

ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION: A VITAL FORCE FOR POVERTY ALLEVIATION AMONG NCE. GRADUATES IN EKITI STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The primary aim of this survey was to examine the role of Entrepreneurship Education as a vital force in poverty alleviation among graduates of Nigerian Certificate in Education (N. C. E.) in Ekiti State, Nigeria. One hundred and twenty N.C.E graduates were randomly selected and administered questionnaire. Data were analysed using simple percentage. Two research questions guided the study. The results revealed that the acquisition and practice of Entrepreneurship skills can help to alleviate poverty in Ekiti State. It was recommended that Entrepreneurship skills should be encouraged among N.C. E graduates; this will bring about self-employment and act as a vital force in poverty alleviation.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship education, graduates, poverty alleviation

INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship is the practice of starting new organization particularly new business, generally in response to identified opportunities. Caree and Thunk (1999 and 2003) suggested that entrepreneurship is one of the determinants of economic growth. In the same vein, Ayodele (2006) quoting Drucker (1970) sees entrepreneurship as all about taking risk. According to him the behaviour of the entrepreneur reflects a kind of person willing to put his or her career and finances on the line so as to take risk in the name of an idea spending much time as well as capital on an uncertain venture. Another view of entrepreneurship is that it is the process of discovering, evaluating and exploiting opportunities.

Thus entrepreneurship goes beyond entering a new business but encompasses ability to take responsibilities for action and decision and to creatively solve problems. Education is the acquisition of knowledge, the aggregate of all processes through which a person develops ability, attitudes and other forms of behaviour with positive values in the Society in which he lives. Fafunwa (1991) describes education as all efforts, conscious and direct, incidental and indirect, made by a given society to accomplish certain objectives that are considered desirable in terms of the individual's own needs as the needs of the society where that education is based. But Erder

(1966) regards it as a manpower industry producing the knowledge and skills necessary for development. Education is derived from the needs and demands of the society thus it is seen as a microscopic reflection of the total society needed for both stability and continuity. Despite the extent to which entrepreneurship education has been encouraged in Ekiti State, the poverty level of the people seems to be on the increase. This situation has been a subject of serious concern to the researcher thereby embarking on this study to find out the roles of Entrepreneurship Education in poverty alleviation among N.C.E graduates in Ekiti State guided by the following probing questions:

- i. Does Entrepreneurship Education contribute to poverty alleviation in Ekiti State?
- ii. Does acquisition and practice of Entrepreneurship skills leads to poverty alleviation among N.C.E graduates in Ekiti State?

It is believed that this study will encourage, curriculum planners to design and develop entrepreneurial programmes which will serve as a vital force in poverty alleviation.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION AND POVERTY ALLEVIATION

Olawale (2007) opines that entrepreneurship is a creative and innovative response to the environment in any area of human endeavour such as Business, Industry, Agriculture, Education, Social Work and Services of all types. In fact research findings have shown that countries which have more enterprising people develop much faster than others. Adcroft (2005), quoting Kirby (2003) has pointed out that business and entrepreneurial development has been listed as one of the four strategic goals of British Universities.

Consequently, entrepreneurship education seeks to provide people with the knowledge, skills and motivation to encourage entrepreneurial success in a variety of settings. What makes entrepreneurship education distinctive is its focus on realization of opportunity, where management education is focused on the best way to operate existing hierarchies. Both approaches share an interest in achieving profit in some form (which in non-profit organizations or government can take the form of increased services or decreased cost or increased responsiveness to the customer/client/citizen). Opportunities can be realized in several ways. The most popular one is through opening a new organization (starting a new business). Another approach is to promote innovation or introduce new products or services or markets in existing forms. This approach is called corporate entrepreneurship or intrapreneurship. A recent approach involves creating charitable organizations (or portions of existing charities) which are designed to be self-supporting in addition to doing their good works. This is usually called social entrepreneurship or social venturing.

The 1990s saw the growth of entrepreneurship as a profession within business, and in that professional approach lies the secret benefit of entrepreneurship education. It helps decrease the chances of failure by stressing a consistent and proven set of

practices (www.en.wikipedia.org) that idea of professionalizing the process of entrepreneurship is the other great commodity across all of modern entrepreneurship education. Entrepreneurial activity and education are unquestionably considered engines of economic growth and innovation. As such, they are among the ultimate determinants of economic performance and development. Poverty is a plague affecting people all over the world; it is a long time phenomenon that has been in existence as old as man himself. (UN Report, 1997) More than 1.3 billion people in this world live in extreme poverty. Myriad of reasons have been fingered as causes or factors responsible for the high prevalence of poverty in Nigeria. Fasan (2008) observed that many Nigerians are already living from hand to mouth, surviving on less than \$1 (one dollar) daily, the benchmark for poverty. But somehow they manage tiding over each day on the benevolence of family members and friends.

According to Kolapo (2008) a poor education system, which does not guarantee good employment for the people only leads to a situation where a legacy of poverty is the only inheritance that the poor can bequeath to their children, the unborn generation inclusive. Poverty alleviation programmes have been introduced by governments, international agencies as well as Non Governmental Organization at all levels. Poverty means hunger, lack of shelter it is being sick and not being able to see a doctor. Poverty is not being able to go to school, not knowing how to read, not having a good job. It is the fear of the future, living one day at a time losing a child to illness brought about by unclean water. Poverty is powerlessness, lack of representation and freedom (U.S. Census Bureau on line 2004). The Webster's Dictionary (1991) defines poverty as the condition of being poor, unproductiveness, deficiency in or inadequate supply of something . Aliyu (1998), defines poverty as the condition in which a person is unable to meet minimum basic requirements of food, health, housing, education and clothing.

World Bank (1990) defined poverty as the inability of an individual or a sector of a society to attain a specified minimum standard of living. Oladunni (1999) further simplifies the concept of poverty to mean a situation of not having enough to eat, poor drinking water, poor sanitation, poor nutrition, unfit shelter, high infant mortality rate, poor environmental condition, low educational opportunities, lack of productive health care, lack of active participation in the decision making process as it affects the individual or society. To further make the concept clearer Alagbe (2004) stated that the incidence of poverty is highly concentrated among people with the following characteristics:

- Poor material possession
- Low education
- Unstable employment/unemployment low status jobs, low unsuitable income, poor housing conditions
- Large families
- Absence of savings
- Constant struggle for survival etcetera

He identifies two main types of poverty as: primary poverty which arises

when the income of an individual or quality of life is insufficient to provide for the basic needs required for physical efficiency and secondary poverty which arises due to mismanagement of the income that would otherwise have been sufficient for the satisfaction of basic human needs. Primary poverty is more critical and that should be of concern to the government and policy makers.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted the descriptive research design. Though the population of the study comprises all the graduates in Ekiti State yet a total of 120 N.C.E graduates were randomly selected and administered questionnaire which was based on Entrepreneurship skills and poverty alleviation. The selected graduates comprising 70 male and 50 female were drawn from two Local Government Areas: Ado and Ikere local government areas in Ekiti State. The entire questionnaire were duly filled and returned. The questionnaire was first subjected to face validity by three colleagues including the Head of Department who made useful contributions. In line with these contributions, the instrument was amended. Simple percentage was used to analysis the data collected for the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In response to the question, Does Entrepreneurship Education alleviates poverty in Ekiti, majority of the respondents claimed that they were graduates of entrepreneurship education, only few were not. In fact a significant percentage of the respondents claimed that they have heard about entrepreneurship education before. Only a negligible number have not. Furthermore, majority of the respondents believed that Entrepreneurship skills have helped a lot to alleviate poverty in Ekiti State. From the analysis above, it could be said that Entrepreneurship Education contributes or help to alleviate poverty in Ekiti State.

In the case of the question, Does acquisition and practice of entrepreneurship skills leads to poverty alleviation among N.C.E. male/female graduates in Ekiti State, the male respondents claimed that the entrepreneurship skills they acquire have helped a lot to alleviate poverty. Also, the male respondents claimed that the practice of engaging in certain skills such as hat and bead making, computer/internet services, running cyber café, soap, juice and confectionaries making, engaging in remedial coaching among others has helped a lot to alleviate poverty. In relation to paying back their loans. The male respondents maintained that their business has helped them to pay back the loans they received to start the business. They equally claimed that the income generated through the practice of the skill is sufficient enough to cater for members of their family/dependent held a different opinion. Considering this view, it was obvious that the acquisition and practice of entrepreneurship skill has helped to alleviate poverty among N.C.E. male graduates in Ekiti State.

On the other hand, the female respondents claimed that the entrepreneurship skills they learned have helped a lot to alleviate poverty. They claimed that the practice

of engaging in certain skill such as hat and bead making, computer/Internet Browsing Centre operation, Soap, juice and confectionaries making, engaging in remedial coaching etcetera had helped them a lot. They maintained that their businesses has helped them a lot to pay back the loan obtained when they started their businesses. It was evident from the study that the income generated through the practice of the skill is sufficient enough to cater for members of their family/dependent. From the analysis it could be said that the acquisition and practice of entrepreneurship skills has helped to alleviated poverty among N.C.E female graduates in Ekiti State. On the whole, only a negligible percentage of both sexes were of negative opinion as it regards the subject matter.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, this paper has attempted to examine the role of Entrepreneurship Education as a vital force in poverty alleviation among N.C.E graduates in Ekiti State. For Entrepreneurship Education to live up to the challenges of today and future, there is the need for a reform of the educational programme which would incorporate new courses/topics in Entrepreneurship skills, this would equip the programme beneficiaries better to meet the socio-economic challenges of our time. Emphasis should be on vocational education programmes such as:

- Building and construction (including bricklaying and concreting)
- Welding and fabrication (including manufacturing of simple agricultural implements and tools.
- Handicrafts and traditional skills
- Basic ICT skills (word processing, data management, internet, etc)
- Business entrepreneurial skill and attitudes (including time management, marketing basic accounting, micro-business management, joint ventures)

It is also ideal to get young people excited about the entrepreneurial opportunities available to them in their communities. Finally if entrepreneurial skills are fully imparted it will empower people such that after graduation, they can explore the business and economic opportunities around them to become self employed, create job opportunities and alleviate poverty in our land.

Table 1: Entrepreneurship Education and Poverty Alleviation in Ekiti State

Item	Responses		Total
	Yes	No	
Are you a graduate of E. E	80(66.6)	40(33.30)	120(100)
Have you heard about E.E before?	100(83.3)	20(16.6)	120(100)
Has it alleviated poverty in Ekiti?	90(75)	30(25)	120(100)

Source: Fieldwork 2009

Table 2: Entrepreneurship Skills and Poverty Alleviation among N.C.E Male Graduates in Ekiti State

Item	Male		Female		Total	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Male	Female
Have any of the skills learnt helped to alleviate poverty?	65 (92.8)	5 (7.14)	48 (96)	2 (4)	70 (100)	50 (100)
Has the practice of any of the following skills helped to alleviate poverty e.g. engaging in that and bead making, Internet Browsing/Computer Centers						
Operation, GSM Call operation, Soap, Juice and confectionaries making, Remedial coaching for WAEC, GCE/NECO, JAMB lessons.	62 (88.5)	8 (11.4)	47 (94)	3 (6%)	70 (100)	50 (100)
Has your business helped you to pay back the loan obtained to started the business?	68 (97.1)	2 (2.85)	46 (92)	4 (8)	70 (100)	50 (100)
Is your income sufficient enough to cater for members of your family/dependants?	55 (85.7)	15 (21.4)	45 (90)	5 (10)	70 (100)	50 (100)

Source: Fieldwork 2009

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