

STUDENTS ' ENTREPRENEURIAL INTENTIONS AND FORMAL EDUCATION A STUDY OF SELECTED UNIVERSITIES IN SOUTH-SOUTH, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the nature of relationship existing between entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial intention among students in selected universities in South-South, Nigeria. The study adopted survey design using structured questionnaire to elicit data. The population was obtained from selected universities during field survey. Systematic sampling technique was adopted in selecting nine (9) universities from a total of twenty-two (22) in the zone. The sample size and number of units allocated to each university was determined using Taro Yamane and Bowley's Proportional Allocation Formulae respectively. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to test the hypothesis. The finding revealed that a positive and significant relationship exist between entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial intention of students., The study therefore, recommends that entrepreneurship education should be made functional and taught at all levels to inculcate entrepreneurial spirit in our citizens from childhood to complement parental and/or guardian efforts. Universities should provide scholarship to lecturers to specialize in the basics of entrepreneurship, provide the needed infrastructure, partner with micro, small, medium (SMEs) and large enterprises to serve as mentors. Governments and other investors should encourage young entrepreneurs by the provision of seed capital, Tax holidays, Management consultancy.

KEYWORDS: Students, Entrepreneurial Intentions, Formal Education Curriculum, Universities, South-South, Nigeria.

1. INTRODUCTION

The rate of unemployment in Nigeria keeps increasing at an alarming rate over the years. The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) on May 15, 2015 in a statement by the Statistician-General and Chief Executive Officer, Dr Yemi Kale said NBS had revised the country's labour statistics in line with internationally agreed standards as well as satisfying local conditions. The Bureau put the number of those that are fully employed (40 hours and above per week) at 55.206 million or 75.68 per cent; underemployed (20 to 39 hours) at 13.05 million or 17.89 per cent; and unemployed (one to 19 hours) at 3.14 million or 4.3 per cent, (Onuba, 2015) as against (20 hours and above per week) as employed and (19 hours and below) as unemployed, before the revision. However, even with the revision in the definition and methodology adopted in the computation of labour statistics, unemployment rate increased from 6.4 per cent at the end of the third quarter of 2014 to 7.5 per cent (Onuba, 2015). Notwithstanding the changes in the statistics, the reality of unemployment has worsened going by the 2016 fourth quarter report. Nigeria's unemployment rate rose to 14.2 per cent in the fourth quarter of 2016 (NBS, 2017). The Bureau disclosed that the rate rose from the 13.9 per cent recorded in the preceding quarter of the year under review (Olawoyin, 2017).

Suffering, hunger, crime, violence, death and other dehumanizing social vices particularly among the youth, majority of who are graduates, are all manifestations of unemployment and under-employment worsened by job losses arising from Nigeria's of recent past economic recession. The loss of about twenty innocent lives in the botched 2014 Nigerian

Immigration Service (NIS) recruitment and selection exercise precisely on Saturday March 15, 2014 is still fresh in the minds of Nigerians. 710,110 applicants were made to pay One thousand naira (N1,000) each online for the NIS recruitment form, for which available statistics confirmed that 522,652 were short listed for the ill-fated aptitude test and physical examination intended to fill just 4,000 vacancies at the NIS (Maduabuchi and Opeseitan, 2014; Abimaje, Ukaibe, Esebonu, Benjamin, Ajobiewe and Oche; Mbawike, Ochoga, Ezeugwu, and Ogbebo, 2014; Ojeme, Onoyume, Mosadomi, Johnson, Ebegbulem and Umoru, 2014 and The Punch, 2014).

In a bid to combat the problem of poverty and unemployment, the Federal Government of Nigeria with technical assistance of multinational institutions like United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), United Nations Development Programmes (UNDP), International Labour Organization (ILO) and the co-operation of the Organized Private Sector (OPS) implemented several entrepreneurship development programmes (Ogundipe, Kosile, Olaleye and ogundipe (2012) and Onwuka, (2012). Only in the administration of President Goodluck Jonathan, the Federal Government through its agencies introduced the Subsidy Re-investment Programme, Graduate Internship Scheme (SURE-P GIS), Presidential Amnesty Programme, the Youth Enterprise with Innovation in Nigeria (YOUWIN), Graduates with Innovation in Nigeria (G-WTN) amongst others. The current administration of President Buhari also has similar programmes called N-Power, Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) and Government Enterprises Entrepreneurship Programme (GEEP) (Premium Times, 2017). However, these efforts seem not to have yielded fruitful results because they were and up till now, more or less short-term entrepreneurial training programmes particularly with discontinuity in government programmes and policies over time, as such, grossly inadequate to provide the required entrepreneurial training for the millions of unemployed youths. A survey conducted by the Federal Ministry of Education showed a worrisome trend that over 60% of graduates are either unemployed or under-employed (Jimah, 2010 as cited in Onwuka, 2012).

South-South Nigeria is an integral part of the Federal Republic of Nigeria comprising six (6) States - Bayelsa, Rivers, Delta, Edo, Akwa-Ibom and Cross River States. The zone has the largest deposit of oil and gas which contribute the largest chunk to the national wealth of Nigeria. The zone also has arable land, large span of water bodies with rich aquatic life; a clement atmosphere; vast mangrove rainforest; fascinating recreational sites; wildlife conservation among other natural and human resources. The people of the area are traditionally farmers and fishermen/women who for the past sixty (60) years are beset with environmental spoliation and degradation arising from oil and gas exploration and exploitation activities of multinational companies which negatively impact on their means of livelihood, thereby contributing to hardship, suffering, poverty and unemployment. Although these States are major oil and gas producing states that form part of the nine (9) States of the Niger Delta region known for oil and gas production that also form the mainstay of the Nigerian economy with the attendant revenue that accrue to them, the dearth of jobs has not been upturned. To this end, this study considers self-employment as an alternative career option to Civil/Public Service and Multi-National corporation jobs. Thus, the study to ascertain the extent of relationship between formal education curriculum and students' entrepreneurial intention in universities in South-South, Nigeria will help position prospective graduates to take advantage of opportunities and mitigate threats to their becoming entrepreneurs.

The study was anchored on the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) by Icek Ajzen (1991). Ogundipe et.al (2012) asserted that much of human behaviour is planned and is, therefore, preceded by intentions to ward behaviours. The theory assumes intention as the immediate antecedent of behaviour. The study reviewed several empirical works carried out in Europe, Asia, and Africa. The three studies done in Nigeria (inclusive in works in Africa), were in Lagos State (South West, Nigeria), Adamawa State (North-East) and Kwara State (North-Central) none in the South-South. The mentioned studies did not sufficiently address the relationship between formal education curriculum and entrepreneurial intention of students in universities. Against the backdrop of the identified gaps, the aim of the study was to fill these gaps in knowledge by carrying out this study in South-South, Nigeria.

1.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Over the years there has been unsuccessful search for non-existing white collar jobs among college students which seem to make them continue to leave in the past because they seem not to consider setting up their own businesses on graduation. Although a large body of research has been devoted to determining the factors that influence entrepreneurial intentions, not much has been put together in relation to formal education curriculum content. If students of Tertiary Institutions are not adequately prepared for self employment on graduation in the face no jobs. The functional

relevance of the curriculum and higher education courses in question and the graduates produced are exposed to disappointment, frustrations and dehumanizing experiences of un-employment.

Graduation after years of study in tertiary Institution is a joyous experience, if on graduation one becomes gainfully employed. But it is a disastrous dead end, if on graduation one both meets no job syndrome and lack of skill and fund for self employment. This work, therefore, seeks to determine the extent of the relationship between formal education curriculum (Independent variable) and students' entrepreneurial intentions (dependent variable) in selected universities in South-South, Nigeria.

In the realization of the significance of entrepreneurship in job creation, poverty alleviation, solving unemployment problems and contributing to economic growth and development, the Nigerian government through the Federal Ministry of Education formulated entrepreneurship education policy and introduced same as compulsory course now taught at all levels of the tertiary educational system which universities belong to. But how far it has been able to achieve the desired goal is the essence of this study.

1.2 HYPOTHESIS

Ha: There is a significant relationship between formal education curriculum and entrepreneurial intentions among university students in South-South, Nigeria.

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Entrepreneur

pattern of production by exploiting an invention" (Bezzina, 2010). The definitions given show that creativity and innovation are central to the concept, 'entrepreneur'. This view aligns with that of Eriobunah and Nosakhare (2011) where entrepreneurs are said to be associated with introducing new products and ideas, and establishing unknown needs (Cantillon, 1931) as cited in (Kuip and Zoetermeer, 2003) who wrote that the function of an entrepreneur is that of manipulating the demand and supply; and allocation of scarce resources to optimally viable and feasible aspects of the business. This implies that individuals undertaking economic activities require planning and organizing of resources; controlling According to Eriobunah and Nosakhare (2011), the concept of entrepreneur has been in existence since the 16th century. They traced the concept to French origin 'entrepredre' meaning "to undertake". In 1934, Schumpeter defined entrepreneur as "an innovator who develops untried technologies" (Dujin, 2009). In 1942, with the passage of time and inevitable social changes, it metamorphosed to "an individual who is able to reform or revolutionize the and taking the risks of business for success. For Baba (2013), Olakitan and Akanbi (2005); Hisrich, Michael and Dean (2005), entrepreneurs are individuals who take risks, have the capacity to identify business opportunities, organize resources, create, as well as grow new ventures. They have the nature, character and willingness to bring innovative ideas into real world application in order to achieve success and/or increase revenue.

2.2 Entrepreneurship

The greatest human endowments are intelligence and entrepreneurship because besides living and created things, every other thing in the world is the product of human intelligence and entrepreneurship (Briggs, 2009). Entrepreneurship has been defined differently by different people. According to Dermol (2003), entrepreneurship is an independent process by which the entrepreneur creates something new and worthy, which not only require some time and effort, and assumes the financial, psychological and social risk but also possibly reward, in the form of money or personal satisfaction and independence.

Baba (2013) says "entrepreneurship is an attitude, spirit and ability to create something new that is valuable and useful for themselves and others". Kume, Kume and Shahini (2013) describes entrepreneurship as an "employment opportunity", helping people to get self-employed. This suggests that entrepreneurship is an alternative means of livelihood against unavailable white-collar jobs. Ijaz, Yasin and Zafar (2012), describe entrepreneurship as starting ones business; freedom of activity; risk taking and job creation. Succinctly, Hisrich et al. (2005) define entrepreneurship as the dynamic process of creating incremental wealth. Eriobunah and Nosakhare (2011) posit that entrepreneurship is the willingness and the ability of an individual to seek investment opportunities, set up and run an enterprise successfully. More elaborately, entrepreneurship is to create added value through the process of combining the

values of resources that make up the character and behavior of someone who is always creative and efficient, with new ways and difference in order to win the competition (Subroto, 2013). Given that entrepreneurship is multi-disciplinary, there

is no generally accepted definition of entrepreneurship but different scholars have defined it from different schools of thought. In view of all that has been mentioned, it would not be out of place to say that there is consensus on initiative of creating something of value, the commitment of time and effort, taking reasonable risks and the reward of being an entrepreneur. However, Hisrich et al. (2005) note that the creation of a product or service may or may not be unique but with value added by the entrepreneur.

Significantly, entrepreneurship according to Stoner, Freeman and Gilbert (1995) has at least four social benefits. It fosters economic growth; it increases productivity; creates new technologies, products, and services; and changes and rejuvenates market competition. Suffice to say that entrepreneurship is a viable career option. Individuals with business initiatives take advantage of existing opportunities while assuming major risks (financial, psychological, social risks) to provide goods or services of value to the consuming public at a price. This is achieved with devotion of reasonable time and effort for the reward of enterprise.

2.3 Entrepreneurial Intention

Katz and Gartner (1988) as cited in Olaleye (2010), define entrepreneurial intention as the search for information that can be used to help fulfill the goal of venture creation. For Vozikis and Boyd (1994) and Dermol (2003), 'it is a state of mind that directs and guides the actions of the entrepreneur toward the development and implementation of the concept. Similarly, Bird (1988, 1992) as cited in Vozikis and Boyd (1994) define intention as a state of mind that focuses on a person's attention, experience, and behaviour toward a specific object or method of behaving. Simply put, Ijaz et al. (2012) describe entrepreneurial intention as the way to create new firms within available resources. To this end, this work defines entrepreneurial intention as an individuals' wish and plan to start a profit oriented productive enterprise as a means of wealth creation and earning a living.

2.4 Formal Education Curriculum

According to Dib (1988), formal education corresponds to a systematic, organized education model, structured and administered according to a given set of laws and norms, presenting a rather rigid curriculum as regards objectives, content and methodology. Gbamanja (2002), defines curriculum as the totality of experiences given to the learner under the auspices of the school. These experiences, he suggests, should be systematically planned so as to produce positive behavior changes in students to make them fit into society. In modern times, therefore, the curriculum includes: a programme, planned and directed activities towards the child, the teacher, the learning environment or school and the attainment of specific goals or objectives. Meanwhile the experiences, he noted can be given or acquired through three major curriculum categories, namely: programme of studies, programme of activities and programme of guidance. To this end, the curriculum includes academic and non-academic, vocational, emotional and recreational activities from which the learner receive his or her experiences.

Nigeria's philosophy of education is based on the development of an individual into a sound and effective citizen, and full integration into the community (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2004). This presupposes that education is a social instrument for national development. Entrepreneurship education therefore, forms part of the Nigerian formal education curriculum to provide students with the knowledge, skills and motivation to encourage entrepreneurial activity in a variety of settings; a lifelong learning process starting as early as primary school, secondary through tertiary programs including adult education through a framework for teachers to use in building appropriate objectives, learning activities, and assessments for their target audience.

Realising the relevance of entrepreneurship as key to economic development given the state of unemployment at the time and perceiving entrepreneurship education as a veritable tool, the Federal Government through the Federal Ministry of Education in 2007, after wide consultation and discussion with stakeholders, inserted compulsorily, in the curriculum of tertiary institutions in the country, the study of entrepreneurship education as a course requisite for graduation (Jimah, 2010 as cited in Ejiofor and Onwuka, 2012 and Onwuka, 2012). This initiative was considered to be the stepping-stone in bridging the gap in the labour market that would not only prepare students to establish, their own enterprises, thereby becoming employers of labour in the new business established. This vision is deemed to have the capacity of putting the economy on the path of full employment, growth and development through the informal and organised private sector.

Notably, universities are critical set of institutions at the tertiary education level after secondary education. The National Policy on Education of the Federal Government of Nigeria states that:

University Education shall make optimum contribution to national development by:

- intensifying and diversifying its programmes for the development of high level manpower within the context of the needs of the nation;
- making professional course contents reflect our national requirements;
- making all students as part of a general programme of all-round improvement in university education, to offer general study courses such as history of ideas, philosophy of knowledge, nationalisms and entrepreneurship;

Entrepreneurial education is the extent to which training in creating/managing new, small or growing business entities is incorporated within the education and training systems at all levels (Xavier, Kelley, Kew, Herrington and Vordewulbecke, 2012). This implies that this form of training can be taught across the primary, secondary and tertiary levels of our educational system. Omolayo (2006) explains that entrepreneurship education is the act of starting a company, arranging business deals and taking risks in order to make a profit through the education skills acquired. He went further to state that it is the ability to generate innovative ideals and transform them to profitable activities. Entrepreneurial education emphasizes the acquisition of certain skills which revolve round the concepts of innovation and creative process, opportunity identification, venture evaluation, deal making, financing, and controlling (Ejiofor and Onwuka, 2012). The major objective of entrepreneurial education is to provide students with adequate knowledge, skills and aptitude to engage them in entrepreneurial ventures in various sectors (Brinda and Dileep, 2011).

Paul (2005) as cited in Ogundipe et al. (2012) elaborately highlighted several objectives entrepreneurship education is set to achieve. They include:

- to provide functional competencies for the youth that will enable them to be self-employed and self-reliant,
- to provide youth graduates with adequate training that will enable them to be creative and innovative in identifying novel business opportunities,
- to serve as a catalyst for economic growth and development,
- offer tertiary institution graduates with adequate training in risk management, to make certain risk bearing feasible,
- to reduce high rate of poverty,
- to generate employment,
- to reduce rural-urban migration,
- to provide young graduates with enough training and support that will enable them to establish a career in small and medium sized business,
- to inculcate the spirit of perseverance in the youths and adults which will enable them to persist in any business feature they embark on.
- to create smooth transition from traditional to a modern industrial economy.

The aforementioned objectives are detailed, comprehensive and show the capacity of functional entrepreneurial education that will bridge the gap between academic learning and the real world, termed ‘taking the gown to town’, thereby solving the problem of hardship, poverty, underemployment and unemployment. In line with the position of Ogundipe et al. (2012), Subroto (2013) identified several strategies amongst others that can be applied to foster the spirit of entrepreneurship in tertiary education:

- develop entrepreneurship lecture
- relate the specific course material relevant to the cultivation of an entrepreneurial attitude
- develop extra-curricular activities associated with the planting of entrepreneurial attitude
- develop tertiary education curriculum that provides entrepreneurship education that can enhance the understanding of entrepreneurship, develop character and skills of entrepreneurship and
- foster a culture of entrepreneurship in the college.

Summarily, Olateye (2010) posited that entrepreneurship education is set to develop understanding and the wherewithal to pursue entrepreneurial behaviours; skills and attributes in diverse contexts. The researcher remarked that these behaviours can be practiced, developed and learned.

3. METHOD

This study adopted Survey Research Design. It utilized both qualitative and quantitative methods. The population comprised of 1,416 final year students (full time and part-time) of the Department of Business Administration/Management

from nine (9) selected out of twenty-two (22) giving equal opportunity to each state, different generations of universities from 1975 to date, incorporating public and private as well as Federal and State universities in South-South, Nigeria. Those selected include: University of Benin, University of Calabar, University of Port Harcourt, University of Uyo, Delta State University, Igbinedion University, Niger Delta University, Novena University and Rhema University.

Systematic sampling method was used to draw from the population. The sample size of 312 was determined using the formula developed by Taro Yamane (Dike, Ehikwe and Onwuka, 2013). The sample size for each University was subsequently estimated using Bowley's Proportional Allocation Technique (Dike et al., 2013). Primary data was collected through responses from questionnaire items in a two-section structured questionnaire. The instrument tested was checked for validity through a pilot study (survey). The data generated was retrieved, analysed and the hypothesis tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Technique of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 20. Coefficients were used to interpret data.

Decision rule

The following interpretation coefficients was used:

<0.1: weak;

0.11-03: modest;

0.31-05: moderate;

>0.5: strong (Muijs, 2004).

4. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Respondents Demographic Information

Table 1: Respondents' Gender

	Frequency	Percent (%)
Male	142	47.8
Female	155	52.2
Total	297	100.0

Source: Field Survey (2017)

Table 1 shows the percentage distribution of respondents according to their gender. Male were 142 representing 47.8% of the respondents while female respondents were 155 which represent 52.2% of the sample.

Table 2: Pearson's Correlation of Entrepreneurship Education and entrepreneurship Intentions

		Entrepreneurship Education	Entrepreneurial Intentions
Entrepreneurship Education		-	
Entrepreneurial Intentions	R N	21 297	- 297

Source: Field Survey 2017

The data presented in table 4.1 shows that the Pearson's Correlation Coefficient (r) was 0.21. This shows a positive correlation between entrepreneurial education and entrepreneurial intentions. The coefficient of determination (.212) shows that entrepreneurship education explains 4.4% of the variance in entrepreneurial intentions. Therefore, the extent of relationship between entrepreneurial education and entrepreneurial intention was considered modest. In response to the objective of this study, a positive and significant relationship was found. The finding infers that if there is effective transmission of entrepreneurship knowledge and skills to students, students would be motivated to establish their own business in the near future and vice versa. The reasons for this relationship may stem from the attractiveness of the course or programme, the quality of the lecturers/instructors, nature of the curriculum content, existence of a social network of present

and/or former students, and availability of functional support infrastructure by the universities. The finding is critical to the extent that entrepreneurship needs to be given the boost it deserves in the university curriculum to help solve the problem of unemployment, poverty and under-development in the land. This finding is in line with earlier findings of Dyer (1994), Kolvereid and Moen (1997), Noel (1998), Watson, Hogarth-Scott and Wilson (1998), Raijman (2001), Souitaris, Zerbini and Al-Laham (2007), Keat et al. (2011), Egunsola (2012), Ogundipe et al. (2012), Kume et al. (2013), Babatunde and Durowaife (2014) and Sharmal and Madan (2014). Summarily, universities have a role to promote entrepreneurship via its entrepreneurship curriculum and content as it is beneficial and would influence self-employment intentions of prospective graduates and accelerate growth of the country. The result of the empirical test of the hypothesis demonstrates that entrepreneurial intentions of University students in the South-South are influenced by entrepreneurship education. There was a significant correlation between students' entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurship intentions, $r(297) = .21$ and $P < 0.05$. The null hypothesis was rejected.

5. CONCLUSION

The study found formal education curriculum (entrepreneurship education) as having positive and significant relationship with students' entrepreneurial intentions in selected universities in South-South, Nigeria.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made for this study:

- Entrepreneurship education should be taught at the primary, secondary and tertiary education levels to inculcate entrepreneurial spirit in our citizen's from childhood.
- Entrepreneurship education curriculum should be practical-oriented, attractive and functional to create the needed jobs and not just teaching/learning principles and theories.
- Universities and other tertiary institutions should provide scholarship to lecturers to specialize in entrepreneurship as a discipline.

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