



Unlocking the Entrepreneurial Potentials of Undergraduates in Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike Nigeria: The Role of Lecturers

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. The lead author LEO designed the study, performed the statistical analysis, wrote the first and second draft of the manuscript while author OAM managed the literature search and proof read the work before publishing. Both authors read and approved the manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

University students are not graduating with relevant skills in preparation for the labour market. The Federal Government of Nigeria in recognition of this, introduced entrepreneurship centres in universities. However, it is not just the students who need to be encouraged to have entrepreneurial mindset but the teachers as well. The objective of the study was to assess the readiness of teachers in the development of students' cognitive skills to foster entrepreneurial mindset. The study area was in Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike. All the 22 lecturers in the entrepreneurship centre were purposively selected while Multi-stage sampling procedure was used in sample selection of students. Out of 10 colleges in the University, 5 were randomly selected, followed by random selection of 50 final-year students, giving 250 respondents. Data collected with questionnaire and focus group discussion were analysed using descriptive statistics like frequencies, percentages and regression model. Findings indicated students were exposed to different skills; bead-making (8.4%), poultry production (9.2%), hairdressing (12%) confectionaries

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(26.4%) and tailoring (3.2%). On level of knowledge skills exposed to them, about 38% of the respondents had high knowledge while 62% had low knowledge. The findings revealed about 82% of the course lecturers lacked adequate training to help them teach effectively, while 18% had acquired the skill through self-sponsored training and conferences. Therefore, the paper concludes that the students were ill equipped to succeed in work places and teachers were not properly trained to meet the challenges. The paper recommends government should train teachers to make employability skills the top priority, to enable graduates make a success of their working life.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship skills; labour market; graduates.

1. INTRODUCTION

Within the context of rising unemployment rates in a skill constrained economy, rising graduate unemployment is particularly worrisome. Development Policy Research Unit [1] states that 8 million youths are unemployed and it has been the fastest growing education cohort of unemployment since 1995. In a similar vein, International Labour Organization noted that despite the rapid recovery in the global economy that took place in 2010 following two years of severely adverse labour market conditions, global unemployment elevated in 2010. According to [2] the scenario is the same and even appears worse in Nigeria. In similar development, [3] reported that the economic survey in 2011 doted unemployment rate in Nigeria at 23.9%. It is disturbing to acknowledge that a greater number of this percentage are graduates from the Nigeria universities, colleges of education and polytechnics who roam the street and in the job markets looking for non-existing jobs for lack of entrepreneurship skills.

Preparing students for work, citizenship and life in the twenty-first century is daunting [4]. Globalisation, new technologies, migration, international competition, changing markets, unemployment, environmental and political challenges all drive the acquisition of skills and knowledge needed by students to survive and succeed in the labour market.

What critical skills do tomorrow's work force need to develop today? What capabilities will young people need to tackle the volatile and unexpected challenges they will face in the future? Debates regarding the competencies and skills the students need to cope with unforeseen challenges ahead, has given rise to the introduction of Entrepreneurship education in Nigerian Higher Institutions.

The Small and Medium Enterprise Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) was established in

2003 to facilitate the promotion and development of a structured and efficient Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMES) sector that will enhance sustainable economic development in Nigeria and also provide Entrepreneurship Education among other things. According to them, today's education should be on the philosophy of creating jobs, i.e. transforming the students from job seekers to job creators.

Entrepreneurship education is the development of entrepreneurial skills, effective and efficient application of the skills in management of business to create a significant difference from other businesses, recognising the skills and allowing it to function effectively. [5] defined entrepreneurship education as the structured formulae conveyance of entrepreneurship competencies which in turn refers to the concept, skills and mental awareness used by individuals during the process of starting and developing their growth oriented Ventures. Training according to [6] is the process of systematically acquiring job related knowledge, skills and attitude in order to perform with effectiveness and efficiency specific tasks in an organisation. He stated further that the acquisition of knowledge and skills during training is not designed for its own sake in industrial and commercial enterprise and that it is utility that predisposes an organisation to invest financial and material resources in it. The skill required by entrepreneur can be classified into three main areas;

- Technical skill,
- Business management skill and
- Personal entrepreneurial skills

Technical skills involve such things as writing, listening, oral presentation, organising, coaching, being a team player and technical know-how [7].

Business management skills include those areas involved in starting, developing and managing an enterprise.

The personal entrepreneurial skills differentiate an entrepreneur from a manager. Skills included in this classification are inner control, risk-taking, being innovative, being change oriented, being persistent and being a visionary leader among others [8].

According to [9], entrepreneurship education can be defined as the process of providing individual with the ability to recognise commercial opportunities and the knowledge, skills, and attitude to act on it. From the definition, entrepreneurship is one of the ways by which human capital development can be enhanced in the country. The total number of Nigerians estimated to be officially unemployed in 2011 is estimated at 14 million against 12 million in 2010.

Majority of those captured as unemployed are graduates from university, polytechnics and colleges of education in the county. Unemployment is rampant in Nigeria like other nations because of the mismatch between the need of employers and stock of job-specific human capital produced, educational training institutions and also the inability of the institutions to match theory with practice effectively.

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Nigerian labour market is currently saturated, unable to absorb the ever increasing number of labour force. It is becoming more difficult for graduates to use their skills and education to create employment opportunities through entrepreneurship. This will only be possible when graduates are well equipped with entrepreneurial skills during their years of learning. Presently, Nigeria is said to have one of the highest rates of unemployed youths for unindustrialized world. Despite strong economic growth, youth's full time unemployment rate for 2015 in Nigeria was put at astonishing rate of 9.9% (National Bureau of Statistics, Nigeria, 2015). On the other hand, countries like Japan, China, India, Korea, have joined community of industrialized nations by strengthening their small scale industries. To this effect, entrepreneurship education was introduced in all universities in Nigeria as entrepreneurship education as part of the curriculum to put Nigeria youths in the right trade. Entrepreneurship education trains the students to gain innovative enterprise skills and capture opportunities to succeed in business venture. Entrepreneurship education serves two objectives:

1. To increase the understanding among students about what entrepreneurship entails
2. It is about preparing individuals for the world of work. On the same vein, Paul (2005) assert that entrepreneurship education is structured to achieve the following objectives:

In other to face these challenges squarely, there is need for good and quality education to reduce the risk of unemployment, improve productivity, increase wages, increase technological and economic growth. The big question is "how ready are the lecturers teaching this course – Entrepreneurship in our institutions". According to [10], low human capital leads to poorly trained labour supplies. The broad objective of the study was unlocking the entrepreneurship potentials of undergraduates; the role of lecturer, with the following specific objectives: to

- i. Describe the socio-economic characteristics of the lecturers at the centre;
- ii. Ascertain the adequacy of training of training facilities;
- iii. Ascertain the various skills acquired by the students during their internship;
- iv. Examine their level of knowledge on technical and managerial skill competencies after the internship;
- v. Ascertain the perceived competencies they hope to acquire on graduation and
- vi. Ascertain the constraints faced during the internship.

3. METHODOLOGY

The study area was Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike. It was established by the federal government of Nigeria Decree 48 of 2nd November, 1992. It is one of the 3 specialised Universities of Agriculture in the country. The University has tripartite mandate of teaching, research and extension in agriculture and related discipline. It is located in Umudike, which is predominantly and traditionally a farming community. Umudike is about 10 km south east of Umuahia, capital of Abia state, Nigeria. Umudike is located between longitudes 7° and 7° 05' E and latitudes 5° and 5° 25' N.

The University operates a collegiate system

1. College of Agricultural Economics, Rural Sociology and Extension (CAERSE)

2. College of Applied Food Science and Tourism (CAFST)
3. College of Animal Science and Animal Production (CASAP)
4. College of Education (COED)
5. College of Crop and Soil Science (CCSS)
6. College of Engineering and Engineering Technology (CEET)
7. College of General Studies and Communication (CGSC)
8. College of Management Sciences (COLMAS)
9. College of Natural Sciences (COLNAS)
10. College of Physical and Applied Sciences (COLPAS)
11. College of Veterinary Medicine (CVM)

The University also has 2 centres

1. Centre for Continuing Education
2. Centre for Entrepreneurship Studies

The centre for Entrepreneurship has 22 lecturers teaching at the centre and 8 programme Coordinators with the Director at the helm of affairs

The sample consists of students purposively drawn from the population in the university. The instrument used for data collection was a 17 item structured questionnaire tagged unlocking the potentials of undergraduate students. The questionnaire was of two sections; section A for students while section B was that of lecturers. The questionnaire was validated by lecturers in the department of entrepreneurship studies. The comments and suggestions of the experts were incorporated in building up the final draft of the instrument. The instrument was trial-tested on 20 students drawn from Abia State University Uturu, an institution not involved in the main study. The result was used to determine the reliability of the instrument using Cronbach Alpha techniques. A reliability index of 0.79 was estimated. This value was considered high enough, thus indicating that instrument was adequate enough and reliable for the study.

Multi-staged sampling procedure was used in the selection of the students from the Colleges. In the first stage, five colleges whose final year students were up to 100 and above, were purposively selected, followed by a selection of 50 students randomly selected from each college who participated fully at the training and had a score above C in his or her business plan, sample of product or service presentation,

bringing the total to 250 students; including the 22 lecturers. Data were collected using questionnaire and Focus Group Discussion and later analysed with descriptive statistics and means.

Objective 1 and 3 were analysed with descriptive statistics while 5 points Likert-type scale were used to generate data for objective 2, 4, 5 and 6 and later analysed with mean scores.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results on Table 1 revealed that about 50% of the lecturers were still in the productive age and are capable of handling entrepreneurial courses. [11] notes that both students and adults alike need academic and applied knowledge, and must be able to connect knowledge and skills, learning and competence, inert and active learning, codified and tacit knowledge and creative and adaptive learning and transform them into valuable skills.

The Table further revealed that most of the lecturers are married (about 91%) and so responsible individuals who are capable of handling the affairs of the centre with interest. The Table also shows that all the lecturers were qualified to teach the students, about 64% of the lecturers had Ph.D. while 34% of them had M.Sc. degree.

Finally, the Table indicated the number of times the lecturers had gone on extra training on entrepreneurship studies or other management courses. From the result, it was discovered that only about 9% had gone on training once or twice while about 9% had also gone between 3 and 4 times. Majority (about 82%) had not received any form of extra training for the programme. [12] stated that the key challenge stifling the growth of entrepreneurship education is the inadequacy of competent lecturers in the field of entrepreneurship to make the course practically interesting and goal oriented as opposed to too much focus on theoretical instructions. Also, [13] noted that professionals in the education sector are having serious nightmare on the theoretical content of entrepreneurship education being delivered to the undergraduates across Nigeria's higher institutions. Competencies encompass cluster of skills, knowledge, abilities and behaviours required for people to succeed. So regular training organised for these lecturers will

Table 1. Socio-economic characteristics of the lecturers

Variables	Frequency	Percentage	Mean (M)
Age			
30 – 35	5	23.00	
40 – 45	11	50.00	
50 – 55	6	27.00	43 years
60 – 65	-	-	
Total	22	100	
Marital status			
Single	2	9.09	
Married	20	90.91	
Total	22	100	
Educational level			
B.Sc.	-	-	
M.Sc.	8	36.36	
Ph.D.	14	63.64	
Total	22	100	
Number of trainings in the last 3years			
1 – 2	2	9.09	
3 – 4	2	9.09	
5 – 6	-	-	
None	18	81.82	
Total	22	100	

enhance their competences and they will deliver better. However, recent research shows that normalising collaborative learning will require changes in curricular, instructional assessment practices, learning environments and the professional development of lecturers.

Information on 13 training facilities was generated through personal observations, Focus Group Discussion and questionnaire given to the students to fill. As shown in Table 2, the facilities score for current training facilities reveals a fairly low level (2.32). This illustrates the inadequacy of training facilities among the students. Based on this result, it will be very difficult to match theory with practice. The students stated that availability of these facilities is highly needed for them to acquire the skill necessary for self-employment/ labour market.

Results on Table 3 show the skills acquired by the students during their internship. The result revealed that about 26% of the respondents were engaged in confectionaries, followed by 12% involved in hair dressing, 9.2% in poultry production and 8.4% in bead making, among others. With these skills the students may be able to generate income for themselves and create job opportunities for others.

Table 4 revealed the level of Technical and Managerial competencies of the student after the internship. The result revealed that about 31.2% of the students had high technical competencies after the internship while 68.8% had low technical competencies. The result further showed that 18.4% of the students had high managerial competencies while 41.6% had low managerial competencies.

Table 2. Adequacy of training facilities

Training facilities	Mean (M)
Bead making	2.85
Video production	1.68
Electrical installation	2.55
Machines for dress making	2.43
Poultry production	2.65
Hair dressing	2.21
Cassava processing	2.20
Juice processing	2.11
Phone repair	2.36
Mechanic (Auto repairs)	2.48
Networking	2.53
Shoe/ bag making	1.62
Confectionaries	2.54
Grand mean	30.21
Facilities score	2.32

Source: Field survey, 2016

Note: Adequate $M \geq 2.5$ and above.

Inadequate $M < 2.5$

Table 3. Distribution of respondents based on the type of skill acquired

Variables	Frequencies	Percentages
Bead making	21	8.4
Video production	18	7.2
Electrical installation	5	2.0
Tailoring	8	3.2
Poultry production	23	9.2
Hair dressing	30	12.0
Cassava processing	15	6.0
Juice extractor	9	3.6
Auto repair	11	4.4
Phone repair	18	7.2
Networking	10	4.0
Shoe/ bag making	6	2.4
Confectionaries	66	26.4
Total	250	100

Source: Field data, 2016

Table 4. Distribution of respondents based on level of competencies acquired after the internship

Variables	High	Low
Technical competencies	78 (31.2%)	172 (68.8%)
Managerial competencies	46 (18.4%)	104 (41.6%)

Source: Field survey, 2016

Technical competencies (capabilities and motor skills inherent to an occupation) were low as evidenced in various skills engaged by the students. Managerial skill is the effective coordination of the production process, from the results the managerial skills acquired by the students were also low. Entrepreneurship is associated with several activities which deal with the establishment and operation of a business enterprise. The development of entrepreneurial (technical and managerial) capacity of the students implies improving students' ability to identify and select investment opportunities, provide investment capital, coordinate the production process, innovate and bear risk. The implication of the result is that the student did not learn much during the internship period.

Results on Table 5 show the perceived competencies which the students wish to acquire on graduation. From the result, writing of business plan with a mean score of (M = 4.44) was one of the competencies which they will like to acquire knowledge of, to help them design a bankable business plan for loans. A business plan is a formal statement of business goals, reasons they are attainable and plans for reaching them. Practical sections should be organised and work book prepared to guide the students on how to write the business plan.

Table 5. Mean distribution of perceived competencies to acquire on graduation

Variables	Mean
Writing of business plan	4.44
Critical thinking	4.32
Communication and collaboration	4.31
Problem solving	4.28
Creativity and innovation	4.20
Media technology literacy	4.10
ICT literacy	3.96
Sense making skills	3.58
Entrepreneurial mindset	4.33
Total mean	

Source: Field survey, 2016

Note: 1 = very low, 2 = low, 3 = moderate, 4 = high, 5 = very high

Critical thinking had a mean score of (M=4.32), according to the students, these skills are very vital to acquire because it will help them on graduation. Critical thinking is essential skill outside formal school. It will help the students on graduation to be able to compare evidence, evaluate compelling proposals and make responsible decisions. Critical thinking involves accessing, analysing, and synthesizing information and can be taught, practiced and mastered. Critical thinking also draws on other

skills such as communication, and ability to examine, analyse, interpret and evaluate evidence. Communication and collaboration had a mean score of (M=4.3), in this context, effective communication and collaboration skills can help to avoid misunderstanding and miscommunication and also collaboration should be developed between school and outside school experiences. According to [14] students will learn together as they work collaboratively on authentic projects-based assignments and develop skills by teaching their peers in groups. Therefore, stimulating those interactions in entrepreneurship studies will have clear benefits. Problem solving skills with mean score of (M=4.2) is one of the competency skills they wish to acquire on graduation. [15] cited that problem solving include point identification and ability to search for, select, evaluate, organize and weigh alternatives and interpret information. This will enable stand up entrepreneurs to perform well. This ability to scan multiple domains is specially valued in today's highly competitive workplace [16].

This skill will help the students to discern relationships between existing and new information and between new context and goals and to locate new knowledge when needed.

Creativity and Innovation had a mean score of (M=4.2), according to the students the skill should be necessary because, 'In today's world of global competitiveness and task automation, innovation capacity and creative spirit are fast becoming requirements for professional and personal successes. The capacity to "break new ground, invoke new ways of thinking, put forth new creativity ideas and solutions, pose unfamiliar questions and arrive at unexpected answers, further advance innovations and creativity [17] and also Sternberg [18] opined that –successful individuals will be those who possess the creative skills to envision a strategy for making the world a better place. Media technology literacy (M=4.1). The complexity of today's world increasingly demands the ability to access, evaluate and use information. Information literacy according to the student has a truly transformative effect, one that makes possible the acquisition of other skills essential for the labour market.

ICT literacy had mean score of (M=3.96) – meaning that on graduation, they will like to possess the ability of easy access, manage, integrate, evaluate and create information

through the use of ICTs as these will help them to succeed in the work place.

Sense –making skill had a mean score (M=3.58), [19] stress that students must develop the ability to make sense out of significant and complex global issues. The implication sit ha they need to be prepared to tackle a wide range pervasive problems including human conflict, climate change and energy crisis. So the centre for entrepreneurship studies should provide the students the opportunities, guidance and support to make sense of real-world roles and responsibilities. [20] states that students must develop competences that allow them to make sense of new situations and environments including those characterized by high degree of complexity, fluidity and uncertainty.

Entrepreneurship mind-set had a mean score of (M=4.33), creativity and entrepreneurial thinking are essential skills for the twenty-first century [21]. This is necessary because many fast growing jobs and emerging industries rely on creative capacity of workers including the ability to think unconventionally, question conventional wisdom, imagine new scenarios and produce astonishing works. Therefore, training the students to possess an entrepreneurial mindset will enable them to recognise and act on opportunities and the willingness to embrace risks and take responsibilities - enable them to create jobs for themselves and others. So it is very necessary to teach the students to think on their feet, be coached on inventive thinking and to observe and evaluate opportunities and ideas that might be new to them but which hold merit to positively affect the labour market. Entrepreneurship also provides a valuable tool for ensuring that through the cultivation of the entrepreneurial mindset, students are provided with skills and competences that ensure that they leave school live work- ready.

Results on Table 6 show the challenges faced by the students during the internship. From the results, about 24% of the respondents complained about the short period allocated for the internship cost of training program; about 23% complained about high cost of training materials; about 20% also complained about lack of training facilities; 11% stated lack of collaboration with companies or organizations outside the university. Some of the students (10%) stated that large number of students and limited lecture halls also makes it impossible to understand the theoretical aspect of the work.

Table 6. Distribution of respondents based on challenges encountered during the training

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Lack of training facilities	210	20.2
Large number of students	108	10.4
High cost of training materials	241	23.2
Lack of appropriate collaborations with outside Universities	118	11.3
Short period allocated for internship	247	23.8
Combining lecture and internship	116	11.2

*Multiple responses
Source: Field survey, 2016*

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, most of the lecturers lack the basic entrepreneurial skills, only 9% had acquired extra certificate on entrepreneurship education. The students were exposed to various skills but only about 31.2% had high technical competencies while 18.4% had high managerial competencies challenges faced by the respondents during internship include lack of training facilities, large number of students per enterprise, high cost of training facilities among others. Therefore, consideration of how best to reform lecturers' training and how to encourage the provision of entrepreneurial activities through this should be encouraged.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. National University Commission programme on entrepreneurship education should make more deliberate efforts to identify entrepreneurship as a strategic attempt to address graduate unemployment. This could be achieved by creating a conducive environment and provision of training facilities.
2. There should be linkage between seasoned lectures and industry/guest lecturers on the application of different pedagogical approach in entrepreneurial educational studies in teaching and learning in the universities. The approach should emphasize stimulation and role play experimentation, that is, exposure of students to grasp close to reality experiences.
3. Lecturers and students in the universities should partner with industry/guest lecturers in excursions. The opportunity will not only but expose students and lecturers to successful practicing business people who would share their experiences on regular basis and at the same time serve as ideal breeding ground for planting

entrepreneurial seed for post graduate job creation ability.

4. All industrial establishment in Nigeria should set up satellite institutions or schools of entrepreneurial studies to inculcate their skills of production of their goods in young graduates. This should also include all foreign firms operating in Nigeria, in line with the Nigerian indigenization decree.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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