Full Length Research

Qualitative Entrepreneurial Programme: A Road Map To Fighting Unemployment In Southeastern Nigeria

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The study investigated on quality entrepreneurship programme, a road map to fighting unemployment in Southeastern Nigeria. It emphasizes on the need for entrepreneurship education in institution of learning that would equip graduates with the necessary skills to be self reliant and start up business on their own. The study was guided by two research questions and one hypothesis. The four part-likert type rating scale was used to rate the question containing twenty items. The population of the study was three thousand staff and students. A sample size of one thousand comprising two hundred staff and eight hundred students were drawn through random sampling techniques. Data collected was analyzed with frequency table, percentages, mean score, pooled mean and chi-square. Interview extract were used also to solicit more information. The findings indicated that the various entrepreneurship skills impacted positively on the students. They are found to be self reliance and prepared for the world of works. They have been exposed to various field of life through the laid down NUC curriculum. Among other things, they can make soap, detergent, process food like bread, juice, engage in agriculture, building technology, mechanical, electronic, computer accessories etc. The entrepreneurship skills have also equipped them with knowledge and skills to make business plans, feasibility studies and develop entrepreneurship activities. The study thereby, recommends that the development of entrepreneurship programmes should be constantly reviewed and redesigned to achieve the minimum academic standard for undergraduate. Credit and loan scheme should be set up to enable graduates set up small business enterprises. Above all funding and infrastructure should be increased because of the capital nature of the entrepreneurship programme designed.

Keywords: *Qualitative, Entrepreneur, Programme, Unemployment, Southeastern Nigeria.*

INTRODUCTION

The economic meltdown in the mid 1980's paved way for adverse economic path for unemployment and poverty ridden of young graduates. This is evident in New Telegraph and Daily Trust of Friday 12th June 2020 which asserted that Thirty – Nine Million and Four Hundred Thousand (39.4 million) Nigerians are to be jobless by 2020. No doubt, youths occupy larger segment in Nigerian population sector. From the antecedents, there is ardent need for entrepreneurial inclusive education in all levels of education. The Federal government must have envisaged this that in 2002 a policy statement was

made directing the adoption of Entrepreneurship studies into curriculum of tertiary institution as GST to imbibe graduate with mindset of enterprise and innovation predicated to empowering graduate to harness opportunities of being job creators and not job seekers while engaging in income-yielding ventures amid of scorching unemployment conditions. This initiative gave rise to re-orientation of the intending graduates from the take-a job mentality to make–job mentality. Building from the above, the federal government and the National Universities Commission (NUC) have apt response to prescriptions for a sustainable entrepreneurship programme for Nigerian universities. The Commission quickly embraced it and lend strong support and encouragement to all tertiary institutions to mount entrepreneurship programme of study for undergraduate from various relevant areas of study enabling them receive capacity building, train and re-train for self employability upon graduation, while stressing that the course content should be designed in pedagogical manner giving credence to theory and emphasizing more on practical works.

However by 2010, 2008/2009, 2003/2004 academic sessions, University of Nigeria Nsukka, University of Ilorin, University of Benin have established and developed directorate and technical (TEC) entrepreneurship centres offering courses, organizing conference, seminars and workshop to advance entrepreneurship inclusive education, the University of Nigeria Nsukka on the lead, other tertiary institutions in the South East geopolitical zone embraced the curriculum innovation that a visit to Imo state Polytechnic revealed the inclusion of these entrepreneurial courses (EED)126, (EED)216 and EED 413 in their program of instruction. Seemingly Abia State University Uturu, FUNAI Ebonyi State among other universities in the zone have functional entrepreneurial centres and graduate self employment course (GSE) 301 in their programme of study to inculcate the right type of knowledge, skills that leverage on the acquisition of several hand-on entrepreneurial skills.

OBJECTIVES OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION

The objectives of entrepreneurship education as stipulated by National policy on Education (2004) include:
I. Offer of functional youth education for self employment and reliance.
II. Provision of adequate creative and innovative training to identify novel business opportunities.
III. Reduction of increasing rate of poverty.
IV. Create and generate employment

V. Elimination of all forms of social insecurity.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Entrepreneurship is a French word, entrepreneur is one who undertakes risks, thinking positively on how to create or improve on the existing product and services for purpose of improving life in the society.

Omolayo (2006) opined that entrepreneurship is the act of starting a company, arranging business deal and risk-taking to maximize profits through the skills acquired.

Agbo et al (2001) is of the same view with Omolayo (Ibid) that entrepreneurs are self employed people running their own businesses. According to Wikipedia (2020), an entrepreneur is he/she having possession of new enterprise ventures or ideas and assuming significant accounting ability for the inherent risks and the outcomes. He is an ambitious leader who combines land, labour and capital to create and market novel goods or services.

Ohanele (2010) posits that entrepreneurship is a training programme geared toward equipping learners with creative idea for self-employment and job creation. Agbo et al (2011) defines entrepreneurs as self-employed individuals running their companies. Entrepreneurship is a process of examining the needs, wants and problems associated with start-up and enterprise employing necessary resources, novel ideas and skills for the venture to succeed.

Within the aegis of this paper, entrepreneurial education is the act of teaching and training for the sole purpose of acquiring certain valuable occupational skills with high potency for self- employment inculcating in the recipients the ability to co-ordinate make decisions, bear risks, managers and innovators. Overtly the purpose of establishing universities cannot be over emphasized as it seeks to produce high level manpower for economic growth and national development. Telchur (2009) observes that graduate employability is a socio-economical problem in a given country orchestrated by the young graduates lacking in the skills needed to get a sustainable job for life in a scarce but competitive job market. Investopedia (2020) posited that unemployment is referred to individuals who are employable yet seekers of sustainable jobs. Regrettably, over decades, the university system has been wobbling with inability to meet up with their overriding obligations, the system should be more proactive to redirect and properly advance their curriculum for job creation in order to minimize the rate of graduate unemployment while redesigning or developing qualitative entrepreneurial curriculum would be a road map and lee way to fight graduate

employability and more so the recipient of such curriculum that would be job creators and not job seekers.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Alfred Marsha theoretical framework lends its support to the work. The theorists posited that the level of profit a business attracts consummates with the level of inputs. This theory has overwhelming support of Adejimola and Olufummelayo (2009)Akinboye(2016,2018,2012,2001,1999,1998,1979, 1976) and postulated that entrepreneurship education has the following effects on the students
i. Increase 5-fold the employment rates of youngsters.
ii. Enhances higher order thinking.
iii. Makes student's knowledge more relevant to the realities of life.
iv. Increase their employability profile, adaptation and success in life.

THE PROBLEM

Unemployment rate has been on high increase making job market more crowded and competitive that every year large numbers of graduates are turned out with a far-fetched hope of securing sustainable jobs, and parents accuse the university system's of deficiency in providing qualitative entrepreneurial skills for graduates to stand out of this joblessness. Though, Nigeria has prioritized entrepreneurship inclusive education to equip the intending graduates with potent creative and innovative skills. The problem therefore is to determine whether these skills are capable of providing a road map to fight graduate unemployability in tertiary institutions in South-East Nigeria.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To guide the study, two research questions were posed:
i. How can qualitative entrepreneurship program be utilized to fight graduate unemployment in tertiary institution in the South Eastern States of Nigeria?
ii. What benefit can students derive from quality entrepreneurship programme in tertiary institutions in the south Eastern States of Nigeria?

HYPOTHESIS

One null hypothesis was formulated to guide the study and was tested at 0.5 level of significance.

Ho_1: There is no significant difference between academic staff and student's perception on how entrepreneurship program could be utilized to fight graduate unemployment in tertiary institution in the south Eastern states of Nigerian.

METHODOLOGY

The paper adopted descriptive survey research design with target population of three thousand (3000) consisting of the academic staff and students in selected tertiary institutions in South-East states of Nigeria. The five states that form the South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria are Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo. The sample size was selected using random sampling technique, the universities covered are Abia State University Uturu, Nnamdi Azikiwe Federal University Anambra, Alex Ekwueme Federal University Ebonyi and Federal University of Technology Owerri. Other tertiary institutions include Imo state Polytechnic and Alvan Ikoku College of Education Owerri also in Imo State. A sample size of one thousand (1000) comprising two hundred (200) staff and Eight Hundred (800) students was drawn from the sampled institutions.

Interview extracts consisting of Eight (8) rating items was administered on the staff. The Four (4) points-like type rating scale questionnaire was used for data collection. The reliability of the instruction as carried out using one private university and polytechnic, the scores were subjected to statistical analysis using Pearson Product Moments Correlation Co-efficent-0.5. Two research question and one hypothesis guided the study and data collected were analyzed using percentages, mean score, pooled mean and Chi square with Decision level set at 2.50 Implying that any point above (2.50)(›2.50) was regarded as agreed and below (2.50)(‹2.50) was regarded as disagree.

RESEARCH ANALYSIS

Research Question 1

How can qualitative entrepreneurship program be utilized to fight graduate unemployment in tertiary institution in the South Eastern States of Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean rating on how qualitative entrepreneurship programme could be utilized to fight graduate

S/N	STATEMENT	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	fx	MEAN SCORE	DECISION	POOLED MEAN
	Entrepreneurial program such as the following can be utilized to fight graduate unemployment								
1	Various trading skills i.e electronics.	200	300	200	300	2800	2.80	Positive	
		50%	30	20	30				
2	Clothing Dyeing, textiles	800	1200	600	100	2700	2.70	Positive	
		20%	40	30					
3	Water treatment and packing	400	300	1000	300	2000	2.00	Negative	
		10%	10	50	30				
4	Food Processing, tinning, extract of Vegetable oil.	1200	300	1000	100	2600	2.60		
		30%	10	50	10				
5	Aquaculture, animal husbandry, Fishing, Farming	800	900	600	200	2500	2.50	Positive	2.43
		20%	30	30	20				
6	Brick, block making building technology	1600	300	500	250	2650	2.65	Positive	
		40	10	25	25				
7	Photography, photocopying, wood work, technology carving, drawing	1800	150	200	400	2450	2.45	Positive	
		45%	5	10	40				
8	Tailoring and fashion design	1200	600	600	200	2600	2.60	Positive	
		30%		20	30	20			
9	Metal works technology and Fabrication, welding, automobile	600	1050	400	300	2350	2.35	Negative	
		15%	35	20	20	30			
10	Radio and television repairs, Vehicle maintenance etc	400	150	1000	35	1583	1.58	Negative	
		10%	5	50	35				
N = 1000		**Acceptance Level = 2.50**							

unemployment**.**

From the analysis of the items in table 1 it reveals that qualitative entrepreneurship programme could be utilized to fight graduate unemployment. The result shows that items (2, 4, 5, 6, 8) responded positively because they had their mean value above (2.50) acceptance level. On the other hand, item (3, 7, 9, 10) responded negatively. This implies that they had their mean value below (2.50). In all a pooled mean of (2.43) was obtained. This is however below the cut-off of the acceptance level. The contention is that it could afford the students the various entrepreneurial skills trading, packages, dyeing, textiles, water treatment and packages, building and metal works photography, wood works etc for self sustenance.

RESEARCH QUESTION 2

i. What benefit can student derive from quality entrepreneurship programme in tertiary institution in the south Eastern States of Nigeria?

TABLE 2: Mean rating on the benefit student would gain when exposed to quality entrepreneur programs

S/N	STATEMENT	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	fx	Mean Score	DECISION	Pooled Mean
1	Quality entrepreneurial skills have a positive impact on student career.	400	-	-	-	4000	4.00	p	
		100%	-	-	-				
2	It has a negative impact on students because the skill acquired cannot fight unemployment	1800	150	1000	-	2950	2.95	p	
		45%	5	50					
3	Most graduate acquire skills can make them self employed i.e production of mixed fruit juice from orange, pineapple, banana, grapes etc	1600	300	400	300	2600	2.60	p	
		40%	10	20	30				
4	Most of the graduate can produce soap, perfume, hair relaxer, cream, shampoo for self reliance	600	300	500	250	2650	2.65	p	2.83
		40%	10	25	25				
5	Earn a living on their own as they can manufacture candle, ice-cream, Insecticide, air fresher etc.	1200	600	600	200	2600	2.60	p	
		30	20	30	20				
6	Instead of looking for white-collar job, they can engage in livestock farming, fishing, horticulture to earn a living	2000 50%	300 10	400 20	200 20	2900	2.90	p	
7	Training in architecture, art work, computer accessories can equip graduate with the desired skills needed by the labour marketer	2400 60%	300 10	200 20	200 20	3100	3.10	p	
8	Graduates can be gainfully employed through skills in domestic sciences - food processing.	1600 40%	300 10	600 30	200 20	2700	2.70	p	
9	Acquiring basic skills in motor parts vehicle can make them to 30% be employable	1200 30%	600	200 10	400 10	2410	2.40	Negative	
10	Acquiring skills in photographing ceramics fashion and designing etc can fight the issue of graduate unemployment.	1000 25%	750 25	300 15	350 35	2400	2.40	Negative	
N = 1000		**Acceptance Level = 250**							

Results of the analysis of data in Table 2 indicated that item (11, 12, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8) obtained mean scores above the criterion mean of (2.50) range; this shows that the importance of acquiring quality entrepreneurship skills for graduate employability cannot be over emphasized and justifies the attainment of the programme objectives in the area studied. It is also notable to observe that item (7, 19, 20) scored a mean below (2. 50) which is negatively accepted and a pooled recommendable mean of (2.83).

TABLE 3: Ho$_1$, there is no significant difference between academic staff and students perceptions on how entrepreneurship program could be utilized to fight graduate unemployment.
Chi-test Analysis between the difference in opinion of academic staff and students on how quality entrepreneurship programmes could be utilized to fight graduate unemployment.

SUBJECT DECISION	N	df	Cal Val	Cri-Val	p
Academic Staff Rejection	200	1	4.00	3.84	70.05
Student	800				
Total	1000				

From the analysis of hypothesis above it shows that the critical value at one degree level of freedom and 0.05 level of significance is 3.84 – This shows that the calculated (x^2) value of 4.00 is greater than the tabulated. Therefore we stand to reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative. This however implies that there is a significant difference between the responses of academic staff and students on how quality entrepreneurship programs could be utilized to fight graduate joblessness.

DISCUSSION OF RESULT AND FINDING

Over a decade now there have been consented efforts at integrating entrepreneurship curriculum in Nigeria public universities, these efforts yielded fruits with UNESCO section for technical vocational Education collaborating National Board for Education (NABTE) anchoring projects aiming at equipping Nigerian youth for world of work (UNESCO, 2020). In 2001 NABTE with radical review of its curriculum, started implementation process with twenty-eighty(28) discipline vice-versa, electrical, mechanical, civil Engineering courses in federal polytechnics in the six geo-political zones which the result and findings have lent credence to. For instance the major finding of research question one in items (1, 2, 4, 6, 8) with positive means scores and above accepted value of (2.50), this indicated that credence is given to teaching entrepreneurship programme such as electronic technology, building, wood work, metal technology and civil engineering skills will have potency of curbing the rate of graduate unemployment while building human development for national development. However, acquiring basic trading skills in farming, food processing, fashion and design, textiles, photography, art work, vehicle maintenance and phone accessories could act seriously as a road map to fighting graduate unemployability.

On the other items (3,7,9,10) showed negative response with a mean score below the accepted value of 2.50, this align with opinion of Ihebeneme and Anyaogu (2012) on the deliberation on the extent of academic staff management skills to fight graduate unemployment in tertiary institutions in Imo State. He highlighted that the extent is low and integrated entrepreneurial curriculum has suffered at the implementation level producing epileptic self-reliant graduates.

Contrarily, on oral interview granted to Directors of entrepreneurship and employment at Alex Ekwueme, Federal University Ebonyi state and Nnamdi Azikiwe Federal University at Awka Anambra State affirmed the usage and implementation of entrepreneurial graduate employability curriculum in relation to NUC Bench mark minimum standard for undergraduate programme in Nigerian Universities. Similarly, the Directors of entrepreneurship programme in polytechnics and colleges of Education at Umuagwo and Owerri all in Imo state confirmed the operation and implementation of NABTE and NBCE curriculum. Other state university for entrepreneurship education who were interviewed include Abia State University Uturu and Enugu State University of Science and Technology, they share similar view with their counterparts in Federal Universities and strongly agreed that they offer quality programmes that equip students with desired skills needed by labour markets, invariably confirms the realization of the programme objectives. Other lecturers lend their voices that most of their graduates are gainfully employed while others are self employed. The researchers' findings gave credence to this as way forward for sustainable development and entrepreneurial climate change in Nigeria Universities.

Furthermore, the finding in research question

two (2) on the derivable benefits, revealed that apart from items (19,20) the rest score about 2.50 level of acceptance and a pooled mean of 2.83, implying that the importance of acquiring qualitative entrepreneurship skills for self reliance cannot be over emphasized. This justifies the extent attainment of the programme objectives. Based on these premises, the researchers are convinced that adoption of qualitative entrepreneurship programme in tertiary institution is a welcome development. For instance, Alugbuo (2013), Bababola, (2010), NUC (2011), FGN(2004), UNESCO (2012) NPE (2004) shared the same opinion and agreed with the findings and further declared that the programme will offer functional education for graduate self reliance, increase the rate of self graduate employability through adequate training toward acquiring creative, innovative skills and ability to identifying novel business opportunities. Ajileze (2013), lend credence to the above and affirmed that scholars from relevant areas of study have immensely benefited from the NUC General Studies Entrepreneurship curriculum.

In an interview with some of the students at 300 and 400 levels in some of tertiary institutions in south East Nigeria, they declared that it has positive impacts and agreed that it exposed them to different types of life business skills, like fish farming, leather works, photography, building technology among others. The students further affirmed that EDS courses avail them the skills of writing business plan and organization.

Similarly, other groups are of the opinion that integration of the study into the curriculum has alleged their fear of unemployment as they have alternatives jobs other than white collar jobs; hence the justification for the study.

Unemployment is inability to secure a meaningful job, from the foregoing issues the hypothesis on Table 3 shows that the critical calculated x^2 value of 4.00 was greater than the tabulation. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected and alternate hypothesis was accepted, implying a significant difference between the opinions of the academic staff and the students on low quality entrepreneurship programmes could be utilized to fight graduate unemployment. Mbenya (2013) concluded that a student with quality entrepreneurial skills will recognize genuine business life opportunities for sustainable self and national economic growth and development.

CONCLUSION

In reality of life there are more employable graduate than the available jobs and graduate who think beyond their certificates eventually find their place in work life. To produce quality employable graduates for the world of work, there is greater needs for creativity, innovation and qualitative entrepreneurship climate favoured with adequate funding, superb infrastructure and stable political will and harmonized entrepreneurship curriculum in tertiary institution in Nigeria for sustainable economic development.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the discourse the following recommendations were made:
1. Greater need for National Universities Commission (NUC) Nigerian Business and Technical Examination Board (NABTEB), National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCEC) to review and redesign their programme to reflect the minimum academic standard for quality under graduate entrepreneurship programmes.
2. Increased funds for implementation of entrepreneurship curriculum as it is cost effective.
3. Workshops and seminars should be constantly organized to sensitize students on the need to embrace entrepreneurship education for self reliance and developing career in science and technology.
4. Training and re-training of graduates to possess skills congruent with the labour demands.
5. Provide credit and loan facility to enable graduates set up small and medium business enterprise (SMEs).
6. Undergraduates should be given opportunity for active participation in industrial attachments programme to expose them to world of works.
7. University managements in the area of discourse should provide favourable entrepreneurial climate by providing necessary infrastructure equipment, water, electricity, workshops for effective entrepreneurship programme delivery.

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ORAL INTERVIEWS

1. Emeka Nwaogu (2020)
Age: 49 years
Occupation: Civil Servant, Imo state Polytechnic Umuagwo – Imo State Nigeria – February 6th, 2020.

2. Nwaokocha Uzoma (2020)
Age: 57 years
Occupation: professor Abia State University uturu, abia State Nigeria. Tuesday 11th, feb 2020.

3. Ojide Mbakwa (2020)
Age : 56 years
Occupation: Professor, Alex Ekwueme Federal University Ndufu, Ebonyi state, Nigeria. Monday 9th March, 2020.

4. Nnadozie Ihedinma (2019)
Age: 51 Years
Occupation: Civil Servant, Nnamdi Azikiwe Federal University Anambra State Nigeria. December 23rd, 2019.

5. Mbogbengo Ajileye (2019)
Age: 52 Years
Occupation: Civil Servant (Dean) School of General Studies (AIFCE) Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria.