirement of all Nigerian universities”.
Entrepreneurship Education is important to students of tertiary institutions because they are expected to acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes that would enable them become self-reliant and adapt to changing needs of the society due to globalization and integration processes. A survey carried out by the National Universities Commission (NUC) showed that Nigerian University graduates lack basic job competence, oral communication and managerial skills Nwankwo (2004) in (Moses and Mosunmola, 2014). Probably, the findings of this survey led to the recent recommendation for the introduction of entrepreneurial education to all Nigerian Universities both as a General Study (GST) and a Bachelor of Science Degree (B.Sc) Course. It could be seen therefore that the society depends on creative people who turn ideas into new enterprises or make improvements within existing enterprises.

**Concept of Entrepreneurship**

Entrepreneurship has been defined variously by different authors. Essien (2014), defined entrepreneurship as the totality of self-asserting attributes that enable a person to identify latent business opportunities, together with capacity to organize need resources with which to profitably take advantage of such opportunities in the face of calculated risks and uncertainty. The concept is seen as the dynamic process of creating wealth by individuals who assume the risks involved in providing value for some products and/or services (Kuratko, 2009); “the pursuit of lucrative opportunities by enterprising individuals (being) inherently about innovation - creating a new venture where one didn't exist before,” (Bateman & Snell, 2011); “the process of creating value through the provision of some products or services for the benefit of the society, while learning the skills needed to assume the risk of establishing a business” (Ahiauzu, 2009; (Ogedengbe, Okhakhu, and Adekunle, 2015). From the above definitions, it is clear that the concept of entrepreneurship development is a process which could be considered to begin with knowledge and skill accumulation to sufficiently predispose the individual learner to entrepreneurial pursuit. Entrepreneurship is the capacity to harness the right quantity, quality and combination of resources that are consistent with profit making under risks and uncertainty.

**Concept of Entrepreneurship Education**

Entrepreneurship Education has been defined in many ways by many authors and organizations. UNESCO (2012), stated that Entrepreneurship Education comprises all kinds of experiences that equip students with the ability and vision
of how to access and transform opportunities. It includes creativity, innovation and risk taking as well as the ability to plan and manage projects in order to achieve outcomes. Entrepreneurial Education is focused on developing youths as well as individuals with passion and multiple skills (Izedonmi & Okafor, 2010). Entrepreneurship Education is a form of education that seeks to provide knowledge, skills, attitude and motivation to students for entrepreneurial success in any setting. It equips people with the ability to seek investment opportunities. The propensity to behave entrepreneurially is not exclusive to certain individuals. Different individuals will have a different mix of capabilities for demonstrating and acquiring entrepreneurial behaviours, skills and attributes.

**Entrepreneurship Development in Nigeria**

Entrepreneurial development may be conceived as a programme of activities to enhance the knowledge, skills, behaviours and attitudes of individuals and groups to assume the role of entrepreneurs as well as efforts to remove all forms of barriers in the path of entrepreneurs. It is anchored on the firm belief that entrepreneurship involves a body of knowledge, skills and attitudes which can be learned and applied by most people who are sufficiently motivated. Osemeke (2012), stated that entrepreneurship development refers to the process of enhancing entrepreneurial skills and knowledge through structured training and institution-building programmes. Nigeria like most developing nations of the world is faced with myriads of problems and harsh realities which include poverty, unemployment, conflicts and disease (Amzad, Naser & Zaman, 2009). 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. The government of former President Olusegun Obasanjo in 2007, mandated that all students in Nigeria, regardless of their major, will need to study entrepreneurship (Ayatse, 2013).

Entrepreneurship development assumes that through the process of learning, these characteristics or pattern can be acquired by anyone who is adequately motivated. Similarly, individuals can learn to deal with socio-cultural constraints and inhibitions prevalent in growing economies. Entrepreneurs can be trained also on how to establish and maintain effective relationship with financial institutions, suppliers, government agencies, and other critical institutions upon which they depend for information, guidance and inputs. It is possible to achieve
all these through business counseling and by providing relevant information (Inegbenebor, 1999 in Ogedengbe, Okhakhu, and Adekunle (2015).

Objectives of Entrepreneurship Education
Entrepreneurship Education is important because it is an education and training that empower students to develop and use their creativity to initiate responsibilities and risks. According to Paul (2005) in Loko (2015), the objective of Entrepreneurship Education aims to:

1. Offer functional education to the youths that will enable them to be self-employed and self-reliant;
2. Provide the youth or graduates with adequate training that will enable them to be creative and innovative in identifying novel business opportunities;
3. Serve as a catalyst for economic growth and development;
4. Offer tertiary institution graduates adequate training in risk management;
5. Reduce high rate of poverty;
6. Create employment opportunities;
7. Reduce rural-urban drift;
8. Provide the young graduates with enough training and support that will enable them to establish careers in small and medium sized businesses;
9. Inculcate the spirit of perseverance in the youths and adults which will enable them to persist in any business venture they embark on; and
10. Create smooth transition from traditional to a modern industrial economy.

Importance of Entrepreneurship Education in Nigeria
Entrepreneurship is a key driver of our economy, wealth and a high majority of jobs are created by small businesses started by entrepreneurially minded individuals, many of whom go on to create big businesses. There is more freedom for people who are exposed to entrepreneurship education. There is higher self-esteem, and an overall greater sense of control over their lives. It is the believe of many experience business people, political leaders, economists and educators that fostering a robust entrepreneurial culture will maximize individual and collective economic and social success on a local, national and global scale. It is with this in mind that the National Standards for entrepreneurial education were
developed “to prepare youth and adults to succeed in an entrepreneurial economy”. (Loko, 2015).

Entrepreneurship Education focuses on developing understanding and capacity for pursuit of entrepreneurial behaviours, skills and attributes in widely different context. These behaviours can be practiced, developed and learned; hence it is important to expose all students to entrepreneurship education (Akinbami, 2011).

Entrepreneurial skills and attributes provide benefits to society, even beyond their application to business activity. Obviously, personal qualities that are relevant to entrepreneurship such as creativity and a spirit of initiative can be useful to everyone in their working responsibilities and their day to day existence. Also relevant technical and business skills need to be provided to those who choose to be self-employed and to start their own venture or might do so in the future (Dauda and Rikichi, 2016).

From the above importance/benefits of entrepreneurial education, it is imperative to teach entrepreneurial education to students in all disciplines in tertiary institutions of learning. It is not out of place to say that many business ideas emerge from non-business disciplines, but are often waved aside or ignored because students are not sufficiently educated in the knowledge and skills required.

Curriculum for Entrepreneurship Education

An entrepreneurial curricula contain information on how students can identify and shape opportunities, assess business concepts, develop operational plans, fund and launch ventures, grow new enterprises and case studies which should be discussed in the classroom to provide students with another venue for examining entrepreneurial strategies and learning about the successes and failures of new ventures (Kourilsky, 1995 in Moses and Mosunmola (2014); Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2010). Considering the important role of entrepreneurship development of undergraduates in the achievement of desired goals of an entrepreneurship programme, an entrepreneurship curriculum should motivate entrepreneurial development especially because the curriculum is the basic tool and instrument for the conveyance of entrepreneurial learning experiences to students.

The history of entrepreneurial education into curriculum of tertiary education institutions started in the United States of America as far back as 1947, unlike Nigeria, where it is a recent development that just began in 2006 (Tahja, 2011). In view of the positive social and economic effects of Entrepreneurship
Education, many education institutions, especially at the tertiary level, are now advancing in the implementation of entrepreneurial thinking and behaviour to develop students’ awareness of the relevance of Entrepreneurship training. Entrepreneurship is the product of the rising challenges in the society. Its curriculum content must be responsive enough to address the obvious short comings of our present school systems. That is why Ogunkunle (2009) in Dauda and Rikichi (2016), remarked that global changes in recent times call for innovations in the school curriculum. Entrepreneurship Education is aimed at meeting the challenges of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGS) which must be responsive and relevant to the current and anticipated needs, problems and aspirations of the learner.

Esu (2010), identified the following as the domains of skills that curriculum content must transmit to learners at all levels of education;

- Personal care skills: covers bathing, grooming, toileting, sexuality, medical needs.
- Domestic skills: covers shopping, cooking, laundry, housekeeping.
- Recreational skills: covers street crossing, use of crosswalk, use of walk button, store recognition, public transit use.
- Employment skills: covers pre-vocational skills and experience.
- Modified/functional academics: covers partial integration, small group instruction in areas supporting life, food recognition, safety signs, time and money.

Shai (2009) in Dauda and Rikichi (2016), came out with a three (3) components categorization of entrepreneurship education curriculum considered comprehensive enough to equip products of the school system with the needed skills and capacities for future life.

- Personal Development: It should build confidence, motivate progress, strengthen the entrepreneurial mindset, foster a desire to achieve and inspire others.
- Business Development: Technical, Financial literacy and skills to engage in self-employment and in entrepreneurship that can lead to self-employment. This will include the expected business and functional curricula.
- Entrepreneurial skills development: It should provide training in social skills, networking, creative problem-solving, opportunity seeking,
Every entrepreneurship curriculum must have the above as its integral elements so as to provide the students with the cherished skills and capacities that can make them self reliant and highly productive in the society.

**Concept of Unemployment**

Simply put unemployment describes the condition of people who are without jobs. The International Labor Organization (ILO) in Adekola, Allen, Olawole and Akanbi (2016), defined the unemployed as numbers of the economically active population who are without work but available for and seeking work, including people who have lost jobs and those who have voluntarily left work (World Bank, 1998 in Uddin, 2013).

According to Oppong & Sachs (2015), graduate unemployment is defined as the number or proportion of degree holders (graduate and post graduate) in a given economy who are capable and willing to work, but unable to find jobs. This definition established graduate unemployment as a specific type of unemployment among people with academic degree from higher institution working zero hour and earning zero income.

The higher the unemployment rate in an economy the higher would be the poverty level and associated welfare challenges. Unemployment has been grouped into two categories: first, the older unemployed who lost their jobs through retrenchment, redundancy, or bankruptcy; and second, the younger unemployed, most of who have never been employed (Oyebade, 2003 in Adekola, Allen, Olawole and Akanbi, 2016)). Though unemployment occurs to people of all categories but its effect has bitten more sarcastically hard on the youth.

**Causes of Youth Unemployment in Nigeria**

In the study of youth unemployment in Nigeria, Uddin (2013), identified the main causes of youth unemployment in Nigeria such as Rural-Urban Migration, Rapid Population Growth, Low standard of education, the rapid expansion of the educational system, lack of steady and sustainable power supply and corruption. In terms of specificities, the Chartered Institute of Personnel Management of Nigeria (CIPMN, 2016), identified some factors that predisposed tertiary institution graduates to unemployment in the country. These were lack of national employment policy, sub-optimal quality of graduates, educational
system not tailored and aligned to industry need and inappropriate educational curricula. Others are poor political governance, poor setting of policy direction, inconsistent government policy and harsh business environment.

How Tertiary Institution Graduates can develop Entrepreneurial Skills and be Self-Reliant
Quality Entrepreneurship Education to tertiary institution students will enhance job creation which will subsequently reduce unemployment, poverty and social vices in Nigeria. This will also help to improve the standard of living; hence promote social economic and political development in Nigeria which is the cardinal objective of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (Maina, 2014). Thus, Entrepreneurship Education would lead to self-reliance; improve the quality of life and the general standard of living of the masses. It reflects in the following economic indicators such as Higher Profit Employers, more employment, Higher Productivity, Promotion of Innovative Technologies, products and services and increase in local sourcing of raw materials (Okoba, 2000 in Evans-Obinna, 2016). Therefore, for a country striving to attain self-reliance economy, its educational system should be designed to involve robust entrepreneurial curriculum. In order to achieve viable Entrepreneurship Education that will enhance self-reliance, educational planning effort must therefore:

i. recognize the technological imperatives in modern industrialization and provide suitable arrangements for orientation of the labour force towards technology adoption;

   a. ensure that the educational system is geared not only for quality, because high quality academic preparation is a prerequisite for the type of industrialization that will transform the nation and eradicate imbalance in skill formation through meaningful attention to the enhancement of intermediate technical skills and artisanal training.

Government Support towards Entrepreneurship in Nigeria
Some of the current interventions by the government to positively engage the youths in national development through encouraging entrepreneurship and providing employment include:

1. the N200 billion Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) Development Fund to provide cheap and long-term financial resources for the development of the MSMEs sector in Nigeria;
2. the N100 billion Textile Revival Fund (TRF) for the resuscitation of the cotton, textile and garment Industries which has been comatose and moribund;
3. the Public Works and Women/Youth Empowerment Scheme (PW/WYE) was launched by the Federal Government of Nigeria to create immediate employment opportunities for women and youths in labour intensive public works;
4. the Youth Enterprise with Innovation in Nigeria (YouWIN) programme is a collaboration of the Federal Ministries of Finance, Communication & Technology and Youth Development to organise an annual Business Plan Competition (BPC) for aspiring young entrepreneurs in Nigeria and provide a one-time equity grant of N1 to N10 million to 1,200 selected aspiring entrepreneurs to start/expand their business concepts and mitigate start up risks. It is aimed at generating some 80,000 to 110,000 new jobs for unemployed Nigerian youths over a three-year period.
   i. Petroleum Technology Development Fund (PTDF) was established to promote and upgrade petroleum technology and manpower development through research and training of Nigerians as graduates, professionals, technicians and craftsmen in the fields of engineering, geology, geo-sciences, management, economics and relevant fields in the petroleum and solid minerals sectors in Nigeria and other countries of the world.
   ii. The NYSC Venture Price Competition was introduced by the CBN to sensitize and create awareness in Nigerian youths, awaken their entrepreneurship expertise and orientate serving youth corps members towards seeking alternative employment options, in particular, self-employment.
   iii. The Nigeria Incentive-Based Risk Sharing System for Agricultural Lending (NIRSAL) is a partnership of the CBN, UNIDO and Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa. It was developed to boost access to bank financing for agriculture by de-risking the agricultural and financial value chains through the adoption of risk sharing approaches.
   iv. The N200 billion Small & Medium Scale Enterprises Guarantee Scheme (SMECGS) of the CBN promotes further SME access to credit. In barely two years, the scheme has disbursed over N1
billion to 20 qualified applicants with attendant boosts in their businesses and employment generation.

**Non-Governmental Organizations Support towards Entrepreneurship in Nigeria**

The non-Governmental organization (NGOs) are set up for the challenges of sustainable rural development. They are centers for capacity training and practical demonstration in integrated agriculture and micro-industrial innovations in a rural setting with emphasis on self-reliance. They undertake training, research, advocacy and consultancy to motivate and mobilize rural youths and adults for direct participation in their various and individual and community development (Toluwase and Ogunjobi, 2016).

Some of the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) currently in Nigeria promoting entrepreneurship for poverty reduction and economic development are:

1. **Country Women Association of Nigeria (COWAN):** COWAN mobilizes the rural women for individual and community development. This it does by organizing them into cooperative societies and making funds available for them to go into agro-allied ventures like gari processing, rice milling, mat weaving as well as finding market for their various products thereby increasing their income and invariably improving their standard of living.

2. **Village Pioneer Project (VPP):** The VPP has training and demonstration centres at Ajue and Iju both in Ondo state. It also has a cultural centre at Akure. Some of their activities involves:-
   - a. Youth Exchange Programmes between Nigeria and Germany;
   - b. Construction of the biogas plant in Ondo State (using animal waste to generate gas for cooking and lighting in Ajue centre);
   - c. Organizes Seminar/Symposia on issue relating to processing and equity considerations in sustainable economies.

3. **Nigeria Women Association of Development (NIWAD):** It assists rural women in the area of funding for small scale businesses like gari processing, mat weaving, knitting, cloth weaving, dyeing etc. Co-operative activities backed up with funds allocation are also made available as an effort at assisting the rural women.

4. **National Association of small scale industrialists (NASSI):** Its objectives among others are:
   - a. to ease and solve the problems confronting the small scale industrialists;
   - b. to establish and maintain an association whereby small scale industrialist could meet and exchange ideas on issues common to members (Toluwase and Ogunjobi, 2016).
Other Non-Governmental organizations are NACCIMA, Techno Serve, Women in Business, Hope and Enablement of the Weak Organization (HEWO).

**Conclusion**

The possession of university or professional certification by tertiary institutions in Nigeria is good. But what is the use of academic degree(s) and/or professional certificate(s) if the graduates are not working or unemployed. You either work for others and get paid or create work yourself entrepreneurially and pay yourself. The era of white cola job is gradually becoming over, those who want to escape the scourge of unemployment in Nigeria should make all efforts to acquire entrepreneurial skills necessary for job-creation that will guarantee self-employment. That is why the entrepreneurship curricula in Nigerian universities and other tertiary institutions should contain an extensive coverage on critical thinking and problem solving activities. This is important because critical thinking and problem solving skills are very salient to entrepreneurial success and development. For tertiary graduates to avert unemployment there is a need for them to consciously engage in entrepreneurial courses available to them in schools.

**Recommendations**

The following recommendations were made in consonance with the contents of this paper with following suggestions that:

A new and workable education policy be provided that favours the smooth implementation of Entrepreneurship Education at all levels of education.

1. The National Universities Commission (NUC), National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE), National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) and regulatory bodies should as usual set the minimum benchmark of the courses in Nigerian tertiary institutions. This development should not be politicized, rather the entire policy frameworks needed for the sustainability and improvement should be provided so as to salvage the graduates of tertiary Institutions in Nigeria from clutches of poverty.

2. There should be proper re-training Programmes for teachers on Entrepreneurship Education since they are the personnel that will implement the Entrepreneurship Curriculum for efficient delivery.

3. There is need to carry out constant entrepreneurship education evaluation programme to measure the effects of entrepreneurship education on students’ learning, attitudes and behaviours.
4. An Entrepreneurial Education Programme (EEP) should be formalized and integrated fully into the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) scheme in the same spirit of weekly Community Development (CDS) of the NYSC. This if applied will in turn assist graduates with ideal job generation, creation and development ability.

5. The NGOs also as a matter of urgency and strategy should liaise with all institutions that offer entrepreneurship development programme, such as UNDP, NDE, ASCON, CMD, and SMEDAN so that they could take advantage of their training for their beneficiaries.

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