



ASSESSMENT OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION AND ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS ON UNEMPLOYMENT REDUCTION AMONG YOUNG NIGERIAN GRADUATES

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ABSTRACT

The challenges of fighting the wave of unemployment in Nigeria are phenomenal, and as such, the consequences of its growing menace to the economy cannot be treated with apathy. To address this ugly development, the Nigerian University Commission (NUC) developed an entrepreneurship education programme as a policy for all undergraduates in Nigerian tertiary institutions. The study, therefore, investigates how entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial skills required for self-employment among graduates can reduce the unemployment rate in Nigeria. The paper surveys self-employed graduates of selected Higher Institutions in Nigeria, using a snowball/chain referral technique to collect data. The study reveals a significant positive relationship between entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial skills required for self-employment. Empirical validation further shows that an increase in the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial skills and its delivery in our institutions will, all things being equal, reduce graduates' unemployment. The policy implication is that Nigerian graduates should take up the challenge to develop innovative and creative projects capable of attracting funding from the government to position and develop them independently and economically. The study recommends that towards preparing Nigerian graduates to possess the 21st-century skills and competencies essential for self-reliance and global competitiveness, the education curriculum should be better designed to make entrepreneurship education sufficiently practical and entrepreneurially oriented.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship Education, Entrepreneurial Skills, Unemployment Reduction, Young Nigerian Graduates and Challenges.

INTRODUCTION

Among scholars, entrepreneurship is widely adjudged to be rapidly growing, with evidence as a great mechanism that can be explored to curb the spate of unemployment, particularly in Nigeria (Adejumo, 2000; Onyeneho & Ezeano, 2011). Again, it has been argued that a country's economic performance largely depends on successful entrepreneurship (Agwu, Anidiobu & Ezinwa, 2016; Ubong, 2018). As a beacon of hope and a panacea for the unemployment dilemma, experts have advocated entrepreneurship to be included within the Nigerian education system. Entrepreneurship



education is critical to national development and growth because it tends to affect people's behaviour towards entrepreneurship (Nwekeaku, 2013; Abioye, 2020). As an integral fragment of the whole education system, entrepreneurship education involves acquiring and harnessing skills, knowledge and ideas that are requisite for job creation. It intends to impart the skills and knowledge critical to undertaking an entrepreneurial business (Aluko, Yemi-Akinola & Adedapo, 2019).

On the other hand, entrepreneurial skills are business skills required by an entrepreneur to function and compete favourably in the marketplace to be self-reliant and enhance the individual's livelihood. According to scholars, acquiring entrepreneurial skills is essential in harnessing entrepreneurship prospects for self-employment. This is largely due to its ability to impart the attitudes, skills and capabilities, especially in youths, towards enabling them to actualise their dreams of self-reliance and wealth creation (Trivedi, 2016; Jones, David, Rebecca & Celia, 2017). No doubt, the lack of entrepreneurial skills remains a dominating contributing influence to the challenge of unemployment among Nigerian graduates. This situation led the Federal Government to improve its policy on education. To this effect, the Nigerian University Commission (NUC) introduced an entrepreneurship education programme as a policy for all undergraduates to undertake entrepreneurship courses to address the rising spate of unemployment in the nation. Consequently, the need to investigate the entrepreneurial skills integrated into the policy and how the skills enhance the students' self-reliance. Against this background, the study's objectives are to (i) determine the relationship between entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial skills required for self-employment and (ii) investigate the relationship between entrepreneurship education and unemployment reduction among self-employed graduates in the study area.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptually, entrepreneurship education is the aspect of education that is intended to instil innovation and enterprise in students and simultaneously stimulate their attitudes towards entrepreneurial intentions (Yomi-Akinola, 2016). According to Middleton (2010), entrepreneurship education in universities is to inculcate entrepreneurial skills and attitudes in undergraduates to stimulate entrepreneurial instincts or enhance their considerations for taking up entrepreneurship as a career. Drucker (1985) posited that entrepreneurial skill is both a practice and discipline, and like in any other field, it can be acquired through learning. Entrepreneurial skill acquisition is a process whereby a person obtains or acquires a particular ability, expertise or type of behaviour required for the business enterprise through education or training (IFC, 2007; Chukwunenye & Igboke, 2011; Amadi, 2012).

EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Oboreh and Nnebe (2019) examined skill acquisition and entrepreneurship education among graduates in public universities in South East Nigeria. The study investigated the effect of technical innovation, creativity, risk-taking, and opportunity recognition on acquiring skills in the study area. The study concluded that entrepreneurship education positively affects the skill acquisition of graduates in Nigerian public universities. Agu, Anidiobu and Ezinwa (2016) studied entrepreneurship education as a remedy to the unemployment problem in Nigeria. Findings from the study revealed that the increasing universal responsiveness to entrepreneurship education would boost the acquisition of the required expertise for self-employment. The study concluded that the



government should give appropriate consideration to entrepreneurship education, realising its potential to mitigate the scourge of unemployment in the country. In a similar study, Deebom and Baridoma (2017) examined the role of entrepreneurship education in unemployment reduction among Nigerian graduates. The result showed that acquiring skills such as electrical installations, food and catering services, welding and fabrication, among others, can mitigate the rising rate of graduate unemployment in Nigeria. The study concluded that entrepreneurship education should be practically inclined rather than theoretical due to its propensity to expose students to several good skills.

Mazanai, Thembinkosi, Caleb and Dhoro (2020) studied entrepreneurial activity for economic growth and unemployment reduction in South Africa. The results revealed that prioritising endeavours to boost entrepreneurial skills and enhance entrepreneurial activity could contribute to South Africa's much-needed development in economic growth and, consequently, reduce unemployment, poverty and inequality. Aluko, Yomi-Akinola and Adeola (2019) conducted a study on entrepreneurship education as an instrument for unemployment reduction in Nigeria. Using entrepreneurship intention and attitude, the study found that entrepreneurship education is a veritable instrument for employment reduction. Abioye (2020) explored the influence of entrepreneurship education on graduate entrepreneurs from Covenant University, Ota, Nigeria. Findings from the study lent credence to support the view that entrepreneurship education enhanced students' knowledge of entrepreneurship. However, the program needed to be more practical to enhance their entrepreneurship dreams. The study concluded that there is a need to restructure the education curriculum to support graduate entrepreneurs to realise their goals of self-reliance economically.

METHODOLOGY

A survey research design was used for the study. The survey instrument employed was a structured questionnaire. The population for this study consists of graduate students from The Federal University of Technology, Akure (FUTA) and Federal College of Agriculture, Akure (FECA) who have been exposed to entrepreneurship education. The population consists of graduates in the last five years. A snowball/chain referral technique was adopted to collect data from graduates of both institutions who are self-employed or engage in a kind of personal business enterprise. A sample size of 350 young graduates from the study area was purposively selected, and a questionnaire was distributed to them for data collection. The total valid set of questionnaire retrieved was 289, thus, representing an 83% response rate. With the aid of The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software, data analysis was carried out using descriptive (percentages, table, and mean) and inferential statistics (Pearson Correlation Coefficient).

**RESULTS****Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

Age group	Frequency	Percent
21-25 years	137	47.4
26-30 years	79	27.3
31-35years	73	25.3
Total	289	100

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Table 1 shows that most of the respondents from the two institutions (FUTA and FECA) fall between the ages of 21-25 years, accounting for 47.4% of the total respondents. The survey reveals that most of the respondents graduated in recent years, possibly demonstrating their eagerness to be self-employed after being exposed to entrepreneurship education.

Table 2. Likert Scale Distribution Showing the Relationship between Entrepreneurship Education and Entrepreneurial Skills Required for Self-employment

S/N		SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean
1	Entrepreneurship education enhances the acquisition of training and skills required to build a career in small and medium-scale enterprises	238(82%)	51(18%)	0	0	0	4.82
2	Entrepreneurship education enhances creativity and innovativeness required in business enterprise	152(53%)	123(43%)	14(4%)	0	0	4.48
3	Entrepreneurship education enhances the risk-taking ability of the entrepreneurs	116(40%)	166(57%)	7(3%)	0	0	4.38
4	Entrepreneurship education enhances the ability of entrepreneurs to coordinate factors of production	151(52%)	123(43%)	15(5%)	0	0	4.47

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Table 2 analyses the nexus between entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial skills required for self-employment. Based on the survey, the mean score for each item suggests that the respondents strongly agreed that entrepreneurship education boosts; (i) the acquisition of training and skills for self-employment, (ii) creativity and innovativeness, (iii) risk-taking ability, as well as (iv) ability to coordinate factors of production, all of which are required to build a career in small and medium enterprises. Generally, the survey reveals that the respondents strongly agreed that entrepreneurship education has the propensity to boost the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills essential for self-employment.



Table 3. Likert Scale Distribution Showing the Nexus between Entrepreneurship Education and Unemployment Reduction

S/N		SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean
1	Entrepreneurship education is a useful tool for reducing unemployment	211(73%)	78(27%)	0	0	0	4.73
2	Skill acquisition through entrepreneurship education prepares people to utilise their potential for self-employment	195(67%)	94(33%)	0	0	0	4.67
3	Entrepreneurship education provides the individual with the ability to recognise and exploit business opportunities	129(45%)	145(50%)	15(5%)	0	0	4.39
4	Entrepreneurship education enhances the development of indigenous enterprises and the utilisation of local resources	94(33%)	166(57%)	29(10%)	0	0	4.22

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Table 3 analyses the effect of entrepreneurship education on employment reduction. Judging by the mean score for each item, the majority of the respondents in the survey strongly agreed that (i) entrepreneurship education is a useful instrument for employment reduction, (ii) skills acquired by the students through entrepreneurship education prepare them to harness their potentials for self-employment, (iii) entrepreneurship education provides the individual with the capability to recognise and exploit business prospects, and (iv) entrepreneurship education enhances the development of indigenous enterprises and utilisation of local resources.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial skills required for self-employment among graduates.

Table 4: Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient showing the relationship between Entrepreneurship Education and Entrepreneurial Skill Required for Self-employment

	Entrepreneurial Education	Entrepreneurial Skill	
Entrepreneurship Education	Pearson Correlation	1.000	.442**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.032
	N	289	289
Entrepreneurial Skill	Pearson Correlation	.442**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.32
	N	289	289

**Correlation is significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Source: Data Analysis, 2021

Table 4 shows a moderately positive correlation of $r = 0.442$ and a significance level of $p = 0.032 < 0.05$. This means that the Correlation is statistically significant. In other words, there is a significant



positive relationship between entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial skills required for self-employment by graduates. The coefficient of determination ($r^2 = 0.20$) indicates that a 20% change in entrepreneurial skills can be explained by entrepreneurship education. The null hypothesis is thus rejected. Therefore, the result implies that as the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education and its delivery in our institutions increases, more graduates are enhanced with the skills and expertise needed to start their enterprises and maximise opportunities around them. The result confirms the findings of (Chiekezie, Nzewi & Erhinmwionose, 2016; Oboreh & Nnebe, 2019). This now calls for a more concerted effort to improve the practical knowledge and skill acquisition scheme for all tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between entrepreneurship education and unemployment reduction among graduates.

Table 5: Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient Showing the Nexus between Entrepreneurship Education and Unemployment Reduction Among Graduates

	Entrepreneurship Education	Unemployment Reduction	
Entrepreneurship Education	Pearson Correlation	1.000	-0.862
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.014
	N	289	289
Unemployment Reduction	Pearson Correlation	-0.862	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.014
	N	289	289

**Correlation is significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Source: Data Analysis, 2021

Table 5 shows a strong negative correlation of $r = -0.862$ and a significance level of $p = 0.014 < 0.05$ between entrepreneurship education and unemployment reduction among graduates. This means that the Correlation is statistically significant. In other words, there is a significant negative relationship between entrepreneurship education and unemployment reduction among graduates. The coefficient of determination ($r^2 = 0.743$) indicates that a 74.3% variation in unemployment reduction can be explained by entrepreneurship education. The null hypothesis is thus rejected. The result, therefore, implies that as the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education and its delivery in our institutions increases, the graduates' unemployment reduces. In other words, as a result of entrepreneurship education acquired during their study, they are well harnessed with the ability to recognise and exploit business opportunities and build a career for themselves in a chosen industry, thereby becoming self-reliant. The result is in line with the findings of (Aluko, Yomi-Akinola & Adeola, 2019; Abioye, 2020). This equally calls for a more concerted effort by the government and other policymakers on entrepreneurship education to devote more funding to this initiative and address the various challenges against the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education in tertiary institutions in Nigeria.



CONCLUSION

The study investigates how entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial skills required for self-employment among graduates can enhance unemployment reduction in Nigeria. The results from this study reveal that entrepreneurship education prepares students to be self-employed, having completed the program through the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills required to build a career in business enterprises. Empirically, the study reveals a significant positive relationship between entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial skills required for self-employment by graduates. This suggests that as the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education and its delivery in our institution's increases, more graduates are enhanced with the required skills and expertise needed to start their enterprises and maximise opportunities around them. Empirical validation further shows that an increase in the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education and its delivery in our institutions will, all things being equal, reduces graduates' unemployment in Nigeria. Put differently, the Introduction of entrepreneurship education prepares the students to utilise their potential for self-employment after graduation. In general, the study has established that entrepreneurship education, if geared towards acquiring entrepreneurial skills in tertiary institutions, has the propensity to mitigate the rising scourge of unemployment among Nigerian graduates and develop them independently and economically. Thus, the findings of this analysis have revealed that skills acquisition through entrepreneurship education is a key determinant of young graduates' employment in Nigeria.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Consequent to the findings from this study, the study recommends that:

1. To prepare Nigerian graduates to possess the 21st-century expertise and competencies essential for self-reliance and global competitiveness, the education curriculum should be better designed to make entrepreneurship education practical and entrepreneurially oriented.
2. As a result of the nexus between entrepreneurial skills and youth employment opportunities, tertiary students and prospective entrepreneurs should develop a good mindset towards skill acquisition and development as this would motivate and enhance the cutting edge requisite for value-added conscious entrepreneurs.

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