

## Perception of Stakeholders on the Graduates' Entrepreneurial Skills Acquisition in Reducing Unemployment in Bauchi State Nigeria

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### Abstract

*The study investigated perception of stakeholders on graduates' entrepreneurial skill acquisition in reducing unemployment in Bauchi State. Specifically, the study examined the differences in stakeholders' perception on various entrepreneurial skills which could be acquired to reduce unemployment based on gender and educational qualification. Descriptive survey research was adopted and a total of 200 respondents were employed for the study. A validated questionnaire was used for the study with a reliability coefficient of 0.83. Descriptive and inferential statistics of mean rating, standard deviation, t-test and ANOVA were used for the analysis at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed that the stakeholders were positively disposed to the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills in reducing unemployment rate among graduates. Educational status of the stakeholders was found to influence their perceptions about entrepreneurial skill acquisition in reducing unemployment among graduates. Based on the findings of this study, it was recommended that practical aspects of the entrepreneurial skills should be taught in schools in order to reduce unemployment among graduates. Also, the various stakeholders in education should render all necessary support to equip and furnish schools with equipment for efficient acquisition of entrepreneurial skills by the students.*

**Keywords:** entrepreneurial skills acquisition, graduates, stakeholders, unemployment.

### Introduction

The Federal Republic of Nigeria introduced entrepreneurship education to enable Nigerian graduates acquire the appropriate skills which will make them self-sufficient even after their graduation (FRN, 2013). Entrepreneurial skill acquisition always seeks to provide students with the knowledge, skills and motivation to encourage entrepreneurial success in a variety of settings. It also focuses on the development of skills or attributes that enable the realization of opportunities. Entrepreneurship is however, believed to have focused on the specific context of setting up a venture and becoming self-employed (Lackeus, 2015). Nwaoba (2014) sees entrepreneurship education as a programme which involves the acquisition of skills that is tailored towards making the trainees self-employed. It is in recognition of this that the Federal government of Nigeria initiated many schemes mainly to reduce the rate of unemployment in the country. These initiatives include: National Directorate of Employment (NDE) Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DEFRI), the People's Bank of Nigeria and Bank of Agriculture. To further consolidate these programmes, Obasanjo's administration introduced Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN), National Empowerment and Development Strategy (Needs) and also encouraged the establishment of microfinance banks across the country.

According to Odia and Odia (2013), entrepreneurial skills acquisition can be obtained through various avenues such as: attending entrepreneurial training classes, development programmes, seminars, workshops, etc. But over the years, scholars and some facilitators of entrepreneurial skill acquisition have

excessively streamlined this skill to be a common activity and a basic skill that any individual interested in it can be given training without having the full knowledge whether or not such a skill has been identified as part of a tiny, cottage, small, medium or large scale strategic industry within the Nigerian economy. Skills like hairdressing, make-up artistry, fashion designing, shoe-making, food processing, catering services, fish farming, computer operation, hardware maintenance, software maintenance, poultry, welding, furniture making e.tc. are most of the times taken for granted with the perception that it is too small to be classified as entrepreneurial skills capable of reducing the rate of unemployment among graduates (Mullins, 2010). It is observed by Sule (2016) that the high rate of unemployment in Pakistan is not unconnected with low levels of entrepreneurial development in its economy. Nigeria therefore should endeavour to develop entrepreneurship skills of graduates so as to fix unemployment, economic stagnation, wastage of resources to mention but a few.

Odia and Odia (2013) further argued that the unemployment rate of Nigeria was put at about 19.7% above world average of 14.2% by the World Bank, with 41.6% unemployment rate reported for youth in the 18 to 24 years' age bracket. They are therefore of the view that entrepreneurship skills remain the only alternative that can help Nigerian graduates become self-employed, reduce poverty and empower them to develop their businesses, pursue their dreams and contribute to overall productive capacity and national economic growth and development.

Sule (2016) opines that vocational skills such as transportation, metal work, fisheries, entertainment, veterinary services, water venture, shoe making, soap making, furniture making, computer operation, hard ware maintenance, software maintenance, farming, poultry, etc. remain the only business opportunities in Nigeria which graduates should acquire as these would not only make them self-reliant but can go a long way in developing the nation's economy. He also argues that for this to be actualised, government alongside private individuals should involve fully in providing the basic framework for the successful operation of such schemes. This argument is in line with the submission of Unimaid (2019) that government should endeavour to provide incentives, give out loans to the graduates who acquire some skills and who are determined to become self-sufficient as well as equipping the existing skill acquisition centres in some higher institutions of learning across the country. This will of course discourage the pursuance of white-collar jobs among Nigerian graduates.

Dawaki (2019) is of the view that the system of education in Nigeria often emphasises on the theoretical knowledge at the expense of technical, vocational and entrepreneurial education. There is therefore need to review the whole of school curricula to make it relevant and practical oriented so that it keeps pace with current economic reality. Udiyaudeye and Otu (2015) suggest that there is need to create awareness among students and parents alike as most of them are not keeping in touch with current trends. Some often feel that they will not learn any trade considering the kind of education (or certificate(s)) which they have. While parents sometimes insist that their children must get white-collar jobs. Also, Sule (2016) feels that there is need on the part of government to equip the National Directorate of Employment, an institution built mainly to train Nigerians on different trades/vocational skills. This centre also needs to be opened in all the 774 local government areas so that graduates alongside disadvantaged groups can benefit from this important scheme.

Dawaki (2019) also observes that in Bauchi State Nigeria, there are about 25,000 graduates of higher institutions moving on the street without a job. Some of them are waiting to be employed in a private job or get office work. Albeit, significant proportion of the said graduates have acquired little or no skills during their school days and now lack the wherewithal to go into any profitable venture. This research intends to investigate the perception of stakeholders on what could be done to encourage the entrepreneurial skills acquisition among graduates of higher institutions in Bauchi State, Nigeria.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Nigeria has retrogressed to become one of the 25 poorest countries at the threshold of twenty-first century and remains the only member of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) categorized

among the world's poorest twenty countries (Dawaki 2019). Most recently, Minister of Labour and Employment, Sen. Chris Ngige, said unemployment rate could reach 33.5% by 2020 (Prime Times, 2019). He said this while declaring open a two-day workshop on "Breaking the Resilience of High Unemployment Rate in the Country." The National Bureau of Statistics (2018) states that the rate of unemployment among economically active Nigerians between the youthful ages of 15 and 24 was as high as 37.7 % in 2011 while among those within the age bracket of 25 and 44 years was 22.4 %. For age brackets of 45 and 59, the rate stood at 18.0 % while it was 21.4 % among those within the age bracket of 60 and 64. The translation of this is that Nigerians between the youthful ages of 15 and 24 are those mostly affected by unemployment and are, as such, more vulnerable to its attendant consequences. This evidence is collaborated by the World Bank report (2016) which states that the unemployment rate among Nigerians between the ages of 15 and 24 was 13.8 % in 2011; 13.7 % in 2012; 13.6 % in 2013; and 13.6 % in 2014. This is shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1

*National Unemployment Rates between 2000 and 2019*

Year	Unemployment Rate (%)	Year	Unemployment Rate (%)
2000	13.1	2010	21.1
2001	13.6	2011	23.9
2002	12.6	2012	23.9
2003	14.8	2013	24.9
2004	13.4	2014	25.2
2005	11.9	2015	25.3
2006	13.7	2016	20.4
2007	14.6	2017	23.1
2008	14.9	2018	22.6
2009	19.4	2019	23.1

National Bureau of Statistics (2018) and Dawaki (2019)

It is important to note that the figures above may not have captured in totality the youth unemployment situation in Nigeria; however, they are pointing to the fact that the phenomenon is a very critical issue with far-reaching implications for stability of democracy, good governance and socio-economic development. Hence, the above evidence has set the contemporary contexts and provided the impetus for this study.

### Objective of the Research

The main objective of this research is to:

Investigate the perception of stakeholders on the graduates' entrepreneurial skills acquisition in reducing unemployment in Bauchi State Nigeria.

### Research Question

This research question was raised to guide this study:

What are the perceptions of stakeholders on graduates' entrepreneurial skill acquisition in reducing unemployment in Bauchi State Nigeria?

### Hypotheses

- i. There is no significant difference in the perception of stakeholders on graduates' entrepreneurial skill acquisition in reducing unemployment in Bauchi State Nigeria based on gender.
- ii. There is no significant difference in the perception of stakeholders on graduates' entrepreneurial skill acquisition in reducing unemployment in Bauchi State Nigeria based on educational qualification.

## Methodology

This is a descriptive survey study as it sought to investigate the perception of stakeholders on the graduates' entrepreneurial skill acquisition in reducing unemployment in Bauchi State Nigeria. Daramola (2006) says descriptive survey is a systematic attempt to describe the characteristics of a given population or areas of interest factually. A total of 200 respondents were sampled for this study using stratified and systematic random sampling techniques. A validated questionnaire was used to collect the data from the respondents. Mean rating was used to analyse the data and provide answers to research question raised, while t-test and ANOVA were used to test the generated hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

## Results

*What are the perceptions of stakeholders on graduates' entrepreneurial skill acquisition in reducing unemployment in Bauchi State Nigeria?*

Table 2

*Mean and Standard Deviation of Stakeholders' Perceptions on Graduate Entrepreneurship Skill Acquisition in Reducing Unemployment in Bauchi State*

S/N	Items	Mean	S.D	Remarks
1	Opening of skill acquisition centres in all the higher institutions of learning in the country	3.02	0.62	Affirmed
2	Equipping the branches of National Directorate of Employment in all the local government areas	3.02	0.62	Affirmed
3	Training graduates on specific vocations that can guarantee self-reliance	3.00	0.27	Affirmed
4	Making vocational skills more attractive	2.99	0.62	Affirmed
5	Affiliating skill acquisition centres to experienced entrepreneurs for motivation and advice to the graduate trainees	2.95	0.71	Affirmed
6	Giving out soft loans to the graduates who determine to be self-reliant	2.72	0.42	Affirmed
7	Patronising locally-made goods or products by graduate entrepreneurs	2.71	0.45	Affirmed
8	Discouraging importation of foreign made goods	2.64	0.35	Affirmed
9	Encouraging exportation of products of small-scale entrepreneurs	2.58	0.32	Affirmed
10	Subsidizing cost of raw materials for graduate entrepreneurs	2.56	0.45	Affirmed
11	Reviewing school curricular to be relevant to the practical aspect of skill acquisition	2.50	0.56	Affirmed
12	Organising seminars, workshops and symposium on entrepreneurial skill acquisition for graduates	3.02	0.62	Affirmed
13	Creating awareness to public on the importance of entrepreneurial skill acquisition	3.21	0.54	Affirmed
14	Giving tax incentive and holidays to the graduate entrepreneurs	3.18	0.63	Affirmed
15	Providing infrastructural facilities for small scale entrepreneurs	3.10	0.52	Affirmed

The results above indicate that the respondents are positively disposed to graduate entrepreneurial skill acquisition in reducing unemployment. This is because all the items had mean score of 2.5 and above which affirms positive perception about entrepreneurial skill acquisition. This implies that the provision of soft loans for graduate entrepreneurs, infrastructural facilities for small scale entrepreneurs, subsidy on raw materials for graduate entrepreneurs, motivation for graduates through experienced entrepreneurs, training

on specific vocation, market for the products of graduate entrepreneurs, new acquisition centres in all schools and so on will help in reducing unemployment among secondary school graduates. This result is in line with the assertion of Mullins (2010) who opined that skills such as hairdressing, shoe making, computer operation and so on can be acquired to reduce unemployment. The likely reason for this outcome is because small ventures have provided alternative source of living to many graduates.

**Ho<sub>1</sub>:** *There is no significant difference in the perception of stakeholders on graduates' entrepreneurial skill acquisition in reducing unemployment in Bauchi State Nigeria based on gender.*

Table 3

*Difference in the Perception of Stakeholders on Graduates' Entrepreneurial Skills Acquisition in Reducing Unemployment in Bauchi State based on Gender*

Gender	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-cal	t_critical	Sig.	Decision
Male	100	26.32	2.59	198	1.381	1.960	0.062	Not Rejected
Female	100	25.63	2.15					

\*Significant at  $P > 0.05$

The result above shows that the calculated significance value of 0.062 is greater than the chosen significance value of 0.05. Hence, the null hypothesis is not rejected. Thus, there is no significant difference in the perception of stakeholders on graduates' entrepreneurial skills acquisition in reducing unemployment in Bauchi State based on gender. This implies that male and female stakeholders have the same perception about the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills in reducing unemployment. This finding is against the views of Udiyaudeye and Otu (2015) that students and parents alike should create awareness about entrepreneurial skills. This may be due to the fact that male and female respondents have the same opinion on entrepreneurial skills which accounts for no significant difference in their perceptions.

**Ho<sub>2</sub>:** *There is no significant difference in the perception of stakeholders on graduates' entrepreneurial skill acquisition in reducing unemployment in Bauchi State Nigeria based on educational qualification.*

Table 4

*ANOVA Table on the Perception of Stakeholders on Graduates' Entrepreneurial Skill Acquisition in Reducing Unemployment in Bauchi State based on Educational Qualification*

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-cal	F-crit	Sig.	Decision
Between Groups	14896.225	5	2979.245	21.302	19.50	.000	Rejected
Within Groups	27132.650	194	139.859				
Total	31763.875	199					

\*Significant at  $P < 0.05$

The result above shows that the calculated significance value of 0.000 is less than the chosen significance value of 0.05 (or  $F_{cal}$  of 21.301 is greater than the  $F_{crit}$  of 19.50). Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected. Thus, there is a significant difference in the perception of stakeholders on graduates' skills acquisition in reducing unemployment in Bauchi State based on educational qualification. This means that the stakeholders differ in their perceptions on graduates' entrepreneurial skills acquisition in reducing unemployment based on educational qualification. This finding is consistent with Lackeus (2015) who affirmed that entrepreneurship guarantees self-reliant of graduates. This may however be attributed unequal number of respondents with various educational qualifications.

Table 5

*Duncan Post-Hoc Analysis of the Perception of Stakeholders on Graduates' Skills Acquisition in Reducing Unemployment based on Educational Qualification*

Educational Qualification	N	Subset for alpha = 0.05	
		1	2
Ph. D	12	23.0000	
M.Sc/M.Ed/M.A	74		63.0370
B.Sc/B.Ed/B.A	54	52.2164	
HND	27	42.0124	
N.C.E/ND	33	41.7450	
<b>Sig.</b>		0.946	1.000

Sequel to the establishment of a significant difference between the means, further test was carried out on the various combinations of mean scores to find out where the difference occurred. The test was conducted using Duncan Post-Hoc procedure at 0.05 alpha level. The Post-Hoc is a statistical procedure used to determine in which of the groups the difference actually lies. The results in Table 6 indicate that stakeholders with M.Sc / M.Ed / M.A have the highest contribution to the difference in the perception of graduates' skill acquisition in reducing unemployment based educational qualification. Thus, the significance difference noticed above in Table 4 was accounted for by the perception of stakeholders with M.Sc / M.Ed / M.A educational qualification.

### Conclusion

This work has attempted to look into the perception of stakeholders on the graduates' skills acquisition towards reducing unemployment in Bauchi State, Nigeria. The stakeholders were of the view that acquisition of skills will enable graduates to function effectively in any business environment as an independent or self-employed. And this, will of course give them room to improve their economic condition.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that practical aspect of the entrepreneurial skills should be taught in schools in order to reduce unemployment among graduates. Also, the stakeholders in education should render all necessary support to equip and furnish schools with equipment for efficient acquisition of entrepreneurial skills by the graduates.

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