

Perceived Strategies for Undergraduates' Inclusion in Entrepreneurial Education: Implications for national development

¹Odey A. Mbotu
mbotu1983@gmail.com

¹Obaya Effiong Bassey

¹Margaret Egygor Atsu, Ph.D
¹Department of Guidance and Counselling
University of Calabar, Calabar
Cross River State, Nigeria

Abstract

This study investigated strategies for undergraduates' inclusion in entrepreneurship education and national development. Survey design and stratified sampling method were employed for the study. Respondents were 150 youths from two universities in Calabar. A questionnaire was used to gather data from respondents in order to provide answers to the research questions of the study. Frequencies, percentages and rank order were used to present the result. Results indicated that five out of the seven strategies had a rating of above 50% with strategies listed in items 1, 5, 3, 6 and 2 adjudged by the respondents as most effective for increasing effective youth inclusion in entrepreneurship education and national development in Calabar. The findings also indicated that skilled occupations possessed by youths from both universities were phone operating skills, followed by poultry farming and video coverage/photography skills. None of the respondents possessed functional skills for phone repairs, computer maintenance/repairs, aluminum fabrication, and fish farming. The study recommended among others that counsellors should place emphasis on promotion of occupational counselling, vocational information and youth appraisals to empower and equip youths with information on entrepreneurial ventures and understanding of their interest and abilities to get them engaged.

Keywords: Guidance, Counselling, Skills, Apprenticeship, Entrepreneurship, Education

Introduction

In the last decade, rural and urban youth unemployment and lack of entrepreneurial engagement in self-sufficient and self-reliant economic ventures across communities in Nigeria have been a cause of concern to stakeholders such as the family, the academia and government. The call for social and economic inclusion of the youth population in entrepreneurial ventures has been a major consideration for these stakeholders, which they believe that the engagement of these youth population would bring about a

reduction in unemployment. However, the salient issues which seem germane to the formal and informal apprenticeship inclusion of the youth population in terms of entrepreneurship education, guidance and counselling and entrepreneurial skill set remain unattended to, thereby rendering efforts aimed at entrepreneurial development of the youth population inactive and unsustainable. As observed, prospects of formal employment in Nigeria's shrinking blue collar sector have receded, pushing the growing population of youths without formal or informal skills set to wander the streets jobless, frustrated and available for criminality. As the hopes of formal jobs fade fast with government's poor commitment to providing them, the quest for inclusive markets that incorporate Africa's youth has become a key focus of national and international development efforts, with the so called bottom of the pyramid (BOP) initiative (Dolan & Rajak, 2012), as increasingly seen as a way to draw the continent's poor into new networks of global capitalism.

Dolan and Rajak (2012) opine that the last two decades has recorded a jobless growth rate across much of sub-Saharan Africa, most significantly in countries seen as the continent's engines of growth (South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya) which has left young people with little meaningful hope of formal, let alone secure employment. These call for effectively robust strategies that will awaken the youth population through effective guidance and counselling strategies to boost inclusive entrepreneurship education for the youth population to bring about enterprise and national development. In Cross River State and Nigeria in general, the progress made so far in terms of youth entrepreneurship development, youth independence and youth self-reliance is insufficient and insignificant. These could largely be traced to the absence of entrepreneurship education, Guidance and Counselling education and formal or informal skills sets as afforded by various apprenticeship schemes. It is widely believed that education is a tool for empowerment, knowledge, skills and socio-economic progress. Entrepreneurship, Guidance and Counselling education will therefore empower, inform and grow the youth population towards attainment of appropriate skills and entrepreneurial ventures. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in conjunction with the Tony Elumelu Foundation (TEF) supports vigorously entrepreneurial education across Sub-Saharan Africa with emphasis of empowering youths in underserved communities. To them, entrepreneurship is a key to catalyze the economic development of the African continent. (UNDP, 2019:75).

Ezenwakwelu, Egbosionu and Okwo (2019), affirmed in their study the potency of apprenticeship training effects on entrepreneurship development in developing economies. More importantly, apprenticeship training affords individuals opportunities to acquire performance skills in specific trade areas, and it is a viable means for obtaining a worthwhile and professional career. As observed, successful apprenticeship increases the probability of informal employment and opportunities for formal job engagements, benefits and increased prospects for progress (Monk, Sandefur & Teal,

2007). Entrepreneurship is a vital tool for economic independence and expansion as it identifies, assesses, and harnesses economic growth via job creation, skills, competences and innovations. These positive values improve the general well-being of the people and society. The establishment of various entrepreneurship agencies, such as the introduction of entrepreneurial studies into higher education's curriculum, the National Open apprenticeship scheme, Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN), National Directorate of Employment (NDE), gives credence to the importance of entrepreneurship education (Fadeyi, Oke, Ajagbe, Isiavwe & Adebguayi, 2015).

An Apprenticeship is a system of training for practitioners of a trade or profession that involve on-the-job training and often with some accompanying study (classroom work or reading). It involves training done with an employer or a person, with established skills who helps the apprentice to learn their trade with some financial involvement over an agreed period of time to enable them acquire significantly measurable competencies (Webster Dictionary, 2018). Apprenticeship as an internship or traineeship across various sectors, professions, roles and culture, leads individuals to professional certification, self-employment and job placement offers. An apprenticeship system is in two forms namely: independent apprenticeships and cooperative apprenticeships. Independent apprenticeships are those organized and managed by employers, without any involvement from educational institutions, with no structured educational curriculum but an informal arrangement that caters to the mode of training for trainees; while cooperative apprenticeships are those organized and managed for a group of people who are to acquire the same skill set; it is structured and semi-formal in nature (ILO, 2012).

As seen today in the society, the percentage of youth in apprenticeship or entrepreneurial engagements is not commensurate with the population of unskilled, unemployed youth as a result of shortfall in apprenticeship engagements. As observed, the population explosions in the quest for tertiary education remains prevalent, beyond institutions' accommodating capacities, leaving millions of youths each year not admitted. One can only but imagine if this number of people were engaged in practical apprenticeships across various sectors and field of endeavors, what the outcome will be for national growth and development.

Guidance and Counselling is a discipline of human endeavour that entails using scientific procedures for ensuring optimum human capital development and utilization for meeting the needs of man and society (Okorodudu, 2019). The common trend the world over now is education for enterprise; education therefore is the hub of entrepreneurship and sustainable development. The consideration and application of Guidance and Counselling services in synergy with entrepreneurial development boost and make effective the aim of maximizing human capital development. This would

afford the youths a better and robust preparedness for entrepreneurial education, and to counsel and encourage youths to return to and imbibe practical apprenticeship schemes as a sure way for acquisition of practical skills and hands-on experiences.

In Cross River State, the trend in the dearth of apprenticeship spans through all sectors of economic life, in localized forms of apprenticeship (welding, tailoring, hairdressing, shoe making, interior decoration, plumbing, etc.) and industrial form of apprenticeship. The localized forms of apprenticeship such as welding, tailoring, hair dressing, shoe making (cobbling) interior decoration, plumbing, tiling, painting now record low patronage in terms of number of people showing up for apprenticeship, as seen across communities. This might not be unconnected with the negative perception that localized forms of apprenticeships are for illiterate and are not rewarding, with no immediate gains; youths therefore are increasingly looking for quick ways of attaining financial independence.

Industrial forms of apprenticeships seem to be dwindling also as type, amount of equipment available to apprentices is not a replica of actual work experiences, which is contrary to Prossers' theorems on vocational education as stated in Prosser and Walter (1913) which states that "Vocational education will be sufficient in proportion as the environment in which the learner is trained is a replica of the environment in which he must subsequently work". And that "effective vocational training can only be given where the training jobs are carried out in the same way with the same operation, the same tools and the same machines as in the occupation itself". Thus industrial forms of apprenticeship are ineffective when carried out in isolation away from the exact work environment, with the same tools and machine. As seen across societies and educational system, entrepreneurship development centres are set up in isolation, within the university environment away from the exact work environment, with machines that are not a replica of the machine used in the exact work environment, with entrepreneurial training dominated by oral demonstrations, note taking and minimal hands-on practical lessons or experience. Therefore, this brings to the fore the need for undergraduates and other youths to be trained in environments that offer the skills and required machineries to afford them practical skills attainment.

The Industrial Training Fund (ITF) established in 1997 with a mandate for skills training development across sectors in Nigeria is saddled with the task of deployment of student populations from practical disciplines to various agencies and parastatals of government and private industries for hands on experience of between 6 months to one year known as "industrial attachment." This scheme has been ongoing for over 4 decades now, but how effective this scheme has been in terms of achievements of practical skills set by the student attaches remains a fact to be established. Also, whether student attaches actually acquire any form of skills from wherever they are posted remains to be seen, thus a cause for concern. As observed, most attaches in the scheme are hardly engaged or allowed to

effectively engage in practical experiences to enable them acquire the knowledge to drive or motivate entrepreneurial development.

These motivated the researchers to determine the engagement of youth in apprenticeship, what skills they possess and their perspective on effective Guidance and Counselling strategies to boost youth inclusion in entrepreneurship education in Cross River State. Undoubtedly, the urgent need for effective Guidance and Counselling strategies to promote youth entrepreneurship education for national development is not far-fetched.

Research questions

The following questions guided the study:

- i. What are the views of undergraduates on appropriate Guidance and Counselling strategies for increasing their inclusion in entrepreneurship education?
- ii. What skill set do undergraduates in Calabar possess?

Methodology

The study adopted a survey design which is suitable for descriptive and exploratory studies. Respondents were 150 undergraduates from two Universities in Calabar, Cross River State. In terms of school specific location, the sample consisted of 75 University of Calabar undergraduates and 75 students of Cross River University of Technology. Within each school selected, participation in the study was open to all students. Their ages ranged from 18 to 35 years with a mean age of 25 years.

A questionnaire titled Guidance and Counselling Strategies for inclusion of Undergraduates in Entrepreneurship Development Questionnaire was designed by the researchers to collect data for the study. The questionnaire had two parts. In part A, respondents were asked to supply information on the following variables: age, institution and year of study. In part B, they were required to tick the guidance and counselling strategies they considered would increase undergraduate's inclusion in entrepreneurship education, and to indicate yes or no against each skill they possessed. In each school visited for data collection, available students seen in lecture rooms irrespective of the course or year of study were informed about the purpose of the study and respondents who oblige the researchers their time willingly responded to the questionnaire and returned them on the spot. The questionnaire used for data collection was validated by two experts in Measurement and Evaluation while reliability estimate of .76 to .85 was obtained using Cronbach Alpha Index. Frequency, percentage and rank order were used to analyze the gathered data.

Presentation of results

Research question 1: What are the views of undergraduates on appropriate Guidance and Counselling strategies for increasing their inclusion in entrepreneurship education?

Table 1: Undergraduate Perspective on Guidance and Counselling Strategies for Inclusion in Entrepreneurial Education

S/N	Strategy Description	Freq (%age)	Rank
1	Appraisal of undergraduates to determine their areas of interest, abilities before placement for a particular skill acquisition.	144 (96%)	1 st
2	Disseminating of information on available entrepreneurial opportunities	90 (60%)	5 th
3	Placement of trainees in organizations where a particular skill to be learned is routinely practicalized.	126 (84%)	3 rd
4	A stipulated period of effective appropriate mentoring by different venture experts.	75 (50%)	6 th
5	Administration of vocational counselling to educate undergraduates on various available skilled ventures/world of work.	135 (90%)	2 nd
6	Promotion of cooperative ventures to increase shared ventures that can accommodate more undergraduates in a single enterprise.	108 (72%)	4 th
7	Undergraduates should determine the manner/amount of funds for entrepreneurship education/empowerment.	75 (50%)	6 th

Table 1 shows undergraduate views regarding Guidance and Counselling strategies for increasing their inclusion in entrepreneurship education. Frequency count and percentages for responses to each strategy are shown in table 1. The percentages are in parenthesis while the ranks are on the last column on the right side of the table. Table 1 shows that, youths in the study perceived all strategies as useful in increasing undergraduate's inclusion in entrepreneurship education and national development. Specifically a greater proportion of the respondents considered all 7 strategies as effective for increasing undergraduate's inclusion in entrepreneurship education and national development. Top on the list is item 1; “appraisal of undergraduates to determine their areas of interest, abilities before placement for a particular skill acquisition” (96%) and item 5; “administration of vocational counselling to educate undergraduates on various available skilled ventures/world of work” (90%), followed by item 3; “placement of trainees in organization where a particular skill to be learned is routinely practicalized” (84%), followed by item 6, “promotion of cooperative ventures

to increase shared ventures that can accommodate more undergraduate in a single enterprise” (72%). This is followed by item 2, “Dissemination of information's on available entrepreneurship opportunities” (60%). Others which are unpopular with the undergraduates are: item 4, “A stipulated period of effective and appropriate mentoring by different venture experts” (50%); then item 7, “undergraduates should determine the manner and amount of fund for entrepreneurship education and empowerment” (50%). The rating for the least two item was below 60%.

Research question 2: What skill set do undergraduates in Calabar possess?

Table 2: Summary of Percentages and Rank of Undergraduates' Basic Skills in some Selected Skilled Occupations

s/n	Skilled occupations	Frequency	%	Rank order
1	Video coverage/photography	15	10%	2 nd
2	Phone repairs	0	0%	4 th
3	Computer maintenance/repairs	0	0%	4 th
4	Aluminum fabrication	0	0%	4 th
5	Fish farming	0	0%	4 th
6	Poultry farming	15	10%	2 nd
7	Phone operator skills	120	85%	1 st
	Total	150	100%	

Table 2 reveals that across the 7 selected skilled occupations, undergraduates from both universities possessed functional skills in just three areas, phone operator skills with 120 respondents, representing 85%, video coverage/photography 15 respondents representing 10% and poultry farming, 15 respondents representing 10%. None of the respondents possessed skills for phone repairs, computer maintenance/repairs, aluminum fabrication and fish farming. Thus as revealed most of the respondents lacked functional skills set, based on the skilled occupations considered, 10% of youth possessed video coverage/photography skills, 10% also had poultry farming skills. None of the respondents had functional skills set in thriving occupations such as phone repairs, computer maintenance/repairs, aluminum fabrication and fish farming. 120 out of the 150 respondents representing 85% all had just phone operator skills. By implication most undergraduates in Calabar lack functional skills set. This calls for urgent deployment of guidance and counselling strategies to conscientize and educate undergraduate population, government and the public on the need for undergraduate engagements in apprenticeship schemes to afford them skills and motivate the process of their inclusion in entrepreneurship education and national development.

Discussion of the findings

The result as shown here is an empirical affirmation of the suggestion that the real solution to remedy in the exclusion of undergraduates from Entrepreneurship education

has been a reversal of schemes undermining youth potentiality, denying the state and nation economic growth and expansion for national development, as the youth population and their potentials remain largely untapped. Obviously, when youths are appraised, identified, educated and trained in certain skills, they develop ideas for business ventures, they develop initiative, build businesses, harnesses youth innovation and creativity; this also results in the reduction of unemployment and facilitates national growth and development.

Therefore, the appraisal of undergraduates to determine their areas of interest and abilities will help to achieve appropriate placement for entrepreneurship education. The administration of Vocational Counselling to educate youth on various available skilled ventures and world of work will further enhance their knowledge of skilled professions, work task, criteria for training or apprenticeship to qualify them for such roles and also it will inform them on various associated work hazards. The task of ensuring that government, political leaders and other stakeholders accept and consider Guidance and Counselling strategies as requisite tool for effective youth inclusion and participation in entrepreneurship education and national development could be achieved through policy implementation circulars, seminars, posters, bill boards and mass education campaigns, with the utilization of both print and electronic media.

Counselling Implications/Conclusion

As empirically shown in this study, it is obvious that there is a deficiency or lack of apprenticeship, skills set and enterprise among the undergraduate population in Calabar. This economic misdemeanor is a clog in the wheel of national growth and development. Therefore, counsellors should brace up for orientation of undergraduates, government and the public on the essence of entrepreneurship education and undergraduate inclusion in economic empowerment for national development. The affirmation of the Guidance and Counselling strategies presented to undergraduates for consideration in this study as potentially viable tools for increasing and facilitating effective undergraduate inclusion in appropriate entrepreneurship schemes provides ready schemes for utilization by counsellors. Further research should focus on use of other statistical tools to reveal in-depth the variables of this study. Longitudinal studies are also encouraged to determine the effectiveness of the strategies identified in this study in undergraduate inclusion in other forms of empowerment.

Recommendations

- i. Guidance and Counselling should be incorporated by government or anyone or agency that intends to embark on undergraduate entrepreneurship education.
- ii. Counsellors should promote the orientation of undergraduates, and public on the need for Vocational Guidance and Counselling; individual appraisal should be done before placement in a particular entrepreneurship venture or training.
- iii. Government should as a matter of urgency, formulate a policy to capture Guidance and Counselling as basic component for entrepreneurship education.

- iv. Apprenticeship systems across various professions should be widely promoted and encouraged to enable undergraduates acquire basic functional skills for self-employment and economic development.
- v. Apprenticeship and entrepreneurial training should not be appendages of ministries but specific, comprehensive and independent ministry due to its critical importance to socio-economic role and national development.

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