

WINNING ESSAY

ENTREPRENEURSHIP AS A SOLUTION TO UNEMPLOYMENT IN NIGERIA

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Nigeria, Africa's most populous country, is facing a serious problem which is having the highest rate of unemployment on the continent. As of 2023, the population of people who are eligible to work but are employed was about thirty three percent with the youths hovering at a staggering forty-two percent. Despite Nigeria's vast resources and abundance of youths, this serious problem still scourged the land. Entrepreneurship is proving to serve as a promising solution to this crisis; by fostering a culture of innovation and critical thinking, it serves to be a catalyst of job creation and economic development. This essay delves into the various ways through which unemployment is being alleviated by entrepreneurship.

Unemployment is a multifaceted problem having its roots deeply entrenched in Nigeria's economic structure. The National Bureau of Statistics has reported that for several years, the rate of increase of unemployment has been exponential and that it's acute among our youths. The issue of unemployment was brought about by various factors such as; the fact that there is a mismatch between the skills of graduates and the skills required in the labor market due to the poor education system, the fact that there are inadequate social amenities and infrastructure required to run a business, the fact that the rapid population increase limits the amount of people that can attain feasible jobs and the fact that most people are not willing to work due to the lack of government incentives as well as loans for business startups.

Entrepreneurship on the other hand is the designing, launching and managing of business enterprises which supply goods and services according to the market's demands. An entrepreneur identifies areas the market lacks in and start-up businesses to exploit these areas. There are various types of entrepreneurs such as; innovative entrepreneurs who thrive in creating new products or ideas and developing businesses to specialize in them; imitative entrepreneurs who use existing business models and add their own unique twists; and social entrepreneurs who deal with providing

services on the social network or world. Entrepreneurship has proven to affect the rate of unemployment in so many ways which will be discussed in the paragraphs that follow.

To set the stage, one of the most direct ways in which entrepreneurship alleviates unemployment is by creating job opportunities. Small business set ups as well as medium business set-ups employ about fifty percent of the country's burgeoning work force. Entrepreneurship creates job opportunities in a wide range of industries such as the agricultural industry, business industry, technological industry and many more. Looking at these facts, if more youths are encouraged to venture into entrepreneurship, the rate of unemployment would be significantly dropped. Illustrations of this is the Andela company which specializes in mentoring people on various areas in the technological industry, statistics show that since their start-up, the rate of unemployment has been positively affected.

Diving deeper, Nigeria has a serious problem of being over-dependent on the oil industry leading to the neglect of other industries and sectors. Entrepreneurship allows for people to venture out into various industries leading to the revitalisation of the other sectors and promoting the economic development of the country as a whole. The economic development of the country allows it to expand its industries indirectly creating more job opportunities and alleviating unemployment.

In addition, entrepreneurship fosters a culture of innovation, critical thinking and self-development. Holding more entrepreneurship workshops allows the unemployed population explore the depths of their minds to develop for themselves, new job opportunities to venture into.

Furthermore, entrepreneurship programs such as the National youths entrepreneurship development program and the Nigerian youths development conference held annually allows youths develop the necessary skills not adequately provided by the educational system in order to venture out into more diverse sectors to thrive.

There are so many other ways in which entrepreneurship alleviates unemployment; however, there are also some challenges facing entrepreneurship which will be discussed in the paragraphs below.

To get the ball rolling, the lack of adequate funds for business start-ups is a major issue affecting entrepreneurship. Banks see risks in entrusting funds to small businesses which causes many aspiring entrepreneurs to throw in the towel.

In addition, the lack of infrastructure such as electricity, good transportation networks and access to adequate water supply affected some businesses greatly, discouraging more people from venturing into those sectors.

Furthermore, bureaucracy also affects entrepreneurship greatly with the tedious processes needed to be taken to start businesses and collect loans, many people are discouraged from venturing out to their comfort zones or in other words bite the bullet to start up their own businesses.

Nevertheless, to every problem, a solution exists. The government plays an important role in solving these problems as they are required to soften the tedious processes and eliminate red tapism towards entrepreneurs, they are also required to provide adequate infrastructure to provide entrepreneurs with a reliable source of raw materials and various facilities needed for their business to thrive. Lastly, the government is required to set up more programs that encourage unemployed people and provide them access to funds in order to successfully start up their businesses.

Despite all these challenges, there are still some people who bit the bullet and made it through the obstacles. Examples of these are Angela Ngozi who set up a business that took advantage of the abundance of resources in the agricultural sector and also trains people on how to do so as she recognized the struggle they also have to face. Anthony Mark who started up a digital business in the digital market that taught various computer skills to aspiring entrepreneurs and many others.

Conclusively, in light of what I have said although there are many things to be done to promote it, entrepreneurship is truly the solution to the scourge of unemployment in Nigeria.