

Entrepreneurship Opportunities in Delta State of Nigeria: The Perception of Technical College Final Year Students on Graduation

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ABSTRACT This study was conducted to identify the perception of technical college prospective graduates about entrepreneurship in Delta State of Nigeria. Five research questions were formulated and answered and two null hypotheses tested. Instrument used for data collection was the questionnaire. 50 technical teachers and 632 prospective technical college graduates formed the population of the study. 12 students failed to return their questionnaire to the researcher bringing the population to 670 subjects. The data collected were analysed using the mean and critical ratio statistics. The result of the study showed that: Technical College prospective graduates possess the skills necessary for entrepreneurship to a very great extent, government should provide electricity to all communities in Delta State especially in the rural areas, lack of initial capita, high cost of raw materials, scarcity of equipment and machines were restraints, to entering entrepreneurship. The study therefore, recommends among others, that the government should provide initial capital in form of soft loan with little or no interest to the prospective graduates who intends practicing entrepreneurship.

INTRODUCTION

In Nigeria, there is high incidence and alarming rate of unemployment. Several scholars and commentators on social and economic issues have canvassed on a host of factors responsible for the high and ever-rising levels of unemployment. They have agreed that rural to urban migration of young and educated people is at the very root of it (Sarr 2000; Onah 2001; Otaki 2003).

The only solution to unemployment in Nigeria is the introduction of entrepreneurship education (Odu 2009). Nwaokolo (2003) defined entrepreneurship as "making a living by working for yourself". Entrepreneurship, therefore, involves the ability to set up a business as different from being employed. This ability should be acquired. It is clear that while technical education is geared towards the acquisition of technical skills, entrepreneurship education deals with the skills of business ownership and management. Entrepreneurship is the willingness and ability of an individual to seek for investment opportunities, to establish and to run an enterprise successfully (Suleiman 2006).

Wenrich and Wenrich (1974) identified five reasons why people would like to enter into entrepreneurship in Nigeria:

- a) They need income
- b) People need activity because of the satisfaction they derive from it

- c) People need self-respect and the respect of others
- d) People need social contacts and participation
- e) One is happy if he is expressing himself creatively without much external influence.

Many recent studies have recognized that entrepreneurial attitudes are not sufficiently addressed by training and educational establishment in Nigeria, Delta State inclusive (Ijeoma 1995; Ojo and Ohonba 2009). The reason is that the education curricula offered in selected subjects is too theoretical and not adequately in line to labour market requirements (Toby 1995).

Odu (2009) opined that entrepreneurship education in Delta State of Nigeria is still at its teething level because of some problems such as inadequate technical and entrepreneurial skills possessed by the entrepreneurs, lack of initial capital, irregular supply of electricity, scarcity of equipment and machinery to mention but a few. Odu (1995) recommends that the afore-mentioned hindrances to entrepreneurship could be arrested in the following ways: government should provide soft loans to prospective entrepreneurs with little interest and secondly, it should provide adequate electricity to various parts of Delta State, particularly the rural areas.

The problem to be examined in this study is, do the prospective graduates of Delta State technical colleges possess sufficient desirable characteristics to embark on entrepreneurship?

Specifically, the study sought answers to the following research questions and two null hypotheses were tested.

- a) What is the extent to which technical college prospective graduates possess the work skill required for entrepreneurship?
- b) What factors influence technical college prospective graduates preference for either entrepreneurship or paid employment?
- c) How do government policies and programs affect technical college prospective graduates' entrepreneurship opportunities?
- d) What are the factors that are likely to impede the entrepreneurial opportunities of prospective technical college graduates?
- e) Which specific areas of the economy need to be upgraded by the Delta State Government in order to enhance the entrepreneurship of graduates?

Hypotheses

Two null hypotheses formulated and tested for this study are:

H₀₁: The perception of male and female technical college prospective graduates about their work skill for entrepreneurship will not differ significantly.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in the opinions of technical college teachers and those of prospective technical college graduates about the impediments to entrepreneurship of technical college prospective graduates.

METHODOLOGY

Survey research design was utilized for this study because it solicited the opinions of the respondents. The population consisted of six hundred and eighty-two (682) subjects: 50 technical teachers and 632 prospective technical college graduates. Twelve (12) prospective technical college graduates failed to return their questionnaire to the researcher, bringing the population to 670 subjects (i.e. 50 technical college graduates and 620 prospective technical college graduates). The six hundred and twenty (620) prospective technical college graduates were the graduating set of 2007/2008 session from the six technical colleges in Delta State of Nigeria. As a result of the small strength of the population, all the six hundred and seventy (670) subjects were used for the study, meaning that sample was purposively chosen.

The instrument used for data collection was the questionnaire which comprised of five sections with thirty-nine (39) items. The instrument was structured along four point scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Section A deals with the quality of work skill acquired by the prospective technical college graduates for entrepreneurship. Section B deals with the factors that influence the prospective technical college graduates' chances in undertaking entrepreneurship. Section C is concerned with prospective technical college graduates perception of the influence of government policies and programs on entrepreneurship. Section D is concerned with technical teachers and prospective technical college graduates' perceptions of impediments to entrepreneurship. Section E is concerned with specific areas of the economy that can hinder entrepreneurship of prospective technical college graduates.

Four experts (two each from the department of Vocational Teacher Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka and Technical/Business Education, Delta State University, Abraka), constituted the panel that validated the instrument and it was certified that it has sufficient face and content validity.

A test-retest method was used to test reliability of the instrument. Using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient to compute the reliability of the instrument, it yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.69 indicating that the instrument was reliable. The data was analyzed using mean and standard deviation for the research questions and critical ratio statistics for hypotheses.

Decision Rule

Any item that had a mean response of 2.50 and above was accepted as agree while a mean of 2.49 and below signified that the respondents disagree with the item.

RESULTS

The results of the study are presented in Tables 1-7 based on the research questions and hypotheses.

The result from Table 1 shows that the mean responses of the respondents ranged from 2.04 to 3.58. Item 10 had the highest mean score of 3.58 while the lowest mean score was item 8 which was 2.04. All the 10 items were accepted as agree

except item 8. This shows that the technical college prospective graduates possess the work skill for entrepreneurship. The relevance of skill to entrepreneurship in technical education cannot be over emphasized. Skill development can be accomplished through work experience or through education in the school workshops and laboratories (Odu 1995).

Vocational education is generally designed to develop skills, abilities, understanding, attitudes, work habits and appreciation encompassing knowledge and information needed by workers to enter and make progress in employment on useful and productive basis (Okorie 2001). Studies have revealed that the degree of the contributions to national economy made by educated people on the job is dependent upon the degree of the appropriateness of skill received during training (Nneji 1997). In the Soviet Union, skill acquisition among technical college graduates receives much attention of the government, training institutions and industries and as a result, the curriculum, method of training, staffing and equipment are carefully developed to ensure high technological development and entrepreneurship (Osuala 2004). Ike (2004) revealed in the Soviet Union, that as much as 72 percent of the time allotted to the

training of technical college prospective graduates is given to apply training to ensure that graduates perform well on the job. In the United States (Urevbu 1988) and Germany (Nwaokolo 2003), the emphasis is the same. Okeke (1988) viewing the method of skill training, advised that skill training in Nigeria should not be classroom-oriented. The UNESCO Mission to Nigeria also advised that vocational training in Nigeria should be practically oriented. Uwaifor (2007) recommended appropriate curriculum, high standard of staffing, equipment and actual teaching to graduates of technical colleges to enable them enter into the world of work or entrepreneurship.

Table 2 shows that item eight has the highest mean score of 3.81 while item three has the least mean score of 1.82. Out of the eight items, six items were accepted as agree while two items (three and seven) were least perceived by the respondents as factors influencing prospective graduates' entrepreneurship. Item eight which has the highest mean score indicates that prospective graduates of technical colleges like entrepreneurship because it will make them express themselves creatively without much external influence. This fact is buttressed by Akpa (2007) who stated that entrepreneurship yields socio-logical, psychological and economic satisfaction.

Table 1: Mean ratings of male and female technical college prospective graduates about the work skill they possessed for entrepreneurship N1 = 420, N2 = 200

| S. No. | Item | Male | | Female | | XG | Remark |
|--------|--|-------|--------|--------|--------|------|----------|
| | | X_1 | SD_1 | X_2 | SD_2 | | |
| 1 | I have acquired enough skill in my trade | 3.28 | 0.91 | 3.27 | 0.92 | 3.28 | Agree |
| 2 | I will need more training before I can go into entrepreneurship | 2.64 | 1.41 | 2.63 | 1.42 | 2.64 | Agree |
| 3 | The training I had in school is yet to equip me with enough skills to enter into entrepreneurship | 3.34 | 0.92 | 3.31 | 0.97 | 3.33 | Agree |
| 4 | The practices in school workshop are the same with the ones obtained in commercial workshop | 3.03 | 1.16 | 3.12 | 1.09 | 3.08 | Agree |
| 5 | There are well-equipped workshops for practical skill development in my school | 3.20 | 1.15 | 3.18 | 1.17 | 3.19 | Agree |
| 6 | The tools and equipment in the school workshop are quite useful during practical skill training | 2.58 | 1.35 | 2.57 | 1.36 | 2.58 | Agree |
| 7 | My school has enough qualified teachers who have practical skills | 2.81 | 1.28 | 2.83 | 1.31 | 2.83 | Agree |
| 8 | My school sends her students, for industrial training in the industries to enable them acquire additional skills | 1.97 | 1.00 | 2.11 | 1.09 | 2.04 | Disagree |
| 9 | Practical work in my school takes two-thirds of the academic work | 3.35 | 1.01 | 3.37 | 0.99 | 3.36 | Agree |
| 10 | I can use raw materials to produce goods in my trade | 3.59 | 0.88 | 3.57 | 0.09 | 3.58 | Agree |

X_1 = Mean of male prospective technical college graduates
 SD_1 = Standard deviation of male prospective technical college graduates.
 X_2 = Mean of Female prospective technical college graduates
 SD_2 = Standard deviation of female prospective technical college graduates
 N1 = Number of Male prospective technical college graduates
 N2 = Number of female of prospective technical college graduates,
 XG = Grand mean.

Umemezia (2006) stated that graduates of technical work-oriented programs need not worry about the dearth of paid-employment. These graduates can easily and adequately enter into entrepreneurship and progress rapidly to becoming employers themselves. He stated that entrepreneurship is the only option left for school graduates who have mastery of the appropriate skills.

Akinola (2006) said that if entrepreneurship is widely practiced (which although borders on the type and quality of instructions received in schools), it will lend a hand in boosting the economy of the nation and of course individuals. It will save the unemployed from engaging in dubious activities. Azubuike (2006) identified three elements that are necessary to make entrepreneurship possible, namely having some skills related to the needs of the society, having the right attitude towards work and finance.

Ocho (2005) concluded that craftsmen that are practicing entrepreneurship are likely to have an important economic role in West Africa for a long time to come.

Table 3 indicates that item five has the highest mean score of 3.21 while item two has the lowest mean score of 2.71. A summary of table 3 shows that respondents agree on all the six items as regards how government policies and programs affect their entrepreneurial opportunities. The issue of government policies and programs was highlighted by Nwangwu (2006) when he emphatically stated that availability of reliable power at competitive rates would make a country's industries globally competitive and enables them to exploit the tremendous potentials of entrepreneurship. This problem according to Faseyi (2006) is an indicator that no serious entrepreneurial activities can take place in Nigeria.

Table 4 indicates that the respondents agreed

Table 2: Mean rating of factors that influence technical college prospective graduates' chances of entry into entrepreneurship

| <i>S. No.</i> | <i>Item</i> | <i>X</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>Remark</i> |
|---------------|--|----------|-----------|---------------|
| 1 | My trade requires a huge amount of money for one to enter into entrepreneurship | 2.89 | 1.12 | Agree |
| 2 | To practice entrepreneurship, I must have external financial aid e.g. loan | 2.88 | 1.12 | Agree |
| 3 | There are so many people competing in my trade who are entrepreneur, that is why I will go into entrepreneurship | 1.82 | 1.49 | Disagree |
| 4 | My trade is still in much demand and being an entrepreneur will widen my steady income | 2.72 | 1.51 | Agree |
| 5 | I like entrepreneurship because of the satisfaction I will derive from the activity it involves | 3.14 | 1.17 | Agree |
| 6 | I like entrepreneurship because it brings self-respect to the entrepreneur | 2.58 | 1.38 | Agree |
| 7 | Entrepreneurship will make me to have social contacts with members of the society | 2.26 | 1.54 | Disagree |
| 8 | I like entrepreneurship because it will make me to express myself creatively without much external influence | 3.81 | 0.39 | Agree |

Table 3: Mean rating of technical college prospective graduates' opinions about the influence of government policies and programs on entrepreneurship

| <i>S. No.</i> | <i>Item</i> | <i>X</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>Remark</i> |
|---------------|---|----------|-----------|---------------|
| 1 | Government policies e.g. ban on importation of certain raw materials should be abolished | 3.09 | 1.07 | Agree |
| 2 | Banks should soften their policies regarding collateral and securities to unemployment graduates. | 2.71 | 1.32 | Agree |
| 3 | Consumption of indigenous products should be encouraged | 2.78 | 1.37 | Agree |
| 4 | Older and larger firms should patronize the entrepreneurs by giving them necessary assistance where required. | 3.00 | 1.24 | Agree |
| 5 | Technical college training should be geared towards producing self-employable graduates | 3.21 | 0.98 | Agree |
| 6 | The right and qualified personnel should be employed to assist in entrepreneurial venture | 2.79 | 1.27 | Agree |

on a total of six items (items 1,2,3,4,9 and 10). Items 5, 6, 7 and 8 were perceived as disagree. The respondents revealed that a number of impediments would prevent them from being entrepreneurs. These impediments are: lack of initial capital, high cost of raw materials, scarcity of equipment and machinery and lack of expertise, novelty and creativity. The most serious impediment among these is lack of initial capital. Odjegba (2005) observed that careers in technical education have been blind alleys and the few technical entrepreneurs are frustrated due to lack of fund and incentives.

Table 5 reveals that the respondents agreed on all the items except item four which was rated disagree. The table indicates that lack of access road and means of transport; inadequate land space; lack of electricity and problems of acquisition of industrial location are some of the areas of the economy that need to be upgraded in order to enhance entrepreneurship of prospective technical college graduates. Considering electricity, for instance, there has not been any remarkable difference in the supply of electricity to industries and homes. Dependence on diesel and petrol is on the increase.

The importance of access roads and means

of transport cannot be over-emphasized in establishing entrepreneurship. Various raw materials, machinery and finished products must be moved into and out of the factory or production site. The support given to the acquisition of industrial location enjoys the opinion of Odu (1995) who observed that for projects that require much expanse of land, the existing land use decree should make acquisition of land a bit easier.

Analysis of the opinions of the two groups of respondents provided various computed CR values compared with the table value. The table CR values at 419 and 199 degree of freedom given 0.05 level of probability is 1.96 (Table 6). However, the calculated CR values of all the items are less than the table values of 1.96. Therefore, the null hypothesis is not rejected. This shows that the perception of male and female prospective technical college graduates about their work skill required for entrepreneurship after graduation did not differ significantly. This analysis is an indicator that work skill is very relevant to entrepreneurship. The study revealed that technical college prospective graduates possess adequate work skill required for entrepreneurship (Table 7). This result is in line with one of the main objectives of vocational and technical education,

Table 4: Mean ratings of technical teachers and technical college prospective graduates on impediments to their entrepreneurial opportunities

| S. No. | Item | Teachers (Group A) | | Students (Group B) | | XG | Remark |
|--------|--|--------------------|-----------------|--------------------|-----------------|------|----------|
| | | X ₁ | SD ₁ | X ₂ | SD ₂ | | |
| 1 | Lack of initial capital | 2.96 | 1.18 | 2.99 | 1.17 | 2.98 | Agree |
| 2 | High cost of raw materials | 3.18 | 1.05 | 3.20 | 1.03 | 3.19 | Agree |
| 3 | Non-availability of raw materials | 3.36 | 0.84 | 3.38 | 0.81 | 3.37 | Agree |
| 4 | Scarcity of equipment and machinery | 3.40 | 0.85 | 3.41 | 0.83 | 3.41 | Agree |
| 5 | Under budgeting of the tools and materials needed for entrepreneurship | 1.66 | 1.49 | 1.67 | 1.50 | 1.67 | Disagree |
| 6 | Misappropriation of fund because of other problems I have | 1.96 | 1.48 | 1.98 | 1.48 | 1.97 | Disagree |
| 7 | Lack of proper planning needed for entrepreneurship | 2.46 | 1.34 | 2.47 | 1.34 | 2.47 | Disagree |
| 8 | Misplacement of priorities in relation to entrepreneurship | 1.26 | 1.13 | 1.27 | 1.14 | 1.27 | Disagree |
| 9 | Lack of experience necessary for entrepreneurship | 2.78 | 1.32 | 2.79 | 1.31 | 2.79 | Agree |
| 10 | Lack of novelty and creativity | 3.02 | 1.16 | 3.05 | 1.11 | 3.04 | Agree |

Table 5: Mean ratings of technical college prospective graduates opinions about specific areas of the economy, which need to be upgraded to enhance entrepreneurship

| S.No. | Item | X | SD | Remark |
|-------|--|------|------|----------|
| 1 | Lack of access road and means of transport | 2.90 | 1.19 | Agree |
| 2 | Inadequate land space | 2.59 | 1.19 | Agree |
| 3 | Lack of electricity | 2.97 | 1.14 | Agree |
| 4 | Non-availability of water | 2.49 | 1.31 | Disagree |
| 5 | Problems of acquisition of industrial location | 2.99 | 1.35 | Agree |

which is to equip the students with skills for paid employment or entrepreneurship (FRN 2004). The results also agree with the findings of Amaeghule (1993) and Anyakoha (1994) that acquisition of practical skills is important for entrepreneurship. Based on the objectives of technical college which is to equip the students with technical skills, knowledge and attitude necessary to meet job requirements, the training given to the technical college prospective graduates prepared them to acquire such practical skills for entrepreneurship on graduation.

Analysis of the opinions of the two groups of respondents provided various computed CR values compared with the table value. The table CR values at 49 and 519 degree of freedom given 0.05 level of probability is 1.96. However, the calculated CR values of all the items are less than the table CR value of 1.96. Therefore, the null hypothesis is not rejected. This shows that there is no significant difference in the opinions of technical college teachers and the technical college prospective graduates on the impediments to entrepreneurship. This analysis shows that a lot of hindrances confront prospective technical college graduates from entrepreneurship. Igbo

(1995) gave reasons why graduates face hindrances in entering entrepreneurship ventures. These reasons according to her are incompetence, lack of managerial experience, lack of experience in the chosen line of business, neglect, fraud and inadequate capitals.

CONCLUSION

Entrepreneurship of technical college prospective graduates can only materialize if they possess the desirable work skills and abilities. Though this factor is not an end in itself but a means to an end as other variables like government policies and programs lack of initial capital, access road, and high cost of raw materials militate against entrepreneurship of prospective technical college graduates. If only the government can take a giant stride and remove the above mentioned obstacles, entrepreneurship will abound in all the nooks and crannies of Delta State.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that:

Table 6: Critical Ratio (CR) values of technical college prospective graduates work skill required for entrepreneurship

| Items | X_1 | X_2 | SD_1 | SD_2 | Cal C.R. | Table C.R | Decision |
|-------|-------|-------|--------|--------|----------|-----------|-----------------|
| 1. | 3.28 | 3.27 | 0.91 | 0.92 | 1.13 | 1.96 | Not significant |
| 2. | 2.64 | 2.63 | 1.41 | 1.42 | 0.08 | 1.96 | Not significant |
| 3. | 3.34 | 3.31 | 0.92 | 0.97 | 0.37 | 1.96 | Not significant |
| 4. | 3.03 | 3.12 | 1.16 | 1.09 | 0.94 | 1.96 | Not significant |
| 5. | 3.20 | 3.18 | 1.15 | 1.17 | 0.02 | 1.96 | Not significant |
| 6. | 2.58 | 2.57 | 1.35 | 1.36 | 0.09 | 1.96 | Not significant |
| 7. | 2.81 | 2.83 | 1.28 | 1.31 | 0.18 | 1.96 | Not significant |
| 8. | 1.97 | 2.11 | 1.00 | 1.09 | 0.02 | 1.96 | Not significant |
| 9. | 3.35 | 3.47 | 1.01 | 0.99 | 0.23 | 1.96 | Not significant |
| 10. | 3.59 | 3.57 | 0.88 | 0.90 | 0.26 | 1.96 | Not significant |

Table 7: Critical Ratio (CR) values of technical teachers and prospective technical college graduates about the impediments to entrepreneurship

| Items | X_1 | X_2 | SD_1 | SD_2 | Cal C.R. | Table C.R | Decision |
|-------|-------|-------|--------|--------|----------|-----------|-----------------|
| 1. | 2.96 | 2.99 | 1.18 | 1.17 | 0.17 | 1.96 | Not significant |
| 2. | 3.18 | 3.20 | 1.05 | 1.03 | 0.13 | 1.96 | Not significant |
| 3. | 3.36 | 3.20 | 1.05 | 1.03 | 0.13 | 1.96 | Not significant |
| 4. | 3.40 | 3.41 | 0.84 | 0.81 | 0.08 | 1.96 | Not significant |
| 5. | 1.66 | 1.67 | 1.49 | 1.50 | 0.05 | 1.96 | Not significant |
| 6. | 1.96 | 1.98 | 1.34 | 1.50 | 0.05 | 1.96 | Not significant |
| 7. | 2.46 | 2.47 | 1.34 | 1.34 | 0.05 | 1.96 | Not significant |
| 8. | 1.26 | 1.27 | 1.13 | 1.14 | 0.06 | 1.96 | Not significant |
| 9. | 2.78 | 2.79 | 1.32 | 1.31 | 0.05 | 1.96 | Not significant |
| 10. | 3.02 | 3.05 | 1.16 | 1.11 | 0.17 | 1.96 | Not significant |

- i) The conditions of roads in the rural areas should be improved both by the government and the communities
- ii) Electrification of the rural communities should be jointly undertaken by the government and communities involved.
- iii) Vocational technical training in all institutions should be carried on with adequate facilities such that self-employability of their graduates will be guaranteed.
- iv) Government should provide initial capital in form of soft loan with little or no interest to the prospective graduates who intend floating their entrepreneurship.

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