
Impact of Entrepreneurial Skills in Reducing Youth Unemployment in Benue State

Okoh Aduyi Gabriel

Department of Office Technology Management, Benue State Polytechnic, Ugbokolo.

Abstract

This study aims to investigate how entrepreneurship can be fostered through social intervention and government strategies that focus on generating employment to promote economic security. The study used a descriptive survey design, incorporating both primary and secondary sources to gather first-hand information. A well-designed questionnaire was administered to the employees of EJIFA Transport Company to collect factual information through personal observation and interviews. The questionnaire results revealed that entrepreneurial skills can reduce youth unemployment in Benue state. The research also confirms that entrepreneurial skills play a crucial role in the employment of youths in Benue State. Furthermore, it suggests that youths can receive basic training on mobilizing savings for business enterprise growth and development in local communities. The study also shows that various entrepreneurial development programs can mitigate the unemployment problem in Benue State. Youth entrepreneurship is seen as a solution to the youth unemployment problem, providing a promising avenue for young people with the ambition and resources to become entrepreneurs. Therefore, sustained education and enlightenment programs on the opportunities that abound in the environment should be implemented. To revitalize the Nigerian economy, reduce unemployment, and create more job opportunities, a paradigm shift in policy that emphasizes effective entrepreneurship development becomes imperative.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship Skills; Unemployment; Youth employment; Productivity; Enlightenment programs; Business Enterprise

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Before embracing the colonial government in Nigeria unemployment was a rare phenomenon because people were highly entrepreneurial and productivity-engaged. In pre- and post-independence in Nigeria, the Igbo ethnic groups were recognized internationally for their culture of entrepreneurship and enterprise development (Dana, 1995). The Yoruba's and Hausas were not left out either. Nigeria like most developing nations of the world is faced with a myriad of problems and realities which include poverty, unemployment, conflicts, and diseases. These situations pose great challenges to the very existence of individuals in most developing nations thereby, calling for the training of educated youths, men and women who can function effectively in the society in which they live.

However, successive administrations in Nigeria introduced formal education which enabled people to have the opportunity to be employed in the civil service after graduation. As such, the system destroyed the self-reliance, self-employment, and entrepreneurial skills of Nigerians as they became permanently dependent on their colonial masters (Nicks, 2008; Raimi, 2010) this led to massive unemployment and Craze in the contemporary times of ready-made jobs. It is on this premise that this study seeks the development of entrepreneurship to sustain an economy of high-level unemployment reduction. Nigeria is a blessed country with numerous business and investment potentials due to the abundant, vibrant, and dynamic human and natural resources it possesses. Nigerians have made remarkable achievements in diverse fields such as science, technology, academics, business, and entertainment. Thus, entrepreneurship activities and innovative ingenuity in Nigeria have developed enterprises in the following areas; Agriculture/ agro-allied activities where there are foodstuffs, restaurants, fast food vending, etc. In the area of solid minerals, there are quarrying, perm stone Cutting/ Polishing, and Gushing engineering, In power and transport, there are power generation, and haulages businesses (cargo and passengers), in the area of information and telecom business, there are manufacturing an repairs of GSM accessories, in hospitality and tourism business, there are hotels, accommodation, resorts centers, cinemas, film and home video production; in oil and gas business, there are construction and maintenance of pipelines, drilling, refining by-products, etc.). Although entrepreneurship development has been regarded as the bedrock for employment generation and technological development in Nigeria, the sector nevertheless has had its fair share of neglect with concomitant unpleasant impacts on theeconomy.

Against this backdrop, entrepreneurship when and if gallantly developed in Nigeria will take pride of place in reducing unemployment and thus generating employment among Nigerian youths, especially the graduates, and place the economy on a proper footing. It is in this respect that this paper seeks to investigate the connection between entrepreneurship, unemployment, and employment generation in Benue state.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

There exist diverse economic, social, and political problems at different magnitudes facing nations of the world and the third world countries are not excluded. These diverse economic, social, and political problems have adversely affected the sustainable development of the countries, including the high unemployment rate they are currently facing (Williams and Michael, 2012). Unemployment has become a global phenomenon of the 21st century; the problem is becoming more complex with each passing year in Nigeria. Unemployment, underemployment, and rural-urban migration have enveloped the Nigerian labor market. This has been compounded by a frightening number of graduates from polytechnics, colleges

of education, mono-technics, and universities that leave school each year. This has increased the rate of social vices like robbery, kidnapping, prostitution, human trafficking, child abuse, and unfair labor practices experienced in Benue state by unemployed youths.

National Manpower Board, (2009) opined that the Nigerian labor market could barely absorb 10% of the over 3.8 million persons turned out by the Nigerian educational system.

Annually, the problem of this study revolved around the high rate of unemployment and low productivity among the citizens of Benue State. The present situation seems to give an impression of economic insecurity as a result of failure to properly engage people in the production process. This study was, therefore, necessary to fill the gap by examining the entrepreneurial development and urgent social intervention for all government strategies/programs to have employment generation as an output towards economic security. The question remains: given that the economy of Nigeria is producing below its potential, can entrepreneurship education and urgent social intervention guarantee high unemployment reduction?

1.3 Objective of the Study

The objectives of this study are:

1. To examine the possibility of eradicating unemployment in Benue State through entrepreneurial development
2. To also examine the level at which different entrepreneurial development programs have been able to lessen the unemployment problem in Benue State.
3. To determine the extent to which basic training can motivate the youths to establish and grow business enterprises in their communities.

1.4 Research Questions

1. Is there any possible way of eradicating unemployment in Benue State?
2. To what level can different entrepreneurial development programs reduce the unemployment rate in Benue state?
3. To what degree can youth be given basic training on how best to grow and establish business enterprises in local communities?

1.5 Research Hypotheses

For this study, the following hypotheses were formulated to guide this study:

H₀¹: there is no possibility of curbing the youth unemployment problem in Benue state through entrepreneurial development.

H₀²: Different entrepreneurial development programmers cannot be able to reduce the unemployment problem in Benue state.

H₀³: Entrepreneurship basic training cannot motivate the youths to establish and grow their business enterprises

2.0 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Concept of Entrepreneurship

The word entrepreneur is derived from the French word “entrepreneur” meaning “to undertake”. Since its beginning in the Middle Ages, when it was used for specific occupations, the notion of the entrepreneur has been refined and broadened to include concepts that are related to the person rather than the occupation.

An entrepreneur combines the land of one, the labor of another, and the capital of yet another

and thus, produces a product. By selling the product in the market, he pays interest on capital, rent on land, and wages to laborers and what remains is his or her profit. The entrepreneur has been described by Collins, 1964 as a “risk taker” a person who braves uncertainty, strikes out on his own through native wit, devotion to duty, and singleness of purpose somehow creates an industry where none existed before.

Mbaegbu (2008) submitted that there is, therefore no “one-best” definition for the entrepreneur. He, however, stated, “Anyone who creates a business, establishes it, and nurses it to growth and profitability or takes over an existing business because the founder is dead or has sold it, on a man who inherited it and continues to build and innovate on it, or a man who runs a franchise qualifies as an entrepreneur in our usage.

2.2 The Concept of Unemployment

Every economy is characterized by both active and inactive populations. The economically active ones are referred to as the population willing and able to work and include those actively engaged in the production of goods and services and those who are unemployed. According to Fajana (2000), unemployment refers to a situation where people who are willing and capable of working are unable to find suitable paid unemployment. It is one of the macro-economic problems which every responsible government is expected to monitor and regulate. The higher the unemployment rate in an economy the higher the poverty level and associated welfare challenges. Fajana (2000), Alao (2005), and Wikipedia (2010) identify the following types of unemployment.

i. Structural Unemployment

This occurs when there is a change in the structure of an industry or the economic activities in the country. This may be because people’s tastes have changed or it may be because technology has been outmoded and the product or service is no longer in demand.

ii. Frictional unemployment

This is caused by industrial friction in which jobs may exist yet the workers may be unable to fill them either because they do not possess the necessary skills or because they are not aware of the existence of such jobs. The employable may remain unemployed working in plants.

iii. Seasonal unemployment

This occurs due to seasonal variations in the activities of particular industries caused by climatic changes, changes in fashion, or the inherent nature of such industries. In the tropical region, ice factories are less active in the rainy season because the demand for ice is low.

iv. Technological unemployment

This is caused by changes in the techniques of production technological changes are taking place constantly, leading to the increased mechanization of the production process

v. Residual unemployment

This is caused by factors such as old age, physical or mental disability, poor work attitudes, and inadequate training

vi. Open unemployment

This is the type of unemployment where there are categories of young men and women

who are roaming the streets looking for a job, but there is no job for them to do. They refused to do the job(s) they see because of reasons best known to them

2.3 Conceptualizing Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship has been defined by various professions to mean many things since the Middle Ages. The entrepreneur has been seen as an actor, innovator, or a developer of technology. Ossai (2008) defined entrepreneurship as the process of creating some new or different values by developing the necessary time, assuming the accompanying financial, psychic, and social risks, and receiving the resulting rewards of most personal satisfaction. Entrepreneurship is the process of bringing together creative and innovative ideas and coping them with management and organization skills combining people, money, and resources to meet an identified need and thereby, create wealth. Although each of these definitions or descriptions views entrepreneurs from a slightly different perspective, they all contain similar notions such as risk-taking, organizing, creating wealth, initiative, and newness.

2.4 Causes of Youth Unemployment in Nigeria

In the study on unemployment in Nigeria, Adebayo (1999), Alanana (2003), Echebiri (2005), Ayinde (2008), Morphy (2008) and Awogbale and Iwuamadi (2010) have identified the main causes of growth in employment in Nigeria.

The first is the rapidly growing urban labor force arising from rural-urban migration. Rural–Urban migration is usually explained in terms of push–pull factors. The push factors include the pressure resulting from the man-land ratio in the rural areas and the existence of serious under-employment arising from the seasonal cycle of climate. The factors are further exacerbated in Nigeria by the lack of infrastructural facilities, which makes rural –life unattractive. In addition to this, youth move to the urban area with the probability of securing lucrative employment in the industries.

The second is the rapid population growth in Nigeria. Going by the 2006 census in Nigeria, the nation’s population was put at 140,431, 790 and projections for the future indicate that the population could be over 180 million by the year 2020. With the accelerated growth of the population, Nigeria’s unemployment problem is multi-faceted. It affects the supply side through a highly rapid increase in the labour force relative to the absorptive capacity of the economy

The third is the outdated school curricula and lack of employed skill and the fourth is the rapid expansion of the educational system which directly leads to an increase in the supply of educated manpower above the corresponding demand for them. This contributes to the problem of youth unemployment in Nigeria.

In a nutshell, Nigeria is a country with numerous business and investment potentials due to the abundant, vibrant, and dynamic human and natural resources it possesses. Corruption, which has permeated the entire social structure of Nigeria, has robbed the country of developing a vibrant economic base. Funds meant for development projects have been misappropriated, diverted, or embezzled. Thus, crippling the economy and engendering and exacerbating unemployment which creates abject poverty, hunger, and frustration, killing the zeal and means for entrepreneurship development in the Nigerian youths.

The Role of Entrepreneurship Education on Job Creation among Youths

Education is the key to national development. This is because it unlocks the economic potentials of the people; empowers and equips individuals in the society to participate in and benefit from their national economy; facilitates economic development, and provides the

basis for transportation. Education is an essential tool for sustainability. Quality education plays a vital role in the social, political, and economic development of any nation. This is possible when jobs are created for the citizenry by establishing a lot of businesses that will accommodate the unemployed youth in Nigeria. A qualified graduate of entrepreneurship education would have acquired enough skills relevant to the management of the small business center. Through entrepreneurship education, a pool of potential entrepreneurs who are well equipped with skills and technical know-how to manage small/medium scale industries are produced. This will equally help in job creation. Through quality entrepreneurship education, Nigeria will provide a lot of entrepreneurs who can establish and manage businesses on their own. This will help in reducing poverty in Nigeria.

2.5 Theoretical Framework

Several theories are bound to serve as platforms for the explanation of the nature, processes, manifestations, and variables of entrepreneurship. Schumpeter's theory developed in 1934 dwells on the "concentric circles" of economic boom and depression which generates the "social climate" that determines societal attitudes, encouragement, and rewards to business endeavors. The creative imitation theory espoused by the likes of Drucker, on the other hand, stressed the issue of change which in turn informs the search, response, and exploitation of opportunities by people in a particular society at a given time. Proponents of the economic survival theory are adopted by this study as the framework for presentation and better understanding of this research work. The proponents of this theory's argument focus on what Gilder (1981) referred to as the "movement from poverty to wealth. The theory assumes that entrepreneurship is prevalent among people who are oppressed by marginalization, suppressed by discrimination, victimized by circumstances, and affected by political upheavals. According to Mbaegbu (2008), various theories have been advanced to explain the nature of entrepreneurship and the factors of variables that drive entrepreneurship in a given society.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

This section discusses the research design of the study, instrument of collection, validation of the research instrument, reliability of the research instrument, and method of data analysis.

3.1 Research Design

The study used a descriptive survey design. The study adopted both primary and secondary sources which have to do with first-hand information. Questionnaire items were carefully drawn and sent to collect factual information from the respondents concerning the topic at hand then to achieve personal observation and personal interviews questionnaire was administered to the respondents. The questionnaire was designed with an open-ended and close-ended question that was distributed to members of EJIFA Transport Company Limited and some selected EJIFA transport company workers in MAKURDI. This approach was adopted to ensure that respondents fill out the questionnaires without making it official; this will enable reliable information and favorable returns. The questions were designed to reflect the problems and objectives of the study.

3.2 Population for the Study

The population of the study was conducted in EJIFA Transport Company Limited, Benue state. The population for the study was made up of two hundred and ninety (290) workers of EJIFATransport Company Limited. Management staff (134) and junior staff (156).

Determination of Sample Size

It was impracticable to study the whole population therefore the study settled for a sample size using the Taro Yamani formula stated below

$$S = N$$

$$I = N (e)^2 \text{ (Taro Yamane's formula)}$$

Where N = population if the accounted staff as
estimated E = level of error as estimated = 100

S = sample size to be determined

Note: The staff are grouped into senior and junior staff here:

$$\text{Senior staff} = 134$$

$$1 + (134) (0.1)^2 = 125.37$$

$$\text{Junior staff} = 54$$

$$1 + (156) (0.1)^2 = 135.07$$

The population of senior staff was estimated to be 134 and sample size of 125 and 42% of accounting staff while junior staff was estimated to be 154 and sample size of 135% and 58% of the strength.

3.3 Validation of Instrument

The validity of the questionnaire was carried out through content validation. This was done through the help of experts. These experts were requested to critically, analytically, and logically examine the questionnaire instrument for the relevance of content and clarity of statement; comment from these experts is reflected in the modification of the instrument

3.4 Reliability of the Instrument

Reliability was established by administering the questionnaire to a greater number of the staff of EJIFA Transport Company Limited comprising both junior staff. Some weeks later, the same questionnaire was re-administered; to the same people, using the relevant score of the first and second score of the administration of the instrument as a retest.

3.5 Method of Data Analysis

The findings from the study are represented in percentages. To test for the relationship between the finding and the formulated hypothesis the Chi-square (χ^2) method of data analysis was used the formula states as follows.

$$\chi^2 = \frac{\sum (O-E)^2}{E}$$

When

χ^2 = Chi-square

F_o – observed frequency

F_e – expected frequency

This is calculated as; $\frac{EF - TR \times TC}{GT}$

Where

EF = Expected frequency

TR = Total Row

TC = Total Column

GT = Grand Total

4.0 DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

This section presents and analyses the data accepted from the research. A total

number of one hundred and seventy-one (171) questionnaires were distributed and 160 copies were returned and completed. This analysis is based on the answers from the questionnaire collected whose percentages are 93% returned and 7% not returned.

Socio-Demographic characteristics of the respondents

Table 4.1: Educational Qualification of the respondents

Academic questionnaire	Frequency	Percentages
Diploma	91	56.88
BSC, HND	58	36.25
MSC/MBA	11	06.88
PhD	0	0
Total	160	100

Source: Field Survey 2017

Table, 4.1 shows that 91 respondents, or 56.8% were diploma holders, 56 respondents, or 36.25% were BSC/HND holders, and 11 respondents, or 6.8% of respondents were MSc/MBA holders.

Table 4.2: sex distribution of respondents

Questionnaires sent	Frequency	Percentages
Male	110	68.75
Female	50	31.25
Total	160	100

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Table 4.2 shows the sex distribution /configuration of the respondents, 110 respondents (68.75%) were male while 50 respondents (31.25%) were female.

Table 4.3: Working experience of the respondents

Questionnaires sent 8	Frequency	Percentages
0-3years	70	43.75
3- 6years	43	26.88
7-10 years	37	23.12
10 and above	10	6.25

Source: Field Survey,2017

The table above shows that the responses of those who have worked from 0-3 years were 70 or 43.7%, 43 or 26.8% have worked with the organization for 3-6 years, 37 or 23.12 respondents have worked for 7-10 years while above 10 years recorded 6.25 percentage responses. In this case, it shows that the number of people who have worked for 0-3- years was higher than other years.

Analysis of Research Questions

Question 1 – is there a possibility of curbing the youth unemployment problem in Benue State through entrepreneurial development?

Table 4. Response from respondents

Question sent	Frequency	Percentages
Yes	133	83.12
No	27	16.88
Total	160	100

Source: Field Survey 2017

From the table above, 133 or 83.12% agreed that there are possibilities of curbing the youth unemployment problem in Benue state through entrepreneurial development, and 27 or

16.88 of the respondents said that there is no possibility. Therefore, the youth employment problem can be curbed.

Question 2 can youths be given basic training on how best to mobilize savings for the growth and development of business enterprises in local communities with the state?

Table 5. Response from respondents

Questionnaire sent	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	121	75.62
No	39	24.38
Total	160	100

From the table above, 121 or 75.62% said that youths in Benue state be given basic training on how best to mobilize savings for growth and development of business enterprises while 39 or 24.38% of the respondents said vice-versa. With this, it means that youths in Benue state can receive training on how best to mobilize savings

Question 3- to what extent can different entrepreneurial development programmers be able to lessen the unemployment problem in Benue state?

Table 6. Response from respondents

Questionnaires sent	Frequency	Percentages
Some	110	73.33
No	50	31.25
Total	160	100

The table shows that 110 or 73.33% said that different entrepreneurial programmers have been able to lessen the unemployment problem in Benue state to some extent while 50 or 31.25 of the respondents said to every extent and 40 or 25% of the respondents said to no extent.

Test of Hypothesis

H01: there is no possibility of curbing the youth unemployment problem in Benue state through entrepreneurial development

Table 7

Questionnaires sent	Frequency	Percentages
Yes	133	83.12
No	27	16.88
Total	160	100

The chi-square calculation

Questionnaire Sent	F ₀	F _e	F ₀ -f _e	(f ₀ -f _e) ²	$\frac{(f_0 - f_e)^2}{F_e}$
Yes	133	80	53	2809	35.11
Total	160	160	0	5618	70.22

Calculated chi_ square $x^2 = 70.22$

For critical value

Degree of freedom = 1

Level of significance = 0.05

Critical value = 3.841

Decision rule

In hypothesis i, the critical value is 3. 841 while the computed value is 70.22, since the computed x^2 is greater than the researcher therefore concludes that there are possibilities of curbing the youth unemployment problem in Benue state through entrepreneurial development.

Summary of Result

The responses to the questionnaire administered to the employees of EJIFA Transport Company reveal that entrepreneurial skills aid in the reduction of youth unemployment in Benue state. The research also ascertains that there are roles entrepreneurial skills or business play in the employment of youths in Benue State through entrepreneurial development. Furthermore, it also shows that youths can be given basic training on how best to mobilize savings for the growth and development of business enterprises in local communities within the state and it also goes ahead to reveals that different entrepreneurial development programs can be able to lessen the unemployment problem in Benue State.

5.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Summary

Unemployment problem like corruption in Nigeria is a hydra-head phenomenon and cannot be effectively tackled through a mono-technology. Our study looked at the way the unemployment problems in Nigeria can be solved through entrepreneurial problems in Benue state can be curbed through effective entrepreneurial development. This is despite government efforts aimed at reducing effort alone is not sufficient when compared with the magnitude of the unemployed in Benue State. Our finding is in line with an assertion by Obanla. In Benue State, the unemployment rate is highly based on a lack of entrepreneurial development. This justifies the need to increase entrepreneurial activities to reduce the high rate of unemployment (and its negative effects). The youth through Training are said to learn to develop inner qualities for self and organizational improvement, they also learn the need to develop common sense creativity, and wisdom. However, things may not be in order as planned, hence the need for psychological, sociological, economic, and technological planned and executed entrepreneurship development in Benue State, unemployment rate (which is the

case of the present kidnapping Boko Haram and other problems in our society) will be reduced and become be a thing of thepast.

5.2 Conclusion

Based on the data collected and analyzed, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. There is evidence that young people are enthusiastic about starting a business. However, few young people start businesses relative to those who express an interest. This reflects several barriers affecting youth entrepreneurship in this area including skills, networks, and financing; barriers that are often particular to youth or more severe for youth than for adults. In a period when Benue State faces an economic crisis that has increased levels of youth unemployment and reduced youth participation in the labor market beyond the already harsh long-run trends, public policies and programs for entrepreneurship can play a role in addressing the challenges.
2. Unarguably, youth entrepreneurship is not only a solution to the youth unemployment problem but it represents a robust platform for facilitating a route into the labor market for young people with the ambition and wherewithal to become entrepreneurs. The evidence suggests that when designed appropriately, government programs can have significant impacts on increasing the exit rate of young people from unemployment with reasonable results on value for public money. The youth entrepreneurship policy landscape in Nigeria and other African countries still needs to evolve in its coverage comprehensiveness and the quality of the approaches used.
3. Finally, sustained education and enlightenment programs on the opportunities that abound in the environment should be put in place. If the Nigerian government must revitalize its economy, reduce unemployment progressively, and generate more employment opportunities, a paradigm shift in policy that is critical to effective entrepreneurship development becomes imperative.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the research findings, the study will be incomplete without the following recommendations and suggestions to the management of the organization (RSCS) and other organizations that may find this research work relevant.

Following the findings of this work, the authors make bold recommendations as follows:

- I That there should be a process of a program geared toward training youths in Nigeria in the act of entrepreneurship. There should be the inculcation of entrepreneurial development courses in all higher institutions curricula in Nigeria that still need to be done as these platforms are just being institutional. They ought to be proactive and pragmatic.
- II The federal government should hasten the power sector reforms and re-stabilize it to end the looming energy crisis in Nigeria. This is to encourage entrepreneurial activities in the country as power is a major factor in the economy, in terms of enterprise activities.
- III Religious, ethnic, and political violence and crises should be controlled by all means necessary as they displace people and cause serious harm on their means of livelihood. Many companies have left Benue State because of violence in certain areas of the country. Therefore, any act of violence should be checked out.

Our results of finding show that government efforts aimed at entrepreneurial development cannot solve the multi-dimensional nature of the Benue state unemployment problem. As such, it will require the collective efforts of both the public and private enterprises to mitigate the unemployment problem in Nigeria i.e. a public-private partnership in curbing the unemployment problem through entrepreneurial development.

Secondly, as it is currently being practiced in some Benue State institutions of higher learning entrepreneurial programs and curricula should be designed to meet with the current trends. Its content should be properly designed to make a graduate in Nigeria skillful in a particular trade or enterprise of interest before he or she leaves the school. Finally, adequate funds should be set aside by both the public and private enterprises and channeled towards assisting graduates with entrepreneurial skills to set up their own privately owned enterprises in the area of their skill.

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