



Perceived Impact of Entrepreneurial Education as a Tool for Curbing Unemployment among SMES in Delta State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The study was designed to examine the impact of entrepreneurial education as a tool for reducing unemployment among youths in Delta State. Three research questions and two hypotheses were adopted for the study. The study adopted descriptive research design. The population of the study was 1000 respondents. Tara Yamene's formula was used to derive two hundred and eighty six (286) respondents used as sample for the study. Data was collected from respondents using structured questionnaire and analysed using mean and standard deviation. Pearson product moment correlation and simple regression was used to analyse the hypotheses. The results of the analysis revealed that perceptions of the youths on entrepreneurial education towards unemployment included: enhancing self-sufficiency, stimulated job creation through the formation of small and medium scale enterprises, stimulates idea of foreign exchange earnings among youths, promotes productive capacity of entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurial education have contributed to: youth's resourcefulness and control my finance in business, be profit oriented, dynamic in thinking potential, and adjustable to business challenges. However, lack of entrepreneurship teachers, materials and equipments, poor social attitude to technical and vocational education development, poor plan and execution of processes of actions, and insensitivity of government to enterprise creation and expansion strategy were factors militating against entrepreneurial education in the study area. The study recommended among others that the government should reinvigorate the numerous agencies responsible for facilitating entrepreneurial development, especially the funding facilitating vehicles, to ensure the current high hopes being raised in the students are not only sustained, but eventually made to materialize. The government should engage enough entrepreneurship teachers/researchers in their various training centres.

Keywords: entrepreneurial education, unemployment, youths, SMES

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays there has been increasing concern over the continuously expanding rate of unemployment around the world, particularly in most developing countries, where the youth have been identified as the most affected groups. As a result, various governmental and non-governmental organizations have provided policies through support agencies like: National Directorate for Employment (NDE), Small Medium Enterprises Development Agency (SMEDAN), the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), Raw Materials & Development Council (RMRDC) among others to address the negative issues of unemployment among Nigerian citizens (Olayinka 2010, Emmannuel, 2012, Akhuemonkhan, Raimi & Sofoluwe, 2013).

These identified strategies were provided with the hope that the development of self-employment and small enterprise initiatives would serve as a measure to unlock the economic potentials of the people, increase the capacity to empower and equip individuals in society to participate and benefit from their national economy as well as facilitates economic development which forms the bases for transformation

(Unachukwu, 2009, Ekpo & Edet, 2011). Also recently, the Federal government of Nigeria established another means to educate self-employment (entrepreneurial education) in students of tertiary institutions. This mandate was given to the National Universities Commission (NUC, 2014) to include entrepreneurial educational studies in the curriculum of Nigerian Universities with the hope of reducing unemployment among fresh graduates (Aja-Okorie & Adali, 2013).

Entrepreneurship education as part of the educational system is the kind of education that involves the learning of skills, ideas and management abilities necessary for job creation. An entrepreneur promotes employment rather than seeking for job. Therefore, there is a need to embrace this type of education and provide all the necessary resources needed to make functional. Quality entrepreneurship education could be used as a tool for fighting the war against poverty and unemployment in Nigeria.

Nigeria is currently faced with serious economic challenges. There is therefore an urgent need for resuscitation and diversification of the economy. Small and Medium Enterprises contribute significantly to the economic growth and development of Nigeria. Dogarawa (2011) asserted that SMEs, not only improve the living standards and serve not only as a catalyst in the process of development, but also bring about reasonable local capital formation and achieve high levels of productivity and capability. They are also the main agents for achieving equitable and sustainable industrial diversification and distribution; and in several countries SMEs account for well over half of the total share of employment, sales and value added.

Unfortunately, unemployment is a major problem militating against the economy and well being of many countries in recent times, has resulted in increasing agitation from citizens, therefore, increasing insecurity in such countries. The researcher observed that the unavailability of job opportunities among youths especially graduates in Delta State have been identified as one of the major factors responsible for youth restiveness and other social vices including prostitution, arm robbery, destitution and political thuggery. Armed robbery and stealing are some of the social vices manifestations of unemployment and poverty in the State.

As noted earlier, entrepreneurship education is a form of education or tool which makes humans to be responsive to their personal, families and national needs and aspirations. Entrepreneurship competencies carry with it, the concept of skills and abilities which are needed to understand the functioning of an already existing business. It also drives up entrepreneur orientation in many SMEs, which in turn has significant impact on economic development and unemployment. Being equipped these competencies some of these graduates have settled down for small and medium scale businesses to be economically and socially viable in the society. The question now raise is: to what extent has entrepreneurial education ameliorated the vices in the society and improved the employment condition in the State? Hence, the study sought to assess the impact of entrepreneurial education as a tool of bringing down unemployment among SMEs in Delta State.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to examine the impact of entrepreneurial education as a tool of reducing unemployment among SMEs in Delta State. Specifically the study seeks to:

1. determine the perception of SMEs on entrepreneurial education towards unemployment in Delta State
2. examine the extent entrepreneurial education have contributed to the success of SMEs in business
3. identify factors militating against entrepreneurial education in the study area

Research Questions

In order to achieve the desired end of the study, the following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the perceptions of SMEs on entrepreneurial education towards unemployment in Delta State?
2. To what extent does entrepreneurial education contribute to the success of SMEs in business?
3. What are the factors militating against entrepreneurial education in the study area?

Hypotheses

HO₁: Entrepreneurial education does not contribute to the success of SMEs in business in the study area

HO₂: There is no significant relationship between the perceptions of SMEs and factors militating entrepreneurial education in the study area

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The research work adopted a survey research design.

Population of the Study

Primary source of data was used for the study. The population of the study comprised of One thousand (1000) youths in the empowerment programme of Delta State (STEP/YAGEP, 2021). These youths were chosen because they are graduates that have undergone entrepreneurial education from the empowerment programme before they set-up their businesses. They include: fashion designer, agricultural enterprise (fish, poultry, crop, processing and others), electrical/automobile engineers amongst others.

Sampling Technique

Taro Yamene's formula was used to derive 286 respondents who served as sample of the study. Stratified and random sampling technique was used to select the sample. Ninety five (95) SMEs were randomly selected from each of the three senatorial Districts (strata) that make up Delta State. Taro Yamene's formula: $n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$

Where n= sample size required

N= number of people in the population

e = allowable error (5%)

$$n = \frac{1000}{1 + 1000(0.05)^2}$$

$$= \frac{1000}{3.5}$$

$$= 285.71$$

Aprox= 286 SMEs

Instrumentation and Validation

Structured questionnaire was used for data collection in this study. Three experts from the Delta State University, Asaba campus and the project supervisor were requested to validate the questionnaire items to determine the accuracy; relevance; clarity and face validity. The corrections and suggestions given were used to produce the final version of the instrument.

Reliability of the Instrument

The reliability of the instrument was established using the Cronbach Alpha and the split-half technique. Trial testing of the instrument was carried out in using 20 beneficiaries of STEP/YAGEP programme 2021. This population is different from the sample of the study. A coefficient value of 0.79 was obtained. The high coefficient suggests that the instrument was reliable for the study.

Method of Data Collection

The instruments were administered to the respondents in their various places of business by the researcher and the help of two research assistants who were trained on the distribution and collection of instrument from respondents. Two hundred and four (71.3%) out of 286 copies of the instrument distributed were duly retrieved.

Method of Data Analysis

Data collected from the field was analyzed using mean and standard deviation. Items with mean score of 2.50 and above were accepted while items with mean score of less were rejected. Hypotheses were tested using simple regression and Pearson product moment correlation at 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS

Research Question 1

What are the perceptions of SMEs on entrepreneurial education towards unemployment in Delta State?

Table 1: Mean responses of SMEs on the perceptions on entrepreneurial education towards unemployment in Delta State (N=204)

S/N	Statement items	Mean	S.D	Remark
1.	Entrepreneurship education equipped me with knowledge, skills and competencies, thereby enhancing self-sufficiency	3.09	0.74	High Extent
2.	Entrepreneurial education stimulates job creation through the formation of small and medium scale enterprises	3.03	0.77	High Extent
3.	Entrepreneurial education stimulates idea of foreign exchange earnings among SMEs	3.08	0.68	High Extent
4.	Entrepreneurial education promotes productive capacity of entrepreneurs	3.63	0.81	High Extent
5.	Entrepreneurship education enhances wealth creation	3.31	0.86	High Extent
6.	Entrepreneurship education develops a pool of potential entrepreneurs	2.52	0.76	High Extent
7.	Entrepreneurship education stimulates rural, economic and industrial development	2.91	0.88	High Extent

The data presented in Table 1 showed that the items had a mean range of 2.52 to 3.63. The mean values were above the cut-off point of 2.50. This indicates the perceptions of SMEs entrepreneurial education towards unemployment in the study area. The standard deviation of the items ranged from 0.68 to 0.88. This indicated that respondents were unanimous in their responses as they were not from each other.

Research Question 2

To what extent does entrepreneurial education contribute to the success of SMEs in business?

Table 2: Mean responses of respondents on the extent entrepreneurial education contributes to the success of SMEs in business (N=204)

S/N	Statement items	Mean	S.D	Remark
1	Entrepreneurial education made me to be resourcefulness and control my finance in business	3.03	0.62	High Extent
2	Entrepreneurial education equipped me to be profit oriented	3.09	0.74	High extent
3	Entrepreneurial education made me to know the need for energy for hard work in business	2.43	0.77	Low Extent
4	Dynamic thinking potential was developed by entrepreneurial education	3.68	0.68	High Extent
5	Adjustment to business challenges and future looking are components of entrepreneurial education	3.14	0.82	High Extent
6	I developed risk taking initiative in business through entrepreneurial education	2.32	0.77	Low Extent

The data presented in Table 2 showed that the items had a mean range of 2.43 to 3.68. Most of the means were above the cut-off point of 2.50. This indicates that the respondents agreed items 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6 were contributions of entrepreneurial education to the success of SMEs in business in the study area. Items 3 and 6 were indicated low contribution because their means were below the bench mark. The standard deviation of the items ranged from 0.62 to 0.86. This indicated that respondents were unanimous in their responses as they were not from each other.

Research Question 3

What are the factors militating against entrepreneurial education in the study area?

Table 3: Mean responses of respondents on factors militating against entrepreneurial education in the study area (N=204)

S/N	Statement items	Mean	SD	Remark
1	Poor government support	2.09	0.78	Low Extent
2	Inadequate facilities and equipment for teaching and learning entrepreneurship	2.88	0.82	High Extent
3	Lack of entrepreneurship teachers, materials and equipments	3.09	0.74	High Extent
4	Poor social attitude to technical and vocational education development	3.19	0.66	High Extent
5	Poor plan and execution of processes of actions	3.31	0.77	High Extent
6	Lack of effective policy on entrepreneurship	2.11	0.65	Low Extent
7	Negligence of government to enterprise creation and expansion strategy	3.13	0.77	High Extent

The result presented in Table 3 showed that the items had the mean range of 2.43 to 4.13. Items 2, 3, 4, 5 and 7 had mean scores above the cut-off point of 2.50. This indicated that to a high extent the items were factors militating against entrepreneurial education in the study area. Items 1 and 6 were seen by the respondents as little or no problem. The standard deviation of the items ranged from 0.65 to 0.82. This indicated that respondents were close to one another in their responses.

Hypothesis 1

HO₁: Entrepreneurial education does not contribute to the success of SMEs in business in the study area

Table 4: Regression analysis on the contribution of Entrepreneurial education to the success of SMEs in business

Variables	R	R-square	Adjusted R-square	P-value
Entrepreneurship Education	0.793	0.712	0.702	0.05

Table 4 shows that regression analysis on the contribution of Entrepreneurial education to the success of SMEs in business. The result showed that the R² value (0.71) is higher than the critical value of P at 0.05 level of significance. This indicates that entrepreneurial education significantly contributed to the success of SMEs in business. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected

Hypothesis 3

HO₃: There is no significant relationship between the perceptions of SMEs and factors militating entrepreneurial education in the study area

Table 5: Pearson’s product moment analysis on the mean responses of respondents on relationship between perceptions of SMEs and factors militating entrepreneurial education

Variables	Σx^2	Σy^2	Σxy	R	P-value	Remark
Perceptions of education towards unemployment (x)	87.77	60.82	75.17	- 0.06	0.05	Accepted
Factors militating entrepreneurial education(y)						

Table 7 presented Pearson’s product moment analysis on relationship between perceptions of SMEs and factors militating entrepreneurial education in the study area. The result showed that the R-value is less than the critical value of P at 0.05 level of significance. This indicates that there is no relationship between perceptions of SMEs and factors militating entrepreneurial education. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Perceptions of SMEs on entrepreneurial education towards unemployment in Delta State

The result in Table 2 indicated that the perceptions of SMEs on entrepreneurial education towards unemployment were that to a high extent: it equipped them with knowledge, skills and competencies, thereby enhancing self-sufficiency, stimulated job creation through the formation of small and medium scale enterprises, stimulates idea of foreign exchange earnings among SMEs, promotes productive capacity of entrepreneurs; amongst others. In line with the findings Izedonmi and Okafor (2010), opined that entrepreneurship education is focused on developing young ones with the passion and multiple skills. It is aimed to reduce the problem associated with entrepreneurship thought and guide the firm successfully via its initial stage to the majority. Entrepreneurship education is therefore regarded as an important tool for the reduction of unemployment (Adiele, 2010).

Entrepreneurial education contribution to the success of SMEs in business

The result in Table 3 showed that to a high extent entrepreneurial education contributed to: SME’s resourcefulness and control my finance in business, be profit oriented, dynamic in thinking potential, and adjustable to business challenges. In consonance to the findings, Brown (2000) opined that entrepreneurship education is designed to communicate and inculcate competencies, skills, knowledge, and values needed to recognize business prospects, organize and start new business venture. It is about transforming an idea into reality, rather than talking about how to do it. Garavan and Costine (1995) asserted that entrepreneurship education is the process of activities which focus to enable an individual to understand and develop knowledge, skills, abilities, values and understanding that are not simply related to a narrow field of activity but which allow a broad range of problems to be defined, analyzed and solved. Also the study found out that entrepreneurial education has not been able to help SMEs develop risk taking initiative in business. This is true as Potter (2008) argued that education and training programmes is not enough to nurture entrepreneurial attitudes and skills, but rather educate students for paid employment, despite some recent improvements.

Factors militating against entrepreneurial education in the study area

The result in Table 4 indicated that: Inadequate facilities and equipment for teaching and learning entrepreneurship, lack of entrepreneurship teachers, materials and equipments, poor social attitude to technical and vocational education development, poor plan and execution of processes of actions, and

insensitivity of government to enterprise creation and expansion strategy were factors militating against entrepreneurial education in the study area. Obeleagu-Nzelibe and Moruku (2010) noted that lack of sufficient and skilled manpower, hasty preparations, poor state of infrastructure, faulty foundation, inadequate or outright lack of funding, were challenges of on entrepreneurship education in Nigeria. The result also indicated that the government supports entrepreneurial education in the country. This is so as Chigunta (2002) stated that government of Nigeria support young entrepreneurs by securing a supportive infrastructure that can help overcome barriers associated with lack of networks, skills, finance for premises and access to associated start-up support.

Hypotheses

The result in Table 6 indicated that entrepreneurial education significantly contributed to the success of SMEs in business. This implies that entrepreneurial education promoted self reliance and self employment of graduate youths in the study area. In line with the finding, Dutse et al., (2013) from their study also noted that, majority of the respondents believes entrepreneurial education is a good policy and it has come to stay, they see it as a possible solution to the problem of high level unemployment, through self employment and job creation, source of revenue to government; will promote industrialization, innovation and technology.

The result in Table 7 indicated that there is no relationship between perceptions of SMEs and factors militating against entrepreneurial education. This implies that factors militating against entrepreneurial education never affected the way SMEs percept entrepreneurial education

CONCLUSION

Entrepreneurial education is a discipline that seeks the establishment and maintenance of a functioning economy through job creation with a wide range of interest put into consideration especially as regards unemployment reduction. The study showed that perceptions of SMEs on entrepreneurial education towards unemployment included: enhancing self-sufficiency, stimulated job creation through the formation of small and medium scale enterprises, stimulates idea of foreign exchange earnings among SMEs, promotes productive capacity of entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurial education have contributed to: SME's resourcefulness and control my finance in business, be profit oriented, dynamic in thinking potential, and adjustable to business challenges. However, lack of entrepreneurship teachers, materials and equipments, poor social attitude to technical and vocational education development, poor plan and execution of processes of actions, and insensitivity of government to enterprise creation and expansion strategy were factors militating against entrepreneurial education in the study area.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Government should reinvigorate the numerous agencies responsible for facilitating entrepreneurial development, especially the funding facilitating vehicles, to ensure the current high hopes being raised in the students are not only sustained, but eventually made to materialize
2. The government should engage enough entrepreneurship teachers/researchers in their various training centres
3. Prospective graduates should be made to start from secondary schools to learn and develop entrepreneurship consciousness, culture, motivation, aspirations as well as entrepreneurial skills by making "Entrepreneurship studies" a compulsory subject offering in our schools.

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