ENCOURAGING ENTREPRENEURIAL ATTITUDE: THE ROLES OF PARENTS

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Abstract

The study focused on the roles of parents in encouraging entrepreneurial attitude in children, as a way to mitigate youth unemployment and societal vices. The study was prompted by the need to make entrepreneurship training more meaningful, result oriented and focused on children' participation, so that their interest in whatever venture they delve into is sustained. The study considered the concept of entrepreneurship, and importance of entrepreneurship. It also examines the roles of parents at encouraging children's entrepreneurial attitude. The paper concludes by stating the implications of early entrepreneurship in children. Some of the basic roles of parents towards encouraging entrepreneurial attitude in children includes; helping them to identify their areas of interest, providing encouragement to explore, giving the required support for children to venture into profitable and productive activities. This is expected to engage youth in worthwhile activities and reduce unemployment, create jobs, thereby reducing youth engagement in vices.

Introduction

Education is recognized, the world over, as a means to developing the individual to become useful for themselves and contribute to the development of their society. According to NPE (2013), education is an instrument for national development, which is expected to result in the formulation of ideas and the integration of same for national development. Part of the national educational goals derived from the philosophy of education includes "the acquisition of appropriate skills and development of mental, physical and social abilities and competencies as equipment for the individual to live in

and contribute to the development of the society (NPE, 2013). In the drive towards enabling individuals to acquire skills and developmental capacities, institutions prepare them as well to fit into and contribute to the society; but it had been observed that most Nigerians graduates merely acquire theoretical knowledge with little skills to complement this, resulting in their inability to readily fit into jobs where practical skills are required. Odey (2013) observed that tertiary institutions award certificates to thousands of graduates every year, with majority of them lacking usable skills and therefore unemployable. He reported that Manufacturers Association f Nigeria (MAN) first made public the alert to this fact. It has been severally stated that Nigerian education is more focused on knowledge dissemination and certificate acquisition that practical skill training, which had for long encouraged the craze for certificates at the expense of skill development. The resultant effect is the high rate of unemployment among Nigerian youth. This has had negative effects on the society as the idleness of these youth expose them to becoming ready tools in the hands of some adult members of the society who engage them in unwholesome activities, resulting in public disturbances, hooliganism, crime, insurgency, kidnapping, armed robbery, etc.

In the effort to develop in Nigerian youth appropriate skills required for them to engage in productive activities, the Federal Government gave the directive through the National Universities Commission (NUC), for the establishment of entrepreneurship centres in all tertiary institutions from 2007/2008 academic session. This was to address the twin epidemic of lack of appropriate skills and high rate of graduate unemployment in Nigeria (Odey, 2013). This had been followed with the introduction of trade/ entrepreneurship (TEE) subjects into the secondary school curriculum in 2011, which is a core subject students must offer. It was introduced to make secondary education functional to the extent that school graduates have vocational, technical and entrepreneurial skills and competencies necessary to generate jobs and create wealth, and in the process eradicate poverty (NERDC, 2011). In addition to the above, Governments at the Federal and State levels have also established youth empowerment programmes to engage the teeming youth, in order to direct their efforts towards skill acquisition and profitable activities. Governments have also gone ahead to empower the

youth with some seed money, usually provided after the skill acquisition training to commence small-scale businesses.

It has been noticed that Government's efforts at empowering the youth has only benefited a handful of them with respect to training, while a fewer number eventually access government seed money, when and if released, to commence worthwhile ventures/businesses thereafter, leaving the vast majority of them helpless. In some other instances, the seed money promised by government after training does not materialise, thus forcing many of these youths back into their initial daily activities since the intervention programme of government was not their initial plan/desire. All these had resulted in the poor outcome from the skill-acquisition and empowerment programmes. This paper therefore focused on ways to better exploit what excites the youth and turn it into profitable business ventures (entrepreneurship), as individual's passion enhances commitment to projects that relates to ones passion. This is because what a person has passion for, he will constantly engage in, be committed to and the interest in such activities will be sustained for a longer time. Therefore activities that excite children from the home level can be focused upon and turned into worthwhile ventures/businesses, as a way to engaging youth in entrepreneurship from tender ages, thereby directing their efforts towards positive and profitable activities within the society. This, it is hoped, will in the long run help to correct lopsidedness in youth preparation for useful living and encourage establishment of small-scale businesses very in life. This will ultimately address the problem of unemployment and youth restiveness in the nation. This became necessary because of the security challenges the nation is facing, with respect to youth involvement in vices and unwholesome activities they engage in, which has had negative impact on the Nigerian society.

Importance of entrepreneurship for individual and national growth

Entrepreneurship has been defined in several ways by different authors. It is from a French word "entreprendre", meaning the act of doing something. Entrepreneurship is the act of responding to meet people's needs through the provision of goods and services. It is also defined as the process or ways by

which new businesses are birthed, created or formed. Stevenson and Gumpert (1985) define it as the process of creating value by pulling together a unique package of resources to exploit opportunities. Udeh (1999) in Emmanuel (2010) views it as the willingness and ability of individuals to seek out opportunities, establish an enterprise and run it successfully either for profit or social benefit. Entrepreneurship is the process of creating something new with value, by devoting the necessary time and efforts, assuming the accompanying financial, psychological and social risks, and receiving the monetary rewards for monetary and personal independence (Thomas and Kamalanabhan, 2009). Emmanuel (2010) stated that entrepreneurship is concerned with the identification of gaps and business opportunities in one's immediate environment, and bringing together the necessary resources in an innovative way to fill these gaps, bearing the risks involved and in the process gaining personal rewards.

Government seeks to facilitate the development of indigenous entrepreneurship culture and add value to domestic production, thereby institutionalizing entrepreneurship development (Okojie, 2013). This informed the introduction of entrepreneurship training in tertiary institutions and the teaching of trade/entrepreneurship subjects introduced into the secondary school curriculum. According to Okojie (2013), entrepreneurship is key to re-directing education and developing entrepreneurial mindset in youth. This will equip the youth with necessary skills to start and run businesses successfully. Early entrepreneurship from the home is important to the extent that it will;

i) promote foresight from childhood and will as well help them become individuals who are constantly involved in critical thinking, which is most likely going to result in churning out creative ideas

ii) build in the children self-confidence, develop talents and encourage the determination to succeed

iii) stimulate productive culture that leads to the establishment of business ventures and engagement of youth in productive activities

iv) enhance positive attitude from childhood, thereby encouraging youth

involvement in worthwhile activities

v) result in the maximum utilization of national resources for the benefit of all

vi) result in the establishment of small-scale businesses which will provide employment for Nigerian youths and open up the economy. It will also promote youth independence

vii) aid national development through the establishment of enterprises

viii) result in raising the living standard of Nigerian youth

ix) reduce crime rate and enhance security, as youth get engaged in meaningful activities

x) strengthen family cohesion as business activities involves other family members, who need to work as a team

xi) expose youths to the means of marshalling resources that are necessary to run and sustain businesses

xii) help the youths to learn effective time management, and to provide leadership in their business concerns and in other spheres of life

Considering the numerous benefits derivable from the exposure of youth to entrepreneurship practice, early in life, it becomes important to understand what excites these youth, so that they can be helped to capitalise on these and turn these into useful ventures that will not only add value but will meet people's needs and so sustain the individual in business.

Merging interest with entrepreneurship development

Osubor (2010) views entrepreneurship and being an entrepreneur as acts that requires drive, discipline and determination to succeed. According to Odey (2013), the aforementioned abilities are a combination of being self motivated and visionary; being knowledgeable in business and industry, and having or demonstrating astute marketing skills. This shows that the making of an entrepreneur goes beyond the introduction of entrepreneurship training

in schools, or the youth abridged entrepreneurship programmes meant to develop some skills in individuals within a short term. Entrepreneurship is a lifelong activity that needs to be cultivated as a habit, a lifestyle and even as a hobby. After all, enterprise is not about business, it is purely a mindset (Makwana, 2013). This informs the need to encourage youth from very early in life to take seriously these events in their lives and families that captures their interest, considering their involvement in the day – to – day activities in order to determine what they find more appealing and interesting to them, so that they can be motivated to focus on such activities in the bid to explore same for a lifelong endeavour, which can generate income for them later in life. Naturally, children by their inquisitive nature are creative and desire to explore situations and their environment. This today seems to be discouraged by parents who instruct and advise their children to conform to the status quo. thus relegating their innovative and creative instincts. No wonder children grow up today to attend school only to obtain certificate and get gainfully employed in organizations considered to provide required job security. This has negatively affected youth psyche as they have become "addicted" to working for others and avoiding risks and the difficulties of venturing.

The roles of parents at encouraging entrepreneurial attitude in children

Children are to be assisted to identify and develop their entrepreneurial abilities. This will introduce them, very early in life, to developing entrepreneurship mindset that will prepare them for a formal and enriching entrepreneurial career. Makwana 2013) observed that practical entrepreneurship is a formal part of a young person's education and skills facilitation. According to him, young people should be assisted in their approach to challenges and aspirations through the offer of a platform to express themselves within the environment of creativity, collaboration and new technology. If Nigeria, therefore, will succeed at raising a new generation of young entrepreneurs with the commitment and drive to make a difference, to break away from the traditional mentality of securing white-collar jobs, to become focused job creators and reduce unemployment in Nigeria, then parents and guardians have roles to play and duties to perform

with respect to:

i) identifying areas of interest in their wards;

ii) encouraging entrepreneurship mindset in the children;

iii) providing encouragement to venture, try out and practicalise on activities that children involve themselves in;

iv) providing needed support in terms of motivation, and required financial backing for the business their wards engage in;

v) boosting the morale of the children through appropriate psychological pep talks and varied experiences of life;

vi) raising a new generation of businessmen and women, who will use their creative abilities and explore activities they have passion for, to birth businesses. Thus becoming job providers and wealth creators, thereby diverting the energies of the society's most vibrant group (youth) into profitable and productive activities

In order to turn children' excitement into business ventures, parents have the duty to help their wards identify areas where their strength lies and activities which they devote more of their time for. The identification of such activities is to be backed up with pep talks on need to work at it, and parents also need to make necessary tools and facilities/equipment in the home available for the children to explore the identified activities. Parents and guardians also need to make themselves available to share experiences, guide and encourage children on the development of products or services from the activities of interest. The parents will need to stimulate their children to engage in the productive activities, by offering to make purchases of the goods or requesting the services provided by the children in exchange for money consideration.

Parents need to make efforts at linking their children with mentors who can help the children improve on their creative ideas, and as well educate the children on dignity of labour as against the desire for quick and easy money. They will as well need to make their services available as marketers and

promoters of the children' products and services. By this they will be advertising their ward's products or services, for others to patronize the children. This will go a long way to provide the morale booster that the children require, thereby encouraging them on the activities. If this is sustained, it will become a lifelong venture that will benefit the children in later life.

Implications for National Security

If the above task is devotedly carried out by parents there will be a tremendous increase in the number of youth engaged in worthwhile activities and to a large extent will reduce the rate of unemployment in the society. When this is achieved, the number of redundant youths initially available for dirty jobs, and those involved in societal vices will drop drastically. This will greatly reduce vices in the Nigerian society.

Again the engagement of youth in productive activities will lead to an improvement in the local economy and positively affect the national economy, thereby contributing to national economic growth.

The engagement of youth in entrepreneurial activities and floating of businesses will result in job creation, translating into wealth creation and improvement in the living standards of Nigerians generally. This will alleviate poverty amongst Nigerians and make the youth less vulnerable to exploitation by irresponsible adults in the society.

The establishment of small-scale businesses by the entrepreneurially-minded youth will reduce clamour for Government and white collar jobs, and enable government to focus more on the provision of infrastructural facilities that will further aid success of established businesses, absorbing more youth for gainful and decent living in the society.

Youth engagement in entrepreneurial activities will promote and sustain societal peace and harmony, as business owners know that their business will only thrive in an atmosphere of peace. They will therefore work towards ensuring peace in and around their business locations.

Youth entrepreneurial activities will promote family ties as they engage more family members in growing businesses, thus reducing rancour even in

the home. Since the communities are made up of family units, peaceful homes will result in peaceful communities and cohesion among the varying groups in the society.

With the observation of peace in the Nigerian communities and Government' provision of basic infrastructural facilities, foreign investors will be attracted into the country and this will promote international trade and enhance national development.

With the growth in small-scale businesses and Nigerian efforts at patronizing locally made goods, the reliance on foreign goods will drop, resulting in the conservation of the nation`s foreign exchange earnings, which will overtime shore up the exchange rate of the naira. This will provide more value for the naira, thus enabling Nigerians including the youth to live more comfortable lives and reduce the temptation to indulge in vices.

Involvement in entrepreneurship ventures by the youth will promote their independence and enhance their self esteem, boost their ego and make it difficult for them to be used to foment trouble. This will ultimately promote peace and ensure security in the nation

Conclusion

The study revealed the following:

1. An early involvement of parents in turning children' exciting activity into business ventures is a sure way to kick-starting and sustaining youth interest in entrepreneurial activities, to generate jobs and create wealth

2. Early involvement of children in entrepreneurship will engage them (in later life) as youths in worthwhile activities, and make them unavailable for use as thugs, hooligans, armed robbers, kidnappers, etc; while they will also seek peace and promote it to ensure a conducive atmosphere for their business activities.

Recommendations

The paper, on the strength of the discussions, makes the following recommendations:

1. Parents must demonstrate interest in their wards/children' activities
2. They must encourage entrepreneurship mindset in the children, towards helping them to explore the activities of interest for a lifelong endeavour.
3. They must provide needed support, advice and financial backing for children to turn their exciting into business ventures.
4. Parents need to build self-confidence in their children and develop positive attitude in them from childhood
5. They must make effort to link children with mentors, and be ready to promote and market their children' products/services. This will promote sale and keep children in business.

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