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Entrepreneurship Education and Entrepreneurial Skills as a Panacea to Graduate Unemployment in the South East Nigeria: A Sustainable Development Tool (Evidence From Public Polytechnics In The South East Nigeria)

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Abstract

The study examined the role of entrepreneurship education and the enhancement of entrepreneurial skills in solving graduate unemployment in the south east Nigeria. Questionnaire was used to collect data from students on entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial skills. The population of the study was 57,710 and a sample size of 399 was determined using Taro Yamene. The research adopted the purposive sampling technique. The hypothesis was tested at 0.05 per cent level of significance using the analysis of variance (ANOVA) with the aid of SPSS version 21.0. The study found that there is a significant relationship between entrepreneurship education curriculum content and entrepreneurial skills in undergraduates in the South Eastern States. The study concluded that entrepreneurship skills acquisition is at the center of solving unemployment problems among the youths in the South Eastern Nigeria by making the self-dependent and employers of their own labour. The study recommended that Entrepreneurship skill acquisition should be made compulsory for every final year student as a condition for certification by the institution.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, Education, Entrepreneurial skills, Youth, Unemployment

INTRODUCTION

The rate of graduate unemployment in Nigeria especially in the south east has persistently been on the increase despite the enormous endowment of the country with human and natural resources. However, graduate unemployment is not peculiar to Nigeria or developing nations, rather, it is a long standing global phenomenon and a common trend in many developing countries (Twumasi, 2013). In reducing the universal predicament of graduate unemployment, policy makers and stakeholders in developed countries such as England, USA, and Germany, advocated a change of

educational systems towards acquisition of vocational and technical skills to enhance smooth transition into jobs for school leavers particularly graduates of polytechnics. This is due to the fact that education is important to the development of any society particularly because the goals of wealth creation, poverty reduction and value re-orientation can only be attained and sustained through an efficient educational system which impacts relevant skills, knowledge, capacities, attitudes and values into individuals (Agi & Yellowe, 2016).

The target of entrepreneurship education is to empower graduates, irrespective of their areas of academic specialization, with knowledge and skills that will enable them to create their own income generating ventures, even if they are not able to secure jobs in the public sector. Entrepreneurship education is an orientation that seeks to transform graduates from job seekers into job creators in order to reduce graduate unemployment and increase students' interest in entrepreneurship as a career (kinsiku, & Olubunmi, 2014), The rationale for introducing entrepreneurship course in olytechnic curricular development is to help the students to acquire increased understanding of entrepreneurship. The focus is to equip them with relevant skills and competences that prepare the students to become entrepreneurs and managers of new businesses soon after graduation in order to increase their household income. Nevertheless, "social and commercial entrepreneurial entry is facilitated by strong property rights and government activism that impacts on entrepreneurship (Anyadike, Emeh, & Ukah, 2012).

In Nigeria graduate unemployment has undoubtedly become a herculean national canker worm which everyone is expected to join hands to deal with. It is as a result of rising number of youth unemployment that majority of evils such as kidnapping, banditry, stealing and robbery are on the rise. Obviously, the idle mind is always the workshop and abode of the devil. What then can we do to quell this attenuating challenge for the youth graduates in the south east? A section of the public is of the view that job opportunities for new graduates are few whiles others contend that there are enough job opportunities, but the type of graduates turned out from the institutions of higher learning are often not well grounded or prepared for the challenges ahead (Aremu, & Adeyemi, 2011). Most of the employers, therefore, select the fresh graduates who studied in the relevant fields for their jobs as trainees for a number of years before decision is taken either to hire them on full-time basis or as casual workers.

This problem has necessitated this research to evaluate entrepreneurship education and enhancement of entrepreneurial skill among undergraduates in the south eastern Nigeria. The study is to research into the type of entrepreneurship education received by the participants that developed their abilities to create their own jobs as graduate entrepreneurs soon after their graduation.

Arising from the above. the major purpose of this study is to examine entrepreneurship education and the enhancement of entrepreneurial skills as a panacea to graduate unemployment in the south eastern Nigeria.

LITERATURE

Conceptual Review:

The word **"entrepreneur"** is derived from the French verb "enterprendre", which means 'to undertake'. This refers to those who "undertake" the risk of new enterprises. An enterprise is created by an entrepreneur. The process of creation of an enterprise is called **"entrepreneurship".** Entrepreneurship is a process of actions of an entrepreneur who is a person always in search of something new and exploits such ideas into gainful opportunities by accepting the risk and uncertainty with the enterprise (Chand, 2020).

Entrepreneurs are, thus, the seeds of industrial development and the fruits of industrial development are greater employment opportunities to unemployed youth, increase in

per capita income, higher standard of living and increased individual saving, revenue to the government in the form of income tax, sales tax, export duties, import duties, and balanced regional development.

Basically, **entrepreneurship education** is the process that exposes undergraduates to acquiring knowledge, special skills and experiences needed to succeed and for effective conquering and adaptation to the environment. Entrepreneurship education seeks to provide students with the knowledge, skills and motivation to encourage entrepreneurial success in a variety of settings. Variations of entrepreneurship education are offered at all levels of schooling from primary or secondary schools through graduate. Entrepreneurship education benefits students from all socioeconomic backgrounds because it teaches kids to think outside the box and nurtures unconventional talents and skills. Furthermore, it creates opportunity, ensures social justice, instills confidence and stimulates the economy {Florina & Sabrina, 2015).

Entrepreneurship education is designed to develop entrepreneurial attitudes for future entrepreneurs. It serves to stimulates young people to think about entrepreneurship and the role of the business community in economic and social development. It provides students with an opportunity to analyze rapid changes taking place around them and are consequently encouraged and energized to consider self-employment and enterprise creation as a career choice. This is the basis for enshrining in the academic curriculum of tertiary institutions the study, teaching and learning of the practice of entrepreneurship education.

Osuala (2002) in Ordv et al (2010) as opined in Nebo (2018), entrepreneurship education is the type of education given to a set of people to be able to instill in them the principles, skills and practices required to see and evaluate business opportunities, to gather the necessary resources and the desire to take advantage of them as well as initiating appropriate action to ensure success in any choice profession or occupation. It is the foundation for developing the flexible skills needed to participate in knowledge intensive economic activity. Entrepreneurship education is a specialized training given to students of vocational and technical education to acquire the skills, ideas and the managerial abilities and capabilities to be self-employed rather than being employed for pay, Otamiri (2007).

Sthitaprajnya (2019) studied the importance of entrepreneurship education in national development and made the following revelations that it teaches basic life skills; enhances creativity; develops problem solving and identification capability; boosts leadership quality; and prepares the students for an uncertain future.

It is important to note that across the globe, local, state, and national economies rise and fall on the growth of entrepreneurship. New businesses create more jobs and introduce new ideas that solve problems in better ways. Entrepreneurship also makes the marketplace more competitive so that outdated thinking is challenged and in order not to restrain the society from growing and developing (Alison, 2020). In addition, young graduate become self-dependent, self-reliant, and discover themselves early enough.

Entrepreneurial Skill and Constraints

Entrepreneurs are distinguished along the lines of numerous skills that they possess and consciously apply to the business. The skills represent the basic knowledge and talent inherent the entrepreneur which he brings to the business. The nature and quality of the skills an entrepreneur possess invariably defines the future and successfulness of the business. As noted by Alison (2020), entrepreneurial skill that guarantees business success includes creative thinking and innovation, leadership skills, risk taking, strong work ethics, and communication skills. Successful entrepreneurs are usually separated from the rest based on the skills that they possess and bring to bear in the business. Entrepreneurship is all about doing things new or doing an existing thing in an entirely new way. These skills make an entrepreneur and the

business thick, strong and viable. Knowledge is acquired by those who are ready, willing and committed to learning. The schools are where these skills can be acquired. Commitment on the part of the learner or trainee is key to successful teaching and learning of entrepreneurship. It is advocated therefore that those who have the privilege and opportunity of being sent for training should sincerely make maximal use of such opportunity. The development of these skills also suffer constraints.

As noted by Olawale (2017); Suleman (2010); Nebo (2018); argue that the development of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship education in Nigeria has been bedeviled with a myriad of problems which includes but are not limited to lack of capital or paucity of funds to start or fund an existing business to growth and expansion; difficulty in getting loans and credit facilities from financial institutions; lack of infrastructural support or inadequacy of supportive infrastructure; instability in the economy and allied socio – economic challenges; inconsistencies in government policies; multiplicity of taxies which are seen as official attempts at discouraging budding entrepreneurs; poor planning, control and execution abilities of entrepreneurs, fear and unwillingness to take risks associated with opening of a new business; lack of positive entrepreneurial mindset; corruption, insecurity and unsafe business environment, inadequate entrepreneurship education and development programmes, inadequate learning and instructional materials, inadequate well-grounded and experience entrepreneurship instructors, facilitators and trainers in many entrepreneurship centers in the south east Nigeria.

Concept of Graduate Unemployment

To be unemployed after graduation is a very difficult phase in the life of any Nigerian that has no connection with a member of the political class. It can be attenuating and incredibly frustrating. It always comes as a big problem and a very challenging experience. However, every problem such as graduate unemployment must be seen as a signal that change is needed. Problems come to invite change; primarily a change in thinking and acting. Problems never come unless some necessary proactive steps had earlier been neglected, ignored or abandoned. The way to solve a problem is never to curse it, blame others, hope on other for solution or even think/imagine that it would walk away. The best approach to such problems is to take personal responsibility, to seek a new awareness, a fresh insight or a specialized knowledge that promises the desired solution. Problems always take their leave as you take the needed action. Learning is the intelligent approach to getting the ideas that opens doors; doors of opportunities and possibilities. You do not solve a problem by doing nothing about it. Entrepreneurship is that one thing that you must do.

As opined by Oppong and Sachs (2015), graduate unemployment is defined as the number or proportion of degree holders (graduate and post graduate) in a given economy who are capable and willing to work, but unable to find jobs. A deep and close look at this definition revealed that graduate unemployment as a specific type of unemployment for people with academic degrees obtained from higher institution who are qualified and ready to work but having zero hour at work and earning zero income because the jobs are not there. In the same context, Eneji, Maifa, and Weiping (2013); Akinyemi and Ikunomore (2012) and Ogege (2011) described graduate unemployment to encompass graduate of universities and polytechnics who are fit and ready to work but could not find a job or discriminated by experience. In this category of unemployed people are fresh and young tertiary institution graduates, retrenched graduates seeking re-engagement and those who are underemployed or on disguised employment. The challenge posed by such unemployment is that the useful part of the nations' labour force are allowed to idle away instead of harnessing and taking sheer advantages of their energies, vibrancy, resourceful and fecundity for national growth and development.

Longe (2017) quoting the Chartered Institute of Personnel Management of Nigeria (CIPMN,

2016) in Longe (2017), listed lack of a national policy on employment, sub-optimal quality of graduates, educational system not tailored and aligned to industry needs and, inappropriate educational curricula as some of the factors that predisposed tertiary institution graduates to unemployment in Nigeria. Others are poor political governance, poor setting of policy direction, inconsistent government policy and harsh business environment. Besides, in recent decades, the Nigeria economy has not achieved any significant diversification and the country's tertiary education system has witnessed a ponderous admission overload of students, resulting into massive over supply of higher education graduates. This lack of synergy between the production of graduates and employment opportunities underscore the complexity of the graduate unemployment issue in Nigeria (Ogege, 2011).

The challenge and consequential effects of graduate unemployment are bifurcated into two – the **economic effects and social effects**. The economic effects of graduate unemployment can lead to a reduction in gross domestic product, decrease in economic welfare and quality of living of the people, possibly erodes human capital and create underutilization of labour resources, and obviously dispossesses graduates of salary income value in the society. The social angle to the consequence/effects of graduate unemployment includes creates a perpetual unhappiness to the affected individuals; paves way for disaggregation of social bond and instability in the level of social order; destroys morals and breaks social relationship, and increases social vices and crimes among the affected graduate. These challenges are what we think can be fully addressed by inculcating the tenets of entrepreneurship education in the molding and preparation of the graduates before releasing them into the society.

Theoretical Framework

This work is anchored on the theory of human capital entrepreneurship theory. It was postulated by Becker (1975) and derives its premise primarily on two factors which are; education and experience. The theory postulates that knowledge acquired from education and experience, is considered a resource that is diversely dispensed across individuals, which forms the basis for understanding the disparities in identification and exploration of opportunities (Shane & Vankataraman, 2000). Davidson and Honig (2003) and Anderson and Miller (2003), affirmed that human capital factors has a positive impact on the emergence of nascent entrepreneurs. This implies that Human capital theory of entrepreneurship creates a foundation for the place of education regarding entrepreneurial development which makes it particularly relevant to the context of entrepreneurship education (Chandler & Hanks, 1998). Specifically, in the context of this study Shane and Vankataraman (2000) argued that human capital factors are salient to idea generation, opportunity recognition and business planning. This according to Anderson and Miller (2003) implies that the components of an entrepreneurship programme have a prominent role to play in enhancing the development of abilities associated with successful entrepreneurial outcomes of an entrepreneurship programme.

Empirical Review

Eze (2017) assesses specific financing options available to SMEs in Nigeria and contribution to economic growth. The paper uses secondary sources of data, which were generated from the publications of Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) statistical Bulletin and World Development Indicators (WDI). Asymmetric Ordinary Least Square (AOLS) estimation technique was employed to determine the effect of SMEs financing on economic growth in Nigeria. The analysis of the results suggested that there is an insignificant direct and indirect relationship between both positive and negative component of SMEs financing and Economic growth in Nigeria, which can be adduced to policy inconsistencies in SMEs financing.

Olayinka, Babatunde and Olusegun (2015) empirically examined the impact of entrepreneurship training and education on poverty reduction in Nigeria. The researcher

adopted a stratified random sampling technique. A total of 500 entrepreneurs and apprenticeships were chosen from six recognized Local Government Areas in Lagos State. The best linear unbiased estimator was used to test the relationship between entrepreneurship training and poverty reduction in Nigeria. The result emanated from the findings suggests that there exist a positive and significant relationship between entrepreneurship and poverty reduction and this was confirmed by the value of R^2 on the coefficient of determination.

Teru (2015) examined the inadequate entrepreneurship skill among the Nigerian youths and its contribution to unemployment rate in Nigeria. Some variables were identified as possible problems of acquiring entrepreneurship skills in Nigeria. The study focuses on ways that is needed and used to conceive and commercialize business opportunities. Nigeria especially in the face of the global economic crisis and its energy crisis requires graduates who will be job "creators" and not job"seekers". Review of some related literature pertaining to the subject matter were identified in the study. Method used in collection of data was questionnaires. The method used in data analysis is table and simple percentage and the statistical tool used for testing of hypothesis was chi-square. The study found that entrepreneurship education has not sufficiently yielded the boost in youth employment creation.

Fadeyi, Oke, Ajagbe, Isiavwe, Adegbuyi (2015) investigate the role of youth Entrepreneurs in nation building. A total of 40 upcoming entrepreneurial firms were randomly selected from a cross section of a population of firms located across Yaba Local Government Area (LGA) of Lagos state. Participants were chosen through a simple random sampling technique. The responses to the questionnaires were complemented with personal interviews of some of the owners and managers of entrepreneurial firms. Participant's responses were analyzed with the use of simple percentages and are presented on pie and bar charts. This study finds that there is a significant relationship between competition, growth and development of entrepreneurial firms in Nigeria.

Agu and Chiaha (2013) carried out a study on entrepreneurship education and graduate employability in Nigeria. The purpose of the study was to investigate entrepreneurship education and employability of university graduates in Nigeria. Two research questions and two null hypotheses guided the study. Survey research design was used for the study. The sample for the study was 320 drawn from the population of 3,780 participants using a multistage sampling technique. Three instruments were used for the data collection. These include, structured questionnaire on graduate entrepreneurship education and employability skills (GEESQ), interview schedule and entrepreneurship content analysis. The structured questionnaire consisted of 25 items. The researchers found that entrepreneurship education enables graduates possess employability skills.

Aribaba (2011) studied an evaluation of the impact of technological innovative entrepreneurial development program on the performance of small and medium scale enterprises in Nigeria. The population of small and medium scale businesses residing in Ondo state Nigeria. A sample population of one hundred and sixty (160) was randomly selected, the chi-square method was adopted for its analysis, while questionnaire was distributed for data collection. From the study, it was discovered that technological innovation entrepreneurial development program has an effect on the performance of small-scale business enterprises in Nigeria.

Gap in Knowledge/Literature

A careful examination of several studies both empirical and contextual in this study indicates a vast degree of literature on entrepreneurship education and youth unemployment, thereby placing this study within framework of existing literature. Regrettably, this study noted that the result of most of these empirical works

conducted have not been conclusive or did not treat/focus at all entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial skills as a panacea to youth unemployment in the south eastern Nigeria. This is the perceived gap that this study filled at the end.

METHODOLOGY

This is a descriptive research and questionnaires were used to collect data on entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial skills. The primary source of data was used in this study because of the variables that were used in the study. Questionnaires were used to collect data from students selected for this study. The study had a target population of 57,710 consisting of the students of the selected polytechnics in the south east Nigeria. A sample size of 398 students was determined using Taro Yamane statistical formula. The Bowlins method for distribution of sample was used across all the polytechnics to ensure proportionate representation. The statistical instrument used in testing the hypotheses was Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) with the aid of Statistical package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21.0. The data was subjected to a content validity test as an affirmation that the items adequately represented the content of the property/trait that the researcher wishes to measure. Using Cronbach's alpha reliability test method, the data was subjected to an internal consistency test to determine its reliability. The population of the study is comprised of final year students who took entrepreneurship classes drawn from the following Polytechnics: Federal Polytechnic Nekede, Imo State Polytechnic Umuagwo, Abia State Polytechnic Aba, Federal Polytechnic Oko, Akanu Ibiam Federal Polytechnic Unwana, Institute of Management Technology (IMT) Enugu, Enugu State Polytechnic Iwolo, Ekwenugo Okeke Polytechnic Anambra. The extrapolated population of the various schools for a five-year period are presented in the table below:

1	Federal Polytechnic Nekede	10,837
2	Imo State Polytechnic Umuagwo	9,211
3	Abia State Polytechnic Aba	8,630
4	Federal Polytechnic Oko	11,644
5	Akanu Ibiam Federal Polytechnic Unwana	8,750
6	Institute of Management Technology (IMT) Enugu	9,722
7	Enugu State Polytechnic Iwolo	4,660
8	Ekwenugo Okeke Polytechnic Anambra	3,978
	Total	**57,710**

DATA PRESENTATION

The data that are collected from three major areas of entrepreneurship skills acquisition, availability of instructional materials/facilities and commitment of students and facilitators to teaching and learning of entrepreneurship are presented below.

Readiness to learn Entrepreneurship Skills

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent

YES	205	47.3	55.1	55.1
NO	167	38.6	44.9	100.0
Total	372	85.9	100.0	

Sources: SPSS Output 2021

The above table reveals that the two hundred and five of the respondents which represents (55.1) persons responded affirmatively, while one hundred and sixty-seven (167) respondents which represent 44.9% were not so convinced that students are very ready to acquire entrepreneurial skill.

Availability of Instructional Materials & Facilities

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
YES	323	74.6	86.8	86.8
NO	49	11.3	13.2	13.2
Total	372	85.9	100.0	100

Sources: SPSS Output 2021

Evident in the table above is that three hundred and twenty-three (323) of the respondents, which represents 86.8% of the total respondents admitted that in their various schools, there is a reasonable provision of instructional materials and facilities for the teaching and learning of entrepreneurship.

Commitment of Students and Facilitators to teaching and learning

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	278	64.2	74.7	74.7
No	94	21.7	25.3	25.3
Total	372	85.9	100.0	100

Sources: SPSS Output 2021

From the table above, 74.7% which represents a total of 278 respondents agreed that facilitators and students are committed to the teaching and learning of entrepreneurship.

INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

This chapter presents the data obtained from the respondents through the administered questionnaire. Three hundred and ninety-nine (398) questionnaires were administered on the students of the selected institution However, three hundred and seventy-two (372) copies of questionnaire were retrieved. Therefore, the analysis and interpretation of data were only based on the returned questionnaire.

Hypothesis 1

Ho_1: There is no significant relationship between entrepreneurship education curriculum content and entrepreneurial skills in the polytechnics in the south eastern Nigeria.

ANOVA

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	3242.5981	3	1794.190	6.742	.015
Within Groups	6734.279	371	378.389		
Total	77436.800	372			

Source: SPSS Version 21, 2021

The test table reveal that the wide significance value (F. sig<.05) indicate group differences. Since the F-value of 6.742 which has a significance of .015 is less than .05 (i.e .001<.05), there exist no group difference among the variables. Therefore, there is significant relationship between entrepreneurship education curriculum content and entrepreneurial skills in the polytechnics in the south eastern Nigeria. The null hypothesis as stated above is therefore rejected while the alternative hypothesis which states that there is a significant relationship between entrepreneurship education curriculum content and entrepreneurial skills leant in the polytechnics in the south east Nigeria.

Hypothesis 2

Ho_2: Entrepreneurship facilities does not enhance entrepreneurial skills among polytechnics graduates in the south east Nigeria.

ANOVA

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2839.200	1	1419.600	7.807	.088
Within Groups	8597.600	371	505.741		
Total	11436.800	371			

Source: SPSS, Version, *2021*

From the regression result, we discover that in the F-statistics has a significant value 7.807, with a probability value of 0.88. Since its probability is greater than 0.05% desired level of significance, we reject the null hypothesis and accept alternative hypothesis, which states entrepreneurship facilities enhances entrepreneurial skills among polytechnic graduates in the south eastern Nigeria. This result agrees with the appriori expectation that effective and rewarding skill can only be learnt where instructional facilities are adequate.

CONCLUSION

The study vehemently utilized evidence from available literatures in examining entrepreneurship education and the enhancement of entrepreneurial skills among polytechnics graduates in the south eastern Nigeria. The review of the literatures revealed that the most difficult socio-economic problem facing the polytechnics graduates in the south eastern Nigeria is the growing number of unemployment leading to having many unemployed graduates roaming the streets in search of greener pasture. The study therefore concludes that the problem of graduate unemployment that is rampaging the future of our polytechnic graduates can be quelled, quenched and addressed by effective entrepreneurship education and acquisition of sound entrepreneurial skills from the polytechnics education.

In view of the need to tackle graduate unemployment through entrepreneurship education, this study recommends as follows:

i. It is recommended that entrepreneurship education curriculum content should be restructured to accommodate the local content developmental needs of the society by enhancing the entrepreneurship skills/knowledge that they impart in the students.

ii. It is recommended that the various polytechnics should be well equipped with modern entrepreneurial facilities so as to enhance entrepreneurial skills acquisition among the students.

iii. Graduating students should be compelled in their final years to undertake a specialized practical training in any trade and build a strength of skill in that chosen business/line.

iv. The government through its National Youth Service Scheme (NYSC) should develop a national policy that will make these young and fresh minds from the polytechnics to establish and nurture a business within the compulsory on year of NYSC while the duties of the NYSC officials will be to regularly monitor and record progress made on monthly basis.

v. There should be regular training and retraining of instructors, facilitators, and teachers of entrepreneurship in various institutions and centers so as to be in-tune with new approaches to learning and impacting entrepreneurship knowledge to students.

vi. Polytechnics management should through the Centre for Entrepreneurship Development Studies in their various institutions organize on regular basis exhibition programmes on entrepreneurship skills acquisition and, invite experience/exposed practitioners and stakeholders with industry based experience/backgrounds to help them build an inclusive and encompassing knowledge to the students.

Suggestion for Further Studies

Considering the fact that this study is not by its nature exhaustive, it is therefore suggested that other researchers should channel energy towards the sustainability of entrepreneurship education for economic growth and survival of Nigeria.

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