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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Innovation Management and Skills Acquisition for Job Creation Among University Students in Cross River State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The introduction of entrepreneurial study programme for students in the Universities for self-reliance is a commendable initiative by university administration. The focus of this paper is therefore to examine how to ensure that these innovations in University programmes enhance job creation among students in Cross River State, Nigeria. To carry out the investigation, two research questions were posed and two hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. The innovation programmes adopted in the study are entrepreneurship skills and Information and Communication Technology (ICT). The population of the study comprised all students in the Faculty of Education in University of Calabar and University of Cross River State, Calabar. Stratified and simple random sampling techniques were deployed to sample 500 students for the study. The instrument for data collection was designed by the researchers, and tagged: "Innovative Management and Skills Acquisition for Job Creation Questionnaire (IMSAJCQ)". Data collected were analysed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis statistical technique. The result of the study revealed that innovation management in terms of entrepreneurship skills and information and communication technology skills acquisition has significant correlation with job creation among university students. It was therefore recommended amongst others that students should be made to compulsorily offer practical entrepreneurship education as a short course that runs from 6-9 months to become better equipped with the pre-requisite skills that would guide them on the path of setting up business venture for themselves before or after graduation.

Keywords: University, Innovative, Skills, Skills Acquisition, Job Creation

INTRODUCTION

The growing concerns about the rising numbers of unemployment in recent times in the world, particularly in developing countries like Nigeria have become worrisome. Young people including those who graduated from the universities have been identified as the most affected groups. These youths constitute greater fraction of the nation's economically active population. Nnabuife (2009) noted that youths like other classes of the population have needs to meet. Unemployment issues pervade

almost all countries of the world, but at varying degrees of intensity. In developing countries such as Nigeria and in Cross River State in particular, unemployment rate with its attendant problems is very high. Nwosu and John (2017) defined unemployment as an economic condition in which individuals seeking jobs remain un-hired. It can also be seen as unutilized human resource within a nation seeking employment.

The problems created by unemployment ranges from idleness, gossiping, stealing, robbery, prostitution,

money launderings, political thuggery, insurgency, kidnapping, cultism, banditry and many more. One of the major goals of economic development strategies pursued by successive governments in Nigeria has been the reduction of unemployment through job creation. Job can be viewed as errand carried out for which persons hired receive payment. The creation of job can be possible if the candidate has acquired the relevant skills needed to create the job either as an industrial establishment that can employ people or for self-reliant. As pointed by Oviawe (2015), job in the real sense is created for those that need it, desire it and can effectively perform the expected skills to achieve the objectives of the company. The rationale for job creation is to solve unemployment problem and to meet the needs of the economy and people in the society in general. Skills are abilities and competences needed to perform a task (Adeyemo, 2014). In the view of Encarta in Ankeli (2010), a skill is the ability to perform a coordinated set of physical movements. It represents particular ways of using capacities in relation to environmental demands, with human beings and external situation together forming a functional system. Skills are commonly described as the ability to expertly perform an action or a mission. It is seen as having the capacity to do anything well (Onele & Nwite, 2011). The process of production of needed human resource for sustainable development requires special skills or abilities which are being developed by the universities.

It has however been observed that tertiary institutions seem to provide more of theoretical academic knowledge than practical knowledge due to inadequate funding of the system. To this end, most University students' lack the prerequisite practical experience and skills needed to take up paid employment, as well as inability to demonstrate initiatives to generate or create jobs. Successive administrations in Nigeria had tried to solve these problems in the past through various programmes such as Better Life for Rural Women, Operation Feed the Nation, Green Revolution, and recently policies are funded, among other things, by various agencies such as the National Directorate of Employment (NDE), Need for Power (N-Power) and the Social Investment Programme (SIP) to solve the unemployment problems.

Unegbu (2018) maintained that governments, NGOs and international bodies seeking to improve youth livelihoods could best pursue their empowerment objective by tapping into the dynamism of young people and building on their strong spirit of risk-taking

through personal development activities. Innovation is the process of bringing the best ideas into reality, which may trigger creativity and generate series of innovative events for personal development and job creation. This is the rationale for the introduction of Entrepreneurship and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) into the curriculum in the universities as innovation management programmes for students to enhance their job creation on graduation. This is aimed at mitigating the problem of graduates' unemployment as entrepreneurship skills acquired would enable them to start small-scale business ventures for self-reliance instead of waiting for paid employment in their various academic disciplines.

Entrepreneurship and ICT programmes involve skills acquisition in various vocational training, such as business management skills, photography, tailoring, bead making, hat making, shoe making and so on. Similarly, skills acquisition in ICT has various components in computer-based learning application and usage in all sectors of a nation's economic life. According to Stauffer (2015), innovation serves as the driver of growth and is very necessary for keeping pace with new technologies and emerging market opportunities. It is on the basis of these and many more that this study is carried out to investigate innovation management and skills acquisition for job creation among university students in Cross River State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

In considering the number of universities in Nigeria, and the number of graduates year after year, it becomes obvious that government and the private sector of the economy cannot absorb all into paid employment. This has always resulted in graduate unemployment in various academic disciplines on graduation from the universities. Given the fact that these graduates constitute the most active segments of the nation's population, their inability to find good jobs portend grave danger for the country. Unfortunately, owing to the dysfunctional nature of the educational system, most of them do not possess relevant skills that would-be employers may need. The bleak employment situation therefore, partly accounts for the general insecurity in the nation such as terrorism, violent crimes, and other sundry unpatriotic behaviours.

To tackle this problem, the National Universities Commission (NUC) directed all Nigerian Universities to introduce entrepreneurship skills acquisition

programmes into the university curriculum to equip students with some skills outside their academic programmes for self-reliance (job creation) on graduation. The skills acquisition programmes offered are two fields: Entrepreneurship skills and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills. The management of these programmes is referred to in this paper as “innovation management for job creation” since it is not part of the original university academic disciplines for the award of degrees. This is why it is compulsory for all students to offer these skill-oriented programmes to equip them for job creation during and on graduation.

The management of these programmes involves special arrangements with each Department in each Faculty to ensure that year one to third year students are handled in batches, subject to the availability of qualified facilitators and facilities for the various entrepreneurship skills training programmes.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the management of skills acquisition as an innovation in university programmes for job creation among students in universities in Cross River State, Nigeria. The specific purpose was to find out whether:

1. Entrepreneurship skill acquisition relate to job creation among university students in Cross River State, Nigeria.
2. Information and communication technology (ICT) skill acquisition relate to job creation among university students in Cross River State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the relationship between entrepreneurship skill acquisition and job creation among university students in Cross River State, Nigeria?
2. What is the relationship between Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skill acquisition and job creation among university students in Cross River State, Nigeria.

Research Hypotheses

The following research hypotheses were formulated to direct the study:

1. There is no significant relationship between entrepreneurship skill acquisition and job creation among university students in Cross River State, Nigeria.

2. Information and communication technology (ICT) skill acquisition has no significant relationship with job creation among university students in Cross River State, Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Entrepreneurship is designed to educate people on skills acquisition and the knowledge needed before taking a decision on embarking on a business venture. It helps to enhance the creation of job opportunities and achieve economic growth. The growing awareness among the populace on the need for entrepreneurship skills is now seen as a major key toward curtailing poverty, unemployment, and other vices relating to gender inequality. Tende and Adejola (2013) point out that entrepreneurship is the willingness and the ability of a business-minded individual to identify the areas of needs of people, look for resources to match these needs, combine these resources in the most optimum way, bears the un-insurable risk and establishes a successful and profitable venture.

Bomo, Godpower and Kire (2019) investigate the relationship between entrepreneurship skill acquisition and job creation among graduating students in business education programmes in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The study was guided by three objectives and one research questions. Survey research design was used while purposive sampling technique was adopted to select the sample of the study. The test conducted showed that there was a significant relationship between entrepreneurship skills acquisition and job creation. It was also revealed that entrepreneurship skills acquisition would help students to be productive, effective, efficient in the labour market, since organization can employ them to be job creators rather than job seekers after graduation.

Obereh and Nnebe (2019) examined entrepreneurship education skills acquisition of graduates in public universities in South-East, Nigeria. The study investigates the effect of technical innovation, creativity, risk taking, opportunity recognition on skills acquisition of graduates in the area. Descriptive research design was employed in the study. The sample was 7951 students drawn from eight universities. The data generated through questionnaires were analyzed using multiple regression analysis. The study found that technical innovation had a significant positive influence on skills acquisition of graduates in public universities

and that risk taking had a positive influence on skills acquisition of graduates in public universities.

Binuyo, Adefulu, Asikhia and Odumosu (2020) conducted a study on the effect of the social innovation dimension on skill acquisition among university graduates in Nigeria. A cross-sectional survey design was adopted for the study. The data collected were analyzed using multiple linear regressions. The results of the analyses revealed that social innovation dimensions had a positive and significant effect on skill acquisition among university graduates in Nigeria. The findings further showed that education innovation and digital innovation had a positive and significant effect on skill acquisition, entrepreneurship education had a positive but insignificant effect on skill acquisition among university graduates in Nigeria.

Onyeaghala and Okorie (2018) empirically assessed the efficacy of entrepreneurship skills acquired by Nigerian university graduates. Survey research design was used for the study with a questionnaire as an instrument for data collection. Result of the study showed a significant strong positive relationship between entrepreneurship skills acquisition and the measured efficacy indices or indicators such as identification of business opportunities, taking advantage of business opportunities in the environment and the tendency to take calculated risk in business ventures.

Okiridu and Bupo (2018) focused on how business education programme can inculcate innovative ideas, employable knowledge and self-reliant skills on students during the period of reduced economic activity. The study adopted a descriptive survey design where purposive sampling technique was used to draw the sample of the study. Mean was used to answer the research questions, while z-test statistical tool was used to answer the hypotheses to ascertain the difference in the survival rate between students who acquired employable cum self-reliant skills and those that did not. The findings revealed that students who acquired the business education knowledge and skills got employed and established one business or the other after graduation.

Onuma (2016) investigated entrepreneurial education for post-graduation job creation ability. The study population was all the final year students of educational administration, using Ebonyi State University 2013/2014 academic year totaling 200 respondents. The findings showed a significant relationship in the three hypotheses used. The implication of the study was that entrepreneurship

education was relevant to students with regard to equipping them with skills for post-graduation job creation ability rather than job seekers.

Information and communication technology (ICT) has been recognized across the globe as a veritable tool for massive job creation in recent times. This is made feasible through the adoption of appropriate technologies embedded in ICT. It is only through ICT that the poor and the unemployed can be engaged all the year round. Nigeria being rated as a poor country and in recognition of the need to create jobs for the unemployed and tackle poverty, has mapped out programmes aimed at alleviating poverty among her citizens through effective use of ICT. Information and communication technology has created impact in Nigeria. It has various opportunities for job seekers in the area of web design, business centre, graphic design, and data programming among others. ICT are electronic technologies used for information storage and retrieval.

Odufowokan (2010) cited in Ogah and Adebayo (2014) defined information communication technology as availability and accessibility of internet facilities, telecommunication equipment and services, media and broadcasting, libraries and documentation centres, commercial information providers, network-based information services and other related information and communication activities. Angioha and Ugal (2019) examined the facet of information and communication technology has on youth employment in Calabar Municipality, Cross River State, Nigeria. It specifically examined the relationship between call centre operator and youth employment and assess of internet café operator relates to youth employment. Survey research design was adopted for the study. The study made use of 200 sample selected using purposive sampling technique. Data was collected and analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient. Result revealed a statistical considerable relationship between call centre operator and youth employment and internet café operator and youth employment in Calabar Municipality. The study recommended among others that government at all levels should as a matter of urgency provide all necessary facilities for the training of youth in ICT management so as to provide job opportunities for the teeming unemployed youths.

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) (2011) study showed that information and communication technology has an impact in the creation of employment and self-employment opportunities. The study argued that the

impact can be indirect through multiplier effect or direct, through growth of ICT using industries or the ICT sector. The paper concluded that even though ICT can lead to loss of employment as systems and tasks are automated, when a country supports ICT initiatives, individuals can also benefit by enhancing their opportunities for employment through acquiring ICT skills.

Sepehrdoust and Khodaei (2013) study focused on effects of information and communication technology on the employment level of selected Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) countries. The study used econometric panel data model to analyze the relationship between ICT and employment rate of OIC countries for the period 2000 to 2009. Adopting the Constant Elasticity Substitution (CES) category of production function; the findings showed that the introduction of technology had led to major structural changes in the economy of OIC member countries and there is also a positive and significant effect of the ICTs on employment rate, but the effects are diversified among oil-based as well as non-oil economies.

Ebaidalla (2014) article focused on the impact of information and communication technologies (ICTs) on youth unemployment in the Sub-Saharan African (SSA) during the period 1995-2010. The study employed a dynamic panel data method for a sample of 30 SSA countries, measuring ICT facilities by mobile cellular subscriptions and the number of internet users. The result showed that mobile subscriptions had a negative and significant effect on youth unemployment in SSA countries, implying that communications boom in the past decades had promoted the youth employment to a certain degree. Hafiz, Shaari, and Saleh (2013) cited in Angioha and Ugal (2019) carried out a study on an explanatory evidence of youth's ICT empowerment in Nigeria. An exploratory factor analysis was run on 389 valid responses from 3 geo-political zones in Bauchi State, Nigeria within the ages of 18-35 years. Adopting SPSS version 16 to check Skewness and Kurtosis and using the maximum likelihood procedure which was followed by Varimax, rotation to get a better understanding of the factor structure. Findings

revealed that ICT had an impact on job creation, increase in the stock of technologies and skills, ease of communication, and expansion of trade among others..

METHODOLOGY

Correlational research design was adopted for this study. The population of this study comprised all the students of the Faculty of Education from the two universities (University of Calabar and University of Cross River State). Stratified and simple random sampling techniques were used to select a sample of 500 students for the study. The reason for including this group of students was that they would have offered or taken part in some of the innovation management programmes such as entrepreneurship and ICT skills introduced in the institution's entrepreneurship development centre. The instrument titled "Innovative Management and Skills Acquisition for Job Creation Questionnaire (IMSAJCQ)" was specifically constructed by the researchers for data collection and validated by three experts in Educational Management and Measurement and Evaluation. A trial test was carried out and reliability estimate coefficient of 0.83 was obtained using Cronbach's Alpha reliability method. The instrument had two parts. The first part elicited demographic information from the students while the second part contained 20 items that measured entrepreneurship skill acquisition and information and communication technology skill acquisition with the response options of; Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD) with their nominal values of 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Results

Hypothesis One

Entrepreneurship skill acquisition does not significantly correlate with job creation among university students in Cross River State, Nigeria. Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (r) was used for the analysis and the result is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Pearson's product moment correlation analysis on the relationship between entrepreneurship skills acquisition and job creation

Variables	N	X	SD	r-value
Entrepreneurship skill acquisition	500	10.994	4.594	.444
Job creation		19.886	6.652	

Significance at .05, df = 498, critical-r = .178

The result in Table 1 revealed that the calculated r-value of .444 is greater than critical r-value of .178 at .05 level of significance with degree of freedom of 498. This infers that there is a significant correlation between entrepreneurship skill acquisition and job creation.

Table 2. Pearson's product moment correlation analysis on the relationship between information and communication technology skill acquisition and job creation

Variables	N	X	SD	r-value
ICT skill acquisition		12.946	2.946	
	500			.549
Job creation		19.886	6.652	

Significance at .05, df = 498, critical-r = .088

The result in Table 2 indicated that the calculated r-value of .549 is greater than the critical r-value of .088 at .05 level of significance with degree of freedom of 498. With this result, it therefore implies that there is a significant correlation between information and communication technology skill acquisition and job creation.

Discussion of Findings

The finding of hypothesis one revealed a significant correlation between entrepreneurship skill acquisition and job creation. This finding indicates that students can independently become job creators other than job seekers if they acquire the needed entrepreneurship skill upon graduation from school. The finding of this study aligns with the result of Bomo, Godpower and Kire (2019) who reported that entrepreneurship skills acquisition would help students to be productive, effective, efficient in the labour market, since organization can employ them without training and retraining them and the skills would make them to be job creators rather than job seekers after graduation.

The finding of this study validates the results of Onyeaghala and Okorie (2018) which showed a significant strong positive relationship between entrepreneurship skills acquisition and the measured efficacy indices or indicators such as identification of business opportunities, taking advantage of business opportunities in the environment and the tendency to take calculated risk in business ventures. The finding also agrees with the result of Okiridu and Bupo (2018) which revealed that students who acquired the business education knowledge and skills got employed and established one business or the other after graduation.

Hypothesis Two

Information and communication technology skill acquisition does not significantly correlate with job creation among university students in Cross River State, Nigeria. Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (r) was used for the analysis and the result is presented in Table 2.

This implies that entrepreneurship skill acquisition will equip the students much better and create the willingness and ability to establish a successful and profitable venture.

The finding of hypothesis two revealed a significant correlation between information and communication technology skill acquisition and job creation. This finding implies that students can deploy the skills obtained through ICT to combat unemployment and become gainfully employed. The finding is in consonance with findings of Sepehrdoust and Khodaei (2013) which revealed that the introduction of technology has led to major structural changes in the economy of Organization Islamic Conference member countries and there was also a positive and significant effect of the ICTs on employment rate, but the effects are diversified among oil-based as well as non-oil economies.

The finding is also in agreement with the finding of UNCTAD (2011) which revealed that information and communication technology has an impact in the creation of employment and self-employment opportunities. The finding is also agrees with the findings of Angioha and Ugal (2019) which showed that ICT had an impact on job creation, increase in the stock of technologies and skills, ease of communication and expansion of trade. The implication of this finding is that although ICT has led to loss of employment as systems and tasks are computerized, when a country or institution supports ICT initiatives, individuals can also benefit by enhancing their opportunities for job creation for employment and other young person's for acquiring ICT skills for self-reliance.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

It was concluded that there is a significant correlation of innovation management and skills acquisition for job creation among university students. This has future implication on job creation for students, and this would reduce the rate of unemployment that pervades the country. Inadequate facilities, dearth of skilled manpower and poorly equipped training centres in universities are the major challenges students face in the acquisition of skills for job creation.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were proposed, based on the conclusion of this study:

1. Students should be made to compulsorily offer practical entrepreneurship education as a short course that runs from 6-9 months to become better equipped with the prerequisite skills that would guide them on the path of setting up business venture for themselves before or on graduation.
2. Institutions of higher learning should provide adequate information and communication technology facilities to adequately equip the students with the technical know-how on the application of the ICT skills for job creation

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