

# Curbing Youth Unemployment in South-East, Nigeria Through Skill Acquisition and Entrepreneurial Education

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**Abstract**— *The study examined the extent to which skill acquisition and entrepreneurial education influence youth employment in southeast, Nigeria. The rate of youth unemployment in Southeast, Nigeria is on the high side in recent times. This is what necessitated the researchers to see the topic as a fertile ground for study. Appropriate conceptual, theoretical and empirical literatures were reviewed. The study was anchored on the Opportunity-Based theory of entrepreneurship. Questionnaire was employed in the collection of data, and the population of the study was 210 youths that were randomly selected from the state understudy. 204 copies of questionnaire were returned and certified fit for the study, and were all used in the study because of its limited number. Findings of the study revealed that, skill acquisition and entrepreneurial education are panaceas to youth unemployment in Anambra state. Based on the findings of this study, it was recommended that, creation of more youth empowerment programs and engagement of well-to-do entrepreneurs in the society to oversee some of the entrepreneurship centres should be one of the priorities of government and other well-meaning individuals, if the issue of youth unemployment and its associated negative outcomes in the region will be hugely stamped out.*

**Keywords**— *Youth Unemployment, Skill Acquisition and Entrepreneurial Education.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

There is a saying that has it that, the future belongs to those who learn more skills and combine them in a creative way. So, in order to belong to the future, maybe through self-employment, which also has the capacity of determining ones financial status, one really needs to pursue on time the skills and training that will enable his / her desire come to fruition. Gumbari, a member of the House of Representatives as cited in Ikegwu et al. (2014) opined that, Skill acquisition is the first step in the fight for the reduction of hunger and poverty, unemployment in the society and elimination of crime and other social vices through effective engagement of youths. Skill acquisition is a form of training obtain by individuals which can lead to accession of knowledge for self-development. It encourages training of people in different fields of trade or services under formal agreement which involves the trainers and the trainees for a fixed period of time (Idoko, 2014). It also has to do with the process of cultivating the habit of active thinking or behaviour in a specific area of learning (Ochiagha, 1995). Similarly, skill acquisition which is the manifestation of uncommon idea, that is made manifest through training and injecting in individual the spirit of entrepreneurship which triggers self-development and reliance is what the economy of most developing

economies are in dire need of. When individuals are equipped with relevant skills needed for self-sustenance in the economy, it will encourage their charisma, undependability, social and economic acceptability in the polity, and it has the potency of bringing unemployment, economic doom and other social vices to a minimal degree.

Entrepreneurial education is necessary for the growth of entrepreneurship in most especially, a monolithic economy like Nigeria, and every other society that is witnessing youth unemployment. Entrepreneurial education includes all active ties geared towards inculcation of entrepreneurial thinking, the mental readiness, the needed skills and the required exposure that is critical in any entrepreneurial intention. According to Al-Shammari & Walid (2018), intentionality is that mental condition that spurs an entrepreneur to turn his intentions into reality. Entrepreneurship education upholds that, entrepreneurs are not born, neither do they have two heads nor came from another planet rather, their intentions are made manifest through business or classroom exposure, life experiences, a spotted business gap etc. Entrepreneurship education is a dynamic process of vision, change and wealth creation (Kurtako and Hogges, 2004). However, there are some handful of scholars who argued that, entrepreneurs are born and not made. They anchored their conviction on the point that, it is solely beyond the jurisdiction of schools to teach people to become enterprising (Johannison, 1991). But from another opposing side, supported by preponderance of evidence in literature and life experiences, it shows that entrepreneurship can be promoted and sustained through entrepreneurship education, training and mentoring (Petridou and Glaveli, 2008). The entrepreneurship education can promote a person's entrepreneurial ingenuity by enhancing entrepreneurial mindset amongst the people who have passion for entrepreneurship (Petridou et al., 2009; Lubis, 2014). There are avalanche of empirical studies which came up with findings that, Entrepreneurship education has the capacity to providing and equipping students with the understandings and concepts of entrepreneurship, train and motivate them to indulge into entrepreneurial activities in future.

This study is narrowed to down to Anambra State, one of the states in southeast, Nigeria. The narrowing down was because, the state has recorded in recent times the least in percentages of unemployed and underemployed number of youths in Nigeria out of 2.9 million unemployed youths

(National Bureau of Statistics, 2021). So, there is need to study what necessitated this achievement in order to put up recommendation for other states in the region and federation to emulate, because youth employment in Nigeria has gotten to a point where if it is not addressed quickly to a certain degree, it might usher in anarchy which has the capability of snowballing into other kinds of criminalities and dreadful social vices (Makinde and Adegami, 2019). So, it is on this premise that the researchers deemed it fit to look at the extent to which skill acquisition and entrepreneurial education influence youth employment in southeast, Nigeria.

## II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

### *Skill Acquisition*

Oluwale (2018) refers skill acquisition as a process of enhancing entrepreneurial ability and knowledge through structural training and institution building programmes which basically aim at enlarging the base of entrepreneur in order to hasten the pace at which new business are created. It involves the development of a new skill, practices and means of doing things that are usually acquired through formal or informal training. It has also been described by many as the panacea for eradicating extreme poverty and hunger by creating avenues for financial independence, job and wealth creation, while instilling self-sufficiency and reliance in the trainee (Isaac, 2011). Skill acquisition has been conceived as an effective and efficient tool for self-reliance and sustainability of skills. The whole notion is that, young people should acquire skill training mechanism in addition to their regular academic programme/ curriculum in the crucial sectors in order to remain relevant in this contemporarily competitive world. Gumbari (2011) noted that, skill acquisition is a vital key, needed in eliminating hunger and poverty in a society like Nigeria, because it helps in reduction and elimination of joblessness in any given society.

Skills acquisition has to do with different ways through which graduates and youths (educated and non- educated) can be trained to achieve self-reliance rather than waiting for jobs in the formal sector alone. It is believed that training through skill acquisition programmes will enhance their sustainability in different fields of trade. This is possible when the culture of creative thinking is infused in them at early stage in life to make them self-reliant members of the society and employer of labour. It is the ability to do or perform an activity that is related to some meaningful task, assignment or job. The skill to be gained, behavior, and qualities of character are transmitted to enable the trainee develop intellectual, and moral character which prepares him/her for self-reliance (Ochiagha, 1995)

There is need for growth and expansion of skill acquisition programmes in Nigeria for economic emancipation of the youths through self- reliance trainings and employment generation. This is one of the reasons why federal government came up with several scheme to assist in watering down joblessness among the youths. In the year 2012 for instance, the National Youth Service Corp (NYSC) introduced Skill Acquisition and Entrepreneurship (SAED) Programs into the NYSC orientation course content. The idea behind the programme was to incorporate, sensitize and for mobilization

of young graduates for skill acquisition during and after their service year (Muogbo, Eze, Obananya, 2021). Before now, the efforts of the government towards youth empowerment programme was in agricultural production but as time went by, the idea was moved from agriculture to industrial, ICT and handcrafts production that can yield income and make the youths viable. In recent years, in order to achieve the desired goal, different training programmes were instituted by different tiers of Nigerian government to instill in youths the habit of creative thinking. Some of the training programmes are:

*National Directorate of Employment:* This is a scheme set up by the federal government in 1986 to help the youth to ensure a base in life. This could be made manifest through workshops, seminars, industrial loan scheme and a lot of others. To make this scheme a reality venture, there were diversity of training by the directorate to make the youths more viable.

*National open apprenticeship scheme:* This is a type of skill acquisition programme created to assist in training of unemployed youths such as school drop out to acquire uncommon skills that will help them to find gainful employment on completion of training. In this scheme, applicants are given forms to complete by indicating their vocational interest, location and educational background. This implies that to a large extent each applicant has a choice as to what trade he or she wants to be engaged in.

Adewusi and Adisa, (2018) in their study to find out the relationship between Skill Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development among Corps Members in Ibadan, Nigeria. The quest of Nigeria in becoming one of the top most industrialized economies in near future and the need for the achievement of societal development has been the primary goal of successive governments in Nigeria. However, that this cannot be achieved in a country whose youth is more interested in formal employment rather than engaging in self-reliant initiatives as a result of the career choice factors and the egocentric reasoning of corps members, amongst others. The study reveal among others that despite huge attention the Nigeria government is paying in youth skill acquisition that the youths are still in need of white collar job. That the problem of entrepreneurship development in Nigeria is not short in supply of skill acquisition programme but rather that, macro indicators such as corruption, epileptic power supply, insecurity, infrastructural inadequacy, paucity of funds are key for the declining participation in skill acquisition programmes in the area of study. The significance of skill acquisition to economic development of a country cannot be pushed aside. Thus, the growth of any desirous economy depends on the development of skill needed by her players to carry out a smooth running of their daily business activities (Abdul, 2018).

To gain business sustainability, it is an undertaking that requires special skills and dedication (Perks and Smith, 2006). Having this in mind, for a business to thrive and have an edge over others in the industry, business owners needs to equip themselves with uncommon entrepreneurial skills. These skills assist the beginners, and it is of great importance in the lifecycle of any business concern. Skill acquisition is essential to the survival of any youth who ventures into entrepreneurship of any sort. This is because, skills are the knowledge established

through a superlative performance in certain circumstances, and Skills are acquired and sustained through training (Zehra, 2016).

#### *Entrepreneurial Education*

Entrepreneurship education is a competency for all, with the intention of helping young people to become creative and self-confident in whatever business they undertake. (Manish and Sunil, 2015). Entrepreneurship education is aimed at helping the young ones becoming enterprising individual with intention of influencing their entrepreneurial behavior, orientation and creative ingenuity. This entrepreneurial ingenuity is a demonstration of uncommon vision, creativity, flexibility, risk-taking, and perseverance needed to succeed in this technologically advanced and highly volatile ecosystem. The contemporary skills in various field of learning and the need for entrepreneurial education are vital because, entrepreneurial thinking and skills acquisition are now more crucial than ever. This is due to explosion in population, and the obvious fact that is before everybody that, government of developing and underdeveloped economies will not provide employment space for every of her citizen. Entrepreneurial behaviour is that practices and decision-making activities that lead to and activate entrepreneurship (Lumpkin and Dess, 1996).

According to Babatunde, El-Gohary & Edwards (2021), entrepreneurship education programme has been going on virtually in all Nigerian higher institutions with a sole intention to eradicating unemployment among the educated and non-educated youths. This unemployment problem seems not to be peculiar to Nigerian youths alone. Many countries today are facing the same fate due to global economic meltdown and economic recessions. Government of various countries are tackling these challenges head on through various youth empowerment programmes and entrepreneurial exposures (Odia and Odia, 2013).

A fundamental solution to eradicating the youth unemployment is the equipping the graduates and non-graduates with entrepreneurial skills which has the capability of making them economically independent people and equally employers of labour. Evidence abound that entrepreneurship education has been of help in redressing the problems associated with unemployment and poverty eradication among the Nigerian youths, as it helps make them to be job and wealth creators (Midea 2004; Izedonmi 2009; Unachukwu, 2009). Government, Institutions of higher learning in Nigeria and elsewhere must be swift in dealing with issues of entrepreneurship education, because youths are seem to be less eager in learning handwork after graduation or after their National Youth Service. Equipping them adequately with entrepreneurial skills while in school or during their National Youth Service seems to be the best option. Intensive entrepreneurial education or vocational training should be the nucleus of National Youth Service scheme on which other programmes would be anchored on.

#### *Youth Unemployment: A Time Bomb Awaiting Explosion.*

The age bracket of people regarded as youths varies from country to country. So, there is no universality of age bracket as

far as youthhood is concerned. It is defined within the laws of a particular country. In Nigeria context, a youth is any young person within the ages of 18-35, be it male or female, and who is citizen of Nigeria. The United Nation has its own definition of youth as persons within the ages of 15-24. So, youthhood differs from one location to another, but age seems to be the defining factor in choosing who is a youth or who is not in most countries.

These young people who are regarded as youths are within their productive ages, and they constitute the larger percentage of the active labour force of any country. There is need for them to be fully engaged in the affairs of every serious nation that yearns to compete with developed nations of the world (Ayinla and Ogunmeru, 2018). The growth and developmental stride of a nation is determined by the productivity of her labour force. Any country that ignores these energetic, smart and able bodied group of young people on the streets of unemployment, without plans, policies and programmes to assure them of a hopeful future is bound to face a colossal doom in the nearest future. The percentage of Nigerian youths who are unemployed was at 19.61% in 2021, 19.67% in 2020 and 17.72% in 2019 and it was extrapolated to get to 33% by the end of 2022. These rates were the highest when compared to other age groupings (National Bureau of Statistics Report, 2021). The President of African Development Bank, Dr. Akinwumi Adesina in his lecture, titled, "Nigeria – A Country of Many Nations: A Quest for National Integration", opined that, the future of Nigeria depends on how the leaders handle today with its dynamic youth population. This demographic advantage must be turned into a first-rate and well-trained workforce, for Nigeria, for the region, and for the world (Vanguard newspaper, 2022). He went further to say that, the youths were discouraged, angry and restless, as they look at a future that does not give them hope, and that for Nigeria to be all that it can be, the youth of Nigeria must be all they can be. Leaders should prioritize investments in the youth by up skilling them for the jobs of the future through skill acquisition, entrepreneurial education and vocational training. Combining youth empowerment with youth investment like - opening up the social and political space to the youth to occupy and air their views in order to become a positive force for national development and assuring the creation of youth-based wealth is also not a bad idea for a nation that needs urgent transformation and twenty first century ideas. Let the old give way to the young, so that, there will be a turnaround change in technological, political, economic, financial, and business opportunities for young Nigerians.

The problems of low productivity, crime, lack of innovativeness, high public disorder, kidnapping, prostitution, yahoo-yahoo boys (internet fraud stars) etc. are offshoots of various forms of unemployment within the polity (Ayinla and Ogunmeru, 2018). He revealed further that, the upsurge in all these kinds of criminality have become a time bomb awaiting explosion within the system where the majority of individuals who are involved are youths, and do not have a meaningful means of livelihood due to various factors. This issue of unemployment has subjected a lot of youths into becoming an agent of destruction during political and party activities. Some who managed to leave the shores of Nigeria due to one reason

or the other have also succeeded in painting the nation black by replicating what chased them out of the country to their host countries, because some of them do not have what to offer except illegalities. This is why any Nigerian youth or even the elderly citizens that possesses the green passport across the shores of Nigeria undergoes a thorough and humiliating scrutiny. That is where our country's inability to provide alternatives to white collar jobs (because the government cannot employ everybody) or meaningful engagement of any sort has gotten us to. This problem needs to be addressed and solution proffer to brighten the opaque image of Nigeria both within and outside, and in the best interest of everybody because criminality has no known boundaries.

### III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study was built on the Opportunity-Based theory of entrepreneurship. The proponents of this theory are Peter Drucker and Howard Stevenson. The Theory opens the floodgate of a conceptual framework for entrepreneurship and management researchers (Fiet, 2002; Shane, 2000). According to the theory, entrepreneurs do not cause change as claimed by some scholars, but key in into the opportunities that change (such as technology, consumer preferences, government policies and programme etc.) offers. (Drucker, 1985). An entrepreneur always look for an opportunity or gap in order to respond to it swiftly. The linkage between the study and the theory is that, an entrepreneur or unemployed youth is ready to tap into opportunities provided by training or entrepreneurial education. The theory avers that, the hub of entrepreneurial management is the "pursuit of opportunity regardless of availability of resources.

#### *Empirical Review*

Ayinla and Ogunmeru (2018), examined the impact of youth unemployment on Nigeria's Economic Development. Secondary data was used, and Purposive sampling technique was employed. The variables of the study examined the effect of unemployment among youths in Nigeria. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used and hypotheses were tested using Pearson correlation bivariate for 1-tailed test at 5% level of significance with the use of SPSS v.20. The research found out that despite the increase in youth unemployment, Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product was affected; the rate of crime was on the increase, and was not as a result of youth unemployment. Secondly, despite the increase in youth unemployment, productivity has increased based on data available but not quite impressive based on labour hours spent, while the total hours lost on production has increased. Also, government spending on importation has also increased considerably while the total labour force for the period remained underused.

In a study carried out by Salisu, Salisu, Abdu-Abdissamad and Muhammed (2022) on the moderating role of entrepreneurial education on the relationship between personality attribute and entrepreneurial intention. Data were generated through questionnaire and the partial least square structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) was employed to analyze the data collected from the respondents. It was found out that the five hypotheses of the study were all rejected. The

direct relationship between risk-taking propensity, self-efficacy, entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial intention (EI) were found to be significant. Also, entrepreneurial education moderates the relationship between risk taking propensity, self-efficacy and EI. The study concludes that entrepreneurial education is a critical factor in building the risk appetite and strengthening self-efficacy of students in the area of the study. The study therefore, recommends that, the management of the University under study and policymakers should support entrepreneurial education because it has the tendency to increase students' disposition for risk taking and equally boost their sense of self-efficacy, particularly when combined with a practical approaches.

Mani (2015) in her study, Entrepreneurship Education: A Students' Perspective, explore the entrepreneurship education in engineering discipline from the perspective of students. The study made attempts to dig up the factors that motivate students to take entrepreneurial activities and problems associated with entrepreneurial activities. The population of the study was and 168 students, and data gathered was analyzed using various statistical tools. The findings reveal that the students are highly interested in starting their own business. They put up some factors that are required to make an entrepreneurial venture a success, and they are: decision making skills, risk taking capacity, creativity, communication skills etc. The students opined that people start their own business because of intrinsic factors like- quest for financial independence, a chosen career path etc.; and their greatest challenges are Lack of experience and finance etc.

### IV. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a survey research design because data were collected with the use of questionnaire. The population of the study was 210 youths drawn from the twenty-one Local government areas in Anambra states. The population was made up of five graduates and five non-graduates from each of the LGAs of the state (ten youths from each LGA of the state), which were randomly selected. The entire population was studied because of its limited number. A five-point Likert structured questionnaire was deployed in eliciting data from the respondents, and its validity was examined using the face and-content technique. While its dependability was evaluated using the Cronbach Alpha reliability test for internal consistency, where an alpha level of 0.773 was recorded, indicating a strong consistency level. The 210 copies of the questionnaire that were disseminated, 204 copies were retrieved and used in the analysis. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and Mean were employed in the analysis. The test was performed at 0.05

### V. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Table 1 shows that the means of all the five items fall within the range of 3.22- 3.75 and with mean of means of 3.52 indicating that all the youths that participated in this study, are in agreement that skill acquisition and entrepreneurial education are panaceas to youth unemployment in Anambra state. The study is therefore, in consonance with the work of

Gumbari (2011) which noted that, skill acquisition is a vital key, needed in eliminating hunger and poverty in a society like Nigeria, because it helps in reduction and elimination of joblessness in any given society.

TABLE 1: Mean Ratings of Responses of Youths on Skill Acquisition and Entrepreneurial Education in Anambra State.

S/N	ITEMS	Mean	TOTAL=204 Remarks
1	Skill acquisition has empowered a lot of youths	3.40	Agreed
2	Entrepreneurial education has equipped a lot of Youths with business know-how	3.67	Agreed
3	Skill acquisition has contributed in reduction of youth Unemployment in the state	3.75	Agreed
4	Youths who passed through entrepreneurial education Do not look white collar jobs	3.22	Agreed
5	Skill acquisition and entrepreneurial education make youths employers of labour	3.60	Agreed
Mean of Means		3.52	Agreed

TABLE 2: Mean Ratings of Responses of Youths on Unemployment in Anambra State.

S/N	YOUTHS IN ANAMBRA STATE (N=204)	Mean	TOTAL=204 Remarks
6	Skill acquisition helps create self-employment opportunities for youths	3.87	Agreed
7	Entrepreneurial education prepares the youth against economic dependence	3.36	Agreed
8	Entrepreneurial education helps to reduce the burden of joblessness on the society	3.60	Agreed
9	Unemployment is usually associated with lazy youths	3.41	Agreed
10	Skill acquisition helps reduce the impact of youths unemployment on the government	3.64	Agreed
Mean of Means		3.57	Agreed

Table 2 above shows that, the means of all the five items fall within the range of 3.36- 3.87 and with mean of means of 3.57 indicating that all the youths that participated in this study, are in agreement that: Skill acquisition helps create self-employment opportunities for youths, entrepreneurial education prepares the youths against economic dependence, and that, Unemployment is usually associated with laziness, among others. The response generated from this study is in alignment with the statement of Gumbari, a member of the House of Representatives as cited in Ikegwu et al (2014) opined that, "Skills acquisition is the first step in the fight for reduction of hunger and poverty, unemployment in the society and elimination of crime and other social vices through effective engagement of youths.

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COMPUTE researchquestion1=item1 + item2 + item3 + item4
+ item5
VARIABLE LABELSresearchquestion1 'researchquestion1.
EXECUTE.
DESCRIPTIVES VARIABLES=item1 item2 item3 item4
item5
/STATISTICS=MEAN STDDEV MIN MAX.
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Descriptives  
[DataSet0]

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
item1	204	1.00	5.00	3.3561
item2	204	1.00	5.00	2.7756
item3	204	1.00	5.00	3.6623
item4	204	1.00	5.00	3.2160
item5	204	1.00	5.00	3.6095
Valid N (listwise)				

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SORT CASES BY VAR00001.SPLIT FILE SEPARATE BY
VAR00001
DESCRIPTIVES VARIABLES=item1 item2 item3 item4
item5 /STATISTICS=MEAN STDDEV MIN MAX.
COMPUTE researchquestion2=item6 + item7 + item8 + item9
+ item10
VARIABLE LABELS question2 'researchquestion2.
EXECUTE.
DESCRIPTIVES VARIABLES=item6 item7 item8 item9
item10
/STATISTICS=MEAN STDDEV MIN MAX
```

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
Item6	204	1.00	5.00	3.8650
Item7	204	1.00	5.00	3.2733
Item8	204	1.00	5.00	3.6012
Item9	204	1.00	5.00	3.4131
Item10	204	1.00	5.00	3.6350
Valid N (listwise)				

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SORT CASES BY VAR00001.
SPLIT FILE SEPARATE BY VAR00001.
DESCRIPTIVES VARIABLES=item6 item7 item8 item9
item10
/STATISTICS=MEAN STDDEV MIN MAX
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VI. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATION

Findings

The finding of the study shows that all the respondents that participated in this study, are in agreement that skill acquisition and entrepreneurial education are panaceas to youth unemployment in Anambra state. The study is therefore, in consonance with the work of Gumbari (2011) which noted that, skill acquisition is a vital key, needed in eliminating hunger and poverty in a society like Nigeria, because it helps in reduction and elimination of joblessness in any given society.

Conclusion

The degree of youth unemployment in Nigeria and southeast in particular must be source of concern for all and sundry. This could be linked to the unprecedented crime rate in the region as an idle mind is said to be the devil's workshop. Engaging the youths through skill acquisition and entrepreneurial education remain the veritable tools to ending youth unemployment. This is because our government has proven to be unable to employ everyone, therefore, youths appear to be on their own in terms of finding gainful employment. Skill acquisition and entrepreneurial education

have proved to be the surest ways of getting the youth employed and also making them employers of labour.

#### Recommendation

In accordance with the findings of this study, the following recommendation was made: The creation of more youth empowerment programs should be one of the priorities of government and other well-meaning individuals, if the issue of youth unemployment and its associated negative outcomes in the society will be hugely stamped out. This is because, with skill acquisition programs and entrepreneurial education, youths will be equipped with necessary skills and exposure needed to put in their best in the entrepreneurship world.

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