

## EMPOWERING YOUTH FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT THROUGH ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND HUMAN CAPACITY BUILDING

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### ABSTRACT

*The aim of the paper is to show the role entrepreneurship and human capacity programmes can play in the achievement of holistic development of youth, while also allowing youth to contribute to national development. One of the many challenges today is unemployment. Many graduate youth roam around the street without jobs. The few that are self employed do not have the necessary training that could sustain their businesses. This paper therefore discusses the concepts of youth, youth empowerment, entrepreneurship and human capacity, importance of youth entrepreneurship programmes for the acquisition of necessary life survival skills. Some capacity programmes for young entrepreneurs identified include: vocational entrepreneurship training, classroom training etc. Finally, the study further suggested ways of empowering youth through entrepreneurship to include quality education, finance, networking amongst others.*

**Keywords:** Empowering, Youth, Sustainable Development, Entrepreneurship, and Human Capacity Building

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### Introduction

Youth empowerment often remains a challenge, thus building the capacity of and creating sustained partnership with youths are crucial strategies to contributing to national development. Youth occupy a prominent place in any society that that apart from being the owners and leaders of tomorrow, they outnumber the middle-aged and aged (Onyekpe, 2007). Besides numerical superiority, Youth have energy and ideas that are society's great potentials. Through their creative talents and labour power, a nation makes great strides in economic development and socio-political attainments. Entrepreneurship development in Youth is a means of stimulating economic growth through the generation of greater employment opportunities. Some Youth do not reach their full potentials due to lack of resources, access to knowledge and information as well as institutional barriers. Without guidance, support, Youth are often unequipped to fully participate in the decision that is

affecting their lives. This paper discussed the concepts of Youth, Youth empowerment, Entrepreneurship/human capacity building, importance of promoting Entrepreneurship among the Youth and suggested ways of empowering Youth through Entrepreneurship.

### **Who are the Youths?**

Youth generally speaking is the time between childhood and adulthood. Webster (2004) put it that Youth refers to a time of life that is neither childhood nor adulthood but somewhere in between. Youth identifies a particular mind set of attitude that is related to being young, it refers to individuals between the ages of 11-24 years (Konokpa,1993). According to Thomas (2003) Youth is the stage of constructing the self-concept and this self-concept is influenced by several variables such as peers, life style, gender, training and culture. Youth exhibit certain characteristics in the way they think, speak, dress, walk and relate with themselves and others. In the view of Wing (2012) Youth is the time of a person's life in which he/she makes choices that will affect their future. Many Youth are always in a hurry and very impatient, hardly seeking advice, believing in their physical strength and are easily lured to commit crimes because of their desire to get rich quick or attain to adult standard by force. This situation inadvertently spurs them into causing troubles not only to themselves but also to their parents, custodians and the society at large.

### **Youth Empowerment Explained**

Youth empowerment in the words of Igwe (2013) is the process of giving young persons the right knowledge, skills and attitude which will enable them in becoming useful to self, their immediate families, communities and the entire nation. This is in line with what Oke (2003) referred to as manpower development. Austin *et al* (2003) perceives Youth empowerment as the outcome of certain training by which Youths as change agents, gain skills to impact their own lives and the lives of other individuals, organizations and communities. That is to say it suggests exercising power over one's life by being skilled, critically aware and active in creating community development. According to Jegede *et al* (2011) it is the education and training of individual members of the society aimed to generate the needed skills, knowledge, attitude and ability to explore the resources of the nation for positive development. Some empowerment schemes include:

- **Youth Empowerment Schemes (YES):** This deals with capacity acquisition, mandatory attachment, productivity improvement, credit delivery, technology development and enterprise promotion.
- **Rural infrastructural Development Scheme (RIDS):** This deals with the provision of portable and irrigation water transport, rural energy and power supply.

- **Social welfare services scheme (SOWESS):** This deals with special education, primary health care services, establishment and maintenance of recreational centers, environmental protection facilities and rural telecommunication facilities.
- **National resource development and conservation scheme (NRDCS):** This deals with the harnessing of the agriculture, water, solid mineral resources particularly for the convenient and effective utilization by small scale operations and immediate environment.

### **Human Capacity Building, Entrepreneurship for Sustainable Development**

Development can be defined as appreciable change in pattern of life which could enhance active and positive participation in social, economic, political, cultural and other aspect of societal life for sustainability (Zuofa, 2011). Sustainability on the other hand, means the ability to hold, retain, to keep and build on what has been built, reclaimed or achieved. Sustainability in 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). Entrepreneurship is the capacity to harness the right quantity, quality and combination of resources that are consistent with profit making under risk and uncertainty. According to Essien (2006) entrepreneurship is the totality of self-asserting attributes that enable a person 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 risk and uncertainty. An entrepreneur is the person who carries out the function of entrepreneurship. In the words of Meredith *et al* (1996) entrepreneurs are people who have the ability to see and evaluate business opportunities, to gather the necessary resources to take advantage of them and initiate appropriate action to ensure success. Nwakolo (1997) views entrepreneurship as the ability to set up business enterprise as different from being employed. It involves the acquisition of skills, ideas, and managerial abilities necessary for self-reliance. Entrepreneurship capacities enable youth through self-determination to create their own future, exploit the opportunities that emerge in the unpredictable complex world and contribute to better economic development and social well-being (Anyaneme *et al*, 2009). It is expected that entrepreneurs should undergo training that will build capacity for manpower that will drive sustainable development in order to achieve the millennium goals. Nwafor (2012) suggested some capacity programmes for young entrepreneurs to include the following:

- **Vocational Entrepreneurship training:** This involves training young school leavers who wants to go into small-scale enterprise for various businesses such as carpentry work, motor repairing, catering, furniture making, metal work and so on will be grouped together for intensive entrepreneurship

training. The duration of training does not exceed six months. This is mainly to help them startup businesses of their own. Example of this is the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) in Nigeria.

- **On-the-job-training:** This is a situation whereby the entrepreneur is given an opportunity to be trained on his own business operation. A trainer will be invited to monitor the entrepreneur's performance as long his business activities are concerned. Imhabekhai (1998) proposed that on-the-job-training is a situation whereby the entrepreneur is trained by a supervisor.
- **Classroom training:** This is formal classroom training. An entrepreneur can enroll in a business school for diploma, undergraduate or post graduate programme. This type of training exposes the entrepreneur to other areas of life activities. He can be sent to undergo some sort of training in industries or any business. In doing this, he will gain more skills and experiences that he will use for his business.
- **Electronic training:** The world is now a global village and one need to meet up with the changes in his environment. This type of training involves the use of computer; he can get himself trained through the internet. By familiarizing with the internet, he can be acquainted with some information relevant to skill development and be able to share information with other entrepreneurs around the world.

### **Importance of promoting Entrepreneurship among Youths**

Youth entrepreneurship is a vital stage in life for building the human capital that allows young people to avoid unemployment and possibly have a more fulfilling life. The human capital formed in youth is an important determinant of long term growth that a nation can invest in. The promotion of Youth entrepreneurship is seen as an important means of creating employment and ensuring that nations are able to benefit from the socio-economic potentials of their young people. Thus the inherent benefits include:

- **Economic development:** The profit made by entrepreneurs from the various factors production flow as an increase into the national income, which will help in improving the standard of living of the citizens of the country.
- **Employment opportunity:** Entrepreneurship results in the creation of small business as thereby, creating jobs for the youths and making them to be less dependent on others.
- **Reduction in rural-urban drifts:** One of the primary objectives of entrepreneurship promotion is to reduce rural-urban drift syndrome. As the

migration of rural dwellers to cities could result to congestion, high incidence of crime etc.

- **Improvement in the standard of living through innovation:** The introduction of high quality goods and services by entrepreneurs will transform the lives of the citizens.
- **Conservation of foreign exchange:** This will result from reduced importation of machineries, equipment, raw materials and payment to foreign experts.

### **Ways of Empowering Youth.**

Some of the areas the Youth should be empowered include the following:

- **Education:** Education is vital tool for poverty reduction and national building. Educational youth empowerment involves giving academic supports to the Youths. These supports can be developed by the Government and individuals and can take the form of scholarship and issuing of bursary allowances to youths who are willing to study.
- **Finance:** Youth need financial empowerments to enable them transform ideas into action. Financial youth empowerment involves offering the youths some cash to start up a business or solve his or her problems. Examples of this type of empowerment organization obtainable in Nigeria is YOUWIN, it is a youth empowerment competition mapped out by the Federal Republic of Nigeria to support the youth financially and encourage aspiring entrepreneurial Youth to develop and execute business ideas.
- **Skills acquisition:** This type of empowerment is geared towards training of the youth on skills development. The skills they acquire support them in earning a living and solving other problems. Examples of these skills that can be acquired include: designing, plumbing, writing, weaving, mechanic etc.
- **Agriculture:** Nations are in existence because there is availability of foods. Youths Initiative for Sustainable Agriculture (YISA) is an agro-knowledge based organization that empower Youths to promote agriculture in Nigeria. More development drive on youth empowerment in agricultural practice will develop nations.
- **Networking:** creating websites network for young entrepreneurs will enhance knowledge sharing, collaboration and collective discoveries among members.

### **The way forward**

- Government should provide an enabling environment in the forms of efficient and available basic infrastructural facilities especially electricity.
- Government should provide venture capital through the micro-finance banks and other specialized agencies to adequately empower young entrepreneurs.
- The agricultural sector should be promoted through a package of incentives to encourage youths to take up career in agriculture.
- Government should as a matter of national policy, remove constraints that contribute to high production costs in industry, this will enable the private sector to absorb more labour.
- The method of teaching entrepreneurship as a subject should be replaced with teaching entrepreneurship as an activity.

### **Conclusion**

Entrepreneurial development among the youths provide the necessary skills that make them productive and enable them to identify, create and exploit business opportunities that will ginger them into thinking how to create jobs for others instead of being job seekers. Entrepreneurial training is one of the strategies which can help to bring about sustainable development among the youth for them to be able to fix themselves up in the society, able to explore the world, manipulate it for their survival and establish themselves.

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