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ARE EDUCATION GRADUATES ONLY TRAINED TO TEACH? A REVIEW OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP OPPORTUNITIES IN THE EDUCATION SECTOR

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ABSTRACT

As youth unemployment continue to bite fiercely on the continent of Africa, majority of undergraduate students in various institutions of higher learning are both in dilemma and confusion as to what will become their fate after graduation. While there is broad consensus about the role of entrepreneurial skills for job creation, there is dearth of research about the type of entrepreneurial opportunities that are available for young graduates that studied education-related courses at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. The general assumption is that anyone studying Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) or Post-Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) in the university is automatically cut out only for teaching profession, whereas opportunities abound for such individuals with aspirations for self-employment within the sector. This article presents different entrepreneurship programmes and opportunities which young people with education degrees can explore with a view to becoming self-sustained and employers of labour. It is expected that the article will serve as a road map for young people desiring to become successful entrepreneurs, job creators and active contributors to prosperity and sustainable development of the Sub-Saharan Africa.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, Opportunities, Education, Job Creation.

INTRODUCTION

Recently, scholarly literature in Africa has focused on the issue of youth entrepreneurship as solution to the escalating youth unemployment on the continent (Hassan & Olaniran, 2011; Uleanya & Gamede, 2017; Abisuga-Oyekunle & Fillis, 2017; Adom et al., 2018; Olaniran & Mncube, 2018; Dzomonda & Fatoki, 2019). The goal of an entrepreneurship programme anywhere is to equip the participants with relevant knowledge and skills to become entrepreneurs and solve some of the societal pressing problems. Sub-Sharan Africa is faced with the challenges of how to provide employment opportunities for her teeming young population (World Bank, 2019; Uleanya et al., 2019). The reason is simple; the continent of Africa is home to the youngest population in the world (Figure 1), which is also growing speedily (ILO, 2012). According to Yahya (2017), by the year 2055, the continent's youth population, i.e. those between the ages of 15 and 24, is expected to rise and double the year 2015 total of 226 million.

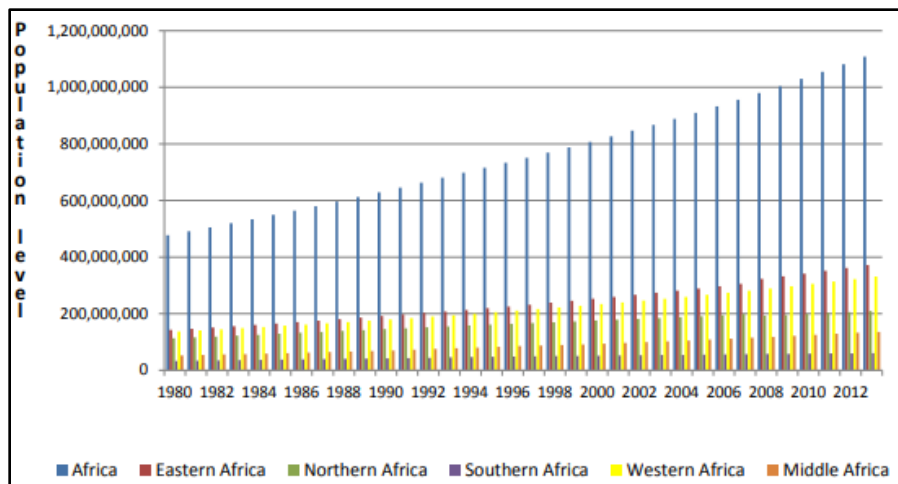


FIGURE 1
AFRICA’S RISING POPULATION [SOURCE: UNITED NATIONS’ STATISTICS (2011)].

The rising youth population being experienced in Africa also has implication for the unemployment rate on the continent (Figure 2) as it may double by the year 2055 unless something concrete is done to salvage the situation. In a similar vein, a report published by the African Development Bank in 2016 revealed that 12 million youths entered Africa’s labour market in 2015, whereas only 3.1 million jobs were available (Yahya, 2017). Among the millions unemployed graduates are the qualified teachers without schools and classrooms to teach (Govender, 2016; Papefnus, 2018). The implication of this is that millions of youths were left stranded without a job or employment after spending years in the universities to bag higher education qualifications.

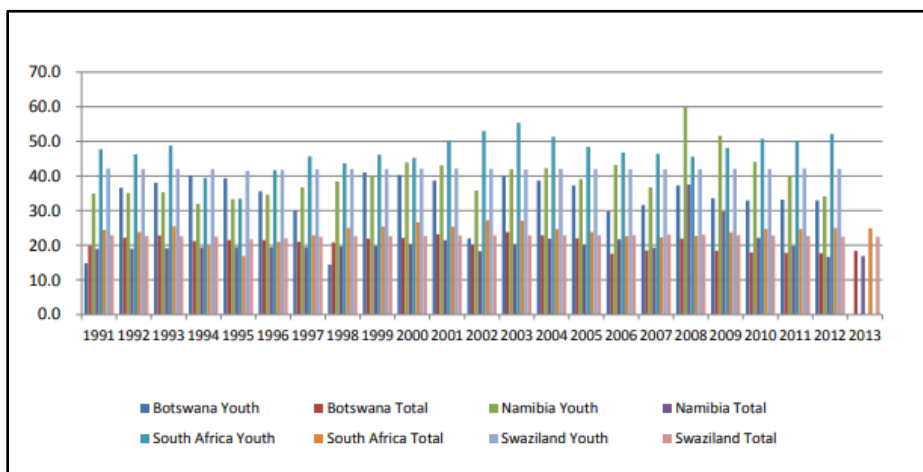


FIGURE 2
YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT RATE IN FOUR SADC COUNTRIES [SOURCE: INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION, TREND ECONOMETRIC MODELS (2012)].

In South Africa, thousands of youths enter the job market on yearly basis with strong hope and energy about the world of work only to have their hope dashed and end up bitterly disappointed (Bernstein, 2019). The South African Statistics (2014) revealed this reality about the escalating youth unemployment rate in the country:

“One in every ten young persons (14.1%) who lived in households in which no one was employed had only “primary and lower” levels of education, while an additional 58.9% had not completed their secondary education. More than two out of every three young persons who lived in households in which no one was employed depended on other household members for financial support, and an additional 27.0%–29.0% relied on persons outside the household. This once again highlights the vulnerability of young people in the labour market”.

Also in Nigeria, 55.4 percent of young people between the ages of 15 and 34 are unemployed (Aljazeera, 2019). Ajufo (2013) described the pandemic of youth unemployment in Nigeria as devastating to both the individual and the society as a whole. Similarly, more than 70% of young people in the Republic of the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Malawi, Mali, Rwanda, Senegal and Uganda are either self-employed or contributing to family work (Brookings Institution, 2013). *“The future of Africa’s economic development lies with young entrepreneurs”*, a statement credited to Issam Chleuh, a young African entrepreneur from Mali, signifies the potential of African youths in turning the economy of the continent around. However, a youth that will contribute effectively to socio-economic development is the one who is rightly guided and entrepreneurially equipped. In other words, exposing young people to entrepreneurial education and training while at school will go a long way in creating a strong pathway for economic prosperity. Issam Chleuh re-echoed the importance of youth entrepreneurship in solving Africa’s deepened unemployment problem by stating that:

“Given Africa’s demographic dividend, its related unemployment and the inability of current companies to absorb all the job seekers, entrepreneurship becomes a necessity on the African continent. However, the question is: will African youth deliver or disappoint? I believe entrepreneurship could help Africa and African youth deliver” (Gabreski, 2017).

While there is broad consensus about the importance of youth entrepreneurship education job creation, there is dearth of research about what opportunities are available for graduate that studied education-related courses in higher institutions, and what impact such graduate can make in improving the socio-economic sector of the continent. In the Sub-Saharan Africa, such study is imperative given the now properly well-known information about the youth population, particularly in relation to the unemployment rate. Since the rate of qualified teachers who are unemployed is rising on the continent (Majavu, 2015; Deacon, 2016; British Council, 2016; Ojiambo, 2018), study about entrepreneurship opportunities in the Education sector is vital. An article of how graduate can explore these opportunities is also important as this will serve as a searchlight for anyone who wants to follow this route. This paper, therefore, aimed at exploring entrepreneurial opportunities in the education sector with a view to sensitizing students in the Education Faculty about Edupreneurship as an alternative pathway to success aside teaching. While studies have been conducted which focused on youth entrepreneurship as a panacea to youth unemployment in Africa (John et al., 2016; Nwokolo et al., 2017; Ismail et al., 2018;

Anosike, 2019), few of these studies talked about the educational-based entrepreneurship. This paper also has implication for achieving the Goal 8 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Africa, which is geared towards the promotion of “*sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all*” by the year 2030 (UNDP, 2019).

WHO IS AN EDUCATIONAL ENTREPRENEUR?

“We are never in lack of money. We lack people with dreams, who can die for those dreams” – Jack Ma.

An attempt to define an educational entrepreneur cannot be successfully made without defining who an entrepreneur is first. The word “*entrepreneur*” is derived from the French word “*entre*” which means “*between*” and “*prendre*” which means “*to take*” (Hassan & Olaniran, 2011). In other words, an entrepreneur is someone who take the risk. Going by this explanation, an entrepreneur can, therefore, be seen as a risk taker. Talking about the risk associated with entrepreneurship, Fernandez (2019) remarks that:

“The road to entrepreneurship is often a treacherous one filled with unexpected detours, roadblocks and dead ends. There are lots of sleepless nights, plans that don't work out, funding that doesn't come through and customers that never materialize”.

Entrepreneurs worldwide occupies an important place in nation building. Scarborough & Zimmerer (2003) notes that entrepreneurs are new business drivers that emerges in the face of risk and difficulties with the aim of running business, make profit and contribute to the economy. This is why the promotion of entrepreneurial spirit among youths has been a major policy for many government in Africa, as it is seen to be one of the major ways of reducing unemployment and equipping people with knowledge and skills for wealth creation.

Having examined who an entrepreneur is, an educational entrepreneur, therefore could be seen as an individual with adequate knowledge, skills and competence to identify challenges in the education sector and design a business model to respond to the identified challenges. According to Researchers, an Education Entrepreneur is an individual who works within in the sector of education. In other words, what an educational entrepreneur does is simply identify and respond to a particular problem in the education sector through a business model. Shulman elaborated on this further when she described an education entrepreneur as “*Edupreneur*”:

“Edupreneurs are usually mission-driven and live for bringing to light positive impact. They can be found building new education organizations and businesses, developing the latest edtech tools, running new schools, and giving keynote speeches around the world. They lead with a 21st-century education mindset and are known globally inside and outside of the classroom”.

An individual with entrepreneurial mindset towards education must be able to:

- i. Identify a need in education sector and develop an idea to meet the need.
- ii. Convert the idea into action by introducing a project, product or an organization.
- iii. Engage in promotional activities to unveil the project or organization.

- iv. Be aware of the risk and uncertainties involved and put mechanism in place to mitigate.
- v. Continue working and strategizing to have an edge over potential competitors.

Talking about identifying a need and conceiving an idea or project to meet such need, one must be proactive and versatile with one's immediate environment, especially with the education landscape. The following are some of the entrepreneurial opportunities available in the education sector:

1. Educational Consultancy

Education is one of the numerous fields of human endeavour that is not static. In order words, the sector keeps changing as society experience changes on daily basis. I always describe this ever-changing society with an analogy of a '*beauty with the beast*', i.e. one with numerous opportunities and diverse challenges. It comes with challenges for schools and educators because of the need for constant shift in the paradigm of teaching and learning as well as the overall school management. The fact is that many schools and teachers are struggling with overcrowding classrooms, heavy teaching workload and extremely difficult-to-manage learners' behaviours. However, these challenges open the door of opportunities for young education professionals to take business initiative by specializing in those areas where schools and educators are struggling to cope. An Educational Consultant is an individual who assist schools, parents and students with educational planning. The job of an educational consultancy is not for everybody with any kind of background or degree, it is perfectly fit for someone with background and experience in the field of education. This is because as an educational consultant, you will be consulted to offer education-specific services which include curriculum development or revamping, and guidance on how to improve students' learning or school performance in national and international competitions. As an education consultants, you do not necessarily need to have a direct contact with the student or parents (Threlfall, 2018), the role is similar to that of a school counselor. While school counselors are hired directly by schools, educational consultant are usually self-employed, and they sometimes work in roles that supports Schools and Education Departments to enhance the delivery of teaching and learning activities or to fix systemic issues.

2. Educational Website and Mobile Application Designer

The future of higher education is Open and Distance Learning (ODL). Due to the disruptions that will follow the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), many conventional institutions, including universities, will be forced to do blended learning or switched fully into ODL. This obviously will create huge opportunities for those who are into creation of digital platforms for learning such as Websites, Mobile Applications that can be used as Learning Management Systems (LMSs) by the institutions of higher learning. The use of electronic learning (e-learning) resources such as LMS and mobile applications for teaching and learning has been dominant among institutions of higher learning since the beginning of the 21st Century (Olaniran et al., 2017). This, therefore, creates an entrepreneurial opportunity to young people with education background to acquire the knowledge and skills in this area, as the demand for this services will rise as we approach the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) era.

3. Research Analysis and Editing Service

Many universities, both in the developed and developing countries, are gradually becoming research-intensive institutions. While the core activities of universities globally are to provide teaching, research and community engagement activities, it appears research is taking preeminent place though it has been said that research speaks directly to teaching and community engagement. The implication of this is an increased in the volume of research activities conducted by the universities and research students admitted yearly. Research data analysis and editing services are part of the services in demand by many educational institutions and research students today. To specialize in this field, you should have the skills and knowledge of the software systems like the Statistical Software for Social Scientists (SPSS), INVIVO and Atlas ti, among others. You should also be ready to work with individuals and organizations in collecting and analyzing large volumes of data. Due to the disruptions that will follow the much expected Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) the services of research data analysts will be in high demand. This, without doubt, presents an entrepreneurial opportunity for young people with education background to reskill themselves in the areas of statistics, data analytics, data mining, and project management, so as to take a full advantage of this opportunity.

4. Education Tour Planner

Educational tourism and recreational programme is one activity that contributes immensely to mental and social learning capacity of school children (Whitesell, 2016; Bakioglu et al., 2018). Little wonder that many parents spend huge amount of money to enable their children participate in field trips, excursions, and other outdoor learning programmes. However, planning an educational tour can be overwhelming and many parents and schools do not have the luxury of time to put into this planning. The services of a professional education tour planner are constantly sought by schools and parents that values outdoor learning activities nationally and internationally. Education tour planners, also known as education tourism agencies, are known to provide advisory services to schools and parents on different educational tourist activities that are within budget or choice. Establishing and running an education tourist agency is not capital intensive and could be a money-spinning venture, especially if the idea is conceived by an individual with education background with relevant certification and network of institutions.

5. After-School Services

There is a relative shortage of good after-school programmes for teenagers, especially those in the high schools (Holstead et al., 2015) and this present an entrepreneurial opportunity for recent graduates with education degrees. Every parent wants their teenage children engaged in productive activities after school hours and one of the ways of ensuring this is to enroll them in after-school programmes. After-School programme is usually an evening learning platform established purposefully to provide educational activities to teenagers and youths on a broad range areas like academic support, career guidance, vocational skills training, sports and recreation, among others (Yohalem et al., 2010). Recent studies revealed that there are immense benefits in enrolling teenagers in after-school programmes (Kayalar, 2016; Leonard et al., 2017; Khan & Lauzon, 2018). A good after-school programme leads to positive outcomes for young people including enhanced academic performance, improved social relations and cognitive skills.

Based on the certification necessities and the professional ethics required of someone operating an after-school programme in many countries, the best person to venture into this terrain is someone who is a trained educator who must have gone through comprehensive training on different learning theories, curriculum design, and psychology of education, among other essential courses while in school.

CONCLUSION

Entrepreneurship education, without doubt, is the way out of the huge youth unemployment rate facing Africa, and other developing continent of the world. Countries in Africa cannot afford not to create enabling environments for young people to run small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Those who studied education-related courses are not left out as they can explore any of the educational enterprises highlighted in this paper. The elite of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) will not be individuals with degrees but those with entrepreneurial skills and ideas that can solve human and societal problems. Education sector is one of the domains that will be greatly revolutionized by the 4IR as many qualified educators will lose their jobs due to massive engagement of robotics and artificial intelligent machines to solve educational problems. Interventions are necessary to help the incoming teachers navigate the slippery terrain of this 21st Century education landscape. All institutions of higher learning offering education degree courses at Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.), Postgraduate Certificate of Education (PGCE), Master of Education (M.Ed.) and Doctor of Education (EdD) must strive to close the tunnel of teacher unemployment and unemployability by introducing a general course in educational entrepreneurship. More research studies need to be conducted in considering the roles of education entrepreneurs in job creation and strengthening of education service delivery in the Sub-Saharan Africa.

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