

Entrepreneurship Education as Panacea For Youth Unemployment: Implication Of Vocational Counselling For Sustainable National Development

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Abstract

One of the many pressing challenges facing Nigeria today is youth unemployment with the ripple effect of their resort to violent crimes. The concern of many educationists and the public in general is to encourage youths to engage in useful livelihood. This paper x-rayed the promotion of entrepreneurship education and vocational counselling in eradicating youth unemployment in the society. An attempt has been made to look at entrepreneurship education based on the goal of the newly introduced senior secondary education curriculum enriched with the aims and objectives of Vocational Counselling. It was concluded that guiding the young people to pursue the right type of entrepreneurship education through effective and continuous vocational counselling is a sure way of eradicating unemployment and will build a more prosperous and advanced country. Some recommendations towards improving entrepreneurship education were also made.

Key words: Unemployment, Entrepreneurship Education, Vocational Counselling, Sustainable Development

1. Introduction

The importance of entrepreneurship development to the economy has been the subject of increased attention in Nigeria and the world-over in recent years. Gibson,(2001) defined entrepreneurship as the process of using private initiative to transform a business concept into a new venture or to grow and diversify an existing venture or enterprise with high great potential. Henry (2003) views entrepreneurship as the engine driving the economy of nations, creating new industries, young entrepreneurs, employments and wealth. Also, Agbionu,(2008) opined that entrepreneurship involves a process aimed at creating wealth for the purpose of growth, development of the environment and eradication of unemployment for national sustainability. However, entrepreneurship involves employment generation and wealth creation for human sustainability.

Unemployment is a very serious problem facing the nation as a whole. Olusakin, (2010) found out that even though up-to-date statistical data are lacking, local media reports indicate that half of the Nigerian population of 148 million are youths, 95% of whom are unemployed. Decades of economic stagnation and poverty have driven a large percentage of this figure to crime and violence in their early years.

The youths, when they are not gainfully employed either in the public or private sector of the economy, become very vulnerable to criminality such as kidnapping, rape, armed robbery and many other social vices which are now a menace to the society (Nwachukwu & Nwamuo, 2010). The Federal and state governments have made several efforts through some agencies to address the issue, yet many young graduates are unemployed either in the public or private sector of the economy. Some of these young people are also unable to gain admission into the tertiary institutions and as a result, are neither at work nor in school. Therefore, they have no option than to roam about the streets in search of vanity. Akinola, (2001) stated that these youths without jobs engage in all types of vandalization and wanton destruction of lives and properties.

Most government-fronted skill acquisition programmes shortly fade away after much expenditure, are of no impact on the youths. Most of these government skill acquisition efforts are not sustainable, because the beneficiaries cannot sustain their economic livelihood after the skill acquisition training and meagre start-up capital. Eradication of unemployment in society demands a combined effort of the government, parents, the schools, larger society and the youths themselves (Nwachukwu & Nwamuo, 2010).

2. The New Senior Secondary School Education Curriculum and Entrepreneurship Education

The government in her bid to reduce unemployment introduced a new curriculum in the Senior Secondary School with effect from the 2011 academic year. The goal of the new curriculum is geared towards wealth creation, entrepreneur development and skill acquisition training for self-employment. The new Senior Secondary Education Curriculum (SSEC) expected to launch Nigeria to a higher level in terms of entrepreneurial development was formally launched and presented to the public in Abuja on Monday, 14th March, 2011 by the minister of Education Prof. Ruqayyat Ahmed Rufai.

The philosophy of the new SSEC is summarized by Oduşelu, (2011): “every senior secondary education graduate should have been well prepared for higher education, as well as captured relevant functional trade/entrepreneurship skills needed for poverty eradication, job creation and wealth generation, and in the process strengthen further the foundations for ethical, moral and civic values acquired at the basic education level”.

2.1 Objectives of the New Curriculum

- Develop individual to be self-reliant and become employers of labour.
- Develop entrepreneur skills, which will in turn lead to emergence of many small scale businesses.
- For self- discovery in order to fast-track technological and economic development.
- Impact creativity and ingenuity skills.
- To meet the present need of the community and the nation at large. (NERD, 2008).

3. Basic features of the New SSEC

- Provides support for higher education;
- Introduction of ICT, civic education and trade entrepreneurship as compulsory cross cutting core subjects;
- ICT enables students become globally competitive;
- Civic education enables students become more responsible and responsive citizens;
- Trade/Entrepreneurship provides required strategic skills for job creation and poverty eradication.

The indispensability of entrepreneurship could be seen in the new Senior Secondary Education Curriculum as a tool to realize the stated objectives of the National policy on Education (2004). Ojekunle, (2011) posed some challenges for the implementation of the curriculum vis-à-vis: facilities for the newly introduced thirty – five (35) trade/entrepreneurship subjects; time-table and allocation of subjects and personnel for the new subjects. It is however believed that pro-active actions could be taken by discussing with stakeholders on tackling the challenges posed by the new Senior Secondary Education Curriculum and providing useful suggestions.

4. Entrepreneurship Education and Vocational Counselling

Entrepreneurship is the capacity to harness the right quantity, quality and combination of resources that are consistent with profit making under risks and uncertainly. Essien, (2006) defined entrepreneurship as the totality of self – asserting attributes that enable a personal to identify latent business opportunities, together with capacity to organize needed resources with which to profitably take advantage of such opportunities in the face of calculated risks and uncertainty. An entrepreneur is the person who carries out the function of the entrepreneurship.

In the view of Nwakolo (1997), entrepreneurship is the ability to set up a business- enterprise as different from being employed. It involves the acquisition of skills, ideas and managerial abilities necessary for self-reliance. Entrepreneurship in any country is important for the following reasons; reducing unemployment, with the zeal of entrepreneurship very valuable jobs will be created, not just for the entrepreneurs, but also for others (George & Archibong, 2010). This will to a large extent reduce government expenditure in a way and thus contributing to a balanced budget for the economy. Going beyond employability, entrepreneurship capacities enable graduates by self-determination to create their own future, exploit the opportunities that emerge in the complex unpredictable worlds and contribute better to economic development and social well – being (Anyamene, Anyachebelu, Nwakolo and Izuchi, 2009).

Counselling is a help or assistance given by a professionally trained personnel called the counsellor to an individual or group of people who have challenges, to help them understand themselves and their environment with a view to solving their problems, make necessary adjustment, bring about right decisions and finally live a satisfactory and productive life now and in the future (Anyamene et al, 2010). Vocational Counselling is

described as a process of assisting a person to develop and accept an integrated and adequate picture of himself and of his role in the world of work with satisfaction to himself and benefit to the society. Akinade, (2005) see vocational counselling as a facilitative process, a service rendered to the individual in choosing and adjusting to an occupation. Vocational counselling as a decision-making process in the realistic choice of career, a course of study and individual subjects, relates to the future mental health of students and therefore pre-requisite to the economic growth and manpower needs of the country. (Olayinka, 1993). Vocational services are the services given to help an individual student understand the work, how to find rightful place in it and perform to an optimal level (Nwachukwu, 2007).

There have been a lot of studies on the importance of guidance programmes (in which vocational counselling is one) and entrepreneurship development among students and the youths in general. Ubah, (2010) found out that counselling will intensively equip students for sound public relation, self understanding and better management skills which will facilitate entrepreneurship development; better educational and occupational adjustments can enhance students' entrepreneurship whereby the students are assisted to harness abilities and potentials to be more productive educational and vocationally and hence become more enterprising to attain sustainable employment which will in turn contribute to national development.

5. Sustainable Development and Entrepreneurship Education: Role of the Counsellor

Development is a process of becoming and unfolding, maturity process. Development means getting the correct environment and putting healthy people into such environment and exposing them to situations of learning to actively strive towards unfolding inner endowments in such a manner that full realization and fruition is realized. Sustainability means the ability to hold, to retain, to keep and build on what has been built, reclaimed or achieved. Sustainable development therefore means an unfolding and actualization of endowment which is conducted such that no ground is lost, but indeed a later achievement is built on an earlier one (Ebigbo, 2010).

Sexton & Smilor (1997) defines "Entrepreneurship" as the process whereby individuals become aware of business ownership as an option or viable alternative, develop ideas for business; learn the process of becoming an entrepreneur and undertake the initiation and development of a business. It includes the practical application of enterprising qualities such as initiative, innovation, creativity and risk-taking into the work environment (either in self employment or employment in small start-up firms) using appropriate skills necessary for success in that environment and culture. In the words of Nwachukwu & Nwamuo (2010), the application of these qualities, a process known as "Entrepreneurism" leads to ventures on the social, political or business spheres.

As Entrepreneurship Education is being introduced into Senior Secondary Education Curriculum, the counselor has a vantage position to make sure that the concept of entrepreneurship is explained in schools and promoted as a career opportunity for youths. There is need for the provision of vocational counselling right from primary school. Teachers of different subjects should be re-orientated to design lessons towards entrepreneurship education. Most tertiary institutions (Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education) at both public and private across the country have units for entrepreneurship skills acquisition (Alademerin, 2004).

In the view of Orubele, (2005), the present unemployment situation will change when the youths are guided effectively at school into choosing subjects and occupations that best suit their individual abilities and interests. Entrepreneurial education offers the citizens of acquiring the necessary technical know-how on business management, risk taking in business management thereby creating productive populace as well as eradicating unemployment in the nation.

Counselling is regarded as an enabling process which encourages self-responsibility, as people make choices and decisions or shares an inner burden. Counselling enables people to examine their needs and problems and in so doing reduce the confusion in the thoughts and feelings that should be stressed. Lack of vocational counselling through occupational information has led to the production of graduates without entrepreneurial knowledge and skills for effective running of business, hence emergence of increased unemployment trend in the society (Onyejiaku, 2001). Anagbogu (2002), suggested that vocational counsellors should stress the possibility of self-employment, the nature of occupations, the job requirements as this will help the students after graduation to apply the knowledge in varying context.

Counselling being an integral part of the present system of education at all levels should be encouraged continuously. It should be ensured that vocational counselling built on specialization is implemented to start at the primary school to tertiary institutions in a bid to prevent unemployment after school (Ubah, 2010).

Vocational Counselling and Entrepreneurship Education will assist learners to create wealth in future by integration of school education within the economic activities of the community. For instance, in a community where there is tie and dye industry, the school can include designing, colour combination and marketing into the curriculum. By so doing, the school will help the children to improve on traditional trade/entrepreneurship skills

of the community together with other curricular contents. This will ensure future employment opportunities which will contribute to individual total well-being and sustain national development.

6. Conclusion

Counselling in schools at all levels will enable the country to identify her talented youths and nurture them to the optimal level of social, educational and economic development. Early identification of the talent of an individual is very essential for the proper planning of programmes for the manpower needs of the country. Guiding young people to pursue the right type of entrepreneurship education through vocational counselling in which there will be no over-production of certain manpower needs and under-production of the other aspects of the manpower needs, is a sure way of eradicating unemployment and building a more prosperous and advanced country.

7. Recommendations

Eradication of youth unemployment as a process of enhancing entrepreneurship skills and knowledge based on structure/training and institution building programmes can be realized with students through active vocational counselling programmes:

- A well articulated entrepreneurship education should offer more than self-employment that will contribute to national development.
- Entrepreneurship skills can be reactivated among students at all levels of education through intensive and articulated guidance and counselling services, thereby making them psychologically ready for business venture before leaving school.
- Unemployment and family poverty can be eradicated through entrepreneurship guidance right from the primary to tertiary level of education.
- Counselling services should be made available to youths in order to develop a culture of entrepreneurship.
- Excursion programmes should be introduced from the primary schools where pupils are taken round the society to observe and interact with successful entrepreneurs. Handicraft should be re-introduced.
- Teachers of different subjects should be re-orientated and given adequate counselling on how to design lessons promoting entrepreneurship education.
- Marriage counselors should encourage intending and married couples to give their children solid home training to be able to accept the challenges of life and be useful to themselves. Parents should be advised to start from cradle to let their children know that there is dignity in labour.
- Youths need to be re-orientated to stress the effects of crime, the need for honest livelihood and need for acquisition of skills to maintain their lives.
- The society should be advised to assist the government in policy implementation. Community leaders should be counseled to be involved in spreading the good-news of entrepreneurship education. Skills acquisition programmes should be organized.
- Counsellors must shift their educational counselling programmes from emphasizing theory to practical applications of knowledge.
- Government should provide essential facilities including human and material resources, workshops and in-service training to maximize both input and output of Guidance Counsellors for entrepreneurship education.

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