

ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION, SMALL AND MEDIUM SCALE ENTERPRISES AS CORRELATES OF YOUTH EMPOWERMENT IN NORTHERN NIGERIA: CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS

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BACKGROUND

Nigeria is located in the West African Sub-region with a projected population of about 180 million majority of whom are youth. The country is divided into two major regions of the North and South.

Northern Nigeria is characterized by abundant arable land for farming and general agricultural produce. It is said to represent 73 percent of the territory of the Federal republic of Nigeria with 19 states divided into three major geo-political zones (North Central, North East and North-West). The region has however, been recently plagued by insurgencies from different vantage points with North-East leading the recurrence of the incidences.

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◎ Kano state is one of the seven states of Northwestern region of Nigeria, located in the Savannah geographical belt of West Africa. The State is bordered on the East by Jigawa State; to the South by Bauchi and Kaduna States and to the West Katsina State. In the North it shares borders with Katsina and Jigawa States. The State has a total land area of approximately 20,760 square kilometres, consisting of 1,754,200 hectares agricultural land and over 92,250.81 hectares forest vegetation and grazing land. It is an Agrarian State. Agriculture is the economy mainstay, involving at least 75% of the population.

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KANO: MY CITY, MY STATE



INTRODUCTION

- Youth occupy a prominent place in any society. Their energies, inventiveness, character and orientation define the pace of development and security of a nation. Through their creative talents and skills, a nation makes giant strides in socio-economic development (Muhammed, 2013)
- There is therefore, dire need to strengthen their education as it correlates to the economic development of Northern Nigeria.

- ◎as such there is the urgent need for technical and vocational education in Northern Nigeria. The education that is capable of producing focused, highly skilled and self reliant youth for the development of the region.
- ◎Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) are regarded as one of the major primary sources of employment to the teeming number of youths in Nigeria and the world over, they are effective tools of achieving youth empowerment in Nigeria.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION IN NIGERIA AND SMEs: PROSPECTS & CHALLENGES

● In the context of Nigeria's historical experience, the youths have rendered valuable contributions to the struggle for liberation and national development. They as well constitute a reservoir of energy and dynamism for any national struggle or socio-economic endeavour if they are correctly guided, mobilized, and fully integrated into the social fabrics of the nation.

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- They may also constitute a threat to national survival and stability if they are allowed to drift, are unemployed, indisciplined and morally bankrupt. No nation aspiring to a major national greatness can afford to ignore the youths;
- Entrepreneurship Education was introduced to provide students in tertiary institutions with the knowledge, skills and motivation to encourage entrepreneurial success in a variety of ventures

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- ◎ It is often used interchangeably with entrepreneurship training and skill acquisition. Conceptually, entrepreneurship education refers to a specialized knowledge that inculcates in learners the traits of risk-taking, innovation, arbitrage and co-ordination of factors of production for the purpose of creating new products or services for new and existing users within human communities (Minniti and Levesque, 2008).
- ◎ Thus to make the delivery effective, the Nigerian Universities Commission (NUC) prescribed the following ten areas in the Benchmark Minimum Academic Standard (BEMAS) guide for teaching EEd in Nigerian Universities:

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- ◎ 1) Introduction to entrepreneurship;
- ◎ 2) Entrepreneurship in theory and practice;
- ◎ 3) Types of business, staffing and marketing;
- ◎ 4) Capital requirement and raising capital
- ◎ 5) Financial planning and management;
- ◎ 6) Feasibility studies and reports;
- ◎ 7) Innovations;
- ◎ 8) Legal issues in business;
- ◎ 9) Insurance and environmental consideration, and;
- ◎ 10) Possible business opportunities in Nigeria

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However, about ten years down the road, the excitement and momentum generated at the introduction of EEd have waned as a failed expectation.,(Onuoha et al, 2014).

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- ◎ Notwithstanding the scholarly observations with respect to curricular implementation at the tertiary levels, the federal government had institutionalized certain key policy framework to achieve tail end prospect of the programme that includes;
- ◎ The establishment of small scale industrial estates and putting in place such policies as pioneer status, accelerated depreciation, tariff protection, approved user scheme, Small and Medium Industrial Equity Investment Scheme (SMIEIS), soft loan scheme, the agricultural credit guarantee scheme,

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- ◎ The establishment and funding of Polytechnics, Universities, Administrative Staff College of Nigeria (ASCON), Centre for Management Development (CMD), and research institutes such as Nigerian Institute for Social and Economic Research (NISER), Projects Development Agency (PRODA) etc,
- ◎ The establishment of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), Small and Medium Enterprises Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN), Bank of Industry (BOI), Standard Organization of Nigeria (SON), Nigerian Agricultural Cooperative and Rural Development Bank (NACRDB), African Development Bank (AFDB), Export Stimulation Fund Scheme, etc

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- The establishment and funding of Industrial Development Centres (IDCs): Small Scale Industries Corporation (SSIC); SME Apex Unit Loan Scheme; The defunct National Economic Reconstruction Fund (NERFUND); Nigerian Export Promotion Council (NEPC); the New Industrial Policy; National Directorate of Employment (NDE);
- Getting inputs from the Organized Private Sector (OPC); trade associations such as NECA, NACCIMA, MAN, NASSI, etc., in budget preparations and economic policies.

Challenges of EE and SMEs

- ◎ **Capacity of the Lecturers/Instructors:** The teachers who are manning the teaching of entrepreneurship education are reported to be deficient in practical entrepreneurial skills. They are ill equipped with the necessary skills required for the effective service delivery of the course. Most of them are not full time teachers of the course rather, borrowed from economics and other commercial related courses.
- ◎ **Absence of curricular capacity to support the training:** The curriculum is not comprehensive and well-coordinated for the effective service delivery of the course content. A good curriculum must be phased and integrated to ensure that there is a systematic upgrading of knowledge over time. The concept of "problem-based learning activities" is not used in developing the curriculum, and this was observed to be common problem of most EEd curricular (The Consortium for Entrepreneurship Education, 2012)

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- ◎ **Insufficient Government Participation on Research and Support for the Graduate Students:** Upon graduating, the students lack the requisite capital to start off the SMEs business, and in most cases where such funds are available, bottle-necks makes it very hard for the graduate students to have access to those funds.
- ◎ These are some of the challenges that are facing the realization of this course to its full potential in our higher institutions.

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- **Overemphasis on Theory Delivery:** The method of teaching is regarded as being teacher centred as against the modern child/student-centred method of teaching. The method leaves no room for the students to engage individually with the hard realities of the business environment. The high students/lecturer ratio in Universities occasioned by expanded admission quotas; usually beyond the carrying capacities of the facilities available has been suggested as the reason for de-emphasizing the practical components.

EDUCATION AND EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMMES: CASE STUDIES OF KANO STATE

- ◎ The government of Kano State has established 2 State owned Universities the technical base Kano State University of Science and Technology (KUST) and the conventional North-West University where massive enrollment of Kano citizens as well as other citizens within and across Nigeria was ensured.
- ◎ In the areas of investment in human capital through building the capacities of youths in various fields of professional undertaking, Government had embarked on graduate programmes abroad. And part of the objectives in that policy option, was to further exposed youths potentials in international best practice and global competitiveness towards nation building.

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- ◎ To that effect, 3,206 students were sent to various universities across the globe in the fields of; marine engineering, pilots, public health, Engineers and other foreign languages especially in French and Chinese.
- ◎ Earlier, 24 skills acquisition centers in various subject areas comprising; Agriculture, ICT, Sports, Social, Journalism and Hospitality were established. Entry requirement was nil as the curricula were hands on base. And, upon graduation, funds were being made to support take off;

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- Recently, Government in collaboration with the Peugeot Automobile Company had sponsored about 100 of its citizens to undergo skills acquisition training in Technical apprentice as Motor Mechanics. The project's design had considered post-training arrangement that was to include immediate attachment to functional Motor-Mechanic-Workshops.

KANO STATE SPORTS INSTITUTE



KANO STATE NORTH WEST UNIVERSITY



KANO STATE DRIVING SCHOOL



KANO STATE FILM INSTITUTE



Kano State Corporate Security Guards Training Institute



RECOMMENDATION

- ◎ That in order to have an all-encompassing and comprehensive system of education that would address the employment needs of the youth in the North, an active review must be taken by the Northern state governments with proactive commitment to entrepreneurship education and the development of workable SME programmes in the North through collaboration with relevant critical stakeholders .

Conclusion

- ◎ It has consistently been argued that for developing nations (Nigeria inclusive) to grow and catch up with other developing nations, there is the urgent need for a viable entrepreneurship model that would help tackle hydra-headed poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, chronic diseases, maternal mortality, infant mortality, crimes, conflict, terrorism/insurgency, while at the same time promote growth of SMEs, wealth creation, enhance value reorientation, preserve the eco system from abuse and in the final analysis achieve sustainable economic development (National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy, 2004, DFID, 2009).