

New Media Entrepreneurship and Youth Empowerment in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions

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Abstract

New media entrepreneurship is the internet-enabled entrepreneurship that seeks to provide students with the knowledge, skills and motivations to encourage entrepreneurial success in a variety of settings. New media entrepreneurship education consists of three ingredients, namely; creativity; innovation and entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship education, in particular, the new media entrepreneurship has been neglected recently in most of Nigeria tertiary institutions, even in the face of current economic, unemployment and energy crises. This current dispensation requires graduates who will be “job creators” and not “job seekers.” With this in view, this paper argues that the new media entrepreneurship education and empowerment for youths at the tertiary institution has an immense importance for youth empowerment and employment for the production of the manpower that is needed in Nigeria labor market. The paper deems new media entrepreneurship education as the most needed education for the development, technological emancipation and industrial expansion of the nation economy. It will tremendously assists in career choice, job placement and gainful employment. It is against this backdrop that the paper makes some propositions on the framework for educating and empowering youths in tertiary institutions of learning. The paper concludes that these proposed strategies and steps will be useful in acquiring new media entrepreneurship skills for students, especially those on the verge of completion.

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Youth population is increasing explosively particularly in developing countries as a result of rapid urbanization. This increase is bringing large number of social and economic problems. For instance the impacts of job and training availability, and the physical, social and cultural quality of urban environment on young people are enormous, and affect their health, life-styles, and well-being (Gleeson & Sipe 2006). Besides this, globalization and technological developments are affecting youth in urban areas in all parts of the world, both positively and negatively (Robertson, 1995).

New media entrepreneurship is an internet enabled entrepreneurship whose creation and ownership of a small enterprise or organization as well as activity add at least one voice or innovation to the media market place. New media entrepreneurship is a technological appreciation to the general term entrepreneurship that introduces students to the basic concepts of entrepreneurship which is now made possible over the internet or the World Wide Web. It blends instructions on the overall entrepreneurship concepts on how the internet and digital technologies are enabling individuals that uses it to run and own businesses online which transforms our media economic. The place of internet in creating an enabling environment for people to do businesses online cannot be over emphasized as Panthos (2012) puts; internet users are persons who make use of the internet from any geographical location, while Trading Economies (2014) describes internet users as people with access to the World Wide Network.

According to the Culture-ist (2013), there are more than two billion internet users worldwide, this figure is rising everyday as more people have access to digital devices and internet connection becomes cheaper. In fact, the Voices of American (2014) states that the United Nations Telecommunications Agency said there will be almost three billion internet users by the end of 2014 and two third of the users will be in developing countries which Nigeria happens to be part of. The new media which is an enabling factor of entrepreneurship online refers to on demand access to content anytime, anywhere, on any digital service, as well as interactive user feedback, creative participation and community formation around the media content. An important of these new media is the “democratization” of the creation, publishing, distribution and the consumption of the media content.

Most technologies described as “new media” are digital, often having characteristics of being manipulated, networkable, dense, compressible and interactive. Some examples may be the internet websites, computer multimedia, video games CD-ROMs and DVD. Some examples of

new media are the Wikipedia, is an online encyclopedia, it combines internet accessible digital text, images and video with web links, creative participation of contributors, interactive feedback of users and formation of a participant community of editors and donors for the benefit of non-community users. Educating students on this new media entrepreneurship is the focused of the seminar paper. In a report of the Global Education Initiative (2009) on educating the next wave of Entrepreneurs and unlocking entrepreneurial capabilities to meet the challenges of the 21st century, an aspect of the report states thus that; Preparing today's students for success and eventual leadership in the new global market place is the most important responsibility in education today. New media entrepreneurship education is an important tool to achieving these objectives and should be universally available to provide all students with opportunities to explore and fulfill their potentials. Alvin Toffler in putting forward his argument explains that to fit into future perfectly and function with the skills needed in this dynamic and responsive society it requires entrepreneurship education knowledge. The rapidly expanding nature of entrepreneurship education and the new media entrepreneurship in particular has become an evolving aspect of higher education. It is a culture that is meant to transform the Nigeria Tertiary Education system towards global trends.

In supporting of the above argument, Obanya (2010) is of the view that universities have always striven to be the best among equals. That the advent of the "Knowledge Economy" and its emphasis on such values as "cutting edge" (in terms of ideas, innovations, facilities and most importantly technology) and global competitiveness has influenced the academic ambition of tertiary institutions in general and universities in particular in a "sky-is-no longer the limit direction. Which he further stated that there is an external socio-economic push for people to seek education in competitive institutions for eventual exposure to face the competitive world. The concept of these new media entrepreneurship, is however associated with a number of activities as it does not occur in a vacuum. For it to happen, it demands the presence of an entrepreneur and an enabling environment. The question however is who is an entrepreneur?

According to Meredith (1983) an entrepreneur is a person who possesses the ability to recognize and evaluate business opportunities, assemble the necessary resources to take advantage of them and take appropriate action to succeed. In another view, an entrepreneur is a person (or group of persons) who initiates a business, organizes, controls and combines other factors of production, directs the processes of production and bears all the attendant risks. While the enabling environment for an entrepreneur is to explore his skills and his abilities with the global computer

network i.e. the internet or the online World Wide Web. The new media entrepreneurship education which is recently gaining ground means different things to different educators and the people being enlightened. Kourisky (1995) defines entrepreneurship education as opportunity, recognition, marshaling of resources in the presence of risk and building a business venture. Bechard and Toulouse (1998) defines entrepreneurship education as a collection of formalized teachings that informs, trains and educates anyone “interested in business creation or small business development”.

This type of entrepreneurship education means different things at different levels of education. At the tertiary level of education, entrepreneurship education is perceived not only as a career opportunity but as a way of upgrading a young person’s abilities to succeed as an employee as well as an entrepreneur when they finally graduated from university. The implication there is that the overall purpose of new media entrepreneurship education is the development of expertise as an entrepreneur. It is the process of providing individuals with the ability to recognize business opportunities, the insight, the zeal, the knowledge, the courage and skills to act on them.

The new media entrepreneurship enables enterprising youths (students) to explore, validate, and prepare new business concepts to launch as startup companies holders. Students can walk in teams to develop their ideas into new media products and services and learn the iterative process of growing a digital media business from the ground to the top.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Entrepreneurship education is currently being downplayed if not totally neglected in Nigerian schools, colleges and tertiary institutions, yet this aspect of education is critical for economic development. Students in Nigeria tertiary institutions among which the Federal University of Technology, Minna is not an exception need to acquire skills in various new media entrepreneurial ventures so as to become self-reliant on their graduation from their degree programmes. To that purpose, the paper firstly defines what new media entrepreneurship is, and goes further to illustrate few examples of ICT related media such as the AD sense, which is easier to create and have one’s own websites.

Therefore, new media entrepreneurship seeks to prepare people especially youths who mostly are students to be responsible and enterprising individuals. Also, it develops in them deep thoughts on entrepreneurship and consequently be able to contribute to economic and sustainable development

of their communities. New media entrepreneurship encourages creative thinking and promotes a strong sense of self-worth and accountability. Through new media entrepreneurship, undergraduates especially those who are still at the university would be equipped to find new methods of doing things that will enabled them to be their own bosses and job “creators” rather than job “seekers”.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The objective of this paper is to elaborate on the menace of youth unemployment among Nigerian undergraduate students and to proffer suggestions on strategies to tackle this menace that has reared its head in form of unemployment among the youth. Therefore, to achieve this objective

1. The paper will discusses the concept of new media entrepreneurship education and youth empowerment in Nigeria.
2. The paper will pinpoints on the challenges of youths’ unemployment and strategies in acquiring new media entrepreneurship skills. Also,
3. The paper will be anchored on a theoretical frame work that the writers deemed applicable for studies on new media entrepreneurship education.

NEW MEDIA ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION: A SYNOPTIC OUTLOOK

Arguably, it is well known fact that entrepreneurship ability is very rare in the developed and developing nations amongst which Nigeria is not an exception. Entrepreneurship education has been neglected in most tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Students are taught on how to be good job seekers rather than job creators themselves. They are usually taught on how to climb a corporate ladder instead of how to own the ladder, also on how to excel in recruitment interviews and not how to interview people for recruitment or employers. Thus, schools turn out graduates who cannot establish and become self- reliant. Consequently, many people who had the opportunity of earning a good income in their working days retire into abject poverty because they lack entrepreneurial ability. This is why in Nigeria today we see highly educated persons who lack entrepreneurial ability depending on pensions and gratuities that are difficult to come-by, of which even if they are paid they cannot afford the basic necessities of life as a result of the rising increased family and social responsibility. There are people with limited formal education but who are adepts in entrepreneurial lability. While others may have academic giants but are financially dwarfs. The difference is the acquisition of skills and utilizations of entrepreneurial capabilities. Everyone will

concur that a good formal education combined with acquisition of skills and entrepreneurial ability is a sure way to financial freedom.

Study has emphasized that the basic objective of entrepreneurship education is to develop students' conceptual thinking and manipulation skills. With this, the implication of entrepreneurship education in Nigeria cannot be over emphasized. It encourages the Nigerian students to appreciate and accept carrier choices for which they have abilities for sustainable employment and self-reliance. They conclude by saying that entrepreneurship education makes education functional, enhancing multifarious skills acquisition and application and it empowers the youth by exposing them to a variety of programs in which they can make choices in life and be aware of the implication of their choice, make decisions and accept the consequences of their actions (Enu, 2010).

New Media Entrepreneurship education and empowerment for youths in Tertiary Institutions exposes students to online variety of business activities that could empower the Nigerian Youths to be self-reliant and independent. Thus, indicating that the rapidly advancing information and communications technologies (ICTs) helps in addressing social and economic problems caused by the rapid growth of urban youth populations in developing countries. ICTs offer opportunities to young people for learning, skill development and employment. But there are downsides: young people in many developing countries lack in having broad access to these new technologies. They are vulnerable to global market changes, and ICTs link them to global cultures which promote consumer goods, potentially eroding local cultures and community values (Manacorda & Petrongolo, 1999).

The new media entrepreneurship education is geared towards establishing and building a firm ground for an internet entrepreneur who would look at the vast power of the internet by utilizing it in a way of starting up and growing a business. Whether it's physical merchandizing business or a play on innovative modern services, someone who wants to become a successful internet entrepreneur will often pay attention to some start up basics involving blending the new technology with classic good business sense (ILO, 1996; ILO, 2000).

In fact, Awogbenle and Iwuamadi (2010) indicated in their write up that the issue of unemployment has become even much more troublesome in many parts of the world. In Nigeria, however, the magnitude of this can be appreciated if accurate statistics could be obtained from the Federal Bureau of Statistics on the number of unemployed youths roaming the streets of Nigerian towns

and cities. In this regard, the National Manpower Board and Federal Bureau of Statistics showed that Nigeria has a youth population of eighty (80) million representing 60 percent of the total population of the country. Sixty four (64) million of them are unemployed while one million six hundred thousand (1.6 million) are underemployed (cited in Agboola, 2014).

The International Labour Organization's research (2004) revealed that the labour force participation rates for young people decreased by almost four per cent (which is equivalent of 88 million young people) between 1993 and 2003. This is largely as a result of the increased number of young people attending school, high overall unemployment rates, and the fact that some young people gave up any hope of finding work and dropped out of the labour market. At the regional level, youth unemployment was highest in Middle East and North Africa (25.6%) and sub-Saharan Africa (21%) and lowest in East Asia (7%) and the industrialized economies (13.4%) (International Labour Organization 2004). The youth in economically disadvantaged regions face many challenges in education and training that delivers them the right set of skills and knowledge demanded by the labour market. As a consequence, the transition from school to work is mostly unsuccessful and young population end up either unemployed or underemployed in the informal sectors (United Nations, 2005b).

Unemployment and lack of economic prospects of the urban youth are pushing many of them into criminal acts, excessive alcohol use, substance addiction, and also in many cases resulting in processes of social or political violence (Fernandez-Maldonado 2004; United Nations 2005a). Long-term unemployment leads young people in a process of marginalization and social exclusion (United Nations, 2004). The sustained high rates of long-term youth unemployment have a number of negative effects on societies. First, it results in countries failing to take advantage of the human resources to increase their productive potential, at a time of transition to a globalized world that inexorably demands such leaps in productive capacity. Second, it reinforces the intergenerational transmission of poverty. Third, owing to the discrepancy between more education and exposure to the mass media and fewer employment opportunities, it may encourage the spread of disruptive behaviours, recourse to illegal alternatives for generating income and the loss of basic societal values, all of which erode public safety and social capital. Fourth, it may trigger violent and intractable political conflicts. And lastly, it may exacerbate intergenerational conflicts when young people perceive a lack of opportunity and meritocracy in a system that favours adults who have less formal education and training but more wealth, power and job stability (Hopenhayn, 2002).

APPLICABLE THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING

Structural functionalism is adopted as a framework of a analysis. The thrust of this theory is that in every political system, there are structures that perform certain functions for the survival and stability of the system. The structures regardless of their nature still perform some specific functions. In every society whether modern or traditional, specific functions are performed. These functions according to Almond (1965) are political socialization and orientation, interest articulation and aggregation and political communication, which he calls, input functions. Others are rule making, rule application and rule adjudication, which fall under what he calls output functions. Generally, the structures ensure the surveillance, maintenance, stability and security of the system. Universities perform the functions of education, orientation and socialization of the citizens in the society, but they can only perform the duties well when they have a challenging and stimulating environment.

The theory was chosen as a relevant framework because it describes how specific institution functions in society. Functions which are political socialization and orientation, interest articulation and aggregation and political communication which are input functions that ensures surveillance, maintenance, stability and security of the system. In this regard, university performs the function of education, orientation and socialization of the citizens in the society. This theory has justified the issue of the subject-matter discussed in this paper and has a stake for the new media entrepreneurship education and empowerment for the Nigeria students in the tertiary institution.

THE CONCEPT OF NEW MEDIA ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION AND YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

Entrepreneurship education is a product of the rising challenges in the society. The present system of our country Nigeria today is unable to create employment opportunities to our massive youths both at the rural and urban sector. Students who have gone through the four walls of the University and pass through the pains in learning one discipline or the other ends up struggling for survival in a bid to positioning and establishing oneself in life. Students are usually thought most of the time how to climb a cooperate ladder instead of how to own the ladder, thus schools churn out graduates who cannot establish themselves in life or become self-reliant in the rising challenges in life. There is needfor schools to turn out graduates who can establish and position themselves in the society they found themselves. Thisis possible only if students are taught and expose to

entrepreneurial skills through education and empowerment (Akinbode, 2009). Also, entrepreneurs might employ the gale of creative destruction to replace in whole or in part interior innovations across markets and industries, simultaneously creating new products including new business models. Educating students at this level is necessary to make changes in their thinking faculty, knowledge, skills, values, behavior and life styles to achieve sustainability and stability in their lives. Hence, it should be of utmost priority to the intending students who are educated to ask questions as to what is at stake, what they need to do, how they go about it and so on in order to break through the tides and be fulfilled in life (Akinbami, 2011).

Youths occupy an important position in any society. They are sine qua non of society and nation. They are the leaders of tomorrow and tend to out-number the middle-aged and the aged (Onyekpe, 2007). The youth are the foundation of a society in the sense that their energies, inventiveness, character and orientation define the pattern of development and security of a nation. It is through their creative talents and labour power that a nation makes giant strides. The youth comprise of a particular cluster of the national population laden with sensitivity, energy, activeness and the most industrious and productive echelon of society. Also, the youth are most volatile and yet the most vulnerable segment of the population in terms of social-economic, emotion and other aspects (Anasi, 2010). The youth are defined as people aged between 18 and 35 and they constitute about 40 percent of the more than 167 million people of Nigeria. The Nigeria unemployment rate is projected at over 11 percent compared to the average rate of 9.5 percent in sub-Saharan Africa (The National Youth Development Policy, 2001). The National Bureau of Statistics (2004) revealed that, young people aged between 15 and 24 years account for 52.9 percent of unemployed people, while those aged between 25 and 44 years accounted for 41.1 percent. Therefore, those in the age bracket of 15 and 44 years account for 94 percent of the total unemployed persons in Nigeria (Osibanjo, 2006).

Aside educating and empowering the students, personal development of the students such as building confidence, motivating progress, strengthening the entrepreneurial mindset, all these foster a desire to achieve and inspire action. Furthermore, the students' needs to have new media entrepreneurship skills development such as intensive training in social skills, networking creative problem solving, opportunity seeking, interviewing etc.

THE CHALLENGES OF YOUTHS' UNEMPLOYMENT

Entrepreneurship ability is very rare in the developed world but rarer in the under developed and developing nation of the world with Nigeria being a part. According to the World Development Report (2003) there are more than one billion young people between the ages of 15 and 24, and 85 percent of them live in the developing countries of the world. They report that young people between the ages of 15 and 24 comprise around 18 percent of the World's population; they represent around 41 percent of the unemployed and represent more than 40 percent of the worlds unemployed.

According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2015). The unemployment Rate in Nigeria increased to 24.20 percent in the first quarter of 2015 from 23.90 percent in the fourth quarter of 2011. Unemployment Rate in Nigeria averaged

15.97 percent from 2006 until 2015, reaching an all-time high of 24.20 percent in the first quarter of 2015 and a record low of 5.30 percent in the fourth quarter of 2006. Unemployment Rate in Nigeria is reported by the National Bureau of Statistics, Nigeria.

Several factors are said to be consequential to Nigeria youth unemployment. However, one cogent factor being that of population growth. Nigeria has continued to experience high rate of population growth since the discovery on oil in the early sixties and coupled with economic boom that followed in the seventies. This increasing population growth has produced an overwhelming increase in the youth population thereby resulting in an increase in the size of the working age population. Related to the rapid population growth is the massive rural-urban migration by the youth. Another factor of youth unemployment is lack of employable skills due to inappropriate school curricula, where analysts have posited that the skills that most job seekers in Nigeria possess do not match the needs and demands of employers. Yet another factor is the perception of policy makers and the youth themselves about employment. To the policy makers and the youth, employment means a job with salary and working for someone else. It is this perception that has continued to influence the institutions in Nigeria that provide skills and training (Ajufo, 2013).

Youth unemployment rates typically fluctuate in line with the overall unemployment rates, indicating a strong link to general economic trend. There are an estimated sixty six million unemployed young people in the world today, and at least fifty percent of the countries for which data are available have youth unemployment rates of more than fifteen percent. For growing

number of young people, employment is precarious (unstable, unsteady and uncertain) and may not provide an income sufficient to cover basic necessities of life. In developing countries, a rising number of young people work in the informal economy, where they earn low wages and are often subjected to poor or even exploitative working conditions. For young people jobs provide a source not only of income, but also of dignity and self-respect. Youth unemployment can lead to marginalization, exclusion, frustration and low self-esteem and sometimes to behavior that imposes a burden to the society (Akinbami, 2011).

THE STRATEGIES IN ACQUIRING NEW MEDIA ENTREPRENEURSHIP SKILLS

Although there have been a lot of arguments as to whether entrepreneurs are born with it or they can acquire it. It is believed that entrepreneurship perspective can be developed in an individual. It has become clear that entrepreneurs or certain facet of it can be taught. Based on this prepositions, different methods of inculcating entrepreneurship in students must be reviewed. Also, study have suggested that educators should use market oriented methods in educating youths in entrepreneurial skills, that small business owners should be used in educating the youths. Likewise, it is generally believed that graduates are expected to search for work, but this perception can be changed by changing the mindset of the students that they can be self-employed (Akinbode, 2009). However, below are the successful steps of becoming an internet entrepreneur:

1. Have a concrete business plan: just like traditional business, internet business can profit greatly from a well thought out business plan that will help attract capital, guide leaders in starting and growing a business and presents this fledgling enterprise to the outside world as something legitimate with great potential.
2. Add shopping carts or other infrastructure: One of the key aspects of becoming a successful entrepreneur is to put the needed tools into the website, allowing customers to get involved with business and make transactions easily and conveniently.
3. Pursue appropriate advertising: advertising needs are different for every business, and dialing in exactly what specific internet business needs is a huge part of success for any internet entrepreneur or business startup leader.
4. Control costs: Another part in being a successful internet entrepreneur applies to bricks and mortar businesses well. The basic task is making sure that revenues exceed expenses. This is done by limiting overhead and being judicious about spending money on behalf of the business until more profits are coming in that would justify certain business expenses.

5. Hedge against risk: Getting a good business structure and purchasing appropriate business insurance will help the new internet entrepreneur or business leader guard against some unpleasant situations that could come up due to product liability or other kinds of unfortunate events or legal challenges

6. Use of social media sites like face book, LinkedIn and Google+. Using social media sites can benefit you to build network and improve brands of your business. Face book, twitter, linked IN could help you build impressions among your customers

AdSense is an example of ICT related media. On it, you can create your own website such as blog, face book etcetera. This site allows users create and run diverse online businesses.

Other types of online business are: cloud computing and storage, which is the future of business collaboration from various places, the Twitch. TV is an explosively popular service meant to let games watch others play games, live. The Zeus is another future of internet business (Zeus is a 3D printer that can scan and copy objects and using the internet, fax objects to other printers).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The new media entrepreneurship education and empowerment for youths at the tertiary level is an entrepreneurship that introduces students to the basic concepts of entrepreneurship which is now made possible on the internet or the World Wide Web (WWW). This paper has focused on new media entrepreneurship and youth empowerment as a way of removing stumbling blocks to the art of equipping student youths with practical knowledge and skills and also providing them with a conducive platform to becoming “job creators” instead of “job seekers”. Strategies and successful steps in becoming an internet entrepreneur were also discussed with a foundational skill of creativity, innovation and transformation of the innovative ideas.

The researchers therefore considered new media entrepreneurship education and empowerment for students at the tertiary institution as immense importance for youth empowerment and for the production of the manpower need in Nigeria labor market. It is the most needed education for the development, technological emancipation and industrial expansion. It tremendously assists in career choice, job placement and gainful employment.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO KNOWLEDGE

Following the importance of new media entrepreneurship education and empowerment to youths at the tertiary institution, it is expected that educating and empowering the students at certain time in their lives should be mandatory as a way of equipping them with the manpower against all odds to improving their socio-economic conditions and those of the entire community through exposure to acquisition of necessary knowledge and skills both in theoretical and practical terms. the following recommendations are suggested:

1. There is need therefore to develop specific entrepreneurial culture among the students, for the production of graduates that possesses relevant skills. It is therefore advisable that relevant skills like this should once in a while be taught by lecturers, and lecturers should be specifically trained and regularly retrained for efficiency and optimum performance.
2. For the students, new media entrepreneurship education should be a pre-requisite irrespective of the course of study especially at the final year of the students at schools. This would enable them to acquire the relevant entrepreneurial skills to become self-relevant and self-sustaining in the society they might find themselves.

DIRECTION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Taking cues from the above discussions, the authors would like to highlight that the future research studies, apart from the need to be empirical and meaningful to the intended audience who are the youth, it must be conducted to establish youth needs with special attention to groups with special needs particularly for youths living in the rural areas. These needs must be articulated and provided for adequately. Research studies must aggregate precisely what amount of fund is needed and how to generate such fund for the purpose of covering training cost and providing loans for self-employment activities. Also, future research studies must focus and emphasize on how to conduct practical and appropriated education and counseling in –and-out-school with an objective of preparing youths for self-employment activities.

Finally, future research studies should articulate statistically the need for gender balancing and mainstreaming in all youth development programs. Both genders are equal.

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