



Entrepreneurship Development Centres and Employment Generation in Lagos State, Nigeria

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Abstract. University environments naturally foster innovation, the free interchange of ideas, and fresh perspectives on the world. Entrepreneurship has become a faster-growing academic topic since universities have embraced it. Entrepreneurship for students in the higher institution is designed to inspire and create an innovative mindset for students. This mindset will provide the students with the ability and vision to transfer opportunities into wealth. In spite of all these efforts, the statistics on the tremendous rise in jobless rates in Nigeria suggest that the country is on its way to becoming the world unemployment capital. This paper, therefore, examined the role of entrepreneurship centers in achieving employment generation in Lagos State, Nigeria. The population of the study was 36,774 students from two selected universities in Lagos State. A sample of 456 students was selected from both universities using Cochran's formula. The study found that Entrepreneurship Centers had a significant effect on youth empowerment in Nigeria ($\beta = 0.49$, $t = 11.58$, $p < 0.05$). Entrepreneurship Centers had a significant effect on employment generation in Nigeria ($\beta = 0.59$, $t = 11.58$, $p < 0.05$). The findings underscore the importance of fostering a supportive ecosystem for entrepreneurs through access to finance, mentorship programs, and collaboration between stakeholders. The recommendations emphasize the need to invest in skills development, enhance access to technology and infrastructure, address regulatory challenges, and encourage research and data collection. By implementing these recommendations, Nigeria can leverage entrepreneurship to drive sustainable and inclusive economic growth.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship center, Entrepreneurship Education, Employment generation, Youth empowerment

1. Introduction

Unemployment among young people has undoubtedly developed into "multi-social problems" that have given rise to a number of undesirable behaviours among them, including prostitution, kidnapping and hostage-taking, computer fraud, drug dealing, armed robbery, and bunkering. In other words, crime in Nigeria is now a growing economic activity that pays even better than many occupations (Odumade, 2020).

Another fundamental reason for the high rate of unemployment in the country is the inability of job seekers who are majorly made up of young university graduates to match up to the skills required for the ever-dynamic workforce. Numerous observers have stated that, generally speaking, throughout Africa, job seekers' skill sets fall short of what companies want and need. With its liberal orientation, Nigeria's educational system does actually produce graduates that lack the skills that businesses demand on the job market. Additionally, many Nigerian graduates lack the entrepreneurial abilities necessary to support self-employment (Imhonopi, Urin, & Onwumah, 2018). Additionally, graduates from Nigerian colleges are typically solely qualified for white-collar employment and have little to no basic skills relevant to any other line of work. Unemployment rates will naturally be high in such circumstances, especially among university graduates (Olowu et al, 2016).

The federal government of Nigerian oftentimes rolled out programmes and policies that would address the persistent issue of unemployment in the county. One of these policies was the directive to make Entrepreneurship Education (EEed) a compulsory course for University students starting from 2007/2008 academic session (Aliu, 2018). Leading to adding EEed to the curriculum of all higher institutions in Nigeria. The further introduction of Entrepreneurship centres, also known as

entrepreneurship resource and information centres in some polytechnics and universities, are all in response to the country's problem of graduate unemployment, poverty, and wealth formation. The centres are aimed at filling the skills acquisition gap in Nigeria universities, and to equip students with appropriate skills to survive in the present economic climate and unemployment world. Thus, majority of Nigeria universities have a centre for entrepreneurship education. These centres are established to contribute to national development.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Entrepreneurship Education

Entrepreneurship education teaches students how to access and transform possibilities of all types. According to Enu (2020), entrepreneurship education goes beyond the development of businesses, it aims to improve students' capacity to engage and react to societal changes. Emeraton (2018) claims that entrepreneurship education focuses on the attitudes and abilities required for an individual to react to their surroundings when preserving, beginning, and managing a business. He also added that in order for a person to react positively to his surroundings and exploit its potential, a few fundamental attitudes and abilities are required. Oduwaiye (2019) also conform that entrepreneurship education equips the students with the necessary tools to develop marketable abilities.

Entrepreneurship education helps students build positive attitudes, innovative thinking, and self-reliance abilities to start sustainable business rather than rely on the government for employment. With the kick start of entrepreneurship education, graduates are equipped with self-assurance and the sovereignty to seek out new information that will advance economic development.

All levels of education in Nigeria provide entrepreneurship-related courses, from basic and secondary schools to graduate university degrees. According to Aig-Imoukheude (2018), there are 10 attitudes that aspiring entrepreneur should have. These attitudes include: "positive attitudes, high aptitude for rational critical thinking and timely decision making, Clear vision, generation of progressive ideals, drive and passion for success, Ability to convert vision into concrete reality, Creativity, innovativeness, courageousness, and self-confidence, Ability to assume reasonable risk, mercurial ingenuity, resourcefulness, patience and/or opportunities insight" (Aig-Imoukheude, 2018, p.

45). The knowledge economy's competitiveness depends on the idea of lifelong learning. It pertains to all ages, all stages of life, and all degrees of education and training, as well as the various types of apprenticeship.

In order to be a driving force in operating a firm, entrepreneurship education strives to build the necessary entrepreneurial abilities, attitudes, competencies, and dispositions (Agu, 2016) whilst increasing students' knowledge and ability for pursuing entrepreneurial behaviour, skills, and attitudes. This form of education is built for everyone and for just the purview of a few self-styled business gurus. Exposing students to entrepreneurship education is crucial in terms of development and learning (Akpomi, 2019). Therefore, the government's decision to make entrepreneurship education one of the required general courses for students at institutions across the nation through the Federal Ministry of Education should be viewed as a positive step in the right direction. This is done to foster a spirit of independence among young people (Oduwaiye, 2019). In addition to addressing the issue of unemployment and underemployment, this development will also ensure that there is a human potential for entrepreneurship for national growth. With the addition of entrepreneurial education to our higher institutions, it is hoped that universities would be better positioned to transform into centres of excellence by outfitting technological labs at both the secondary and university levels (Enu, 2020).

The study of Entrepreneurship education and employment generation is not new in Nigeria's political lexicon; many scholars, such as (Bayo, 2013; Adekunle & David, 2014; Olayemi, 2018; Chinelo, 2020) have written so much about it and its impact. Cao (2018) examined the relationship between entrepreneurship, innovation and economic growth. Cao (2018) study measured growth, innovation, and entrepreneurship using real GDP per capita, investment per capita, and new business density, respectively. By collecting statistics from 125 countries (developed and developing) between 2006 and 2016. The study examined the impact of innovation and entrepreneurship on the growth of both sets of countries using a specification of the Cobb-Douglas production function. Generalised Method of Moments (GMM) and Statistics Panel Data were both used as estimate techniques. The study revealed that in developing countries, the short-term impact of innovation and entrepreneurship on growth is negligible.

2.2 Entrepreneurship Centers in Nigeria

Environments at universities naturally encourage creativity, the open exchange of ideas, and novel viewpoints on the world. Since colleges and universities have embraced entrepreneurship, it has emerged as the campus subject with the quickest rate of growth and, in certain cases, has spawned completely new academic fields (Ezugworie, 2008). For college students, the major objective of entrepreneurship is to encourage them to see innovation as a form of travel that can take them anywhere (Uzoagulu, 2012). It also offers general recommendations on how entrepreneurship may function as a crucial component of undergraduate education, the major, graduate study, faculty assessment, "co-curriculum" issues, and university management. The Federal Government created the "National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy" (NEEDS) in 2004 to address the concerns of poverty reduction, employment generation, wealth creation, and value re-orientation through entrepreneurship instruction in higher institutions. Nigerian teenagers are being modeled more after consumers than creators, say Nwoye (2007) and Ezugworie (2008). Beyond the polytechnic and college levels, especially at the university level, entrepreneurship has been incorporated into the curricula of Nigerian postsecondary institutions. Eight years after the Federal Government announced its intention to include entrepreneurship in the curricula of Nigerian universities, as of 2012, the Universities of Lagos and Ibadan appear to offer the most coordinated entrepreneurship education. Two workshops that later became the Centre for Entrepreneurship and Innovation were organized as part of the Programme on Entrepreneurship and Innovation in Lagos and Ibadan in 2003 and 2004.

The Universities of Lagos and Ibadan Programmes on Entrepreneurship and Innovation, according to Adebisi and Oni (2012), might be said to have had little impact after eight years of implementation. The University of Lagos and other universities in Nigeria currently integrate the curriculum in their undergraduate curricula. Additionally, to promote entrepreneurial culture and attitude, skill development, self-employment, economic independence, and self-actualization, the Center for Entrepreneurship and Development Research (CEDR) was established in 2010 at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (Adebisi & Oni, 2012). The University of Benin established an Entrepreneurship Development Center to encourage research and experimentation in entrepreneurship, to promote and

advance entrepreneurship, skill sets, and creativity among all students, employees, and members of the public, and to commercialize discoveries and innovations. The Technical Entrepreneurship Center (TEC) was founded at the University of Ilorin during the academic year 2008–2009. The university had, in theory, consented to create a directorate to manage the institution's entrepreneurial education in 2005 (Ojile & Tijani, 2017). However, according to Okoye & Chinasa (2019), the situation is completely different in some private universities around the country where the owners use entrepreneurship training as a recruitment strategy.

Covenant University in Sango-Otta, Ogun State, is one of the leading examples of integrating entrepreneurship education into its system. Since the institution's founding in 2001, considerable attempts have been made to incorporate entrepreneurship development study into the curriculum. All pupils are required to enrol in and pass the Entrepreneurship Development Study (EDS). The first two lower-level courses focus on theory. However, the latter two upper-level courses emphasise more practical than theoretical learning, developing skill sets through experience learning, using newly acquired skills, and commercialising newly developed innovations (Obot, 2014).

The Entrepreneurship Centre aims to foster an entrepreneurial spirit in Nigerians by teaching trainees how to start, manage, diversify, and expand businesses successfully. It also makes it simple for trainees to get start-up capital, particularly from banks and other financial institutions. A small-scale entrepreneur must have received specific training at Entrepreneurship Development Centres, or EDC, certified by the apex bank, to be eligible for any loans supported by the Central Bank (CBN). The centres, also known as the Entrepreneurship Development Institute (EDI), foster an entrepreneurial spirit in Nigerians. In addition, they are expected to provide insight into the tools, strategies, and framework for managing all business functional areas, such as production, marketing, personnel, and finance (Abeng & Obinnaya, 2017). The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) supports micro, small, and medium-sized businesses (MSMEs) in addition to regulating the activities of commercial banks in Nigeria. It is one of the apex bank's Microfinance responsibilities. CBN EDC encourages private Entrepreneurship, self-employment, job creation, income growth, poverty eradication, economic development, self-deployment, etc. (Obot, 2014).

3. Theoretical Framework of Analysis

The theoretical framework for this paper draws upon the Keynesian theory of employment. Developed by economist John Maynard Keynes, this theory challenges classical economic assumptions and provides insights into how government intervention can address unemployment and stimulate economic activity (Torr, 1988).

Keynesian economics posits that aggregate demand plays a crucial role in determining employment levels and overall economic performance. According to Keynes (1936), inadequate aggregate demand can lead to persistent unemployment and underutilization of resources. To address this issue, Keynes argued for active government intervention through fiscal and monetary policies to stimulate demand and promote full employment. In the context of the article, the application of Keynesian theory suggests that achieving decent work and economic growth requires government intervention to boost aggregate demand and create favourable conditions for job creation. This can be achieved through measures such as increasing public spending on infrastructure projects, providing subsidies and incentives to businesses, and implementing expansionary monetary policies to lower interest rates and encourage investment.

Furthermore, the Keynesian framework recognizes the importance of income distribution and the role of effective demand in driving economic growth (Tcherneva, 2008). Policies aimed at reducing income inequality and ensuring fair wages can contribute to increased consumer spending and aggregate demand, thus fostering economic growth while also promoting decent work opportunities. Critics of Keynesian economics argue that excessive government intervention and deficit spending may lead to inflation and create inefficiencies in resource allocation. They contend that market mechanisms should be allowed to operate freely without substantial government interference. Additionally, critics argue that Keynesian policies may have limited effectiveness in the long run and that supply-side policies, such as reducing taxes and regulations, are more conducive to sustained economic growth.

However, proponents of Keynesian economics maintain that government intervention is necessary during times of economic downturns to overcome market failures and stabilize the economy. They argue that fiscal and monetary policies can have multiplier effects, stimulating aggregate demand and promoting job creation, ultimately leading to sustainable economic growth. The Keynesian theory of employment seeks to understand the relationship

between decent work and economic growth. By emphasizing the role of aggregate demand and the importance of government intervention, this framework provides insights into the policies and strategies necessary to achieve both objectives. While Keynesian economics has faced criticism, it remains a significant framework for understanding the dynamics of employment and economic growth.

To address the scarcity of jobs, policies that encourage providing bank credit to entrepreneurs and giving appropriate expenditures on education, housing, transportation, agriculture, health, power, road construction, and national defence, among others, are to be prioritised by the government. This will help the various sectors of the economy function very well, making the business environment friendly for entrepreneurs, which will, in turn, increase the output of goods and services. The importance of entrepreneurs to local economic growth cannot be overstated. Therefore, every country must create a supportive atmosphere to encourage the expansion of SMEs. By doing this, graduates will not have to rely entirely on the few available white-collar positions. However, they will be able to create their own businesses, work for themselves, and eventually hire others.

4. Research Methodology

This paper adopted survey design. The study population was 36,774 students from two selected universities in Lagos State; University of Lagos and the Pan-Atlantic University. They were purposively selected for the study because they are listed among Nigeria's best universities for entrepreneurship studies. Cochran's formula was employed to select 456 respondents for the purpose of data collection. The survey method, which involved the use of a questionnaire, was used because it requires systematic and scientific data collection from the population sample. The sample size selected is to give an overview of the situation in the study population. The Cochran formula was employed to determine the sample size for each university, resulting in a total distribution of 456 questionnaires. Data was analysed using descriptive statistic while regression analysis was employed in testing the hypotheses at a 0.05 significance level. The hypotheses were:

H₀₁: University-based entrepreneurship centres have no significant effect on youth empowerment in Nigeria.

H₀₂: University-based entrepreneurship centres have no significant effect on employment generation in Nigeria.

5. Findings and Discussion

Table 1: H₀₁: University-based entrepreneurship centres have no significant effect on youth empowerment in Nigeria.

Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta (β)	T	p	R ²
(Constant)	7.928	.495		16.016	.000	0.324
University_based_entrepreneurship	.427	.028	.586	15.080	.000	

Dependent Variable: Youth empowerment

Source: Field Survey 2023, Note: significant at 0.05

Table 1 indicates that University-based Entrepreneurship Centres has a positively significant effect on youth empowerment in Nigeria (R²= 0.324, β= 0.586, t = 11.580, p<0.05). The model shows that University-based Entrepreneurship Centres could explain 32.4 percent variation (R²= 0.324) in youth empowerment in Nigeria. Consequently, the null hypothesis, which states that University-based entrepreneurship centres have no significant effect on youth empowerment in Nigeria, was rejected. The model further shows that University-based Entrepreneurship Centres has a moderate positive (r 0.586, p<0.05) significant effect in youth empowerment in Nigeria. This suggests that improvement in University-based Entrepreneurship Centres will be associated with an increase in youth empowerment in Nigeria.

H₀₂: University-based entrepreneurship centres have no significant effect on employment generation in Nigeria.

Table 2: University-based entrepreneurship centres have no significant effect on employment generation in Nigeria

Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta (β)	T	p	R ²
(Constant)	8.540	.369		23.172	.000	0.374
University_based_entrepreneurship	.341	.021	.612	16.154	.000	

Dependent Variable: Employment generation

Source: Field Survey 2023, Note: significant at 0.05

Table 2 indicates that University-based Entrepreneurship Centres has a positively significant effect on employment generation in Nigeria (R²= 0.374, β= 0.612, t = 16.154, p<0.05). The model shows that University-based Entrepreneurship Centres could explain 37.4 percent variation (R²= 0.374) on employment generation in Nigeria. Consequently, the null hypothesis, which states that University-based entrepreneurship centres have no significant effect on employment generation in Nigeria, was rejected. The model further shows that University-based Entrepreneurship Centres has a strong positive (r 0.612, p<0.05) significant effect on employment generation in Nigeria. This suggests that increase in University-based

situation. Furthermore, the center has served as a mentorship center for students as it connects students to other entrepreneurs who have been in the business. This gives the students the opportunity to be able to ask questions first-hand and get first-hand information on what works in the business terrain in Nigeria and on what does not work. Just as Mwatsika (2016); Shane and Venkataraman (2000) clearly affirms that the primary goal of entrepreneurship centres is to teach current and future entrepreneurs how to find, create, evaluate, and take advantage of opportunities to develop new products and services. The finding of this research question is supported by the views of Thomas (2006).

Entrepreneurship Centres will be associated with an increase on employment generation in Nigeria.

The scholar identifies the cognitive, networking, and experiential approaches as the three major approaches defining entrepreneurial learning research. Each strategy has qualities that distinguish an emergent field and are qualitatively unique. Even though well-defined theories of entrepreneurial learning are still developing (Cope, 2005), these methods show how scholars have conceptualized the phenomenon.

6. Discussion of Findings

The finding of hypothesis one was able to identify that the University based entrepreneurship center has been a response to the country's problem of graduate unemployment, poverty, and wealth formation. Which aims to fill the skills acquisition gap in the universities and, consequently, equip students with appropriate skills to survive in the present economic

The finding of hypothesis two was able to identify that the University based entrepreneurship center has influenced employment generation for students when

they graduate from the university. Being trained as an entrepreneur has developed an entrepreneurial spirit in the hearts of students and inspired them to develop feasible business, ideas, and build business ventures to successfully growth and mature. The finding agrees with Adebisi and Akinsotoo (2019), scholarly work. This affirms that entrepreneurship contributes considerably to job creation, raising living standards, distributing income fairly, fostering interdependence among businesses, preserving foreign exchange, promoting the efficient use of domestic resources, and reversing rural-urban migration. Mwangi asserts that it is an undoubted truth that youth employment is higher in Sub Sahara Africa (Mwangi, 2016), and this is a significant challenge; nevertheless, the introduction of Entrepreneurship education in schools will endow graduates with the required knowledge to start a business (Mwangi, 2016; Haan, 2006) while Awate et al. (2017) maintained that entrepreneurship and skill-based education is the major remedy to unemployment, forced labour, human trafficking, and inequalities in our societies.

7. Conclusion

This study has revealed that the initiative by the National University Commission to establish University-based Entrepreneurship Centers would assist the government in achieving decent work and economic growth in the country. This learning process would develop an entrepreneurial spirit in the hearts of students and inspired them to develop feasible business, ideas, and build business ventures to successfully growth and mature. However, there are a lot of challenges encountered by these centres like lack of finance, limited private partnerships, unqualified trainers, internal administration amongst others; yet the economic, social, and educational benefits of this initiative cannot be over-emphasized.

Entrepreneurship in Nigeria has emerged as a catalyst for economic growth, addressing the challenge of unemployment, fostering innovation, and diversifying the economy away from oil dependence. The vibrant entrepreneurial ecosystem has attracted both local and foreign investments, contributing to job opportunities, knowledge transfer, and economic inclusivity. Furthermore, the growth of SMEs and startups has led to technological advancements and increased export revenues, positioning Nigeria as a player in the global market.

8. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

- Nigeria's implementation of entrepreneurship training needs to be localized and tailored to the Nigerian situation. The curriculum must take into account all the variables that could potentially have an impact on businesses in Nigeria, and it must also be dynamic.
- Trainers should be encouraged to apply various teaching techniques to ensure the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education. Methods like hands-on learning, mentorship, and business idea pitching should be incorporated into the teaching of entrepreneurship education;
- The entrepreneurship centres' operations should be adequately funded by the university administration. There should be an improvement in these centres' financial resources. The school administration should also promote entrepreneurship centres in its effort to transform the institution into an entrepreneurial university; and
- Infrastructural facilities such as roads, and electricity, that would boost business activities in the country should be made available by the government.

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