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How Entrepreneurial Thinking can contribute to Curb Youth Restiveness in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria

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Abstract: The objective of the paper is to discuss how entrepreneurial thinking can contribute to curb youth restiveness in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. Methodologically, the sources of data collection for the paper are secondary mainly based on qualitative content and documentary analysis with few quantitative contents. The research design is descriptive. The finding of the paper on the first part shows that the skill requirements for an entrepreneur include people-factor skill, creative skill, politeness skill, appreciation skill, and screw it, just do it skill. The paper on the second part finds out that the Niger Delta youths are passionate about their future and life, and have the desire to work, take risk, and dream big in order to improve their entrepreneurial thinking skills. One of the recommendations of the paper is that the Niger Delta youths should beyond the desire to be empowered academically and entrepreneurially, begin to engage their mind critically; thinking how best to make best use of the empowerments they have received so far. The paper concludes that every entrepreneur is businessman but not all businessmen are entrepreneurs, and it takes bringing a new idea into an already existing business to have entrepreneurship.

Keywords: Entrepreneur, Entrepreneurship, Entrepreneurial Thinking, Youth Restiveness, Niger Delta Region, Niger Delta Youth.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Niger Delta region over the years has witnessed uneasy calm as result of the activities of the youths over the struggle for oil p and related issues. The region is made of Abia, Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Imo, Ondo and Rivers States. Governments both at the state and national levels have at various times introduced programmes and activities towards youth empowerment and entrepreneurial development. Youths in every society remain critical agents and a segment of the population for national development and transformation. It is on this basis that every serious country and its government do not play with the youth population. The Niger Delta youth cannot be left behind in the scheme of things in our national development and transformation. It is in line with this fact that Partnership for Advancing Women Empowerment in Development (PAWED) (2022) argues that youth participation in scheme of things cannot over explained both in the developed economy or developing one.

In Nigeria, youth population are among the highest in the country, 45.46% are between the ages of 15-35 years, given an estimated total population of about 209.6 million people in

2021 This demography can be transformed into strength for economic development of the country if young men and women are mobilized, trained and given necessary skills (PAWED, 2022). Demographically, Stakeholder Democracy Network (SDN) (2020), states that the Niger Delta is a home of about 30 million people. Foundation for Partnership Initiatives in the Niger Delta (PIND) (2011), observes that two-thirds (2/3) of the population of the Niger Delta are youth. This gives about 20 million young men and women in the region. Despite the vast oil resources, the region is a clear explanation of what is 'poverty.' Out of this figure 70% (that is, 14 million) of the youth live below the poverty line. Further negative report about the youth of the region shows that those between the ages of 15-24 years have an unemployment rate of about 40%, far exceeding the national average youth unemployment rate of 14%.

The aim of this paper is to discuss how entrepreneurial thinking can help curb youth restiveness in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria. The paper recognizes that many youths of the Niger Delta region have undergone both academic and entrepreneurial trainings for empowerment, in and outside of the country through various intervention programmes by the

successive governments. However, the position of the paper is that more needs to be done on the part of the youth themselves in the area of developing entrepreneurial thinking skills to utilise and maximize these efforts they have received from the government through such agencies like the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC). This is the motivation behind the paper.

2. Some Conceptual Clarifications

2.1 The Concept of Entrepreneur

The word 'entrepreneur' was derived from the French verb 'entreprendre', which means to undertake, to attempt, to try in hand, to contract for; or, to adventure, to try (Girard, 1962). Entrepreneur is "a person responsible for setting up a business or an enterprise. He has the initiative, skill for innovation and who looks for high achievements. Entrepreneur is also a "catalytic agent of change and works for the good of people" (Dhenak, 2020, p. 1). The successful entrepreneur is defined as a man or woman who starts a business where there is none before; who has at least 8 employees and who has been in entrepreneurship for at least 5 years (Hornaday & Bunker, 1970; Hornaday & Aboud, 1971).

2.2 The Concept of Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship is the act of identifying and founding a new line of business where none existed before. Chang and Wyszomirski (2015) observe that entrepreneurship is an activity that shifts the old habits into the new one with fully discipline and independent. The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) defines entrepreneurship as "any attempt at a new business or new venture creation, such as self-employment, a new business organisation or the expansion of an existing business by an individual, a team of individuals or an established business (Kelley et al., 2012). Davis (2015) explains entrepreneurship as the creation and running of one's own business. While the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) (1999) see entrepreneurship to a process of using initiative to transform business concept to new venture and diversifying existing venture or enterprise to high growing potentials. Entrepreneurship entails three key issues. One, identify business opportunities, which are people's problems; two, allocate resources (labour, materials and finance) to solve the problems; and three, create and add value to people.

2.2 The Concept of Entrepreneurial Thinking

According to London Premier Centre (2023, p. 1) "entrepreneurial thinking is the mindset of finding opportunities, creating solutions, developing creative ideas, and considering risks to drive cited possibilities and activities." Gillett and Kelterborn (2022) believe that it is an entrepreneurial thinking that helps an entrepreneur to form his mindsets, which he exhibits in his attitudes and behaviours in order to identify and capitalize on opportunities and at the same time sees his mistakes as an opportunity to learn and improve. For Kuan (2023, p. 1) entrepreneurial thinking "as an approach to problem-solving that involves focusing on a

problem to be solved and testing various solution ideas as early, often, quickly, and cost-effectively as possible." London Premier Centre (2023, p. 2) summarily concludes that "the core meaning of an entrepreneurial thinking creates the mindset to think outside "the box when solving abstract problems, using resources, and planning."

2.3 The Concept of Youth Entrepreneurs

Israel (2020), defines youth entrepreneurs as young individuals who maximize their enterprising abilities, take initiatives, create, innovate, and bear all risks involved in setting up new enterprises.

2.4 The Concept of Youth

The National Youth Policy (2019) defines youth as all young people in Nigerian between the ages of 15 – 29 years. The 2020 National Youth Survey refers youth as people between the ages of 15 – 35 years.

Table 1 Definition of youth outside Nigeria

Entity/Instrument/Organisation	Age	Reference
UN Secretariat/UNESCO/ILO	Youth: 15-24	UN Instruments, Statistics
UN Habitat (Youth Fund)	Youth: 15-32	Agenda 21
UNICEF/WHO/UNFPA	Youth: 15-24	UNFPA
UNICEF/The Convention on Rights of the Child	Child until 18	UNICEF
The African Youth Charter	Youth: 15-35	African Union

Source: Adapted from

<https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/youth/fact-sheets/youth-definition.pdf>

2.5 The Concept of Niger Delta Youth

Ukpong (2009) regrettably, states that youth in the context of the Niger Delta connotes not only age but social exclusion deprivation, economic disempowerment and political disenfranchisement. They constitute a segment of the society which, traditionally should be seen rather than be heard, but who nevertheless always struggle to be heard. They are the category of humans who get blamed when things go wrong in

the society even though these may have been masterminded by the Nigerian state. Niger Delta youth constitutes that class of young men and women who are supposed to dress responsibly, think responsibly, behave responsibly and respectfully, take up responsibilities in and out of homes and in the community and still remain young enough to be called youths.

2.6 The Concept of Youth Restiveness

Youth restiveness is the engagement by youths in agitation for the restoration of their rights and dignity or self-seeking and criminal activities, that can be either constructive (positive) or destructive (negative) (Ejumudo, 2014, p. 1). The causes of youth restiveness are connected to unemployment, lack of basic and inadequate infrastructural facilities and inadequate social amenities amongst others (Akpokighe, R., & Ejovi, 2020, p 66). Youth restiveness relates to matters of agitation by youths over issues of deprivation, neglect, marginalization, and feelings of dissatisfaction (Ejumudo, 2014).

2.7 The Concept of Youth Entrepreneurship

This is a process whereby creative and innovative ideas are transformed into enterprises initiated and managed by young people with the primary purpose of addressing their socio-economic challenges such as poverty and unemployment.

Youth entrepreneurship is the entrepreneurial activity by youths to create, and innovate and build something of recognized value around perceived opportunities. This activity is the process of creating value through the creation of an organization and also the process of starting and or growing a new profit-making business. This includes the process of finding a new product or service.

2.8 The Concept of Business

Business is an enterprise or activity with the main intention to make profits. It can be in the form of a company, partnership, organization, sole proprietorship, occupation, or any entity that undertakes commercial, industrial, charitable, or professional activities to earn profits. The term “profit” doesn’t necessarily mean anything monetary. It can be a non-monetary benefit in any form which a business entity may deem/consider rewarding. Moreover, a business can be a “for-profit” or “not-for-profit” entity and may have a separate existence from those who run/control it (Marketing Tutor.net, 2023). Business consists of a broad variety of commercial, industrial, or professional activities meant to bring in money and provide consumers with value. The main goal of a business is to efficiently handle resources like finances and assets. It needs to be handled to increase profits (Entrepreneursdata, 2023).

3. Discussion

3.1 Difference between Businessman and Entrepreneur

A businessman focusses more on small improvements of an existing situation, but an entrepreneur tries to imagine how

things may be in the future and work toward making that idea a reality (this attitude, by pushing the boundaries of what we know, entail higher risks but also higher rewards when successful) (Piu, 2012). Usually, the terms businessman and entrepreneur are used interchangeably, but they are two different words and refer to separate individuals possessing distinct approaches to a business (Acharya, 2022).

A businessman is an individual who starts or operates a business with an unoriginal business idea. A businessman is an individual carrying out an activity related to industrial and commercial purposes. He/she chooses to establish a business in a field or area in high demand or give maximum profits in return, irrespective of its uniqueness. A businessman follows an established path engraved by someone with an unoriginal idea, but an entrepreneur believes and thinks about making his/her own path with new ideas. An entrepreneur is an individual having an exclusive idea to establish and initiate a new venture and bring a change in the world. An entrepreneur is highly innovative and creative, takes a risk, and endures unpredictable situations in the business. Businesses starts by entrepreneurs with a new concept are known as a startup (Acharya, 2022).

The significant difference between an entrepreneur and a businessman is that an entrepreneur comes up with a unique concept or idea, while a businessman sets up a business as a new entrant in an existing market on industrial or commercial grounds (Acharya, 2022). This paper summarily distinguishes a businessman and an entrepreneur from the standpoint of their mental model (that is, way of they think. A businessman is more an ‘analytical thinker’ while an entrepreneur is more a ‘possibility thinker’ (Piu, 212).

Table 1 Difference between Entrepreneur and Businessman

Factor	Entrepreneur	Businessman
Definition	An entrepreneur is an individual having an exclusive idea to establish a new venture.	A businessman is an individual who establishes a business with an old business idea.
Market position	Entrepreneurs are market leaders.	Businessmen are market players.
Market	Entrepreneurs create a market for his/her business ideas.	Businessmen make a place in an already existing market with effort and dedication.
Nature	Entrepreneurs are intuitive.	Businessmen are calculative.
Risk factor	The risk of	The risk of

	failure is very high.	failure is less.
Method of operation	Uses unconventional methods to run the business.	Uses traditional methods to run the business.
Focus	Focused in essence and gives importance to customers, employees and the public.	Focus is oriented towards profit.
Goals	Entrepreneurs are visionary, and they set long-term goals.	Businessmen are focused on short-term profits.
Competition	Low competition for the business since they enter a new market.	Faces extreme competition since it is difficult to obtain a competitive position in an already existing market.

Source: Acharya, M (2022).

Table 2 Difference between Business and Entrepreneurship

Factor	Business	Entrepreneurship
Focus	Profit generation and operations	Opportunity identification and innovation
Ownership	Can be owned by individuals, groups, or corporations	Often initiated by individuals or small groups
Risk	Generally lower due to established operations and customer base	Higher due to introducing new ideas and ventures
Innovation	Focus on optimizing	Thrives on disruptive ideas

	existing strategies and processes	and solutions
Decision-making	Often hierarchical and top-down	More collaborative and flexible
Culture	Traditional and structured	Agile and adaptable
Growth potential	Gradual expansion, diversification, and acquisitions	Higher potential for rapid growth and scaling
Stability	Emphasizes stability and predictability	Involves embracing uncertainty and change
Resource management	Efficient allocation and utilization of resources	Resource optimization and creative problem-solving
Ownership involvement	Owners may or may not be directly involved in day-to-day operations	Entrepreneurs are actively involved in all aspects of the business
Market orientation	Focuses on existing market demand and competition	Seeks to create and shape market demand
Pro-activeness	Reactive to market changes and trends	Proactively identifies and creates opportunities
Success measurement	Financial performance and profitability	Impact, innovation, and growth
Flexibility	Adapts to changing market conditions and customer needs	Embraces flexibility and agility in decision-making
Time horizon	Long-term stability and sustainability	Short-term goals and rapid growth

Organizational size	Can vary from small businesses to large corporations	Often associated with startups and smaller ventures
Exit strategy	Exit options include mergers, acquisitions, or going public	Exit options often include selling the venture or strategic partnerships
Resources required	Established infrastructure, systems, and capital	Requires resourcefulness and access to capital
Market knowledge	Focuses on understanding existing market dynamics	Seeks to identify untapped market opportunities
Failure tolerance	More risk-averse and seeks stability	Embraces failure as a learning experience and catalyst for growth

Source: Adopted from **Entrepreneursdata. (2023).**

3.2 The Benefits of Entrepreneurship Thinking

Having entrepreneurial thinking skills and putting them to good use is not important for entrepreneurs alone but for everyone pursuing a successful career. Employees with such skills stand out because they tend to think creatively and take ownership of their jobs as well as performance. The following are some benefits of entrepreneurial thinking skills:

3.2.1 It helps to stay ahead of others in business

It helps an entrepreneur tackle the ever-increasing competition and rise through innovation. The ability of an entrepreneur to identify problem quicker and provide solution timely is likely to put forward the best in the marketplace.

3.2.2 It allows for more flexibility in business

Entrepreneurial thinking can change the attitude of an entrepreneur towards his enterprise as well as himself. Through flexibility it enables him adapt to

the changing environment such as the changes in competitive landscape, market dynamics, and consumer trends/demands etc. Little or no time is wasted in resistance towards the change, speeding up his business growth.

3.2.3 It boosts Creativity

Developing entrepreneurial thinking boosts people's creativity and helps them develop innovative solutions to all challenges (London Premier Centre, 2023).

3.2.4 It leads to development of leadership skill

Entrepreneurial thinking helps an entrepreneur develop the leadership skills he needs to run and succeed in his enterprise (London Premier Centre, 2023).

3.3 Skill Requirement for Youth Entrepreneurial Thinking

There are skill requirements for youth entrepreneurial thinking and successful entrepreneurship as articulated by Branson (2010).

3.3.1 The people factor skill

This is the basis of many entrepreneurial successes and because many business leaders discount it, innumerable failures occur. While the current thinking in business schools holds that someone with an idea needs to succeed through focus, clarity and good business plan. It is obvious that bringing together a great team that is united by strong motivation, determination and bravery is much more important (Branson, 2010). It should be inculcated in Niger Delta youth as a skill, on how to assemble great entrepreneurial team that has a vision, passion and a real sense of ownership.

3.3.2 Creative skill

This skill will teach how to be genuinely enthusiastic in doing business. One's approach may not likely work for all business, hence creative skill is vital to building lasting success and ensuring your product or service has an edge over your competitors (Branson, 2010).

3.3.3 Politeness Skill

A successful enterprise is not just the product or service it sells, its supply chain or its corporate culture. It is a group or people bound together by a common purpose and vision. The best designed business plan for an entrepreneur will come to nothing if it is not carried out by an enthusiastic and passionate staff. This is especially true when things go slightly wrong, a friendly and proactive team can often win people round, averting a potential disaster or even turning it to your benefit (Branson, 2010).

3.3.4 Appreciation skills

Always look for the best in your people. Lavish praises for any success recorded. Never criticize, rather focus on mistakes as to make it better next time, catch someone doing something right every day. When mistakes happen, which is inevitable always take the position that you have to learn from them and try not to dwell on what went wrong (Branson, 2010).

3.3.5 Screw it, just do it skill

To succeed in entrepreneurship, you must have the bravery to give it a go. Starting entrepreneurship and becoming an entrepreneur is a big risk. An entrepreneur needs resolve and conviction to overcome the early hurdles. Most startups fail in the first few years, so a key ingredient of success is the ability to pick up and try again (Branson, 2010).

3.4 Characteristics of an Entrepreneur Who Thinks

An entrepreneur possesses a complex personality, certain personality characteristics that make him or her quite different. Most of these entrepreneurial traits can be further developed in an individual if they are present in him to some extent in latent form by well-structured training and development programmes. Some of the important characteristics attributable to successful entrepreneurs are listed below (Ajani & Ayelokan, 2010):

3.4.1 Self-confidence and Self-Motivated

Entrepreneurs with self-confidence have independence, individuality and optimism. They tend to believe strongly in themselves and their ability to achieve goals. London Premier Centre (2023) is of the view that successful entrepreneurs globally are people that are self-confidence and self-motivated. They are not been pushed to take action simply because they are initiative in what they do to succeed.

3.4.2 Creativity and Innovative

Creativity has remained one of the salient characteristics of an entrepreneur that thinks. It is the ability to think creatively and critically that generate innovation in every entrepreneur.

3.4.3 Task-Result oriented

Need for achievement, profit oriented, persistence, determination, hard work, drive and initiative as good qualities of entrepreneurs who are task-result oriented.

3.4.4 Risk Taker

Every successful entrepreneur is a risk taker, ready to face challenges. Emmanuel (2020, p. 7) states that “an entrepreneur needs to be comfortable and always ready to take risk after identifying a potential opportunity by investing, money and efforts into it to make is a success.” In another instance, London Premier Centre (2023) states that entrepreneurs in their efforts to venture into new experiences, had already embraced for risks therein in order to succeed in creating values and achieving their goals.

3.4.5 Leadership

Leadership is all about the ability to influence and inspire others. Therefore, leadership behaviour of an entrepreneur gets along well with others, responsive to suggestions and criticisms for improvement.

3.4.6 Originality

Innovative, creative, flexible, resourceful, versatile and knowledgeable are the elements of originality, which any successful entrepreneur possesses.

3.4.7 Future oriented foresight and perceptive

The success to start or run any enterprise is as a result of the ability of the entrepreneur to have the character of future oriented foresight and perceptive.

4.5 The Role of Entrepreneurial Thinking in Curbing Youth Restiveness the Niger Delta Youth

Encouraging the youth of the Niger Delta region to become entrepreneurial thinkers has a lot of advantages in terms of solving problems of youth restiveness, unemployment, as well as paving way for the innovation and growth of the region and the country too. Generally, youth entrepreneurship to the young people in the Niger Delta region will promotes innovation and resilience as it encourages them to find new solutions, ideas and ways of doing things through experience-based learning that will keep their mind busy productively (White & Kenyon, 2000).

Chigunta (2002) identifies the following specific benefits of entrepreneurial thinking, which are also applicable to curb youth restiveness in the Niger Delta:

- Creating employment opportunities for self-employed youths as well as the other young people they employ.

- Bringing alienated and marginalised youths back into the economic mainstream and giving them a sense of meaning and belonging.
- Helping address some of the socio-psychological problems and delinquency that arise from joblessness.
- Helping youths to develop new skills and experiences they can then be apply to other challenges in life.
- Promoting innovation and resilience in youths.
- Promoting the revitalisation of the local community by providing valuable goods and services.
- Capitalising on the fact that young Niger Delta entrepreneurs may be particularly responsive to new economic opportunities and trends in the region and the country at large.

3.6 How to Improve Youth Entrepreneurial Thinking Skills

Having known the skills requirements for entrepreneurial thinking, it is also important to look at how to improve youth entrepreneurial thinking skills.

3.6.1 Be passionate about your work

Passion is the ultimate key to the success of every entrepreneur and as well as contentment. If you are still thinking how to get a job and a new one, it is time to begin to think and plan to own a business and own a business. If you are not passionate about what you do or what you want to, you should simply shift to start a new business.

3.6.2 Be a risk-taker

Entrepreneurship is all about taking risks. Almost all business owners are aware of the phrase 'high risk, high reward'. What sets an entrepreneur with entrepreneurial thinking apart from the average ones is the appetite for risk. Nobody ever says it's easy to put all you have at stake, but it does pay off! By taking small risks you are likely to get rewarded in your entrepreneurship.

3.6.3 Dream big

Never limit your dreams because the most important aspect of entrepreneurial thinking skills is the boundlessness that is required. Throughout our lives we are all conditioned to be practical and realistic. The one thing that has the tendency to set you apart is your ability to dream big and think different. That's where entrepreneurial thinking begins! Dream big and start small, but with a new idea.

4. Conclusion and recommendations

The place of the youth in national development of any country cannot be wished away. This is because the youth segment of country's population has remained the most supplier of active and productive human capital in all economic activities and in

all sectors- public and private. The Niger Delta youth are not and cannot be an exception.

The paper makes the following recommendations:

First, the youth of the Niger Delta region must be more actively and productively relevant to the scheme of things and to themselves too.

Two, they should go beyond the desire to be empowered academically and entrepreneurially, but must begin to engage their mind critically thinking on how best to make use of the little (if I may use the word little) empowerment they have received so far.

Third, the government should not relent in their efforts towards further empowerment of the Niger Delta youth, but this this time, engage them on creativity and innovative entrepreneurial thinking.

Finally, this paper cannot say it all. However, as the saying goes: All hands must be on deck! to have and enjoy lasting peace in the Niger Delta region irrespective of political inclinations.

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