



Economics Education and Students' Attitude Towards Acquisition of Entrepreneurship Skills in Curbing Unemployment and Improving Global Competitiveness in Nigeria

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Abstract: This study explored the Economics Education and student's attitude towards the acquisition of entrepreneurship skills to curb unemployment and improve global competitiveness. The study was guided by two research objectives and questions. The study employed a descriptive survey research and research design. The population of the study is 2860 and stratified sampling technique was used to sample a total of 280 economics education students. A self-structured questionnaire titled EEA was used for data collection. The instrument was validated and trial-tested. Cronbach Alpha was used to attain a 0.74 reliability coefficient. Data were analyzed using simple percentages. The finding of the study revealed that economics education students have a negative attitude towards the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills and some factors like family background, peer influence, lack of funds, and profit-making factors among others are responsible for influencing their attitude. The study recommended that curriculum planners should as a matter of urgency incorporate practical entrepreneur skill acquisition content in economics education curriculum across all levels. There is a need for sensitization and programs geared towards enlightening people on the benefit of entrepreneur skills, this will help to motivate and build critical thinking of new ideas, seek opportunities and bring new products into existence or add value to existing products or services. Parent should also be sensitized on the importance of entrepreneurship skills to their children and the development of the society at large.

Keywords: Economics Education, Entrepreneur Skills, Attitude, Unemployment.

Introduction

The persistent issue of unemployment in Nigeria has long been a matter of significant concern for a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including economic managers, government entities at various levels, and policymakers. This concern was notably articulated by Nwankwo (2013), who underscored the gravity of the situation. The severity of this issue was further highlighted by recent data from the National Bureau of Statistics (2022), which estimated Nigeria's unemployment rate at a staggering 33.3%. This alarming figure has drawn increased attention from key players in the nation's economy, signalling a need for urgent intervention.

Unemployment in Nigeria is a multifaceted problem, as described by Lamido (2013) and later referenced by Bogoro (2015). They perceive it as a critical economic challenge that any responsible government must monitor and address. The root causes of this high unemployment rate are multifarious, including the lack of comprehensive social welfare policies, insufficient orientation and value placed on vocational and technical education, and broader societal attitudes that may not adequately support or value these forms of education. These factors collectively contribute to a scenario where a significant portion of the population is unable to secure employment.

Further adding to the discourse, Fajana (2000) offers a precise definition of unemployment, describing it as the condition where individuals who are both capable and willing to work are unable to find appropriate paid employment. Complementing this definition, the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 2015 delineated the unemployed as those members of the economically active population who are without work, yet are available and actively seeking employment. This group includes individuals who have been laid off as well as those who have voluntarily left their previous employment. Such definitions are crucial in understanding the full scope of the unemployment issue in Nigeria, as they encompass a wide range of circumstances and reasons why individuals may be without work. The high unemployment rate in Nigeria, therefore, is not just a statistic; it represents a critical challenge that affects the economic stability and social fabric of the nation, demanding concerted efforts for effective resolution.

One of the possible causes for the rise in the level of unemployment in Nigeria is this lack of incorporation of technical skills to complement the education acquired by the teeming youth. Iwuamadi (2012) has highlighted the primary factors contributing to the increasing unemployment rate in Nigeria in their research on the subject. One factor is the fast expansion of the urban workforce due to migration from rural areas to cities. Rural-urban migration is often seen via the lens of push-pull variables.

Furthermore, that is why there has been a clamour for the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills across all levels of education. To clarify, while dealing with this issue, a complementary strategy is required. In developed or industrialized economies, the education system prioritizes teaching students to approach problems, including societal ones, as challenges and opportunities that can be transformed into valuable goods and services through entrepreneurship. This emphasis is placed on the trail of inquiry-discovery application in teaching (Adejimola & Olufumilayo, 2009; Giwa, 2000; Adeyemi, 2006).

Entrepreneurship has been viewed by many as a process of engaging in useful and productive activities through creating products and services for a nation's economy. Olagunju (2004) defined entrepreneurial competence as the ability of an individual to effectively use an idea and establish a business that benefits not only the individual but also society and promotes growth. In his study, Salgado-Banda (2005) argued that entrepreneurial talent encompasses qualities such as enthusiasm, empathy, courage, perseverance, self-confidence, openness to expert guidance, a drive for immediate outcomes, and the capacity to identify possibilities.

Alternatively, one strategy to address the pressing problem of unemployment in Nigeria involves universities and other higher institutions focusing on teaching and research in entrepreneurship and innovation centers, as well as fostering cooperation between universities and the business sector. Entrepreneurship education has been recognized as a catalyst for job creation and empowerment, particularly for those who are jobless or underemployed in a globalized market. This should include enhancing the skills and knowledge of employees and students in entrepreneurship and innovation, as well as actively collaborating with small and medium-sized businesses via initiatives like business

incubators. Providing training to entrepreneurs and carrying out research and consultancy are essential for fostering entrepreneurial, industrial, and economic development in Nigeria.

This paper however looked at the attitude of Economics Education Students towards the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills for global competitiveness.

Purpose of the Study

The study was to

1. Find out the attitude of Economics Education students' perception towards the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills
2. The factors influencing Economics Education students' attitude towards acquiring entrepreneurial skills

Research Questions

1. What are the attitudes of Economics Education students towards the acquisition of Entrepreneurship skills?
2. What are the factors influencing Economics Education students' attitudes towards the acquisition of entrepreneurship skills?

Methodology

This research work adopted a descriptive survey research design. Federal University Kashere, Gombe State Federal University Wukari, Taraba State, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, University of Abuja, and Usmanu Danfodio University, Sokoto were all selected purposefully for the purpose of data collection. Which covers parts of some geo-political zones in Nigeria. The population of the study is 2860 students, studying Economics Education at all levels. A purposive sampling technique was used to select a total sample size of 280 using a stratified random sampling technique.

The instrument used is a self-structured questionnaire titled AEES which contained two sections, section A was on bio-data information while section B consisted of two clusters, with 4 Likert measuring scales of SA, A, D, and SD. The first cluster included questions that will extract information from the respondents and their attitude towards acquiring entrepreneurial skills while the second cluster is on the factors that influence the attitude of the respondents towards the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills. The benchmark for accepting results in clusters 1 and 2 is 50%. This means that 50% and above will be recorded as agreed while 49% and below will be recorded as disagreeing. The instrument was trial-tested and validated. The reliability coefficient was 0.74 using Cronbach Alpha. The researcher administered 280 questionnaires via google forms of which 248 entries were recorded.

Results

Research Question 1: What are the attitudes of Economics Education Students towards the acquisition of Entrepreneurship skills?

Table 1: Responses on the attitude of Economics Education Students on Entrepreneurship skills

S/N	Items	SA	A	SD	D	Decision
1.	I do not have basic knowledge of new skills	76 (38%)	50 (25%)	44 (22%)	30 (15%)	Accepted
2.	I am too old or young to learn a trade	80 (40%)	50 (25%)	40 (20%)	30 (15%)	Accepted
3.	My friends would laugh when they saw me doing this work	90 (45%)	60 (30%)	36 (18%)	14 (7%)	Accepted

4.	I cannot become rich doing petty jobs	70 (35%)	40 (20%)	50 (25%)	40 (20%)	Accepted
5.	It will bring a bad image to my family	40 (20%)	30 (15%)	80 (40%)	50 (25%)	Rejected
6.	It devalues students' status	36 (18%)	50 (25%)	74 (37%)	40 (20%)	Rejected
7.	Entrepreneurship skills are a waste of resources	40 (20%)	32 (16%)	76 (38%)	52 (26%)	Rejected
8.	Skill sets are not taught in-depth so it is a waste of time	76 (38%)	50 (25%)	32 (16%)	42 (21%)	Accepted
9.	The programme cannot prepare students for the future	40 (20%)	32 (16%)	74 (37%)	27 (27%)	Rejected
10.	It exposed students to dubious activities	32 (16%)	42 (21%)	88 (45%)	38 (19%)	Rejected

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Table 4.2.2 shows respondents' responses on the attitude of economic education students on entrepreneurship skills in the study area. The data implied that 63% of the respondents agreed that they do not have basic knowledge of this new skill (entrepreneurship) but 37% of the respondents disagreed. 65% of the respondents accepted the statement that they are too old or young to learn this trade while 35% of the respondents rejected the statement. 75% of the respondents agreed that their friends would laugh when they saw them doing this work but 25% of the respondents disagreed. 55% of the respondents accepted that they cannot be rich doing petty jobs while 45% of the respondents rejected the statement. On account of their attitudes towards acquiring innovative skills 35% of the respondents agreed that it will bring a bad image to their family whereas 65% of the respondents disagreed and held that it will not bring a bad image to their family. 43% of the respondents agreed that it would devalue students' status but 57% of the respondents rejected the assertion on the grounds it would add value to them and their curriculum vitae. 63% of the respondents agreed that skill sets are not taught in-depth but 37% of the respondents disagreed that the sets of skills are taught in-depth.

On the basis of entrepreneurship skills were wasted resources, 36% of the respondents agreed while 64% of the respondents disagreed that entrepreneurship skill was not a waste of resources. 36% of the respondents agreed that the programme cannot prepare economic education students for the future while 64% of the respondents disagreed and held that it can prepare economics education students for the future. On the ground that entrepreneurship skills exposed economics education students to dubious activities, 37% of the respondents agreed whereas 63% of the respondents disagreed. The result implied that economics education students do not see the acquisition of entrepreneur skills as important as it may seem. This implies that they have a negative attitude towards the acquisition of entrepreneurship skills.

Research Question 2 What are the factors influencing economics students' attitude towards the acquisition of entrepreneurship skills?

Table 4.2.3: Responses on the factors influencing Entrepreneur skills acquisition by Economics Education

S/N	Items	SA	A	SD	D	Decision
1.	Family background	84 (42%)	40 (20%)	36 (18%)	40 (20%)	Accepted
2.	Peer influence	70 (35%)	60 (30%)	44 (22%)	26 (13%)	Accepted
3.	The nature of the skills	66 (33%)	80 (40%)	40 (20%)	14 (7%)	Accepted
4.	Lack of entrepreneur resources and facilities	84 (42%)	66 (33%)	24 (12%)	26 (13%)	Accepted
5.	Valued the society attached to the	64 (37%)	66 (33%)	32 (16%)	28 (14%)	Accepted

	skills to be learned					
6.	Profit making nature of the facilitators	76 (38%)	56 (28%)	32 (16%)	36 (18%)	Accepted
7.	Lack of funds	84 (42%)	66 (33%)	20 (10%)	30 (15%)	Accepted
8.	Lack of motivation from stakeholders	66 (33%)	70 (35%)	32 (16%)	32 (16%)	Accepted
9.	Inadequate training materials	76 (38%)	54 (27%)	36 (18%)	34 (17%)	Accepted
10.	Incompetence of the facilitators	50 (25%)	70 (35%)	30 (15%)	50 (25%)	Accepted

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Table 4.2.3 presented data on the factors influencing economics education students' attitudes towards the acquisition of entrepreneurship skills. It illustrated that 62% of the respondents agreed that family background affected their attitude towards the acquisition of entrepreneurship skills but 38% of the respondents disagreed. 65% of the respondents agreed that their peers influenced them greatly which affected their attitudes negatively whereas 35% of the respondents disagreed that their peers did not exert any influence on them. 73% of the respondents agreed that the nature of the skills affected their attitude but 27% of the respondents disagreed. 70% of the agreed that the value society attached to the skills to be learned affected their attitude while 30% of the respondents disagreed.

On the basis of the profit-making nature of the facilitators, 66% of the respondents agreed that this affected their attitude whereas 34% of the respondents disagreed. 75% of the respondents agreed that lack of funds affected their attitude towards the acquisition of entrepreneurship skills but 25% of the respondents disagreed. Whereas 68% of the respondents agreed that lack of motivation from stakeholders affected their attitude 32% of the respondents disagreed. 65% of the respondents agreed that inadequate training materials affected their attitude while 35% of the respondents disagreed. On the basis of the incompetence of the facilitators, 60% of the respondents agreed that affected their attitudes but 40% of the respondents disagreed. This showed the list of factors affecting economics education students' attitude towards the acquisition of entrepreneurship skills which include family background, peer influence, the nature of the skills to be learned, the valued society attached to the skills to be learned, profit-making nature of the facilitators, lack of funds, lack of motivation from stakeholders, inadequate training materials and incompetence of the facilitators.

Discussions

From the findings of this study, it is worrisome that at this dispensation a large number of economics education students still have a negative attitude towards the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills. According to Adelakun, Lawal, Oyegbami, and Oyedokun (2019), innovative skill acquisition and entrepreneurship development aim to enhance economic and human development by positively influencing wealth creation, reducing unemployment, alleviating poverty, fostering creativity and innovation, and ultimately increasing the country's gross domestic product. Additionally, these efforts lead to psychological rewards for individuals. Similarly, this outcome contradicted the perspectives of Oghojaforet al., (2011) and Emmanuel, (2013) who argued that innovative skills, widely recognized as a means of fostering economic growth and development, involve the enhancement or refinement of acquired skills, leading to improvements in both economic and social aspects of an individual's quality of life.

The results in Table 1, imply that economics education students have a negative attitude towards the acquisition of entrepreneurship skills. This was in line with the findings of Verhaest and Omey (2012) who ascertained that bad friends, poor family orientation and value attached to a skill by society were a significant factor in graduate youths' negative attitude towards skill acquisition programmes, because it discouraged them to look for white collar jobs. This corroborated Steve, (2018) stated that youth's negative perception of entrepreneurship skills programmes increases the unemployment rate and there is

an increase in the rate of poverty among youths in Nigeria. The study was also consistent with Adegun and Akomolafe (2013) who identified some attributes and behaviours of Nigerian youths towards entrepreneurial skills to include: lack of parental guides, minor jobs not fetching much money, fear of taking risks in business and stigma of failure with a mindset that they have seen many who started small business but could not continue.

However, Table 2 presents the characteristics that impacted the attitude of Economics Education towards the development of entrepreneurial skills. The findings revealed that the factors contributing to this phenomenon encompass family background, peer influence, the inherent characteristics of the skills to be acquired, the societal value placed on these skills, the profit-driven nature of the facilitators, insufficient financial resources, lack of motivation from stakeholders, inadequate training materials, and the incompetence of the facilitators. This supports the conclusions of Thomas and Eforuoku (2016) that a lack or insufficiency of training facilities hinders young people from engaging in the development of agricultural skills and entrepreneurship. The outcome corroborated the discoveries of Adelakun, Lawal, Oyegbami, and Oyedokun (2019), who identified several elements that, if not addressed, would persistently impede the ability of young graduates to become entrepreneurs and achieve self-reliance. This corroborates the conclusions of Uddin et al (2015) that the advantages of entrepreneurship programs are greatly influenced by variables that impede young people from having a positive disposition towards entrepreneurship development programs.

Conclusion

In conclusion, economics education students attitude has significantly influenced the acquisition of entrepreneurship skills for a favourable economy and to compete globally. From the research findings, it can be concluded that economics education students show a negative attitude towards the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills. The cultivation of entrepreneurial abilities is essential in fostering a cultural environment where entrepreneurship becomes an inherent and integrated aspect of our progress, capable of generating employment opportunities for the abundant population of economics education students. An important discovery from the analysis of current programs is the significant impact of mentorship, particularly by individuals who have previously achieved success in the specific domain relevant to the learning of entrepreneurial skills.

Recommendation

1. Curriculum planners should as a matter of urgency incorporate practical entrepreneur skill acquisition content in the Economics Education curriculum across all levels.
2. There is a need for sensitization and programs geared towards enlightening people on the benefit of entrepreneurial skills, this will help to motivate and build critical thinking of new ideas, seek opportunities and bring new products into existence or add value to existing products or services.
3. Parent should also be sensitized on the importance of entrepreneurship skills to their children and the development of the society at large.

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