

Youth Empowerment for Sustainable Development: The Role of Entrepreneurship Education for Out-of-School Youth

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Abstract

Nigeria has one of the poorest sets of national development indices in the world and it is widely believed that the underdevelopment of human capacity is a major factor contributing to Nigeria's underdevelopment. Demographic segregation of the Nigerian population indicates that youths form the largest segment of the population. Hence, developmental efforts must target and/or capture the youthful population to have tangible and meaningful impact. The term youth empowerment is broadly employed to explain efforts aimed at providing coping skills and an enabling environment for youths to lead decent lives and contribute meaningfully to national development. An emerging trend in youth empowerment in Nigeria is entrepreneurship education. Entrepreneurship education assumed importance against the background of poverty, widespread unemployment and the need to shift the attention of the citizenry away from white collar jobs and government patronage. This study highlights the importance of youth empowerment towards attaining sustainable development of the Nigerian nation. It examines the place of entrepreneurship education in the empowerment of youths, and attempts to identify missing links in the execution of entrepreneurship education initiatives in Nigeria. The researchers segregated the youthful population into two categories; in-school and out-of-school youths. Using literature study and unstructured observation, the researchers appraised the relative spread and intensity of entrepreneurship education initiatives (especially government-facilitated entrepreneurship education) amongst both groups. While entrepreneurship education initiatives targeted at in-school youth are easily noticeable nationwide, the same cannot be said about out-of-school youth. Meanwhile, based on national literacy, school enrolment, and tertiary institution matriculation examination/admission records, it can be inferred that out-of-school youths in Nigeria far outnumber in-school youths. The authors therefore recommend specific and deliberate nationwide efforts to impart entrepreneurial skills to out-of-school youths as a means to empowering them to contribute to sustainable development of the Nigerian nation and society. Such initiatives could have as primary targets, drop-outs from secondary schools, and young people who cannot proceed to higher institutions after their secondary education.

Key Words: Entrepreneurship, in-school youth, out-of-school youth, national development

Introduction

Nigeria has one of the poorest sets of national development indices in the world. The nation is currently ranked 153rd out of 187 countries with comparable data; with a human development index (HDI) Value of 0.471 for Year 2012.¹ The human development index was developed in 1990 by Mahbub ul Haq, a Pakistani economist. It is the generally acceptable means of assessing the well-being of nations across the globe. This assessment is based on three criteria: life expectancy which is measured based on longevity of life, literacy level which is measured based on statistics of enrolment in schools and Gross Domestic Income (GDI) which is measured based on the purchasing power after the price differences among countries have been removed.

According to the 2010 HDI report,² on life expectancy, an average Nigerian child is expected to live up to 51.9 years (by 2012, it has improved to 52.3 years). Although there is an improvement over the 48 year assessment at the end of the last decade (2009), it remains unacceptable when compared to other African countries like Libya (74 years) and Gabon (62.5 years). Nigeria's per capita income was estimated as \$2,069, while countries like Gabon, Botswana and Equatorial Guinea boast of \$12,249, \$13,049 and \$17,608 per capita income respectively. In education, Nigeria and Tanzania currently have the lowest rate of transition from primary to lower secondary schools in Sub-Saharan Africa. It is estimated that over 11 million Nigerian children of school age are out of school. In fact, Osae-Brown argues that "every year about 600,000 Nigerians are born who never get the chance to step into a classroom."³

Table 1: Human Development Index

Year	Nigeria	Low human Development	Sub-Saharan Africa	World
2012	0.471	0.466	0.475	0.694
2011	0.467	0.464	0.472	0.692
2010	0.462	0.461	0.468	0.690
2009	0.457	0.455	0.463	0.685
2008	0.453	0.448	0.456	0.683
2007	0.448	0.442	0.449	0.678
2006	0.444	0.432	0.440	0.672
2005	0.434	0.424	0.432	0.666

*Source: UNDP

Table 2: Facts on the Nigerian Economy

Aid as % of GDP	0.4%	[109th of 129]
Economic freedom	1.15	[141st of 156]
Exports to US	\$2,635,500,000.00	[21st of 224]
GDP > PPP	\$155,571,000,000.00	[50th of 163]
GDP growth > annual %	6.94 annual %	[35th of 187]
GDP per capita in 1950	\$547.00	[51st of 52]
GDP per capita in 1973	\$1,120.00	[46th of 52]
GDP per capita, PPP > current international \$	1,127.53 PPP \$	[146th of 169]
GINI index	43.7	[14th of 40]
Gross National Income	\$37,132,000,000.00	[50th of 172]
Gross national income > constant LCU	286976500000	[159th of 178]
Human Development Index	0.453	[159th of 178]
Income category	Low income	
Income distribution > Poorest 10%	1.6%	[94th of 114]
Income distribution > Richest 10%	40.8%	[17th of 114]
Population under \$1 a day	70.2	[2nd of 59]
Poverty > Share of all poor people	8.03 % of world's poor	[3rd of 80]
Research and development spending	0.1%	[66th of 69]
Stock		exchange
Nigeria Stock Exchange		
Total reserves minus gold > current US\$	28,279,620,000 \$	[26th of 178]

*Source: <http://www.nationmaster.com/country/ni-nigeria/eco-economy>

It is widely believed that the underdevelopment of human capacity is a major factor contributing to Nigeria's backwardness. Since it is an accepted belief world-wide that the youthful population holds the ace for national productivity, any discussion on sustainable national development must involve an examination of the role and fortunes of the youths.

Nigerian Youth Population

The Second Nigerian National Youth Policy⁴ defines youth as comprising all young persons between the ages 18 and 35 years who are citizens of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. For the purpose of this study, however, young persons of secondary school age (12 and above) shall be incorporated.

Demographic segregation of the Nigerian population indicates that youths form the largest segment of the population. In absolute numbers, the youth population started rising dramatically since the 1980s, on account of relative national peace and reduced infant mortality rates nationwide.

Table 3: Distribution of Population by Age Groups (Census 2006)

Age	Population	Percent	Sector %
Total	140.431.790	100	100
0-4	22.594.967	16,09	
5-9	20.005.380	14,25	
10-14	16.135.950	11,49	41.83
15-19	14.899.419	10,61	
20-24	13.435.079	9,57	20.18
25-29	12.211.426	8,70	
30-34	9.467.538	6,74	
35-39	7.331.755	5,22	20.66
40-44	6.456.470	4,60	
45-49	4.591.293	3,27	
50-54	4.249.219	3,03	31.56
55-59	2.066.247	1,47	
60-64	2.450.286	1,74	3.21
65-69	1.151.048	0,82	
70-74	1.330.597	0,95	
75-79	579.838	0,41	
80-84	760.053	0,54	
85+	715.225	0,51	3.23

**Source: National Population Commission*

The above demographic picture is corroborated by the CIA Factbook, which states as follows⁵:

NIGERIA

Population: 170,123,740 (July 2012 est.)

Note: estimates for this country explicitly take into account the effects of excess mortality due to AIDS; this can result in lower life expectancy, higher infant mortality, higher death rates, lower population growth rates, and changes in the distribution of population by age and sex than would otherwise be expected

Age structure:

0-14 years: 43.9% (male 38,232,053/female 36,483,243)

15-24 years: 19.3% (male 16,757,436/female 16,018,589)

25-54 years: 30% (male 25,123,834/female 25,945,571)

55-64 years: 3.8% (male 2,981,187/female 3,520,154)

65 years and over: 3% (male 2,325,682/female 2,735,991) (2012 est.)

Median age:

total: 17.9 years

male: 17.5 years

female: 18.4 years (2012 est.)

Population growth rate 2.553% (2012 est.)

Birth rate 39.23 births/1,000 population (2012 est.)

Death rate 13.48 deaths/1,000 population (July 2012 est.)

Net migration rate -0.22 migrant(s)/1,000 population (2012 est.)

Urbanization urban population: 50% of total population (2010)

Rate of urbanization: 3.5% annual rate of change (2010-15 est.)

Life expectancy at birth

total population: 52.05 years

male: 48.95 years

female: 55.33 years (2012 est.)

Literacy definition: age 15 and over can read and write

total population: 61.3%

male: 72.1%

female: 50.4% (2010 est.)

School life expectancy (primary to tertiary education) total: 9 years

male: 10 years

female: 8 years (2005)

**Source: CIA World Factbook (February 21, 2013)*

From the foregoing, it can be safely argued that both present and future wellbeing of the Nigerian nation are in the hands of her young people. They are not just the leaders of tomorrow; they should be the drivers of the

economy today. According to Gonyok, (2012),⁶ Nigerian youths have tremendous roles to play towards national development and integration. Unfortunately they are not given the necessary attention by the authorities concerned in incorporating them into the process of national development.

Meanwhile, because of the importance of the involvement of youths and their ability to make positive changes, the United Nations in 1985 drew the attention of the global community to the important roles of young people which prompted a declaration of that year as International Youth Year (IYY) for development and peace. A number of nations of the world have bought into the United Nations initiative to harness the potential of their youths for sustainable national development. Their examples prove that developmental efforts must target and/or capture the youthful population to have tangible and meaningful impact on the nation.

Youth Empowerment

The term youth empowerment is broadly employed to explain efforts aimed at providing coping skills and an enabling environment for youths to lead decent lives and contribute meaningfully to national development. The National Youth Policy (2009) is the official document that stipulates broad guidelines for the implementation of empowerment programmes and projects of youths. The policy document states its goal as follows:

The overall policy goal is to provide an appropriate framework that will promote the enjoyment of fundamental human rights and protect the health, social, economic and political wellbeing of all young men and women in order to enhance their participation in the overall development process and improve their quality of life.⁷

An emerging trend in youth empowerment in Nigeria is entrepreneurship education. In their paper titled, Entrepreneurship Education and Employment Stimulation in Nigeria, Akhemonkhan *et al* described entrepreneurship education as follows:

Entrepreneurship education has also been described as a formal or informal structured learning that inculcates in students/trainees the ability to identify, screen and seize available opportunities in the environment in addition to skill acquisition (Sexton and Smilor, 1997; Jones and English (2004)). In the words of Shane and Venkataraman (2000:218) the thrust of entrepreneurship training entails identifying “the sources of opportunities, the processes of discovery, evaluation, and exploitation of opportunities; and the set of individuals who discover, evaluate and exploit them.” The deliverables of entrepreneurship education when properly imbibed by students and learners are: ability to identify something happening in the environment (resources); and (b) ability to impart something new to trainees, so that that their creativity, innovative abilities, beliefs and recombination skills would be enhanced (Sofoluwe, 2007; Fuduric, 2008).⁸

Benefits of Entrepreneurship Education⁹

Ubah (2011) posits that Entrepreneurship Education will in addition to helping willing recipients to establish their own small-scale business or company after graduation, also help them to have the knowledge of how entrepreneurial firms operate.¹⁰ It will enable them to acquire the skill for innovation, creativity and opportunity recognition which are very essential for anyone entering the market. They will also learn the skills that are necessary for the various and changing challenges they face in their lifetime. Ubah suggests that in addition to these, entrepreneurship education will be useful in:

- Enhancement of economic growth for the individual and the nation.
- Poverty alleviation.
- The solving of the problem of youth restiveness, cultism, arm robbery, vandalization of oil pipelines among others.
- Reducing of the issue of kidnapping and insecurity of life and property.
- Minimizing of human trafficking and prostitution.
- The reduction of the level of unemployment and
- The increase of income per capita.

Entrepreneurship education thus assumed importance against the background of poverty, widespread unemployment and the need to shift the attention of the citizenry away from white collar jobs and government patronage. It will be recalled that the earlier generations of educated Nigerians saw government employment as the ultimate, and most citizens (educated or otherwise) have learned to look up to government for the provision of even the basic necessities of life. This “Big Brother” role of government, however, is unsustainable in the light of emerging global realities. The trend in the world is for more compact governments which are able to channel higher percentages of national earnings to capital rather than recurrent expenditure. Contrary to this popular developmental philosophy of governance, Nigeria for a long time adopted a patronizing, paternalistic and consumerist philosophy of governance where recurrent government expenditure in Nigeria is often in excess of 70% of the national budget¹¹. To reverse this ugly trend, government has made known its intention to promote private enterprise and to stimulate the entrepreneurial spirit in Nigerians.

Given the demographic scenario painted earlier, and the abiding promise of youth, it is of course noteworthy that government recognizes the need to stimulate entrepreneurial orientation among the youths. For this reason, government has launched several initiatives aimed at inculcating entrepreneurial skills in Nigerian youths. Before delving into these schemes, it is valuable to recognize an important stratification of Nigerian youths that bears profound relevance to the subject of this study.

In-School vs Out-of-School Youth

For purposes of mobilization, two major categories of youth are often recognized in youth development/empowerment circles. They are in-school and out-of-school youths.

In-school youths are youths who are in formal educational institutions (primary, secondary and tertiary), while out-of-school youths refer to all other youths outside confines of the formal educational institutions. Out-of-school youths are those who never went to school at all, drop-outs from primary and secondary schools, and young people who cannot proceed to higher institutions after their secondary education. Out-of-school youths are found in vocational training centres, apprenticeships, at home, or simply on the streets.

During the 2012 Children's Day celebrations, it was noted that over 40 per cent of Nigerian young people would celebrate on the street; without access to basic education as economic and socio-cultural factors keep over 10.1 million of the 35.6 million children aged between 6 and 14, out of schools.¹²

According to a report on out-of-school-children (OOSC) jointly anchored by the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), United Nations Institute of Statistics (UIS) and the Federal Ministry of Education for the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) which was presented in 2011, there has been a steady increase in the number of OOSC in Nigeria.¹³ While 12,531,414 boys and 12,130,673 girls aged six to 11 ought to be in primary schools, 3,366,138 (26.9 per cent) and 3,932,679 (32.4 per cent) of the boys and girls respectively, are not in school. This meant that of 24,662,087 children, 7,298,817 were not receiving formal education in the country. Also, 200,630 and 168,795 of the total boys and girls respectively, dropped out of school.

The report noted further that as at the time of publication, 2,834,903 out of 10,912,131 boys and girls aged 12 to 14 who ought to be in junior secondary school (JSS), were not. A total of 625,993 dropped out of school. A breakdown of these figures showed that 5,543,223 boys were supposed to be in junior schools but 1,308,779 were not while 324,576 dropped out. Of 5,368,908 girls, 1,526,124 were not in school while 301,417 had dropped out.

In effect, drop-out rate was higher in junior secondary school than in the primary school category. Of those children who attend primary school, less than one third will attend junior secondary school and even fewer will proceed to senior secondary. The report noted that the problem of OOSC in both primary and junior secondary schools was more severe in all states of the three geo-political zones in the north than in the south.

The factors that kept the children out of schools were grouped into economic, socio-cultural and supply side barriers and bottlenecks. Government and political influence, especially in the capacity of government to implement education policies as well as politicisation of basic education, equally affected the magnitude of the problem.

Most importantly, Anthony Osae-Brown argues, using National Bureau of Statistics figures, that at least three million Nigerians drop out of school annually.¹⁴ In his article titled "Where Do Nigeria's 'Drop-Out' Students Go?", he asks:

“...what happens to the about three million students every year that got some taste of primary and secondary school education but never crown it with a passage through any of Nigeria's tertiary institutions?”¹⁵

To further understand or better appreciate the weight of the above figure (i.e. three million youths per annum), it might be profitable to juxtapose the figure against the admission figures into Nigerian tertiary institutions.

According to the Joint Admissions and Matriculations Board (JAMB), tertiary institutions across the country could only admit 704,000 students out of more than 740,000 candidates who were qualified to be given admission for the 2013/2014 academic year, having scored 200 and above.¹⁶ In fact, the Registrar of the Joint Admissions and Registrations Board (JAMB), Prof. Dibu Ojerinde stressed that the admission capacity of tertiary institutions in the country had just been recently raised to 704,000 from an initial 500,000. Meanwhile, 1,735,720 candidates registered for the 2013 Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination, UTME, out of which 1,540,179 candidates had their results released as 738,375 candidates had already crossed the 200 marks bar.

What the above suggests is that every year, between 500,000 and 700,000 Nigerian youths enter the tertiary institutions, while at least 3,000,000 drop out of the formal education system. Obviously then, out-of-school youths outnumber in-school youths in Nigeria, especially at the median age of the Nigerian population (which, as shown above to be 17.9 years, is also the average age at which our youths enter tertiary institutions).

Target Audience and Entrepreneurship Education Initiatives

Deliberate and organized entrepreneurship education in Nigeria has so far focused on in-school youth. Perhaps

the first attempt to incorporate entrepreneurial education into the formal curriculum of a tertiary institution was at the Yaba College of Technology. The College established a Centre for Entrepreneurship Development (CED) in 2003.

During the second term of former President Olusegun Obasanjo (2004 – 2007), the federal government directed all federal universities to include entrepreneurship education in the curriculum for all undergraduates. Polytechnics and other tertiary institutions were also brought on board.

In 2013, the Federal Ministry of Education issued a Circular directing all secondary schools to promote entrepreneurship education among senior secondary school (SSS) students by making either Book Keeping or Data Processing compulsory subjects for all SSS students in Nigeria.¹⁷ This, it is believed, would offer business or entrepreneurial orientation to young people at an early stage.

Some non-governmental agencies have also made noticeable contributions towards addressing the problem of youth empowerment. An example is the vocational training programmes of organizations like Shell, Chevron, Leventis Foundation, etc. It must be mentioned, however, that while many of these schemes impart vocational skills, the training content is usually low on entrepreneurship education. For instance, the Shell Intensive Training programme, designed to develop the skill of young Nigerian graduates and technicians, actually prepares them for employment in the oil industry (as opposed to entrepreneurship in the oil and gas sector).

While entrepreneurship education initiatives (especially government-facilitated entrepreneurship education) targeted at in-school youth are easily noticeable nationwide, the same cannot be said about out-of-school youth. Presently, there is no specific or deliberate entrepreneurship education programme that targets out-of-school youths in Nigeria. Meanwhile, based on national literacy, school enrolment, and tertiary institution matriculation examination/admission records (as shown earlier in this paper), out-of-school youths in Nigeria far outnumber in-school youths, and thus cannot be neglected without grave consequences for sustainable development. In addition, there are precedents in the global business community which suggest that notable entrepreneurial talent could reside outside the four walls of the tertiary institutions. Stellar examples are Bill Gates of Microsoft Incorporated and late Steve Jobs of Apple Incorporated; world-class entrepreneurs who did not acquire university degrees. Both of them benefited from entrepreneurial development efforts in the Silicon Valley¹⁸, which went a long way to enhance their business success.

Conclusion

Global trends, especially in the new millennium, indicate that nations gain competitive advantage not on account of their natural resource endowment, but by leveraging on the quality of their human resource. Quality manpower is able to innovate, improve efficiency and therefore hasten economic growth – even in the absence of mineral resources. There can be no quality manpower without quality education, hence education is vital to poverty reduction and nation building. In the Nigerian situation, entrepreneurial education has become an imperative if the nation must overcome poverty and under-development.

However, both mainstream educational and entrepreneurial educational opportunities for young people remain unequally distributed, and particularly skewed against out-of-school youths. UNDP Director, Helen Clark, once said: “Many disadvantaged people carry a double burden of deprivation. They are more vulnerable . . . , because of more severe stresses and fewer coping tools. . . . We have a collective responsibility towards the least privileged among us today and in the future around the world—and a moral imperative to ensure that the present is not the enemy of the future.”¹⁹

The least privileged people in Nigeria include school drop-outs, and they must be considered in youth empowerment initiatives. It is therefore recommended that specific and deliberate nationwide entrepreneurial development programmes be designed and implemented for out-of-school youths as a means to empowering them to contribute to sustainable development of the Nigerian nation and society. Such initiatives should have as their primary targets, drop-outs from secondary schools, and young people who cannot proceed to higher institutions after their secondary education.

End Notes:

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17. Oral / Verbal information supplied by the Vice Principal of Oritamefa Baptist Model School, Ibadan on October 7, 2013.
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