



ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION: MEANS OF MITIGATING UNEMPLOYMENT AND POVERTY AMONG NIGERIAN GRADUATES (CASE OF SELECTED ENTREPRENEURS IN EKITI STATE)

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Abstract

Poverty rate is on the rise in most of the developing nations of the world without the exclusion of Nigeria. Rate of poverty among Nigerian youths and or graduates is highly disturbing. More often than not, there is always a direct link between poverty and unemployment problems as the former problem could as well be caused by the latter. However, some of the factors that are responsible for the unemployment problem include lack of appropriate training and non-acquisition of relevant skills that would have enabled potential labour force to become self-employed, productive and if possible create jobs for others. As a result, most labour factors remained unemployed, unproductive and kept in poverty trap. This study therefore seeks to investigate extent to which entrepreneurship education has mitigated unemployment and poverty rate among youths and or graduates in Nigeria using Ekiti State as case study. In order to achieve these objectives, primary data were used, well structured questionnaire was designed and administered to population of the study made up of selected 415 entrepreneurs across the 16 local governments in the state. Descriptive analysis were used such Simple percentages, results indicated that most of the graduates engaging themselves in one entrepreneurial activity or the other have been able to break out of poverty trap and beyond creating jobs for others who are unemployed within their environments. It is therefore recommended that stakeholders at the helm of affairs in the education sector should prioritize entrepreneurship education/training in all institutions of higher learning across the country and this should form part of their curriculum. Similarly, it would not be out of place if the monetary and fiscal policies are designed in such a manner that would ensure survival and growth of most these business ventures set up by these entrepreneurs.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship Education, Entrepreneurs, Unemployment, Poverty Rates, Business Ventures

INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship education is the kind of education given to people with a view of developing entrepreneurship qualities properly followed-up with support services for smooth take-off and successful running of business. Therefore, entrepreneurship education is perceived as the systematic development of skills, knowledge and attitudes demanded by an individual to perform adequately in a given business or occupational oriented opportunities for improved performance of a country's economy. Additionally, the aims of entrepreneurship education therefore, are: to improve the performance of existing economy, to reduce the learning period for one to participate fully in the business environment, to help people develop their capacities so that their economy can meet most, if not all, its future requirements for the economy (Joseph, 2021). Entrepreneurship education has the mandate to equip the youth with functional knowledge and skills to build up their character, attitude and vision. It has vital role in developing eco-system that promotes

innovation and solving unemployment challenges of nations. A number of factors such as corruption and poor governance, poor infrastructure, wars and unending conflicts, cultural and structural factors, poor resource usage, and unemployment are variables identified as capable of intensifying poverty problem (Alex, 2014). In essence, unemployment is an instance when a factor of production, say labour, is said to be unproductive or idle. The idle state of the factors always prevents a nation from being able to harness all her resources fully. The consequence of such is either stagnating or retarding output level which will automatically reduce the per capita income per head with increasing population, lowers savings, and causes investment level to diminish at the same time and finally impacting the productivity level negatively that will produce another low per capita income in the next period, the vicious circle of poverty continues. The root cause of the unemployment rampant among the youths and graduates from African institution of higher learning could be traced to the design of their formal education curriculum that is



oriented towards preparing students for employment in the public sector and already established business entities. The curricula content and context conveyed are that students must be prepared for careers in which they will be working for an existing private business or a public institution. This presumption in our educational system is largely reflected in the old colonial system of education that aim at educating students to fill bureaucratic positions or limited positions in private sector. However, most of these positions are no longer available in both sectors which requires individual to come with ideas that could be transformed into physical good or service with commercial values. This eventually led to introduction of entrepreneurship education forming part of the curriculum and a course to be taught in most institution of higher learning across Nigeria in more than a decade ago. Several studies have attempted to examine the implication entrepreneurship education on national development, business expansion, and reduction in crime rate among others. Only few examined its impact on employment generation using south east, Nigeria as a case study. Therefore, this study intends to assess impacts of entrepreneurship education on unemployment and poverty among selected graduate entrepreneurs in Ekiti state. Apart from the introduction, the rest of the sections is divided into four. Section 2 gives the review of literature, section 3 deals with materials and method while section 4 presents results and discussion and section 5 is the conclusion.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Several studies have been conducted examining the relationship between entrepreneurship and many other variables such employment generation, wealth creation, economic growth crime reduction and national development among others. Some of findings showed that positive relationship while others are indirect in nature as discussed below.

Mathew, Haruna, Anah & Maisanamweui (2020) assessed the impact of entrepreneurship education on increasing employment generation, productivity enhancement, and creating wealth through the implementation of entrepreneurship education in all institutions and at all levels of learning in Nigeria. In achieving these objectives, descriptive statistics were used as their mean and standard deviation values showed that entrepreneurship education has positive impact on students because it prepares them to be self reliant rather than being job chasers. Meanwhile, empirical findings confirmed that entrepreneurship education promotes

entrepreneurial skills, perception and stimulate the interest of final year students in preparing themselves in becoming self-established and creating jobs and wealth for themselves and others as well, which in turn enhances productivity, growth, and development within the economy and further improve government revenue generation. Further close examination of the implication of entrepreneurship education on national economic development of the nation was carried out and empirical results of the study made authors to submit that entrepreneurship education is a cure or answer to unemployment problem in Nigeria because it equips individual with necessary skills to become self-reliant and successful as entrepreneur; all of which are good attributes to gauge national development (Nwankwo & Obinna, 2021). Ugorgi & Ugwu (2017) examined the extent to which entrepreneurship education can resuscitate a dwindling or depressed economy. Authors' descriptive results established that entrepreneurship education has the latent power of enhancing nation's gross domestic product, improves sales and use of locally produced goods, hence stabilizing the depressed economy. In the same vein, impact of entrepreneurship education on entrepreneurial human capital development has been assessed. Besides employability and innovative skills that the mode of education instills, its other socioeconomic implications include wealth creation, employment generation, increasing life expectancy and living standard, poverty and crime reduction with their direct impact on national economy (Ikpesu, 2014). Another qualitative review focussed on the potential of entrepreneurship education in stimulating human capital development and employability of labour in an economy with specific reference to Cameroon economy. Assertively, similar study conducted in Nigeria has adjudged entrepreneurship as capable of equipping their trainees with necessary skills that would make them emerge as job creators and economy developers in the midst of escalating unemployment rate; hence, it is viewed s the bedrock of job creation and national development (Ofishe, 2016). Author averred that entrepreneurship is a veritable tool for eradicating unemployment, poverty and ignorance among the youths in the said nation (Joseph, 2021). Other arguments revolve around quality education in entrepreneurship and innovations serving as medium of creating new business ventures by those not interested or courageous enough before to venture in entrepreneurship activities, therefore making it impossible to downplay its importance in stimulating economic growth and development within an economy (Christmas, Baliago & Gotip,



n.d.). Emezue & Onwujekwe (2019) explored the impacts of entrepreneurship education on performance of some selected Small and Medium scale Enterprises (SMEs) in Enugu State, Nigeria. Their Taro Yamene descriptive statistics results showed that entrepreneurship education and training positively and significantly enhance performance of SMEs and further submitted that entrepreneurship education and training can spur growth and development of a nation. Other studies conditioned the positive impact of entrepreneurship education on economic growth and development of a nation on government ability to build competent study centres with qualified workers to educate and train future entrepreneurs and young people should be exposed to entrepreneurial activities at an early stage so that they can grow with them.

Mamadou (2022) sought and established the connection between entrepreneurship development and poverty in Africa. Author's qualitative technique of analysis pointed out the direct and significant influence of entrepreneurship education development on poverty reduction among the populace within the continent. Emphasis is placed on creating enabling environments within the continent to further reap the benefits of entrepreneurship education that include reduction in unemployment rate among youths and women and denting high poverty level prevalent among them. The empirical results obtained from both descriptive and inferential statistics adopted in examining the effects of entrepreneurship education on poverty alleviation among graduates in Borno State, Nigeria, showed that entrepreneurship education has significant positive impact on poverty via employment generation as well as wealth creation. In essence, both employment generation and wealth creation caused by entrepreneurship education, ultimately mitigate poverty level among graduates. Hence, authors submitted that entrepreneurship education indirectly impact poverty through employment generation and wealth creation it causes (Amina, 2020).

In contrast, a related study was conducted in Pakistan analysing the entrepreneurship influence on poverty alleviation, results of the regression analysis showed that entrepreneurship education has an insignificant influence on poverty reduction, but a significant indirect effect was found. More so, entrepreneurial skills have significant effects on poverty alleviation both directly and indirectly (Moudassir, Alamzib & Waheed n.d.). Akande & Alabi (nd) empirically analysed the effect of entrepreneurship education on entrepreneurial intention among universities' students in Nigeria, results indicated that teaching of entrepreneurship

courses provided entrepreneurial intention among students and a platform for future growth of small scale business. Thus, entrepreneurship is seen having significant effect on entrepreneurial intention. Similarly, another study assessed impacts of entrepreneurship education on self employment, job creation and job seeking intention of graduates from selected Polytechnics in western Kenya, results of the descriptive survey research design showed that most students are not ready for self employment and job creation; hence, most of them have prepared their minds to seek for jobs after graduation. Causative factor accounting for this is teaching mode of their instructors in the course of pursuing their studies that is passive rather than active (John, Susan & Morei 2022). Based on the Content Analysis result generated by some other scholars, entrepreneurship education is perceived as capable of boosting the confidence of graduates and people in general, transforming them into aggressive and purposeful individuals given the strong scientific, technical and factual base coupled with better background information and research skill that entrepreneurship education has instilled in them (Alabi, Alanana & Bahal, 2014).

However, in assessing the impacts of entrepreneurship educational curriculum, skill and pedagogy on job creation, Pearson Correlation Coefficients results revealed that entrepreneurship educational curriculum has low and insignificant effect on job creation, but entrepreneurship skills and pedagogy have significant effects on job creation among graduates (Eze & Aroge n.d.). John, Amos, Thophile, Nicolas & Mahamadi (2022) used their construct to demonstrate relevance of entrepreneurial education in solving prevalent youth unemployment in Ghana, it was ultimately submitted that entrepreneurial education has potentials of proffering solution to youth unemployment problem in the society.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study Areas, Data Source and Sampling

Selected study areas are the 16 local government councils in Ekiti State including Ado-Ekiti, the state capital. All the 16 local governments have their peculiarities and common characteristics in terms of population size and other demographic factors. Primary data were sourced for the purpose of this empirical research from selected enterprises operating across the sectors of the economy within the state. The data were gotten through administered questionnaire that took place in June, 2023.

Simple random sampling method that selects sample on the basis of knowledge of a population

was used in determining the number of chosen entrepreneurs that totalled 415 from all the local governments corresponding to 25 from each local government with the exemption of state capital seat, Ado-Ekiti that doubles as state capital and local government headquarter that has 40 respondents, this is because of the perceived high level of economic transactions going on within this metropolis. Data collection took the researcher two months.

Analytical Technique.

Descriptive statistics were employed in explaining the effects of entrepreneurship education on unemployment problem, poverty problem and other socio-economic variables using percentages and frequencies as well as correlation analysis.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Table 4.1 gives the demographic characteristics of the respondents. Respondents' age lies between 19 and 48 years above. The age range 29-38 has the highest percentage of 34.25%, next to it is age range in terms of percentage closeness is 19-28 that has 30.75%, both totalled 65%. By inference, active and productive population who are still agile to get implemented most of their plans earlier enough are involved in entrepreneurship activities. Meanwhile, exactly 35% are within age bracket of 40 and above. The average age of the respondents was 25 years

which is considered to be within the productive age bracket. Statistics on marital status showed that the percentage difference between the married and single is very wide standing at 17.5%, as statistics showed that over 57.75% of the respondents are single, this high percentage might have been informed by the need for the people in these category to get themselves prepared for future financial responsibilities. Going by the gender statistics, male percentage doubles that of female that stands at 32.75% meaning that for every three entrepreneurs sampled, two are male suggesting that male gender dominate the business world. One of the factors that could have accounted for this may be the huge responsibilities that they have perform both at home and society at large often assumed greater than that of their female counterparts. The educational qualification statistics indicated that less than 20% of the sampled have the least qualification which is National Diploma while over 85% possessed either Bachelor (or its equivalent Higher National Diploma) degree or Master and above, suggesting that out of every 5 respondents sampled at least has first degree and probably other higher degrees. Inferentially, majority of the entrepreneurs are well educated which supposedly will impact their business performance. The result is line with submission of other earlier authors (Emezue & Onwujekwe, 2019).

Table 4.1: Respondent's Demographic Characteristics

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	SD
Age				
(Years)				
19 -28	123	30.75	25	1.462
29 -39	137	34.25		
40 -49	99	24.75		
50 and above	41	10.25		
Marital Status				
Single	231	57.75	2.06	0.395
Married	161	40.25		
Divorced	08	10.25		
Gender				
Male	269	67.25	1.07	0.2650
Female	131	32.75		
Education Level				
National Diploma	69	17.25	2.335	1.005
Higher National Diploma/Degree	283	70.75		
Masters and above	48	12.0		

Table 4.2 shows the frequency and percentage distribution of entrepreneurship education impacts on some identified socio-economic factors. One of the economic variables upon which

entrepreneurship education indirectly influences is entrepreneur income via their entrepreneurial activities. From the sampled population, a little above 50% of the respondents fall in the category of

people who received either high or very high income while a little below 50% claimed to be taking a modest income. The results corroborated earlier research works (John, Amos, Thophile, Nicolas & Mahamadi 2022) that perceived entrepreneurial activities as source of livelihood for the previously unemployed people that ventured into risk taking. Moreover, more than 75% of the respondents affirmed that entrepreneurship activities have raised their standard of living at least significantly while the position of the remaining sampled population was that entrepreneurship activities only impacted their living standard less significantly. Meanwhile, our results lend credence to the previous survey conducted by (Joseph, 2021). Generally, the overall increase in output level in an economy is often the summation of various increments that had earlier occurred in each of the enterprises. Over 85% of the respondents claimed that entrepreneurship education has a very high and positive influence on

output generation and expansion of their firms, suggesting that rise in enterprise output level would result in overall economic growth. This result follows findings of earlier authors (Nwankwo & Obinna, 2021). entrepreneurship education is seen having significant impact on business performance as close to 81% of the respondents agreed that entrepreneurship education impacted their business performance significantly, meanwhile less than 20% disagreed with this position and submitted that it is less significant factor. However, it therefore follows that entrepreneurship education could act as catalyst speeding business growth and also improving its output generation meaning that this form of education can take people off poverty hook as more than 95% of the respondents confirmed that such education had assisted significantly in lessening poverty incidence among the populace. This findings contradicted earlier research reports (John, Susan & Morei 2022)

Table 4.2. Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Entrepreneurship Education/Activities on other Socio-Economic Factors

variables	frequency	Percentage
Income Level Upon Venturing into Entrepreneurship Activities		
Low	152	38.00
Moderate	199	49.75
Very High	49	12.25
Influence of the Entrepreneurship Activities on Living Standard		
Less Significant	98	24.50
Significant	121	30.25
Highly significant	181	45.25
Influence of the Entrepreneurship Activities on Business Performance		
Less Significant	73	18.25
Significant	128	32.00
Highly significant	199	49.75
Entrepreneurship Education Influence on Output Generation		
Moderate	59	14.75
High	136	34.00
Very High	205	51.25
Entrepreneurship Education Influence on Output Generation		
Moderate	61	15.25
High	148	37.00
Very High	191	47.75
Entrepreneurship Education Influence on Wealth Creation		
Moderate	64	16
High	97	24.25
Very High	239	29.75
Entrepreneurship Education Influence on Poverty Reduction		
Less Significant	19	4.75
Significant	83	20.75
Highly Significant	298	74.50
Entrepreneurship Education Influence on Crime Reduction		
Less Significant	18	4.50
Significant	103	25.75
Highly Significant	279	69.75

Source: Authors' Computation, 2023.

Table 4.3.1 presents the correlation analysis between reduction in unemployment and entrepreneurship education or activities. The association between the two elements was established using the Pearson Product-moment correlation coefficient. Required preliminary analyses were performed to forestall violation of Normality, Linearity and Homoscedasticity

assumption. There was strong, positive correlation between the two variables { $r=0.041$, $n=400$, $p<.0005$ }, with high level of reduction in unemployment associated with corresponding high level of entrepreneurship education. This result is conformity with earlier findings (Ugorgi & Ugwu, 2017).

Table 4.3.1: Correlation between Unemployment Reduction and Entrepreneurship Education

Variables	Unemployment Reduction	Entrepreneurship Education
Unemployment Reduction	1	0.041
Entrepreneurship Education	0.041	1

Source: Authors' Computation, 2023

Table 4.3.3 shows the correlation analysis between poverty reduction and entrepreneurship education. The relationship between the two variables was demonstrated using Pearson-moment correlation coefficient. Preliminary diagnostic tests were done to prevent violation of Normality, Linearity and Homoscedasticity test. There was strong positive correlation between the two variables { $r=0.040$,

$n=400$ $p<.0005$ } with high level of poverty reduction associated with increasing level of entrepreneurship education. The result contradicted earlier findings (Ugorgi & Ugwu, 2017). However, the result is not surprising given the different factors that characterised the design of different nation's curricula.

Table 4.3.2: Correlation between Unemployment Reduction and Entrepreneurship Education

Variables	Poverty Reduction	Entrepreneurship Education
Poverty Reduction	1	0.040
Entrepreneurship Education	0.040	1

Source: Authors' Computation, 2023

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study had investigated into the nature of relationship existing between entrepreneurship education and other variables such as unemployment and poverty rate. More so, impacts of entrepreneurship education on unemployment and poverty rate were measured and found to be positively impacting, thus, mitigating the unemployment and poverty rate. A positive and strong relationship was found between entrepreneurship education and unemployment reduction rate, likewise same positive relationship was established between entrepreneurship

education and poverty reduction rate. It is therefore recommended that those saddled with the responsibility of designing the curricula should prioritize entrepreneurship education making it a compulsory course to be offered by all undergraduate students before graduation given its importance in enabling them to become self employed individuals after graduation rather than job seekers. Also, both fiscal and monetary policies should be designed to create conducive business environment for the entrepreneurs to thrive and speed up rate of economic growth and development within the nation.

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