

Interest in entrepreneurial skills acquisition programmes and employability status of Social Science Education Students of the University of Calabar, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study assessed interest in entrepreneurial skills acquisition programmes and employability status of Social Science Education Students in the University of Calabar, Nigeria. One hypothesis was formulated to guide the study. Literature review was carried out based on the variables under study. Survey research design was utilized. Simple random sampling technique was used in selecting the 97 respondents sampled for the study. A validated 20 item four point likert scale questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection. The reliability estimate of the instrument was 0.79 using Cronbach Alpha reliability method. Data was analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The result of the study revealed that there is no significant relationship between interest in entrepreneurial skills acquisition programmes and employability status. It was recommended that Government, in addition to the guideline to introduce entrepreneurship programmes in tertiary institutions, should provide financial backing to sustain students' interest and involvement in the programme.

Keywords: interest, entrepreneurship, skills, acquisition, employability

Introduction

The greatest challenge confronting government and indeed every sector of Nigeria as a country today remains massive unemployment which has served as a breeding ground for anti-social vices. Research articles and reports have consistently painted gloomy pictures of the unemployment situation in Nigeria. Oteh (2009) cited a World Bank Report in which only one in every ten (10) Nigerians get a job on graduation while Obisesan (2010) quoted another World Bank Research indicating that 80% of Nigerian graduates do not have the required skills to take up jobs. Ehirheme and Ekpenyong (2012) maintain that majority of Nigerian graduates who completed the mandatory National Youths Service Corps scheme (NYSC) in the last five (5) years remain unemployed. In the light of the foregoing, Ekere and Ekere (2012) posit that this situation portrays failure of the nation's entire education system and underlines an inherent mismatch between the type of education received by Nigerian graduates and the needs of government agencies, private industrial establishments and other employers of labour.

Recently, the situation has gone beyond the country and there has been increasing global concern over the continuous and expanded rates of unemployment in Nigeria, where the youth and students have been identified as the most affected groups. As a result, the higher education sector is under immense pressure from governments, employers and parents to produce quality students and subsequent graduates that can be economically engaged at the individual, national and global level (Teichler, 2007). Such graduates should possess a combination of attributes that will enable them take adaptive and proactive approaches to their careers (Bezuidenhout, 2011). While there is consensus worldwide on the importance of addressing employability within higher education, there remains some debate on how best this can be achieved (Harvey & Morey, 2012).

As a result, various governmental and non-governmental organizations have initiated policies through support agencies, such as National Directorate for Employment (NDE), the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency (SMEDAN), National Office for Technology Acquisition and Promotion (NOTAP), Raw Materials and Development Council (RMDC), among others, to address the problems of unemployment among Nigerian citizens (Olayinka, 2010; Emmanuel et al., 2012).

These aforementioned strategies were initiated 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 facilitate economic development which forms the bases for transformation (Unachukwu, 2009; Ekpoh & Edet, 2011). More recently, the Federal government of Nigeria established another means to inculcate self-employment (entrepreneurship) culture in students of tertiary institutions. This mandate was given to the National Universities Commission (NUC, 2004) to include entrepreneurial studies in the curriculum of Nigerian universities with the hope of reducing unemployment among fresh graduates (Aja & Adali, 2013).

In spite of the effort made by Government and other sectors in conjunction with its agencies by introducing skills acquisition programme in order to correct this anomaly and also ensure that students and newly graduated students become self-reliant and prepare for them a future which will in turn devoid the economy of miscreants, Nigerian tertiary institutions still produce millions of graduates annually into an economy which is already overpopulated, thereby raising the level of unemployment (Arogundade, 2011). Experience over the years has revealed that seventy percent of these graduates end up roaming about the streets as a result of lack of job opportunities. This situation has become so pathetic because job seekers/applicants end up going back to their aged parents who have invested in them, hoping that someday, they will get back the dividends of their investments but all to no avail. This cankerworm of unemployment which has eaten deep into the fabric of the society must be reversed to avoid national crisis.

However, despite the recognition of entrepreneurship as having the potential of curbing unemployment among Nigerian students and youth and the introduction of entrepreneurship education in Nigerian universities, studies have revealed that one of the challenges blocking the actualization of these programmes is students' interest in the participation of entrepreneurial skills development programmes and this is why about 80% of the Nigerian youth are unemployed and about 10% are under employed with 7 out of 10 graduates remaining unemployed or underemployed (Dike, 2009).

Interest in entrepreneurship skills acquisition programmes is a feeling of curiosity or concern about skills acquisition that makes attention turn towards it. Interest develops slowly and tends to have long-lasting effects on a person's knowledge and values. A student's successful achievement in entrepreneurship is based upon the volume of requisite interest that he has on the activity, his interpretation of it and most importantly, the application of his entire interest on it. Acquisition of such information depends on reading and learning in most cases. The drive to learn could to an extent be a function of the person's interest in the activity. It depends on the individual to decide why he/she wants to be involved in an activity and engage in the activity.

Stevenson and Jarillo (2010) explained that entrepreneurship is the process by which individuals, either on their own or inside organizations, pursue opportunities without regard to the resources they currently control. An entrepreneur, according to Anyanwu et al. (2010), takes calculated risks by investing in business opportunities and gets compensations from the risk by enjoying high profit as a result of risk-taking. The need to prepare the students of Nigeria's higher education institutions for the challenges and benefits of self-employment led to the introduction of entrepreneurship education. Several published researches have justified the assertion that entrepreneurship plays a vital role in creating innovation, wealth and employment. (Jones et al., 2009; Anyanwu et al., 2010; Ismail et al., 2011). Government agencies, captains of industries and other employers of labour prefer to recruit people who can make use of their talents to bring innovation and add value to their workplace. Adeogun (2006) asserted that the most valued skill is the ability to access, synthesize and build information into new knowledge.

With the rapid rate of technological and ICT changes in workplaces with globalization, there is an increase in the demand for skills as a result of new business practices, new organizational structure, the application of new technologies, and the design, production, and delivery of new products and services. Skill training and entrepreneurship is designed for self-employment, job creation and national development. Students are exposed to various forms of skill development in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). They include soap making, shoe making, bag making, fashion and design, events management, film production and others. What is still surprising is that with all the opportunities given to students to develop themselves with these skills, there are still reports that students turnout, participation and involvement in these programmes are still poor.

Although Nigeria as a country and all her thirty six states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) are faced with the problems of unemployment in general, the scope of this paper is limited to Social Science Education Students' employability status. Based on these, the researchers pose a question: Does interests in entrepreneurship skills development programmes have any relationship with the employability status of Social Science Education Students of the University of Calabar? The rationale for focusing on students' employability status arises from the realization that governments, employers and communities are increasingly interested in what Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) have to offer as a source of recruitment and for the development of existing employees.

Interest could be a very powerful affective psychological trait and a very strong knowledge emotion as well as an overwhelming magnetic positive feeling, a sense of being captivated, enthralled, invigorated and energized to cognitively process information much faster and more accurately in addition to most effective application of psychomotor traits like self regulatory skills, self-discipline, working harder and smarter with optimum persistence (Kpolovie, 2010).

The entrepreneurship spirit is a precondition in the creation of an entrepreneurial society and culture; of which interest is required for the total economic growth of any country especially developing ones like Nigeria. This is in line with the view of Ojeifo (2013) that entrepreneurship is the willingness and the ability of an individual, firm or an organization to identify an environmental change and exploit such an opportunity to produce goods and services for public consumption. The European Commission (2017) presents entrepreneurship as "an individual's ability to turn ideas into action." Ocho (2015) asserts that interest in entrepreneurship skill training programmes carried out in schools, helps students to gain insight to business planning. This is as Nwagwu (2017) and Solomon (2017) opined that incorporating skill acquisition programme into entrepreneurship education programme in tertiary institution has gone a long way in building students' business planning skill. It is much easier to develop a good business plan if enthusiasm is matched with logical business thinking.

Nevertheless, in the view of Akpomi (2009), the establishment of entrepreneurship skill centres in schools and exposing students to various skill sets have not yielded any positive result in terms of business planning skill. For her, theoretical knowledge of entrepreneurship and business practices is what develops students' business planning skills. It is possible that a participant acquires the basic vocational skill but he or she is unable to prepare a workable business plan.

A person's successful achievement in any activity is based upon the volume of requisite interest that he has on the activity, his interpretation of it and most importantly, the application of his entire interest on it. Acquisition of such skills depends on reading and learning in most cases. The drive to learn could, to an extent, be a function of the person's interest in the activity. It depends on the individual to decide why he wants to learn an

activity and engage in the activity. What one learns may depend on the degree to which he succeeds in achieving that aim or purpose (Pittaway & Cope, 2017).

Oluwakemi et al. (2018) investigated the effectiveness of entrepreneurial skills acquisition as a tool for employment generation among polytechnic graduates in Nigeria. The study sought to determine the stance of higher education and entrepreneurial skills acquisition in employment generation. The variables of interest were job orientation, job creation and self-employment; and its associated self-reliance, job satisfaction on employment generation. A descriptive design was adopted with a multi-stage sampling technique in selecting a sample size of 647 Batch B stream 2 NYSC members from public polytechnics in Southwest, Nigeria. A multiple regression inferential statistics was applied in data analysis. The findings established that the state of higher education in entrepreneurship have no significant effect on employment generation. However, in Nigeria, other findings revealed that entrepreneurial skills acquisition increases job orientation, job creation and self-employment. It is therefore obvious that entrepreneurial skills' acquisition can lead to self-employment if strategically positioned.

The vision of an entrepreneur may be an innovative idea; it may also be an opportunity or simply, a better way to do something. The end product of this process is the creation of a new venture formed under conditions of risk and considerable uncertainty. However, no matter the magnitude of interest, an entrepreneur who lacks the requisite startup capital may still be unemployed. Entrepreneurship is a factor to reckon with in Nigeria, but most unemployed graduates blame their predicaments on government rather than obtaining relevant skills in vocational jobs like leather works, water production, pet blowing, printing and publishing, metal works and fabrication, restaurant management, bakery, fish farming, tie and dye, soap and cosmetics, beads and wire jewelry cutting, hair dressing, interior decoration, vulcanizing and others. It just might be necessary for government to set up entrepreneurial training centres for youths to learn and acquire various skills at affordable rates (Tenibaje, 2010).

It is important that graduates utilize their time and resources to the fullest by not only engaging in academics, but also in skill acquisition as this will go a long way in assisting them while waiting for the white collar jobs that may not easily come (NIU Outreach, 2005). As observed by Tenibaje (2010), the importance of entrepreneurship skills and training for Nigerian youths cannot be overemphasized. Therefore, it is important for graduates and youths in general to be fully involved in acquiring entrepreneurial skills and training while still in school. This will go a long way to help in developing them to face societal challenges.

Joseph et al. (2013) evaluated entrepreneurship involvement among undergraduate students of Cross River University of Technology, Ogoja Campus, Cross Rive State. Data was obtained through the administration of a structured questionnaire to undergraduate students with personal business irrespective of the scale. Result indicated that family knowledge and natural ability did not determine students' entrepreneurship involvement

but the need for money, desire to become self-dependence and the desire to be employers of labour. The study identified university entrepreneurship internship programme and parental occupation as main sources of entrepreneurship awareness accruable to university students. Furthermore, funds from parents and personal savings were the main sources of capital used to start a business. Pearson's correlation showed a high, positive and significant association between students' involvement in entrepreneurship and income diversification (0.97, $P < 0.01$). Independent samples t-test indicated that entrepreneurship motivation between male and female students differs ($t = 12.767$, $P < 0.05$). The study, based on the result obtained, suggested that the universities in Nigeria should add more values to their graduate by incorporating into their curriculum elements that enhance the development of entrepreneurial attitudes and self-efficacy

The importance and necessity of interest in learning entrepreneurship is so crucial that many scholars believe there is no other way to learn entrepreneurship than personal interest (Lee & Chuang, 2009; Matlay, 2016). They also state that it is through the interest that students acquire requisite knowledge and skills not only to choose entrepreneurship as their future career path, but also to be able to face challenges and cope with the problems surrounding their enterprise (Matlay, 2016; Iwayemi, 2006). It is through interest that students can generate new meaning which consequently leads to change in thinking and behaviour (Fayolle, 2015). Moreover, interests develop students' entrepreneurial self-efficacy, the strong belief and the desire to successfully perform the roles and tasks of an entrepreneur (Peterman & Kennedy, 2013). Egai (2008) highlights experience as an influential factor in developing entrepreneurial self-efficacy. He postulates that entrepreneurial self-efficacy develops through the journey from being completely inexperienced to becoming completely experienced (Fayolle, 2015).

Peterman and Kennedy (2013) observed that interests in entrepreneurship programmes increase students' desire to become an entrepreneur as well as to highly engage in the activities and thereby develop their entrepreneurial abilities. Harrison and Leitch (2015) further argued that high involvement in entrepreneurial activities can better enable students to reach their entrepreneurial potential via skill attainment and increased expectations for success.

Otu et al. (2017) investigated the attitude of students towards entrepreneurial studies in the University of Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria. To achieve this purpose, one hypothesis was formulated and a survey research design was adopted for the study. A sample of two hundred and twenty five (225) respondents was randomly selected from a population of 20,193 undergraduate students of the University of Calabar as at 2014/2015 academic session. The selection was done through the stratified random sampling technique. Questionnaire was the main instruments used for data collection. The reliability estimate of the instrument was established using the Cronbach alpha estimate. Population t-test was employed to test the hypothesis at .05 level of significance. The result of the analysis revealed that students' attitude towards entrepreneurial studies is significantly positive. Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that undergraduates in

universities in Nigeria are favourably disposed to entrepreneurial studies. It was recommended among others that entrepreneurship development in Nigerian tertiary institutions should adopt entrepreneurial learning as entrepreneurship development method. Also, students should be mixed during entrepreneurship programmes with recourse to their level of creativity.

Research increasingly shows that those who develop interest in entrepreneurship skills acquisition could think creatively and generate opportunities. Usman et al. (2018) assessed students' interest in entrepreneurship skills acquisition programme in Adamawa State Polytechnic Yola, Nigeria. Primary data were collected by the use of questionnaire administered to randomly selected 80 respondents proportionate to the number of students from each Department. Data collected were analyzed using percentages, mean, frequency distribution and regression analysis. The findings revealed that majority (67.5%) of the respondents were males, 61.34% of them were within age of 20-29 years and only 15% were married having an average household size of 3 persons. Majority (76%) of the respondents has their highest level of education as secondary education, with 78% being student as their main occupation. The result shows that 85% and 35% participated in computer and male saloon skills respectively. The regression analysis result revealed that the variables of age (X1), marital status (X2) and household size (X3) to be significantly related with the number of skills acquired. The coefficient of multiple determinations (R^2) was estimated at 0.8796 indicating that 87.96% of the variation in skills acquired is explained by the variables included in the model. The major problems encountered by the respondents were inadequate training facilities, inadequate trainers and capital to start their business. Participation in entrepreneurship skills acquisition programme was found to have positive impact on the respondents, as those who were found to be engaged, learned various skills and some were gainfully employed through the skills they learned. The research recommends, among others, that adequate facilities/materials and trainers should be provided for each skill.

Again, Ibebietei and Nanighe (2019) examined interest in entrepreneurship skills acquired by students in secondary schools in South-South Nigeria. The survey research design was adopted for the study. A sample of 2,753 students was drawn using the multistage sampling procedure. The data collection instrument was researchers' developed "Entrepreneurship Skills Acquisition Questionnaire (ESAQ)" structured in 4- point Likert type. Pearson Product Moment technique was used to obtain a reliability coefficient of 0.69. The findings revealed that among the six entrepreneurship skills measured, business managerial, farming, electrical works, home economics, fine arts and computer skills, only farming and home economics skills were acquired by secondary school students in South-South Nigeria. The tested hypotheses also revealed a significant difference in mean rating of male and female students in the acquisition of entrepreneurship skills with a t-calculated value of 8.44. It was therefore recommended that comprehensive and collaborative approaches be used by government and all stakeholders to ensure that students adequately acquire entrepreneurship skills in secondary schools in South South Nigeria.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between interest in entrepreneurial skills acquisition programmes and job employability status of the students.

Research question

Does interest in entrepreneurial skills acquisition programmes determine the job employability status of students?

Hypothesis

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between interest in entrepreneurial skills acquisition programmes and employability status of students.

Methodology

The research design utilized in this study is survey research design. The design is concerned with critical examination of the features of the whole population through a chosen sample. The survey design was therefore adopted because it permits inferences and generalization of findings to the whole population from a study of a representative sample of the population. The survey design was also considered appropriate for this study because it helps to assess thoughts, opinions, feelings, perception and interaction of respondents by the researcher (Denga & Ali, 1998).

The area of the research is the University of Calabar. The University of Calabar is located in the city of Calabar, the capital of Cross River State. Geographically, University of Calabar is situated between latitudes 4°30' and 4°40'N and longitudes 08°5' and 8°15'E with an elevation of about 15m above sea level.

The culture of the people is unique; there are dances like the Abang dance, Ekombi dance and others. The traditional attire is very elaborate and colourful. The women dress like queens and princesses wearing long flowing gowns, adorning their necks with colourful coral beads and wearing traditionally made beaded shoes. They carry beaded handbags while some wear a headdress to match their outfit. The men wear white shirts over a colourful wrapper tied around their waist. They also hang a long piece of cloth on their neck called Okpomkpom in addition to beaded shoes and a cap. There are different kinds of masquerades for various events like the coronation of the Obong (King of Calabar), burial, chieftaincy and other seasonal celebrations and ceremonies. The most distinguished and highest of all other masquerades is the Ekpe masquerade. Its members are only men, and it is played on special occasions.

The population of final year Social Science Education Students in the University of Calabar is 138 as at 2018/2019 academic session. This study adopted the simple random sampling technique in sampling 97(70%) of the students for the study. A validated 20 item four point modified likert scale questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection. The instrument was measured on a scale of Strongly Agree (SA) 4 points,

Agree (A) 3 points, Disagree (D) 2 points, and Strongly Disagree (SD) 1 point. The reliability index of the instrument was 0.79 using Cronbach Alpha reliability method in checking the degree of consistency of the instruments. Data was analysed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) at 0.05 level of significance, using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.

Presentation of result

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between interest in entrepreneurial skills acquisition programmes and employability status of Social Science Education Students of the University of Calabar.

The independent variable in this hypothesis is interest in entrepreneurial skills acquisition programmes while the dependent variable is employability status. Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient was used for data analysis.

Table 1: Pearson Product Moment Correlation of the relationship between interest in entrepreneurial skills acquisition programmes and employability status of Social Science Education Students of the University of Calabar

Variable	N	Mean	SD	r-value	Sig.
Interest in entrepreneurial skills acquisition programmes	97	8.02	2.04	0.139	.707
Employability status	97	6.25	3.21		

*significant at 0.05 level; df = 136; critical r value = .200

The result of the analysis is as presented in table 1. The result in table 1 revealed that interest in entrepreneurial skills acquisition programmes has no significant relationship with employability status of Social Science Education Students of the University of Calabar; the calculated r-value of 0.139 is less than the critical r-value of .200 at 0.05 level of significance with 136 degree of freedom. By this result, the null hypothesis which states that, there is no significant relationship between interest in entrepreneurial skills acquisition programmes and employability status of Social Science Education Students is accepted while the alternate hypothesis is rejected. This implies that interest in entrepreneurial skills acquisition programmes has no significant relationship with the employability status of Social Science Education Students in the University of Calabar.

Discussion of the finding

Finding from the study indicated that interest in entrepreneurial skills acquisition programmes has no significant relationship with the employability status of Social Science Education Students in the University of Calabar. This result is not surprising because no matter the level of interest a student develops in learning a skill, if there is no capital to encourage that student to start his or her business, the interest may die along the

way, and the skill may be forgotten and this may leave the student or graduate unemployed.

The result of this study is in agreement with the result of Tenibaje (2010) which stated that although the vision of an entrepreneur may be an innovative idea, it may also be an opportunity or simply, a better way to do something. The end product of this process is the creation of a new venture formed under conditions of risk and considerable uncertainty. However, no matter the magnitude of interest, an entrepreneur who lacks the requisite startup capital may still be unemployed. Entrepreneurship is a factor to reckon with in Nigeria; but most unemployed graduates blame their predicaments on government rather than obtaining relevant skills in vocational jobs like leather works, water production, pet blowing, printing and publishing, metal works and fabrication, restaurant management, bakery, fish farming, tie and dye, soap and cosmetics, beads and wire jewelry cutting, hair dressing, interior decoration, vulcanizing and others. It just might be necessary for government to set up entrepreneurial training centres for youths to learn and acquire various skills at affordable rates.

However, the result of this study contradicts the result of the study of Pittaway and Cope (2017) which stated that a person's successful achievement in any activity is based on the volume of requisite interest that he has on the activity, his interpretation of it and most importantly, the application of his entire interest on it. Acquisition of such skills depends on reading and learning in most cases. The drive to learn could to an extent be a function of the person's interest in the activity. It depends on the individual to decide why he wants to learn an activity and engage in the activity. What one learns may depend on the degree to which he succeeds in achieving that aim or purpose.

The importance and necessity of interest in learning entrepreneurship is so crucial that many scholars believe there is no other way to learn entrepreneurship than personal interest (Lee & Chuang, 2009; Matlay, 2016). They also state that it is through the interest that students acquire requisite knowledge and skills not only to choose entrepreneurship as their future career path, but also to be able to face challenges and cope with the problems surrounding their enterprise (Matlay, 2016; Iwayemi, 2006). It is through interest that students can generate new meaning which consequently leads to change in thinking and behaviour (Fayolle, 2015). Moreover, interests develop students' entrepreneurial self-efficacy, the strong belief and the desire to successfully perform the roles and tasks of an entrepreneur (Peterman & Kennedy, 2013).

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine and present results on the relationship between interest in entrepreneurial skills acquisition programmes and employability status of Social Science Education Students of the University of Calabar, Nigeria. In line with the finding obtained from this study, it was therefore concluded that there is no significant relationship between interest in entrepreneurial skills acquisition programmes and employability status of Social Science Education Students of the University of Calabar. Entrepreneurial skills have

been noted as strong tools for economic development. Government should at all times try to empower individuals with capital to arouse interest.

Recommendations

Based on the finding it was recommended that:

1. Access to finance by micro, small and medium enterprises must be well liberalized by the government. There should be unhindered access to micro-credit for young students and graduates.
2. Entrepreneurial training in all the tertiary institutions should be specific and practical to enable participants benefit maximally from it.
3. Government in addition to the guideline to introduce entrepreneurship programmes in tertiary institutions should provide financial backing to sustain students' interest and involvement in the programme.

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