

Edupreneurship: Preparing Young Education Graduates Beyond The Classroom Teaching

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Article Info

Article History

Received:
May 10, 2021

Accepted:
August 22, 2021

Keywords :

Entrepreneurship;
Opportunities;
Education; Edupreneur,
Youth, Job Creation.

Abstract

While there is broad consensus about the role of entrepreneurial skills for job creation, there is a 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. Although individuals with teaching qualifications like Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) and Post-Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) are considered first for teaching positions, opportunities also abound for such individuals with a passion for entrepreneurship within the sector. This article presents different entrepreneurship opportunities which young people with education degrees can explore to become self-reliant 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 sustainable development and prosperity of Sub-Saharan Africa.

DOI:

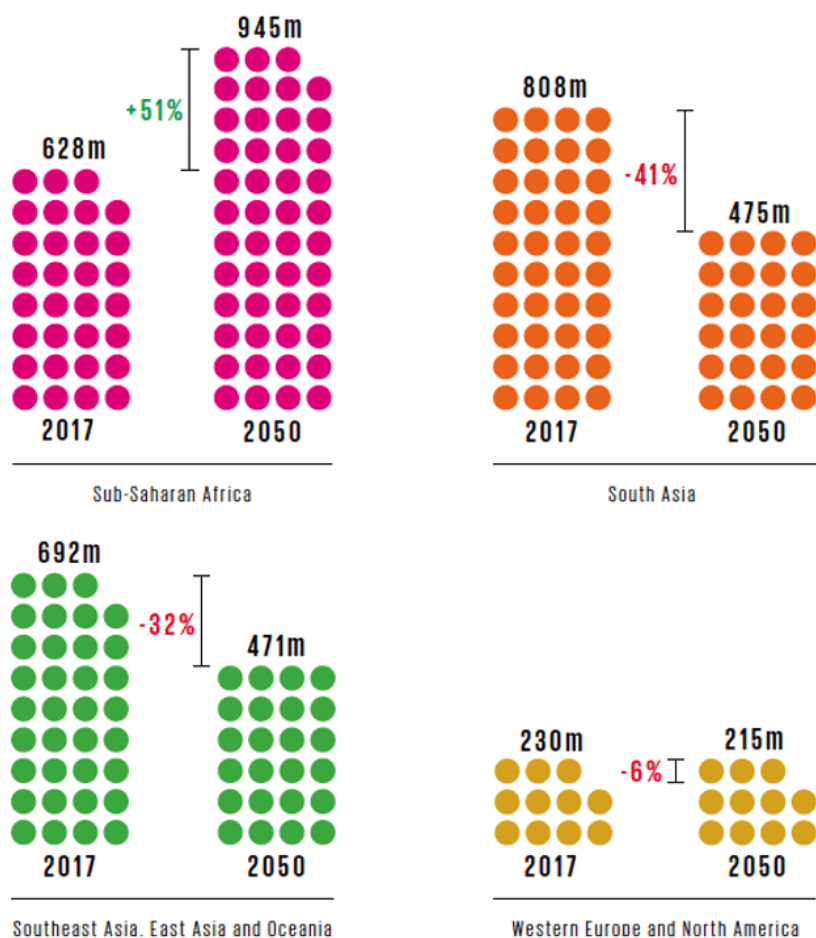
10.5281/zenodo.5234011

Introduction

Recently, scholarly literature in Africa has focused on exploring entrepreneurial opportunities as a solution to youth unemployment on the continent (Hassan & Olaniran, 2011; Uleanya & Gamede, 2017; Abisuga-Oyekunle & Fillis, 2017; Adom, Chiri, Quaye, & Awuah-Werekoh, 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-Saharan Africa is faced with the challenges of how to provide employment opportunities for her teeming young population (World Bank, 2019; Uleanya, Rugbeer & Olaniran, 2019). The reason is simple, as illustrated in Figure 1, Africa is the only continent in the world where the youth population is rising exponentially (Sow, 2019). 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 with a total of 226 million.

Figure 1: Africa's rising youth population

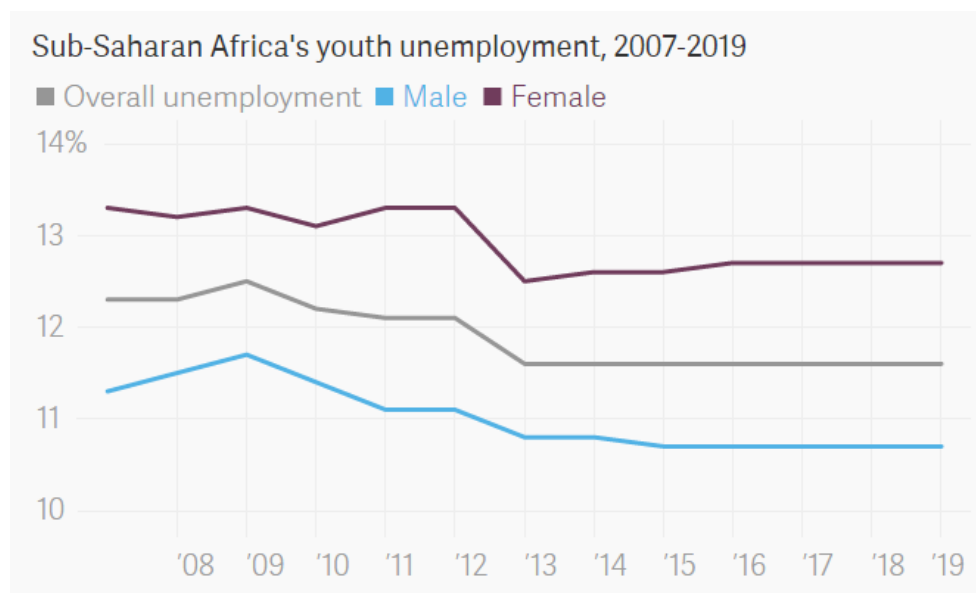
○ Equals 20 million people aged 0–24 years



Source: Sow (2018).

The rising population of African youths also affects the unemployment rate in the continent (see figure 2) as it may double by the year 2055 unless something concrete is done to salvage the situation. Similarly, 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 of unemployed graduates are qualified teachers without schools and classrooms to teach (Govender, 2016; Papenfus, 2018). The implication of this is that millions of youths are left stranded without employment after spending years in the universities to bag higher education qualifications.

Figure 2: Youth Unemployment rate in Africa



Source: Mohammed (2020).

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 where 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 where 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% of young people between the ages of 15 and 34 are unemployed (Aljazeera, 2019). Ajufo (2013) described the scenario of youth unemployment in Nigeria as devastating to both the individual and the society. 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, 2013:1). “The future of Africa’s economic development lies with young entrepreneurs,” a statement made by 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 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, 2017:1).

While there is broad consensus about the importance of youth entrepreneurship education job creation, there is a dearth of research about what opportunities are available for a 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 Sub-Saharan Africa, such a study is imperative considering the rising youth population and youth unemployment rate. Since the rate of qualified unemployed teachers are 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 on how a graduate can explore these opportunities is also important as this will serve as a searchlight for young university graduates that are willing to embrace entrepreneurship.

While studies that focused on youth entrepreneurship as a panacea to youth unemployment in Africa have been conducted (John, Benedict, Kanayo & Ekenechukwu, 2016; Nwokolo, Dywili, & Chimucheka, 2017; Ismail, Tolba, Ghalwash, Alkhatib, Karadeniz, Ouazzani & Schøtt, 2018; Anosike, 2019), few of these studies

addressed educational-based entrepreneurship. Given the scarcity of literature on entrepreneurial opportunities for young graduates in the discipline of education, this review addressed the following research questions:

1. Who is an education entrepreneur?
2. What are the entrepreneurial opportunities that are available in the education sector?
3. How can this review inform policy regarding undergraduate and graduate degrees in the Faculty of Education?

It is anticipated that the paper generates new knowledge and scholarship about entrepreneurship education for students in the Faculties or Colleges of Education, both in the developing and developed countries, particularly in tackling the menace of unemployment among youths. Moreover, the paper prompts a better understanding of the need to rethink the curriculum in the Faculty of Education beyond the usual preparation of students for classroom teaching positions alone. Such understanding enables academics and other stakeholders in the Faculty of Education to seek necessary innovations and collaborations to expose students to entrepreneurial skills and opportunities.

This paper has implication for achieving the Goal 8 of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), also known as Agenda 2030, 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).

The also paper contributes to literature by exploring the entrepreneurial perspectives to education degrees – a context that has not been adequately discussed in the literature. The rest of the paper highlighted the theoretical framework, literature review cases of education-based entrepreneurial initiatives, conclusion, and policy recommendations.

Theoretical Framework

Opportunity-based theory of Entrepreneurship

The opportunity-based theory of entrepreneurship was employed in this paper to further establish the need for young education graduates to embrace entrepreneurship. The opportunity-based theory is a contemporary theory of entrepreneurship that links the success of entrepreneurial endeavours with the changes that occur within one's environment. According to Peter Drucker, the proponent of this theory, entrepreneurs thrive by leveraging on the advantage and opportunities created by social, cultural, and technological changes in society (Dontigney, 2015). In other words, for an entrepreneur to succeed, he/she must observe closely different revolutions as they occur not only in the social space but also in the cultural and technological spaces. Drucker believes that entrepreneurs look for opportunities in the waves of revolutions that happen in society.

The advancement in Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) has revolutionised social and cultural spaces. Many societies have witnessed tremendous changes which have reshaped the views and perceptions about family, community, and education. While these changes have brought about an upgrade in the people's standard of living as many now have access to clean water, decent housing, and technology among others, it has also weakened the structure and communalities for which family is known. Many parents no longer have time to monitor the academic progress of their children because of workplace demands. While this appears to be a challenge, Education entrepreneurs must view this as an opportunity to establish an after-school coaching programme that caters for children whose parents are not available after school hours. The urge to always flow with the new trend in the society, identify the challenges that it brings, and turn them into opportunities is what makes an entrepreneur a change champion (Simpheh, 2011).

Based on the review of literature on opportunity-based entrepreneurship, I have identified four crucial elements which every potential entrepreneur must note. These are:

- i. Opportunities are always connected to specific circumstances and purposes. Certain situations and circumstances always open doors for some services to be rendered or goods to be supplied. For instance, the opening of a new college in a community is likely going to attract the opening of some businesses such as bookshops, food and confectionary shops, printing, and typesetting services, among others.
- ii. Opportunities are limitless: The search for opportunities is endless though it does not have to follow a specific pattern or style. Despite the overwhelming challenges that COVID-19 has brought to different nations of the world since its outbreak in November 2019, several opportunities have opened for a new line of businesses such as the production of face masks, hand sanitisers, personal protective equipment, testing kits, e-learning software, among others. In summary, new challenges will always open fresh opportunities for entrepreneurs to explore.
- iii. Opportunities involve risk-taking: Show me a successful entrepreneur and I will show you an individual who is not afraid of taking risks (Hassan & Olaniran, 2015). Risk-taking in entrepreneurship has to do with tearing down of status quo and believing in a new way of getting a

problem solved. The ability and audacity to follow a deserted pathway or daring a new challenge make an entrepreneur a risk-taker.

- iv. Opportunities attract oppositions: Some threats and oppositions come with being successful as an entrepreneur (Pramanik, 2015). Such opposition sometimes comes in form of competition or bad policy. A good entrepreneur does not see the threats as the end of the business but as steppingstones to reaching new clients and climbing new levels of services or products. However, entrepreneurs with this mindset always seek opportunities for networking, collaboration and reskilling which always serve as reservoirs of strength and defence when the need arises.

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. 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 takes 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 occupy an important place in nation-building. Scarborough and Zimmerer (2003) note that entrepreneurs are new business drivers that emerge in the face of risk and difficulties to run a business, make a profit and contribute to the economy. Therefore, the promotion of entrepreneurial spirit among youths has been a major policy for many governments 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. Hess (2008) sees an edupreneur as an entrepreneur who ventures into an educational-based public or private enterprise with the intention to develop a solution to solve an age-long education problem. Sometimes the word edupreneur and teacherpreneur are used interchangeably to describe a teacher or an educator who functions or develops an entrepreneurial mindset to cause a reform in the sector of education (Bayus, 2013).

According to Shulman (2017), an Education Entrepreneur is an individual who works within 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 a 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.

Looking at edupreneurship from the eye of Schulman submission, one realises that no education system can succeed without the support of private organisations and individuals with innovative mindsets. The work of nation-building and development in a nation cannot be achieved by the government alone. Creative individuals are often positioned to develop entrepreneurial ideas, often found to be complementary to government efforts. Nieswandt (2017) called these individuals social entrepreneurs because of their resilience and quest towards solving social problems. Similarly, Bornstein & Davis (2010:1) conceptualises social entrepreneurship to be “the process by which citizens build or transform institutions to advance solutions to social problems, such as poverty, illness, illiteracy, environmental destruction, human rights abuses, and corruption, to make life better for many”.

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

- (i) Identify a need in the education sector and develop an idea to meet the need;
- (ii) Convert the idea into action by introducing a project, product or an organisation;

- (iii) Engage in promotional activities to unveil the project or organisation;
- (iv) Be aware of the risk and uncertainties involved and put mechanism in place to mitigate;
- (v) Continue working and strategising to have an edge over potential competitors.

Talking about identifying a need and conceiving an idea or project to meet such a 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 other words, the sector keeps changing as society experiences changes on a 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 a 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 the business initiative by specialising in those areas where schools and educators are struggling to cope. An Educational Consultant is an individual who assists 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 a perfect fit for someone with a 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 consultant, you do not necessarily need to have direct contact with the student or parents (Threlfall, 2018), the role is likethat of a school counsellor. While school counsellors are hired directly by schools, educational consultants are usually self-employed, and they sometimes work in roles that support 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 the 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, Duma & Nzima, 2017). This, therefore, creates an entrepreneurial opportunity for young people with a background in education to acquire the knowledge and skills in this area, as the demand for these services will rise as we approach the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR).

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 a preeminent place though it has been said that research speaks directly to teaching and community engagement. The implication of this is an increase 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 specialise in this field, you should have the skills and knowledge of the software systems like Statistical Software for Social Scientists (SPSS), INVIVO and Atlas ti, among others. You should also be ready to work with individuals and organisations in collecting and analysing 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 a background in education to reskill themselves in the areas of statistics, data analytics, data mining, and project management, to take full advantage of this opportunity.

4. Education Tour Planner

Educational tourism and recreational programmes are one activity that contributes immensely to the mental and social learning capacity of school children (Whitesell, 2016; Bakioglu, Karamustafaoglu,

Karamustafaoglu, & Yapici, 2018). Little wonder that many parents spend a huge amount of money to enable their children to 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 value outdoor learning activities, both 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 an education background with relevant certification and a network of institutions.

5. After-School Services

There is a relative shortage of good after-school programmes for teenagers in many African countries, especially for those in the high schools (Holstead, Hightower and Miller, 2015) and this presents 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 enrol them in after-school programmes. The after-school programme is usually an evening learning platform established purposefully to provide educational activities to teenagers and youths in a broad range of areas like academic support, career guidance, vocational skills training, sports, and recreation, among others (Yohalem, Pitman and Edwards, 2010). Recent studies revealed that there are immense benefits in enrolling teenagers in after-school programmes (Kayalar, 2016; Leonard, Fleming, Lewis & Durham, 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 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.

Cases of Innovative Education-based entrepreneurial initiatives

A range of Education-based enterprises exist across the globe that focuses on developing solutions to solve various challenges around the education sector. Prominent among these educational enterprises are e-teach in the United Kingdom, Street2School Initiative in Nigeria, and Teachers pay Teachers in the United States of America.

E-teach: United Kingdom (UK)

There is an overwhelming concern about the dearth of high school teachers in the United Kingdom (See & Gorard, 2019). While the population of high school learners is increasing, many teachers in high schools are reportedly exiting the work prematurely. Many initiatives are springing up to fill the gap in terms of recruiting new teachers for schools that need them. One of such initiatives is e-teach. With the motto “build for teachers, by teachers,” e-teach is reputed to be the first private teachers’ recruitment organisation in the United Kingdom (UK). Founded in 2001 by Paul Howell- the Chief Executive Officer of the organisation and a Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) graduate in Physical Education from the College of St. Marks and St John in Plymouth, [e-teach](#) operates on the philosophy that when excellent teachers are engaged to teach in schools, it will result in improved learning in their students, and school management will have more and happier time to manage the school affairs. Having realised that many schools in the UK spend a lot of time and resources searching for teachers to teach various subjects, the founder of e-teach saw the need to create an entrepreneurial solution to fill the gap around teachers’ recruitment. Though the organisation is not a school and does not have students, it serves as a ladder connecting teachers that are seeking teaching positions with the schools that need quality teachers to teach different subjects. With the integration of technology in the recruitment process, software was developed which allows interested teachers to search for teaching positions and apply to schools of their choice as advertised. Having recruited teachers for various schools across the United Kingdom and beyond, especially in Surrey, Leicestershire, Bristol, Leeds, and Manchester, Northern Ireland, and the United Arab Emirate (UAE) among others, e-teach has proven to be a successful edupreneurship initiative and a model for would-be edupreneurs to follow.

Street2School: Nigeria

Street2School is a non-profit educational initiative based in Lagos Nigeria. The initiative began in 2015 as an intervention programme with an introduction of tuition-free elementary schools for out-of-school children in a

rural community. The founder, Mrs Tosin Taiwo - a former school teacher, was inspired to start this initiative having noticed the high rate of out-of-school children on the street of Ikola Community, a rural community in Lagos where access to government-owned schools is poor. Nigeria is noted to be the most populous country in Africa with abundant human and material resources (Whiting, 2019). Despite the country being the largest economy in Africa (Naidoo, 2020), “one in every five of the world’s out-of-school children is in Nigeria” (UNICEF, 2013). While there is free and compulsory primary education in the country, public primary schools are faced with overcrowded classrooms and poor infrastructure (Babatunde, 2015). This factor led to the proliferation of private nursery and primary schools in the country with parents resorting to this option to educate their children. However, many children from the less-privileged homes whose parents could not afford private school tuition are left with no option other than to enrol in the already crowded public school where many of them are later pushed out due to a shortage of teachers and infrastructure. Street2School currently housed over 160 of such children who were rescued from the street and enrolled in a tuition-free school of the organisation. The non-profit initiative is sustained through donations from the members of the community and funding from corporate bodies that target educational initiatives as part of the Corporate Social Responsibilities (CSR).

Teachers Pay Teachers – United States of America (USA)

Established by a New York City-based public school teacher in 2006, Teachers Pay Teachers is an education-based enterprise created to assist teachers in reaching students by enabling the exchange of teaching and learning resources between the two parties. United States educational system is one of the most unequal in the developed world (Darling-Hammond, 2001). Many students from minority groups are constrained by a lack of educational resources for learning. The founder of the Teachers Pay Teachers organisation, Paul Edelman, saw incredible opportunities in the daily lesson plans and resources that teachers create, and looked for a way these resources can get to the students that need them most. Paul quickly realised that his students did the best when he incorporated ideas from other educators. Teachers Pay Teachers has grown into a reputable global electronic hub for the exchange of learning resources. The organisation’s website has become a platform where teachers can find useful resources designed by colleagues and have served over four million teachers worldwide.

Conclusion

Entrepreneurship education, without doubt, is the way out from the huge youth unemployment rate facing Africa, and other developing continents 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. The education sector is one of the domains that will be greatly revolutionised by the 4IR as many qualified educators will lose their jobs due to the 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 for strengthening education service delivery in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Policy Recommendation

The paper has significant policy implications for the generality of the stakeholders in the education sector, both in Africa and across the globe. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has affirmed the need to rethink the way teaching and learning is delivered both in basic and higher education institutions. The dynamic school system of this Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) requires educators and schools that are passionate and prepared for the task of preparing students for the challenges of the time. We need more than teachers that are only passionate of classroom, chalks, and chalkboard. We need education innovators and inventors who can design education solutions and technologies to solve the complex education problems of today. Universities and Colleges of Education must see this beyond being a challenge but a call to action to raise more entrepreneurs with adequate knowledge of the education system as well as technological skills required to bring a paradigm shift to different areas of school operations such as the curriculum, assessment, and teaching and learning delivery.

Government and policymakers must come up with programmes and projects to encourage young education graduates to embrace entrepreneurship. This includes a need to set up different funding schemes to support Edupreneurs as a way of promoting the operations of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). By promoting entrepreneurship opportunities in the education sector, thinking beyond the current perception of education

degree holders as teachers, we will start seeing them in the light of education change agents capable of driving sustainable education solutions and development.

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