

Entrepreneurship opportunities and Nigerian graduates' unemployment in south-east and south-south geopolitical zones

F. U. Chukwumezie and David U. Osapka*

OTM Department, Federal Polytechnic Nekede, P.M.B. 1036, Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria.

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated entrepreneurship opportunities and Nigerian graduates' unemployment in south-east and south-south geopolitical zones. The study adopted a survey-descriptive design because the events had taken place in their natural course of happening. Two hundred lecturers and Entrepreneurship Development Centers' Staff constituted the stratified random sample drawn from fifteen (15) tertiary institutions from the zones on which an 18-item Likert-type rating scale was administered for data gathering over a period of two weeks with the help of Field Research Assistants. The data were subsequently analyzed with the χ^2 test of Independence and Cramer's v-statistic to establish a basis for generalization of findings into the larger population as well as application of same to tertiary institutions in other geopolitical zones in Nigeria with the same characteristics as those that obtained in the two geopolitical zones under investigation. Findings revealed that (i) Government and its relevant agencies had taken significant actions to help Nigerian graduates establish enterprises as a strategy for creating employment, reducing poverty and controlling social vices. (ii) The various tertiary education, educational monitoring bodies and individual tertiary institutions significantly prepared Nigerian graduates to adequately identify existing and create new entrepreneurship opportunities. (iii) There was significant proof that Nigerian graduates have acquired necessary entrepreneurship skills for self-employment. One major recommendation was that Government should adopt the step-by-step Entrepreneurship Implementation Model designed by the researchers for effective solution of the problems investigated and reported in this paper.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, opportunities, employment, poverty, reduction, social control.

*Corresponding author. E-mail: akpakeosakpa@yahoo.com. Tel: +2348095515415.

INTRODUCTION

The importance of entrepreneurship in the economy of any country cannot be over-emphasized, especially when its multi-faceted effects on socio-economic and political development are considered. For instance, the economies of countries that tick around the world are based on entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship is based on small-scale and medium enterprises and this explains why these businesses constitute the bedrock of the national economy of any nation. NIM/NYSC Programme (SMPE 104) documents that in USA, 23 million SMEs (Small-Scale and Medium Enterprises) employ more than 50% private workforce and generate more than half of the nation's GDP; in the EU countries, SMEs account for

99% of all companies and 65% of business turnover and in Taiwan, SMEs generate 70% of jobs that employ less than 20 workers each with 40,000 firms accounting for 75% of this country's exports. Nigeria cannot be an exception.

The following six theories of entrepreneurship analyzed by Azuka (2013) were reviewed as the framework for this paper: (1) Frank Knight's Risk Bearing Theory, (2) Max Weber's Sociological Theory, (3) Mark Conad's Economic Theory, (4) Joseph Schumpeter's Innovation Theory, (5) Israel Kirzner's Theory of Entrepreneurship and (6) McClelland's Theory of Achievement Motivation. These were complemented by Edwards and Edwards

(1996) concepts of: develop the confidence, motivation and self-discipline to succeed; overcome uncertainty, fears and self-doubts; create a profitable, secure and enjoyable work style; and strategies for taking adversity in stride. One can see the role which graduates from Nigeria's tertiary institutions are supposed to play in the socio-economic and political development of the country.

The disturbing aspect of this situation is that graduates from Nigeria's tertiary institutions are the hardest hit; a clear antithesis of the focus, spirit and letter of tertiary education because they constitute the bulk of the unemployed in the country. This appears to explain the keen interest of Government in creating opportunities for employment as well as formulating policies, establishing legal frameworks and agencies for entrepreneurship and passionately calling on the private sector to actively participate in creating employment opportunities for its citizens.

Many researchers have devoted efforts to investigating various aspects of entrepreneurship, employment creation, poverty reduction and control of social vices in the country. Obi (2012) investigated business education and the entrepreneurship agenda: a synergy for unemployment reduction in Nigeria" and concluded that this problem required a "training methodology that could prepare students with knowledge, practical skills (especially creativity), spirit of initiative, responsibility and a capacity to face risks occasioned by starting a small scale business". No statistical methods were used to analyze data in this research. Amahi and Ogben (2014) investigated "Making Global Workers out of Business Education Graduates through the inclusion of New Technologies in a Competency-Based Harmonized Curriculum" They found that the two null hypotheses were rejected on the bases of $t\text{-cal. of } 1.18 < t\text{-cnt of } 1.96$ and $t\text{-cal. of } 1.45 < t\text{-cnt of } 1.96$ at the significance level of 0.05. This meant that both teachers and students needed business education skills and new technologies to become global workers. Oladeji and Mufutau (2014) presented a National Conference Paper on "Business Education: A Veritable Tool for Job Security in Eradicating Youth Unemployment". They concluded that youth unemployment had hitherto defied Government efforts, and that the only way forward was to pursue an "efficient and effective business education programme". No statistical methods were used to analyze data for results. The researcher, however, recommended a composite approach of stakeholders (Government, Training Institutions, Industries, etc) to the solution of unemployment problem in the country. Oluwafemi et al. (2014) investigated and presented a paper on "Business Education: A Tool for curbing social vices" and concluded that the educational system has to be "modeled towards value inculcation and citizenship education at all levels". The results of this research, too, were not based on any statistical proof for its findings or conclusions. Njoku and Nwosu (2002) investigated the role of business education

in sustaining small scale businesses for National Development. The researchers concluded that effective business management has been constrained by lack of adequate accounting records, poor file management, lack of human relations skills on the part of the employers and employees and recommended that for a small scale business to contribute to National Development, institutions that send their students for industrial attachment (Students' Work Experience) should not only consider government establishments but also private businesses for balanced training experiences. No statistical methods were used to analyze data for results. Finally, Oyenuga et al. (2014) investigated "Strategies for Repositioning Technical and Vocational Education towards an End to Unemployment Crisis". The researchers did not use statistical analyses in their research but, however, concluded and recommended that "Technical and Vocational Education have become a force in education; particularly their orientation towards skills acquisition, attitudes and capabilities of playing an essential role in economic development, employment creation and poverty reduction". None of the research investigated entrepreneurship opportunities and graduates from Nigeria's tertiary institutions' unemployment or entrepreneurship development and practice based on any entrepreneurship theories. This missing link, therefore, constituted the focus of this investigation; namely, to ascertain the extent to which graduates from Nigeria's tertiary institutions were aware of entrepreneurship opportunities in accordance with known entrepreneurship theories and the procedures by which they take advantage of these and become self-employed, create further employment, reduce poverty and control social vices in the country. This is because according to findings by Okon (1979) in Bulus (1994) vocational development in Nigerian schools at all levels has not created any impact on the school leavers as shown in Table 1.

It is, therefore, not possible that school leavers who are in the above disposition about jobs or entrepreneurship can identify and recognize entrepreneurship opportunities (Barringer and Ireland, 2006) or demonstrate the ability of possessing new ideas of customers, existing products/services, distribution channels or Government entrepreneurship development agencies (Hisrich et al., 2009). It becomes necessary to point out the features of small-scale and medium enterprises. These were identified and documented by Odejide (1988) in Olaiya (1994) as presented in Table 2.

It is on account of these realities about entrepreneurship that the Federal Ministry of Education has stipulated the establishment of Entrepreneurship Development Centers in all tertiary institutions as a pre-condition for granting accreditation to new higher institutions or re-accreditation of programmes in existing tertiary institutions. The NUC, NBTE and NCCE have further specified the training focus and content of

Table 1. Ignorance of career and entrepreneurship opportunities.

Criteria	School graduates (%)	Principals (%)	Employers (%)
Lack of information on job seeking	95	85	84
Scarcity and mal-distribution of job opportunities	94	90	90
Discrimination and other inefficient terms of employment practices	45	70	34
Lack of adequate skills	25	40	34
Inadequate school curriculum and services	20	40	6
Lack of proper attitudes towards work, job aspiration and expectation	0	20	44

Table 2. Features of small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

Features	Characteristics
Size	Absolutely small
Technology	Often local
Dispersion	Local and extensive
Intermediate and Raw Materials Inputs	Local
Products	(mainly for) low income
Sales	Mainly local (could export)
Management	Non-specialized
Government Assistance	Needed; but seldom given
Labour Skills	On-the-job-training
Resources Mobilization	Often (from various sources)
Foreign Investment	None
*Initial Capital Outlay	Between N250,000 – N500,000
*Technical Assistance	Needed, but hardly given
*Accounting System	Incomplete records.

*These last three were added by the researchers.

entrepreneurship in Nigerian tertiary institutions. All these and more are contained in the Teachers' Guide on Entrepreneurship Education for each level of tertiary institution.

Figure 1 illustrates a model which the researchers have created for implementation as a solution to graduates' unemployment in Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

This study was not an experimental or quasi-experimental investigation and so, adopted a survey-descriptive design. Stratified random sampling was used to identify fifteen (15) tertiary institutions from a population of fifty (50) across the two geopolitical zones. This constitutes 30% of the population. A stratified random sample of lecturers and staff of Entrepreneurship Development Centers who are directly involved in teaching and practical training students in entrepreneurship education of the fifteen tertiary institutions was drawn on which an 18-item Likert-type 4-point rating scale was administered over a period of two weeks with the assistance of Field Research Assistants. Data gathered were analyzed with the χ^2 test of Independence and Cramer's v-statistic for results. Based on the results, null hypotheses 1 to 4 were accepted while null hypotheses 5 and 6 were rejected in favour of their alternatives. Population and sample distributions were as shown in Table 3 and results of hypotheses testing in Table 4.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Findings, strictly based on results of analysis of data, were summarized as shown in Table 4. Table 4 gives a summary of the results of hypotheses testing with the χ^2 test of independence at the alpha level of 0.05 at 6 df. Decision to reject a null hypothesis or accept its alternative was based on both the calculated and critical values of the χ^2 . Therefore:

1. Where the cal. $\chi^2 >$ crit. χ^2 ; Reject H_0
2. Where the cal. $\chi^2 <$ crit. χ^2 ; Accept H_0

Based on these criteria, the alternatives to hypotheses 1, 2, 3 and 4 were accepted; while hypotheses 5 and 6 were rejected. These results implied that:

(a) Actions Government and its agencies have taken to assist graduates from Nigerian tertiary institutions establish enterprises as a strategy for creating employment, reducing poverty and eradicating social vices have had a significant impact on addressing these issues. However, for the continued lengthening queues of unemployed citizens and escalating spiral of violence

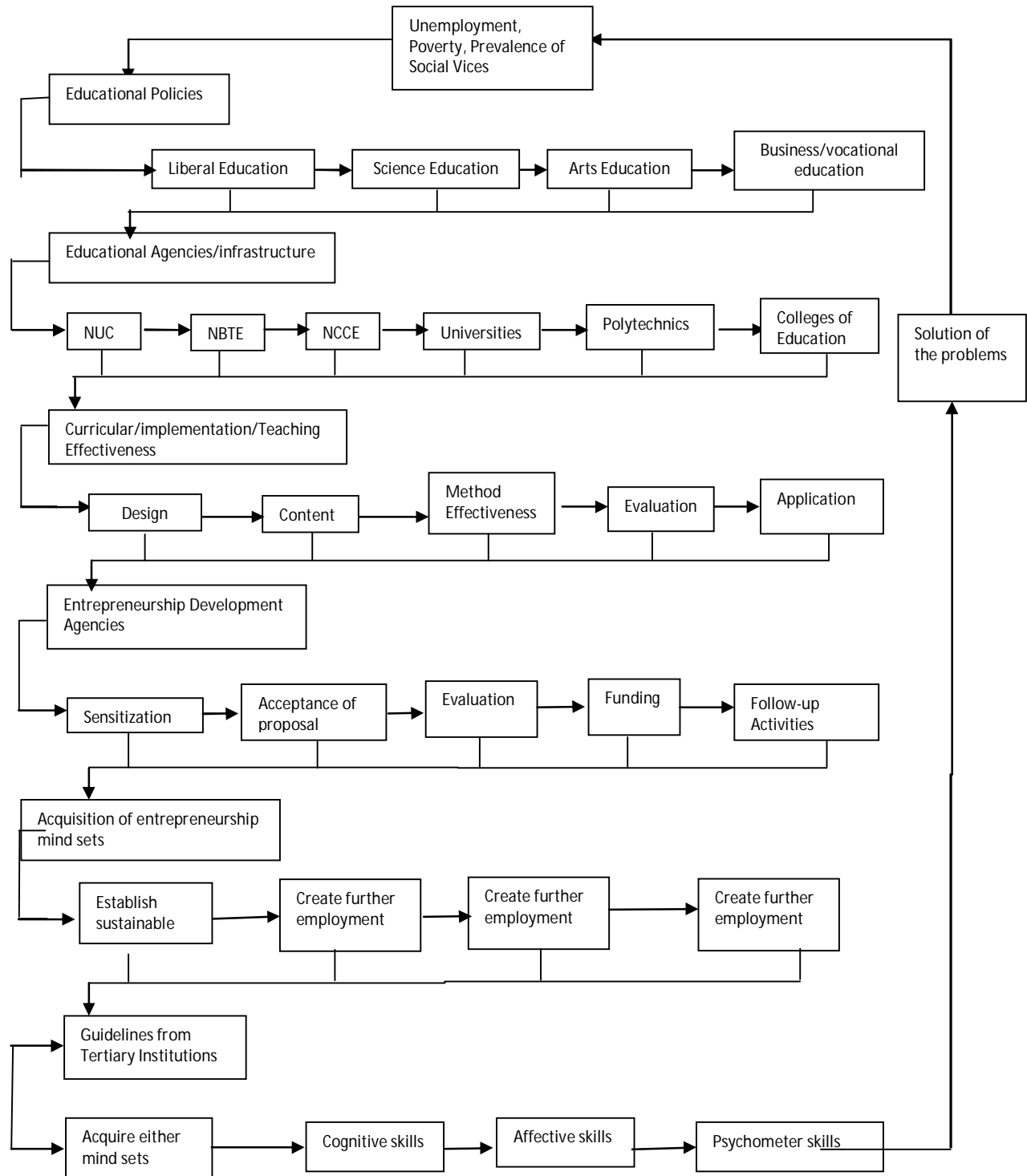


Figure 1. Entrepreneurship implementation model.

around the country, the cause(s) of persistence of these problems lay elsewhere and not on entrepreneurship opportunities.

tertiary institutions adequately prepare students to identify existing entrepreneurship opportunities and create new ones for self-employment.

(b) The finding in hypothesis two indicates that Nigerian

(c) The finding in hypothesis three indicates that

Table 3. Population and sample distributions.

Category of staff	Population			Total	Sample			Total
	Univs	Polys	CsOE		Univs	Polys	CsOE	
No. of tertiary institutions	28	11	11	50	8	4	3	15
Lecturers	139	55	54	248	63	27	26	116
Staff of entrepreneurship development centers	70	30	25	125	56	15	13	84
Total	209	85	79	373	119	42	39	200

Table 4. Summary of findings.

S/no	Hypothesis	Variance	SD	Chi-square		V-statistic	Decision
				Cal.x ²	Crit.x ²		
Ho: 1	Government has not taken any significant actions to help graduates from Nigerian tertiary institutions establish enterprises as a strategy for creating employment, reducing poverty and eradicating social vices in the country.	9.92	3.15	4.73	12.592	0.26	Hi accepted
Ho: 2	The regulating bodies and tertiary institutions do not significantly prepare students to adequately identify existing entrepreneurship opportunities or create new ones for self-employment.	3.76	1.94	3.93	“	0.24	Hi accepted
Ho: 3	There are no specific ways in which graduates from tertiary institutions significantly demonstrate acquired entrepreneurship skills necessary for self-employment.	19.96	4.47	5.83	“	0.27	Hi accepted
Ho: 4	There are no specific ways through which Entrepreneurship Development Agencies significantly help graduates of Nigeria tertiary institutions establish enterprises as a strategy for creating employment, reduction of poverty and control of social vices in the country.	6.42	2.53	3.11	“	0.22	Hi accepted
Ho: 5	There is no significant proof that graduates of Nigerian tertiary institutions have acquired necessary entrepreneurship skills for self-employment.	11.59	3.40	17.37	“	0.38	Ho rejected
Ho: 6	There is no significant step-by-step implementation of a process by stakeholders to create employment, reduce poverty and control social vices in the country.	2.21	1.49	19.63	“	0.58	Ho rejected

graduates of Nigerian tertiary institutions demonstrate acquired entrepreneurship skills for necessary self-employment in significant specific ways. This can be attested to by what most of them do to create employment for themselves –

undergoing further apprenticeships, setting up workshops and business centers, and so on.

(d) The finding in hypothesis four shows that Government agencies have significant specific

ways through which they help graduates of Nigerian tertiary institutions establish their own enterprises.

(e) Null hypotheses 5 and 6 were rejected in

favour of their alternatives. Specifically, hypothesis five indicated that there was a significant proof of Nigerian graduates' acquisition of necessary entrepreneurship skills for self-employment. This finding agrees with and confirms the finding in hypothesis three. Hypothesis six was surprisingly rejected. The researchers wish to observe a distinction between the various actions that stakeholders may have taken individually or collectively and a consciously thought out process as enunciated in the model presented in this paper.

CONCLUSION

The paper concludes that the provision of entrepreneurship opportunities for graduates of Nigerian tertiary institutions and their taking advantage of these is a sine-qua-non to the solution of the problems of unemployment, poverty and prevalence of social vices in the country (Barringer and Ireland, 2006; Hisrich et al, 2009).

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is hereby recommended that if this model is adopted and religiously implemented will solve these problems and open a floodgate of entrepreneurship opportunities to graduates of Nigerian tertiary institutions.

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