ENTREPRENEURIAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR GRADUATES OF POLYTECHNICS: A CASE STUDY OF FEDERAL POLYTECHNIC, NEKEDE, OWERRI

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Abstract
Many of our youths roam the streets in search of jobs that are not available. To further compound this, most of these graduates lack appropriate knowledge, skills and attitudes to be self-employed and therefore are not self-reliant. The aim of this study was to determine the entrepreneurial opportunities which are available to students, the extent of utilization of the available entrepreneurial opportunities and the reason for a particular choice of skill area. Descriptive Survey design was utilized for this study. Descriptive survey design was deemed appropriate since individual opinions, attitudes and perceptions of the respondents were sought as basis for generalization. Frequencies and percentages were used to analyze the results. A total of 1,160 copies of questionnaire were distributed to HND II students across 29 departments. The results of the study indicated that a large number of students were aware of all the entrepreneurial skill areas available to them as provided by the institution. The study showed that students took advantage of entrepreneurial skill areas and actually received training in the skill areas of their choices. However, the study revealed that the choices made were largely dependent on financial constraints on the part of the students. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that government should make available financial resources that will enable the graduates start up their own business to help sustain the acquired skills and also make them self-employed and/or employers of labour.

KEYWORDS: Entrepreneurial, Opportunities, Polytechnic, Graduates

Introduction
The word entrepreneur is derived from French word “entre” meaning “between” and “prendre” meaning “to take”. Originally the word entrepreneur described one who takes on the risks between buyers and sellers or who undertakes tasks such as starting a new venture. On the other hand Egwu (2011) defined an entrepreneur as a person who sees opportunity where others could not, a problem solver, a creative genius, an innovator, wealth generator (not money maker) an inventor, one who produces jobs for others. An entrepreneur is an individual who takes risk and starts something new.

Barring and Ireland (2009) created a distinction between an inventor and entrepreneur. They explained that while an inventor creates something new, an entrepreneur assembles and integrates all the resources needed-money, people, business, model, strategies and risk bearing ability to transform the inventions into a viable
business. To barring and Ireland, entrepreneurship is the process by which individuals pursue the process without regard to resources they currently control.

The essence of entrepreneurship behaviour is identifying opportunities and putting useful ideas into practice. The concept of innovation and newness is always at the centre of entrepreneurship. One of the most difficult tasks for the entrepreneur is the introduction of something new. It takes not only the ability to create and conceptualize but also the ability to understand all the forces at work in the environment (Hisrich, Peter and Shepherd, 2007).

Isiaka (2015) defined an entrepreneur as a person who is driven to establish a business to take advantage of the financial opportunities and personal fulfillment offered by pursuing their own dreams and shaping their own destiny in local, national and global economies. Isiaka saw entrepreneurial education as a lifelong learning process, starting as early as elementary school and pressing through all levels of education, including adult education. It focuses on developing understanding and capacity for pursuit of entrepreneurial behaviours, skills and attributes in widely different context.

One of the major challenges of education today is how education can provide solution to mass unemployment occasioned by abject poverty and other social vices which have besieged the nation Nigeria. From historical perspective, the introduction of western education and the establishment of schools in Nigeria started with the missionary bodies. The efforts of the missionaries were later followed by the government through the establishment of government-owned schools and colleges. The education curriculum as introduced by the missionary bodies comprised only the learning of reading, writing and arithmetic. The curriculum then was designed to suit their own purpose of educating men and women who could read and write to help them in their evangelistic and colonial work (Nwosu, 2009). Obasi and Njoku (2003) citing Obasi (2008) noted that the education system then was characterized by: high quality and committed staff; conducive teaching and learning environment with relatively adequate facilities and equipment of good quality; manageable class sizes; production of internationally marketable and mobile graduates; easy admissions overseas; collaborative links and exchanges with universities and high rating of Nigerian educational system and the products.

Idih (2002) noted that for decades Nigeria has come to realize the need for pragmatic effective education for self-reliance hence the introduction of 1998 National Policy on Education. This policy Idih said was aimed at eradicating one of the major weaknesses of the old system of education which was aimed at the production of those who are qualified to look for jobs than the job providers. Nwosu (2000) recognized that the major challenges facing the youth were traceable to high poverty rate caused by unemployment and cautioned that with the high rate of unemployment arising from large
As the number of graduates increases, the government and private companies may not be able to provide all the jobs that the youth require.

Isiaka (2015) defined human capital as the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills and knowledge, while machines, tools, land improvements, and breeding stock are referred to as physical capital. He contended that a combination of these two makes entrepreneurship education an attractive, complete, and practicable course. This suggests that the provision of physical capital is a necessary ingredient that will enable graduates to start up businesses on their own, regardless of size, without waiting for the government to provide them with jobs, thereby reducing unemployment to the lowest possible level.

In agreement, Adekola and Kayode (2010) referred to the type of education provided by the education system in Nigeria as academic or literal education, which was certificate-based and usually prepared students for white-collar jobs or paid employment. Most of the graduates from the educational system lacked entrepreneurial skills that would allow them to be self-employed if they failed to secure white-collar jobs. They attributed this situation to the high percentage of graduates who relied on paid employment with the unemployment rate among school leavers in Nigeria rising astronomically.

Writing on the consequences of unemployment in Nigeria, Anoruoh (2014) observed that one of the most serious socio-economic problems facing Nigeria is the high rate of unemployment. The challenge is compounded by the recent increase in the number of graduates from the universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education, who are not employed but rather rely solely on government for employment because they lack entrepreneurial skills to be self-employed. The author reiterated the fact that the country had more than its fair share of youth restiveness in protest against socio-economic and political injustices. To this end, youths have been transformed from merely engaging in community protests to militancy with threats to the security of this country as can be witnessed from Niger Delta youths, Avengers, Boko Haram, among others.

Having examined all the socio-economic problems facing Nigeria as a result of the prevailing high rate of unemployment and the further compoundment of this problem by the higher institutions, the Federal Polytechnic, Nekede, in recognition of the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) mandate to establish a well-articulated and functional entrepreneurship training as an avenue to ensure that students are provided entrepreneurial opportunities and skills that will make them self-sustaining.
Purpose Of The Study
The aim of this study was to determine the entrepreneurial opportunities which are available to graduates of Federal Polytechnic, Nekede. Specifically, the study attempted to:

1. Identify the available entrepreneurial skill areas provided by the institution for students to explore and acquire.
2. Determine the extent to which students accept the availability of identified entrepreneurial skill areas provided by the institution.
3. Determine the extent to which students practically utilize each of the available entrepreneurial skill areas provided by the institution.
4. Find out the reason(s) for choice of a particular entrepreneurial skill area over the others.

Research Questions
1. What entrepreneurial skill areas are provided by the Federal Polytechnic Nekede for students to explore and acquire?
2. To what extent do students accept identified entrepreneurial skill areas provided by the Federal Polytechnic Nekede?
3. To what extent do students utilize available entrepreneurial skill areas provided by the Federal Polytechnic Nekede?
4. What are the reason(s) behind the choices made by the students of Federal Polytechnic Nekede?

Methodology
Descriptive survey design was adopted for this study. The survey design was considered appropriate since individual opinions, attitudes and perceptions of the respondents were sought as basis for generalization. A total of 1,160 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to HND II students spanning across 29 departments in the institution out of which 1,102 were found usable. Copies of the questionnaire were administered and collected with the assistance of various instructors. The institution offers 29 entrepreneurial skill areas from which the students were required to pick only one skill area.
Table 1
List of Entrepreneurial Skill Areas Available to Students in Federal Polytechnic, Nekede, Owerri

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/No</th>
<th>Available Skill Areas</th>
<th>Extent Of Availability</th>
<th>Utilization By Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Bead Making</td>
<td>920</td>
<td>83.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Paint Making</td>
<td>1020</td>
<td>92.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Bar Soap Production</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>81.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Bleach Production</td>
<td>860</td>
<td>78.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Cake Making</td>
<td>890</td>
<td>80.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Burger/Meat Pie/Fish Pie</td>
<td>1002</td>
<td>90.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Disinfectants</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>81.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Chin-Chin</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>81.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Liquid Soap</td>
<td>850</td>
<td>77.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Tailoring (Fashion Design)</td>
<td>980</td>
<td>88.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Knitting (Cardigan/Sweater)</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>81.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Events Management</td>
<td>986</td>
<td>78.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Hat Making</td>
<td>840</td>
<td>76.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Headgear Preparation</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>63.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Hair Dressing (Unisex)</td>
<td>820</td>
<td>74.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Metal Fabrication</td>
<td>940</td>
<td>85.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Shoe Making</td>
<td>950</td>
<td>86.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Rapping/MC</td>
<td>840</td>
<td>76.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Traditional Dancing</td>
<td>790</td>
<td>71.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>Gymnastics</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>63.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>Photography</td>
<td>1020</td>
<td>92.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>Handset Repairs</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>72.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>Computer Maintenance</td>
<td>750</td>
<td>68.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>African Braids</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>72.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>Tie-Dye/Batik</td>
<td>1002</td>
<td>90.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26.</td>
<td>Corporate Cleaning</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>81.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.</td>
<td>Construction of Inverters/Solar Power Installation</td>
<td>920</td>
<td>83.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28.</td>
<td>Car Security System (Car Tracker)</td>
<td>1020</td>
<td>92.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29.</td>
<td>Building of High Power Audio Amplifier</td>
<td>990</td>
<td>89.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Entrepreneurship Development Centre Federal Polytechnic, Nekede

The results shown in Table 1 reveal that all the students were very much aware of all the entrepreneurial skill areas which by all indications have been made available by
the institution for students to make their choice from. The high percentage of availability of 92.6% - 63.5% gave a proof to that effect.
The results of extent of utilization by the students revealed that the students actually participated in the chosen entrepreneurial skill areas as shown by varying number of students indicating participation.

Table 2
Percentage Responses to Reason for Choice of Entrepreneurial Skill Areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/No</th>
<th>Reason For Choice Of Entrepreneurial Skill Area</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Ranking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Financial benefits</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>18.15</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Prevalent unemployment</td>
<td>550</td>
<td>49.90</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Hobby</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>5.44</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Fame</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>4.54</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>To fulfill requirement for graduation</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Low financial involvement</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>21.05</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In table 2, the result reveals that uppermost in the minds of students when making choice of entrepreneurial skill area is unemployment, followed by financial involvement and thirdly, financial benefits. Others are rated poorly by the students.

Discussion of Findings

The results revealed that the Federal Polytechnic, Nekede actually provided the students with entrepreneurial skill areas which they can explore and acquire skills. This step is in agreement with Aina (2002) who cautioned that graduates of educational institutions must possess self-management, conceptual, analytical and lifelong learning skill beyond the basic training provided by the traditional education system. Secondly, the objective as to the extent to which the students utilized the entrepreneurial skill areas provided by the institution is guided by the fact that Nigeria is ranked by the World Bank as low income and among poor countries in the world on the basis of income per capita. Therefore, the solution is on how best to cope with the teeming graduates from tertiary institutions who are unable to find employment but are able to acquire entrepreneurial skill that will help them to be self-reliant.

On the other issue of choice of entrepreneurial skill areas, financial involvement came as uppermost in the minds of the students. Thus there is need for our government to put in place a base for financial support to assist the graduates to become self-reliant. This is in agreement with Isiaka (2015) who opined that the provision of physical capital is a need ingredient that will enable graduates start up businesses on their own no matter how small without having to wait for government to provide them with jobs, thereby reducing unemployment to the barest minimum.
Conclusion

Based on the findings, the paper concludes that institutions can contribute immensely to ameliorate the unemployment problem in Nigeria by the provision of adequately equipped and a well articulated entrepreneurship development centre in the various institutions where students can be exposed to acquire entrepreneurial skills outside their traditional course of study.

Recommendations

1. Government should make available financial resources that will assist the graduates set-up their own businesses as a means to helping them sustain the acquired skills and also make them self-employed and/or employers of labour. This can be achieved through granting of soft loans to interested graduates to start up small business.

2. Since the unemployment rate has continued to escalate, institutions of higher learning should maintain entrepreneurship education that will enable their graduates develop appropriate mindset of becoming self-reliant from the on-set.

3. The curriculum and training itself should inculcate appropriate knowledge and skills that will necessitate the production of graduates with all round skills e.g. communication, right attitudes, risk taking, self-management, conceptual, analytical etc.

4. Training institutions should provide relevant facilities for instructions to avoid the production of half-baked graduates. This will ensure the acquisition of appropriate training that will make for smooth transition to self-reliance.

5. Successful entrepreneurs should be invited from time to time to share experiences with the students as a means to encourage and strengthen the students.
References


