

**EVALUATING THE IMPACT OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP
DEVELOPMENT ON EMPLOYMENT GENERATION OF
STUDENTS IN NILE UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA:
A THEMATIC ANALYSIS APPROACH**

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ABSTRACT

The study explored entrepreneurial development as a viable option for employment generation of students in Nile University of Nigeria. The level of entrepreneurship education and training exposes students to more entrepreneurial knowledge and skill acquisition which in turn enhances entrepreneurial intentions and hence employment creation through self-employment. The qualitative research was used through methodological triangulation by using semi structured interviews, participant observation and field notes. A total of thirty-two (32) students were sampled out of which only 21 responded and used ad-verbatim for analysis. The analysis revealed that there is significant relationship between entrepreneurship development activities in Nile University and employment generation among sampled students. The findings suggest that final year students have been prepared future challenges in entrepreneurship. They have learned new knowledge and skills through entrepreneurship education and training throughout the period of study at the University. Some students who are already self-employed are trying to expand their enterprise. It was recommended that emphasise should be put on practical training of students, ensure that the set objectives are being met effectively before the graduation of students in order to avoid leaving school with theoretical knowledge alone, and they should be made to understand that entrepreneurship is an alternative career path and an avenue for self-employment and job creation.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial development, entrepreneurial intention, entrepreneurial creativity, entrepreneurial innovation, employment generation, self-employment

1. INTRODUCTION

International Labour Organization (ILO) (2018) reported that more than 64 million youths are unemployed worldwide while 145 million youths are working but still living in poverty. According to the report, there are more educated youth these days but they still face difficult transition in the labour market. According to the African Union Report, (2018), 60% of global youth are below the age of 35 and are living in Africa with an estimated population of 420 million still growing. This group are three times more vulnerable to unemployment and poverty. Youth enter the labour market annually with an estimated population of 11-12 million and only 3 million employment opportunities are available leaving 8-9 million youth unemployed.

According to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) (2018), unemployment in the region was at a high rate and this is ravaging the youth. However, there is a move by ECOWAS to promote and create job opportunities, skills acquisition and decent employment for youth. Similarly, National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), (2018) observed that the rate of unemployment in Nigeria was 18.8% by the third quarter in 2017. This in comparison is one of the highest rates in recent years.

As part of the measures to address unemployment in the FCT, the Abuja Enterprise Agency (AEA) was set to up by Federal Capital Territory Administration (FCTA) in collaboration with Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN). It was established The main aim of the Agency is to help aspiring and existing entrepreneurs through business planning, finance, skills acquisition and affordable offices etc. Employment generation is a core mandate of the Agency (Abuja Enterprise Agency, 2018).

The Government has made several attempts to generate employment through stimulation of entrepreneurship programmes such as the National Directorate of employment (NDE) established in 1986 to checkmate rising unemployment trends. Currently the Government is trying to launch the Presidential Youth empowerment Scheme (P-YES). The ILO has observed that graduates do not get employment opportunities. The Nigeria University Commission (NUC) mandated entrepreneurship studies for all undergraduates in Nigerian Universities so that self-employment opportunities are created (Keles, 2016). The NUC also included BSc Entrepreneurship into the curriculum of Universities in Nigeria in 2011 (Ugoani and Ibeenwo, 2015).

According to Nkechi, Ikechukwu, and Okechukwu (2012), inexperienced lecturers teach entrepreneurship theoretically without any practical and this discourages them from venturing into entrepreneurship after graduation. This eventually leads to dependence on government and private sector for employment opportunities instead of self-employment and employment generation for others (Ugoani and Ibeenwo, 2015).

The attempts to resolve these issues have led to several studies but with gaps in methodology because most of the studies were quantitative and the few available qualitative studies mostly used secondary data. Although, similar studies have been carried out in other locations, the main purpose of this study was to understand the influence of entrepreneurial development as a viable option of employment generation for students of Nile university of Nigeria in Abuja. Other specific objectives are to investigate whether relevant entrepreneurship education and training were taught to undergraduates and how it influences employment generation from the students' perspective. It also aims to assess the level of entrepreneurial knowledge and skill acquisition of undergraduates in order to ascertain if it can be depended upon. Other objectives are to examine if the undergraduates have developed any intentions or desire to become entrepreneurs and hence become self-employed thereby solving the problem of unemployment, and whether the students developed necessary capacity for self-employment of others. For this study, the sequence of proxies or variables used is also intended to contribute to existing knowledge.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Entrepreneurship and the Entrepreneur

Entrepreneurship is the identification of opportunities, allocation of resources for the creation of value and this is done through the identification of needs or opportunities that are unmet; this serves as an avenue for change. Entrepreneurs see challenges as opportunities for action to provide solutions for customers and payments are made for such services (Nkechi et al., 2012). The entrepreneur must be able to utilize resources that are not within his disposal or control (Ayoade and Agwu, 2016). According to Stam, (2015) entrepreneurs are ambitious persons that explore avenues to discover new products and services to exploit and for addition of value. As Ibrahim and Mas'ud (2016) stated, entrepreneurs are jack of all trade. This implies that performing well in business is an important characteristic of ambitious entrepreneurs. However, there are two entrepreneurship types exist as stated by Salami, (2011) (as cited in Nkechi et al., 2012); *Opportunity based entrepreneurship* that is when an entrepreneur decides to pursue an opportunity that has been identified or *Necessity based entrepreneurship* when no option is available and entrepreneur is compelled by circumstances to pursue entrepreneurship as a career.

Entrepreneurship Education

Entrepreneurship education can be viewed as a formally structured conveyance of entrepreneurial knowledge (Tony, Sefiu, Olamide, Monsuru, and Oluwatoyin, 2018). The process of developing entrepreneurship in students is the realisation that there is an alternative career path in entrepreneurship education and that it can be taken as a profession (Kusmintarti, Thoyib, Maskie, & Ashar, 2016).

Entrepreneurial Creativity and Innovation

Creativity is the precursor to innovation; in other words innovation is implantation of the creative inspiration (Dorcas, 2017). Every business success depends on creative innovation by entrepreneurs. Creativity deals with inventing or creating something through the use of original ideas or imagination while innovation is what sustains continuous success of a business enterprise. According to Ologundudu, and Ojo, (2017) innovation is the process of changing something already established by introducing something new or making new changes that adds value to product and customers. Creativity is use of novel ideas while innovation is processing these ideas into new goods and services or process improvements (Adebayo, Olashebikan, Agumadu, Peter, Akinsulire, and Ikumapayi, 2017). Creativity and innovation cannot be separated from entrepreneurship.

Concept of Employment

Employment is any activity or work engaged upon to earn payments or wages (International Labour Office, 2017). The attainment of permanent employment is no longer feasible or sustainable. Individuals have to work for different people in multiple non-standard jobs are now prevalent. Some of the opportunities available include; permanent contract, temporary contract and no contract employment. Hence, any employment that is temporary falls under non-standard forms of employment and those without a written contract is an informal wage employment ILO (2017). According to ILO (2017), there are four categories of *non-standard employment*: a) Temporary, b) part-time work, c) temporary agency work and other forms of employment involving multiple parties and, d) disguised employment relationships and dependent.

Self-Employment

The International Labour Conference 2012 based on the employment crisis of youths adopted a call for action that provides a decisive policy and framework for action. It advocates a multi pronged approach for improvement of youth employment opportunities through skills development and education, economic policies and job creation, labour market measures, youth support on entrepreneurship, promoting self-employment and guaranteeing rights of youth workers (International Labour Office, 2017). Since entrepreneurship is synonymous to self-employment to many; economists have also used self-employment as a measure of entrepreneurial activities. Self-employment is an activity that creates jobs and wages that dependent upon the profits realised from products offered. Self-employment exist in four sub-categories; employers, own-account workers, members of producers' cooperatives and contributory family workers. As O'Higgins (2017) stated, the health of an economy can be diagnosed based on the level of self-employment activities in that economy.

Importance of Entrepreneurship Development on Employment Generation

Entrepreneurship development has so many proxies such as entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurship training and these lead to acquiring knowledge and skills; the acquired knowledge and skills develops entrepreneurial desire. The desire encourages venturing into self-employment that will eventually through creativity and innovation create job opportunities and hence youth empowerment (Egbefo and Abe, 2017). Entrepreneurship development is generally influenced by government policies, which eventually leads to economic development and promotion of entrepreneurial activities. These activities will at the long run lead to job creation or employment generation through entrepreneurial activities. This is also a catalyst for industrialization of nations (Oni and Daniya, 2012; Cullen et al., 2014; Obaji and Olugu, 2014).

Theoretical Framework

Although there are several theories that could be used to underpin studies in entrepreneurship, this study was based on theoretical triangulation approach, namely theory of the refugee effect (TRE), the need for achievement theory (NAT) and theory of planned behaviour (TPB). The theory of the refugee effect (TRE) posits that unemployment creates entrepreneurial activities and hence employment opportunities as supported by Schumpeter's creative destruction (Nkechi, et al., 2012). The need for achievement theory (NAT) developed by David McClelland in 1965 opines that as the level of need for achievement rises there is a high tendency that more people will engage in entrepreneurial activities (Akhuemonkhan, Raimi, and Sofoluwe, 2013).

For the theory of planned behaviour (TPB) proposed by Fishbein and Ajzen in 1975-80 supported by the theory of reasoned action (TRA) suggests that possession of entrepreneurial intention increases the likelihood of venturing into entrepreneurship in the future. However, behavioural intention depends on subjective attitudes and standards. For instance, where friends and peers view entrepreneurship as a risky venture, then there is a very high likelihood that the individual will not perform entrepreneurial behaviour (Agwu, Onwuegbuzie, and Ezeifeke, 2017).

Empirical Review

A research conducted by O'Higgins, (2017); the Eurofound report revealed that youth desire self-employment but unfortunately the option is not available in Europe due to its unfavourable nature to entrepreneurship development and self-employment. In another study; Predictors of Nigerian Students' Desire to be an Entrepreneur; any differences based on Gender? The mindset of Nigerian undergraduates toward entrepreneurship was examined and findings revealed that the

economic environment in Nigeria does not promote business start-ups after graduation as opined by Ibrahim and Abdullahi, (2014) (as cited in Keles, 2016).

Similarly, Emeka, 2006; as cited in Egbefo and Abe, (2017) conducted a study using qualitative content analysis have shown Nigerian youth need entrepreneurship education and that entrepreneurship development and education can be used for youth empowerment, growth of the nation and national unity among youth in Nigerian tertiary institutions.

For Ugoani and Ibeenwo (2015) in their study of entrepreneurship development and employment generation in Nigeria: A Study of the National Directorate of Employment, using Pearson's techniques revealed that there is a positive correlation between entrepreneurship development and employment generation and that it is in line with popular views in the country. According to the study, students with entrepreneurship training are not only more likely to be self-employed but are more likely to start their own companies because entrepreneurship also provides employment opportunities.

3. METHODOLOGY

Qualitative methods are used in answering questions about the phenomena that is complex in nature with the purpose of describing and at the same time understanding the phenomena from the point of view of the participant (Leedy and Ormrod, 2005). Qualitative methods using methodological triangulation were used for this study. The primary data was sourced through a semi-structured interview or a participant (respondent) interview, and descriptive field notes. The population of the study was the 32 final year students of business administration department Faculty of Management Science of Nile University of Nigeria who have completed the entrepreneurship course and are members of the business club.

The in-depth interview was conducted using semi-structured questions for demographic data and semi-structured open-ended questions that enabled participants to comment freely on questions asked. This approach is consistent with Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009) proposition of effective participant's engagement. In addition, the prolonged engagement with participants was adopted for the credibility of the study, using Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria of establishing trustworthiness of study. The whole population of 32 students constitutes the sample size because it is found fairly a reasonable number to be considered as the sample for the study.

Microsoft Excel was used to carry out thematic coding of the primary data generated as responses were collected (Bree, and Gallagher, 2016). A cross tabulation was also carried out on data to gain more insights on received responses based on some demographic differences in the sample. Entrepreneurial development is independent with proxies in education, training,

creativity and Innovation used to measure employment generation in Nigeria the dependent variable. Verification strategies adopted was to ensure that analysis and study development were in a correct order hence ensuring validity and reliability of study, rigor or trustworthiness of study (Morse et al., 2002).

4. ANALYSIS OF DATA

The respondents were 21 in number and after an in-depth interview with them the following responses emerged; findings from the participant observation and field notes are also discussed. The questions asked of the participants centred on if relevant and adequate entrepreneurship education and training has been received from the University, the respondents commented and the following themes emerged;

- i) We have received much Education and Training in entrepreneurship.
- ii) In addition, we have also, received leadership, public relations, and financial independence trainings.
- iii) The role of entrepreneurship in economic growth.
- iv) Exposure of students to encourage future endeavours.
- v) A solid foundation has been received but with room for personal Improvement.
- vi) Gaining an understanding of business terms, risk, and opportunities of starting a business.

The following are selected verbatim comments and cross tabulated responses from participants on the question;

“Yes we have. Up till date we have received much education and training in entrepreneurship. We have studied various courses dealing with entrepreneurship directly and indirectly. We have offered two courses in relation to it directly and also business related courses.”

21-23 years, male

“Yes I did. In ways that I can understand the business terms, what the business world is all about. The risk and opportunities you will get or face and how to go about your business when you start it or even how to start the business.”

18-20 years, female

The second question that asked if respondents have acquired or learned new knowledge and skill from entrepreneurship education and training, the following themes emerged;

- i) We have learned new entrepreneurial knowledge and skills from the university.

- ii) Knowledge of market competition and role of investments in the economy.
- iii) Skill acquisition is voluntary at the University; however, the following skills were acquired: Management, public speaking, advertising, coordinating activities, communication skills, critical thinking, research and Human resource management, and selling goods at business trade fairs.

The following are verbatim cross-tabulated comments selected from responses of participants on the question;

“Yes I've learnt so much entrepreneurial knowledge and skill from the university but I wouldn't say it was made compulsory. Basically, you can only learn these skills if you decide to step out of your shell to actually build yourself. The university provides you with so many opportunities to make that happen.”

21-23 years, female

“Yes, I did such skills are: i) Communication skills. ii) Critical thinking. iii) Research; how to conduct it and also understand what is important in research. iv) The human resources management: how to manage and understand your employees and also people in general.”

18-20 years, female

“Yes, apart from the courses taught in the university, we have opportunities of participating in business trade fairs in which you are given the opportunity to sell goods. I have once sold goods at one of the trade fairs in which I gained more knowledge and skills.”

21-23 years, male

The third question asked respondents about their intention to become self-employed and the following themes were revealed;

- i) Youth should not wait for job offers from the labour market.
- ii) Many students are yet to decide on business to start.
- iii) There are strong intentions to become self-employed among students.
- iv) Some students intend to become self-employed after gaining some work experience.
- v) Others are already self-employed and actively seeking to expand their business.

The following are selected verbatim cross tabulated comments from the participants on question three;

“Yes, I believe the youths should not wait for job offers from the government or a private company as it is not available for all members of the labour market. I intend to start up my own business and work towards making it a success which in turn would create employment.”

21-23 years, male

“I do, but then, I want to start with working in any organization, in order to have the working experience. But I don't intend to stay long in the working system because I want to be self employed.”

18-20years, female

“Yes I've always seen myself to be a CEO rather than an employee. Although, I never really decided on what exactly I want to do (business) but ever since year one, I've grown to love independency, entrepreneurship and self development.”

21-23years, female

The last question asked respondents if they see themselves as potential employers of labour and the following themes emerged;

- i) They believe that they are potential employers of labour.
- ii) They can create employment opportunities.
- iii) They will prefer to learn more before employing others.
- iv) They want to use factors of production effectively and efficiently.
- v) Some businesses cannot be handled alone so the need to employ others.

The following are selected verbatim comments from participants the responses have been cross-tabulated on question four;

“I believe that entrepreneurship isn't only about the profit maximization it's also about impact. So I want to go into something that would create employment opportunities for others.”

21-23 years, female

“I have partners in my business right now but after leaving school I will learn more before employing others.”

21-23 years, female

“Actually through all knowledge acquired if everything works out I will be an employer of labour.”

Male

“I do because of the type of business I want to go into. It requires strong hands which I know that, I won't be able to handle alone. So yes, I want to be an employer of labour.”

18-20 years, female

The findings from the participant observations and field notes showed that

- i) Final year students of the Business Administration Department made up most of the Executives of the Business Club and this has demonstrated committed on the part of the students towards entrepreneurship development.
- ii) Some students already own business which they run along with their studies and are seeking to expand such enterprises.
- iii) Some students are involved in personal research about businesses they want to venture into. Others have been nursing business ideas even before taking up entrepreneurship as a course at the University.
- iv) The University authority organizes Entrepreneurship Trade Fair to encourage entrepreneurship development.
- v) The Business Club hosted the first business summit the successful ridge with the theme ‘Journey to the top’ in 2018 and they are hoping it will become an annual event.
- vi) The Hult prize Africa also takes place at University which is an award to encourage entrepreneurship development.
- vii) The Business Club also encourages students from other faculties to participate in the club activities and eventually promoting entrepreneurial development.
- viii) The University authority has encouraged these activities by providing an Office for the Business Club at the Student Affairs Office.

Discussion of Findings

The final Year students have received adequate entrepreneurship education at Nile University of Nigeria from the inception of their studies up to graduation point; this was done in order to prepare them for future challenges in entrepreneurship. This was achieved through the subjects or courses being taught by the Business Administration Department of the University.

Final year students of Nile University of Nigeria have learned new knowledge and skills through entrepreneurship education and training throughout the period of study using Courses, Business Club activities, other University programs like the Entrepreneurship Trade Fair and Entrepreneurship competitions like the Hult prize Africa all in a bid to promote entrepreneurial development. This is in line with Emeka (2006), (as cited in Egbefo and Abe, 2017) when he opined that entrepreneurship development is a tool that can be used for youth empowerment.

The students of Nile University of Nigeria have indicated serious intentions of becoming self-employed after leaving school as already demonstrated by some students that own businesses as undergraduates. All these are the results of experiences gathered in the process of studying. This will enable independence and self-employment at the long run. This is aligned with the assertions of Ugoani and Ibeenwo, (2015) that entrepreneurship development influences employment generation and that those trained are more likely to start their own business.

Nile University of Nigeria students actually viewed themselves as potential employers of labour and will create employment opportunities after graduation; this is expected to happen when launching new businesses or during the process of expanding existing businesses. Employment will serve as a catalyst to improve efficiency and effectiveness of businesses through the use of human resources specifically required in their areas of expertise. All these activities will culminate to the employment generation that is required in the Nigerian economy as a result of entrepreneurial development. This is in line with the finding that entrepreneurship education stimulates or is an effective tool for employment generation (Enu-Kwesi, 2012). It also creates opportunities for employment (Ugoani and Ibeenwo, 2015).

5. CONCLUSION

The aim of the study which is entrepreneurial development as a viable option for employment generation in Nigeria has been achieved the findings have shown that entrepreneurial education and training leads to development of new knowledge and skills acquisition in entrepreneurship development despite the inability of the Nigerian economic environment to encourage entrepreneurship and business start-ups (Ayoade & Agwu, 2016; Keles, 2016 and Enu-Kwesi, 2012). The case of Nile University of Nigeria is different as the system encourages entrepreneurial development. This is in agreement with other studies that have shown that a positive relationship exist between entrepreneurship development and employment generation in Nigeria (Akhuemonkhan et al., 2013; Ugoani & Ibeenwo, 2015).

The study enlightened the Youth about entrepreneurial development and its potentials for employment generation through self employment and this will stimulate economic growth in Nigeria. The findings may also influence the policies of Government towards entrepreneurship

development. Avenues have become available for further research in entrepreneurship development especially among Universities or the society as a whole in order to assess the success of the ongoing programmes.

Recommendations

- i) Entrepreneurship Education and Training programmes should have practical aspects that are to be thought by very experienced lecturers or possibly practitioners from the field should be brought so that they can pass on the requisite knowledge and skills.
- ii) A measurement and evaluation system must be put in place to ensure that the set objectives are being met effectively before the graduation of students in order to avoid leaving school with theoretical knowledge alone.
- iii) The Government and schools can intervene by organizing workshops or seminars on campus to encourage entrepreneurship development for confidence building and exposure of students before entering the labour market.
- iv) It should be made very clear that entrepreneurship is not just a subject but rather an alternative career path for students. An avenue for self-employment and job creation for others to also gain employment in the future.

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