

Early Child Entrepreneurship Development: A Paradigmatic Approach to Unemployment Challenges

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Abstract

This study was carried out to investigate the impact of school children entrepreneurship development programme on unemployment. It was aimed at identifying the factors that culminated to this form of entrepreneurship development. It also aimed at determining the innate capability factors enhancing entrepreneurship. The study using random sampling selected 140 school children and 140 parents. Data was collected through pretested structured questionnaires and focus group discussion forum. The entrepreneurship programme variables were measured using four- points likert scale. Descriptive analysis was used to describe the variables of socio-economic characteristic, while inferential statistical tools were applied to analyse the relationship existing between variables of interest. The results show that children were favourably disposed to this scheme. The study also showed that the school- to-apprenticeship did not also affect the education of the school children and their level of involvement in entrepreneurship. Majority of the school children ended up being employer of labour rather than seeking for jobs. The study concluded that there was a positive impact of school children entrepreneurship on unemployment challenges in Kwara State.

Keywords: Early Child, Entrepreneur, Employment.

1. Introduction

In Africa and in Nigeria in particular, the role of entrepreneurship in the development of the economy is progressively becoming significant. Also in developed and some developing countries, the advantages of entrepreneurship have been well recognised as it forms the bedrock of the industrialisation process (Emmanuel, 2002). Entrepreneurship has been described in several ways by writers on the concept. Some of these writings were based on empirical studies while others were narrative in nature. The term therefore has been used differently by various authors and writers. Consequently according to Adeleke *et al* (2008), there has been some controversy due to semantics, or in other cases, based on the writers' background and experience rather than real differences.

Some early writers, such as, Schumpeter (1934) and Drucker (1985) defined entrepreneurship as a person's ability to be innovative in terms goals, method of production, markets, sources of supply and industrial organisation by employing entrepreneurial strategies. Gibbs (2005) on the other hand, representing recent writers defines entrepreneurship as a way of thinking, reasoning, and acting that results in the creation and enhancement, realisation and renewal of value for an individual, group, organisation and society. Researchers in Nigeria defined entrepreneurship as the process of venturing, undertaking and assuming risks involving creative skills associated with the organising, directing and managing of a business enterprise (Eboh, 2009, Egboh, 2009, Onwuka and Ile, 2006).

Arising from these definitions, it is instructive that at the heart of entrepreneurship are the creation, innovation, and recognition of opportunities followed by the will and initiation to seize these opportunities. Based on the above, Dionco-Adetayo (2006) affirms that entrepreneurship has therefore been recognised as an important element in the dynamics of modern economics.

In the late 1980s in Nigeria, the findings of Osoba (1987) revealed among others that the performances of indigenous entrepreneurs were affected by lack of necessary education and training. However, in contemporary Nigeria as in other developing countries, the impressive and rapid growth of entrepreneurship is attributed to the power of education. This often led to the promotion of social, economic, political, and spiritual well-being of an individual and social development. The role of entrepreneurship education in the march towards the development and modernisation of nations cannot be ignored because the knowledge gained from entrepreneurial skills is usually geared towards self-reliance and wealth creation after graduation (Jack et al 2013) Education has therefore been observed by (Karatko and Hodgetts, 2001) to be the instrument for development of man which enables him to live an effective and meaning life and which enables him to contribute towards the development of society in which he find him selves. They concluded that this often lead to innovation and corporate venturing which is an important and legitimate part of corporate entrepreneurship.

The growth of entrepreneurship programmes in educational institutions has been remarkable for over two decades with a view to changing the mindset of youths (Boriffice 2008). Today, entrepreneurship programmes is not only for tertiary institutions but has been extended to the primary and secondary schools (Dionco-Adetayo 2006). It is inferable that when these school children are exposed at early age and are truly equipped to exploit

their personality traits, then there will be assurance that they will be self-employed after graduation from the university. By this time, the school children are matured and would have become competent enough to visualise and recognise employment opportunity.

Presently, the high rate of unemployment in Nigeria calls for innovation and creativity, and it will take an individual endowed with deft entrepreneurship knowledge, skills, knowledge and attitude (KSA) to survive this challenge of unemployment. These growing challenges probably informed parents in Ilorin Emirate Council and its environs to involve their children in entrepreneurship activities (EAS) even while in elementary school. This idea is well supported basically in the book of Proverbs chapter 22 and verse 6, which state “train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it” (King James Version Bible 2011).

Children are known to learn faster and better before attaining maturity. Since according to Bandura’s theory of learning by observation, it involves simply watching the behaviour of a person called a model and later imitating the model’s behaviour. Mazuar (2009), cited Albert Bandura a Canadian- American psychologist as being a pioneer in the study of observational learning .He says that this type of learning plays an important role in a child’s personality development .Bandura , further found evidence that children learn traits, such as industriousness, honesty, aggressiveness, and impulsiveness in part by parents, other family members and friends. Bandura’s influential theory of imitation also called social learning theory postulates that four factors are necessary for a person to learn through observation and then imitate a behaviour; Attention, Retention, Reproduction and motivation. (Muzuar 2009). Furthermore children have fewer challenges to life to cope with. Hence it seems wise to ‘catch them young’ entrepreneurship. The importance of entrepreneurship as a veritable means of solving unemployment cannot be over-emphasised. In this light, Boriffice (2008) noted that the Federal Government of Nigeria through the National University Commission (NUC) directed all institutions of higher learning in Nigeria to introduce the study of entrepreneurship as a compulsory course for all students irrespective of the disciplines with effect from 2009/2008 academic session. This was to solve the problem of unemployment and over- dependency on white-collar jobs. However, Osakive’s (2011) research still observed lack of entrepreneurship skills in tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

Developing school children to have the right attitude and drive towards entrepreneurship would mean preparing them to become successful and useful in the society, and in addition, making the society entrepreneurial. This paper therefore advocates a paradigm shift from the tradition of focusing entrepreneurship development to the adults, especially the retirees. The training of adults and retirees though can have small economic difference; it would not make the society entrepreneurial because of their limited time which cannot impact the passing of their skills to others.

2.0 Research Problems

The success recorded by most developed and developing economies have been traceable to a well managed entrepreneurship development programmes. The “Asian Tigers” such as China, Hong kong, Korea (North and South), Malaysia, Singapore and India are examples of countries where entrepreneurship has taken root downwards and is flourishing due to stable government policies on entrepreneurship. The low level unemployment in this region is also as a result of numerous self-employed citizens.

It is observed that education be it formal or through apprenticeship has enabled these countries to move forward. The Federal Government of Nigeria made several attempts through various programmes to arrest the high rate of unemployment. Such programme includes the establishment of National Directorate of Employment (NDE), charged with the mandate to retrain and fund youths on their way to being self-employed. However the programme has not been encouraging as reported in the study of the operation of this body by Ogundele (2000). Other programmes such as; National Poverty Alleviation Programme (NAPEP), National Economic Empowerment Development Strategies (NEEDS) and many others, were also introduced as a way of mitigating unemployment all to no avail.

Lack of entrepreneurial education in the tertiary institutions was thought to be the course of rising unemployment. As a result the Nigerian government recently directed its agency in charge of Nigerian Universities to as matter policy, ensure that entrepreneurship as a course is taught and made compulsory for all students of tertiary institutions (Boriffice 2008). This idea was mooted by the same Nigerian government to extend the teaching of entrepreneurship in primary and Secondary Schools (Dionco-Adetayo 2006). The latest effort of the Federal Government of Nigeria is the establishment of Subsidy Re-investment Programme (SURE-P) aimed at making the country entrepreneurial. Osakwe (2011) in his research findings observed that entrepreneurship among Nigerian University students is still a mirage.

This is why this research on training school children on entrepreneurship through apprenticeship while still is elementary school is not only topical but an apparent paradigmatic approach to unemployment in Nigeria. This paper therefore is an attempt to investigate the attitude of elementary and some secondary school students towards entrepreneurship. It also determined the level of involvement of these children and their parents in the quest to make these children self-employed well ahead of the completion of their University programmes.

3.0 Methodology

The study was carried out in Ilorin Emirate Council. It is in the North Central part of Nigeria. It comprises of Six Local Government Areas. They are Ilorin, West, East, North and South, Asa and Afon Local Government areas. Majority of the people in Ilorin Emirate Council are Moslem of Fulani descendants with high level of Arabic education. Their common language is Yoruba language. The Yoruba, Ibo, Hausa, Urhobos and Nupes are in the minority. The major preoccupation of Ilorin people is farming, weaving of cloths, fishing and petty trading. One hundred and forty school children and one hundred and forty parents in equal proportion were the respondents selected using random sampling method. The children ages were between 6-13 years which falls between elementary primary school and early secondary school ages.

Data was gathered using pretested and structured interviews and focus group discussion forum designed purposely for the children and the parents.. The entrepreneurship programme variables were measured using four-point likert scale. Descriptive analysis was used to describe the variables of socio-economic characteristics. Also inferential statistical tools such as correlation coefficient analysis using simple regression was applied to analyse the relationship existing between variables of interest

4.0 Results and Discussions.

The data in Table 1 shows that about 51% of the children were between the ages of 6 – 9, 40% were between the ages of 10 – 12, while only 12% were above 12 years. Majority (70%) of the children were male, while (30%) were female. Also from the data majority of the children (75%) were living with their biological parents, while 25% were living with foster parents. This shows that the idea of school-to-entrepreneurship was a concerted idea by parents. Educationally, 66% were in the primary schools while 34% were in secondary schools.

On the other hand, the data shows that about 21% of the parents were below 30 years, about 34% of the parents were between 30 – 40 years, while about 29% were between the ages of 40 – 50 years and only 17% were above 50years old as revealed in table. The data also show that about 21% of the parents had no western education but had early Quranic school education, about 29% had a combination of primary and Quranic education; there were equal number about 29% who had primary education. About 14% had secondary school education while only 7% had tertiary education. This indicates that the literacy level of the children's parents was low in Ilorin and its environs. This is to be expected because Ilorin and its environs is populated by Muslims who prefer Quranic education to Western education until recently.

The Table 1 also reveals that about 34% of the parents were farmers or were involved in agriculture business, while majority were observed to be in other businesses. There is a general trend of many people running away from agriculture to other businesses because as most would say, agriculture using manual system is tedious and is considered not a prestigious venture by the Ilorin people. About 34% of the parents earn below the Nigerian minimum wage, while about 50% were moderate income earners (N28,000) the study further revealed that about 19% earn well above N30,000.00 annually. It also implies that majority of the parents earned above the minimum wage in Nigeria. This indicates that solving unemployment challenges was the motive for pushing children to learn trade while in early school age. Because, as the people commonly express *atelewo eni k ii tan ni je*, meaning a man's destiny is in his hands. However the data revealed that majority 69% of the parents had more than one wife and also with average of 6 children, while 31% have just one wife and an average of 4 children.

4.1 School Children Participation in Entrepreneurial Activities

The table 2 results revealed that majority (96%) of the children were actively involved in one form of economic activities or the other, while 4% only were not. This portends that there was very high involvement of school children in diverse economic undertakings. The data shows that there are ten major economic activities that the parents identified as viable which they get their children involved in. These are as follows: tailoring, mechanic, vulcanizing/wheel balancing and alignment; cloth dyeing; generator repairs; rewiring of vehicles' motor spraying; furniture making, air-conditioner and refrigeration repairs and mechanic. Of all these entrepreneurial activities, tailoring enjoy the highest number of apprenticeship patronage.

This result is quite expected because Ilorin is a Yoruba town where rite passage ceremonies such as, marriages and house-warming, burial; rites for the dead is preponderant The people therefore solidarise with each other by buying clothes to sew, hence the high number of apprentices observed in tailoring activities. In the same vein, generating electricity through generally in Nigeria has been an albatross, virtually all homes have alternative means of generating electricity (generating set), hence also the high number of apprentice for generator. The same kind of argument goes for mechanic, Nigeria is known for high importation of used cars, which breaks down often; hence the high number of apprentice in the mechanic area.

The data in table 3 reveal that the assessment of school children towards early involvement was high. Majority 85% were upbeat that their interest will enable them be self-employed, hence another majority 83% were involved because their parent tutored them that their involvement will mitigate the long waiting time for government employment which is scarce. Those who had no real focus and therefore went into the

entrepreneurship scheme because of peer group influence were about 41% and about 30% were of the opinion that they were not too pleased being involved in the entrepreneurial activities. They were of the opinion that it is affecting their education. Conversely, majority (74%) were comfortable combining school with their entrepreneurial activities as a result, 77% of the school children had plans to encourage other children in their age group to participate in the school-to-learn trade.

About 72% were convinced that their involvement was a proactive approach to unemployment challenges in Nigeria. Data in table 3 also showed that a majority (80%) believed that when fully trained in any of their chosen entrepreneurial activity, they would be able to assist their parents by paying their school fees from the foregoing 76% consider the school-to-learn trade worth the while and is paying off. It is noteworthy that about 70% were sure they can earn little money even while training to support their parents which is the secondary motive for the entrepreneurial training.

4.2 Parents Attitudes towards Involvement of Their Children in Entrepreneurial Activities (Ea's)

The result in table 3 shows the assessment of parents' view in allowing their children in entrepreneurial activities. The high percentage (above 80%) of the parents who willingly allow their children to participate in entrepreneurship is a pointer to their positive disposition towards entrepreneurial activities which their school children were involved in. More than 71% parents believed that they involved their school going children to complement government's efforts of providing jobs. In the same manner 69% of the parents felt that completing the training will assist their children to fill the gap between finishing school and getting government employment. It is to controvert what some school children earlier said; only 32% of parents saw the scheme as an avenue to assist them financially. It is possible that other parents (68%) do not share this view or their wards were not enterprising enough. In the table 5, result also showed that majority 79% of parents consider the scheme as both affordable and encouraging.

About 70% believe that this is effectual in the reduction of crimes within the children peer group. The data also affirmed that parents were upbeat that the entrepreneurial activities would make their wards self-employed when they completed their tertiary institution programme. In line with the above, 75% fully supported the whole idea of entrepreneurship development while still in elementary and secondary schools. Some parents 21% were of the view that exposing children to entrepreneurial activities at the ages of 6 – 14 was child abuse. On the other hand, about 52% of the parents believed that engaging school children at this age will ensure that they have creative mind and become self-reliant in the future. However, less than average (41%) thought that their children were coping with going to school and learning under entrepreneurial activities.

4.3 Relationship between School Children, Level of Engagement and Socio-Economic Characteristics

The correlation analysis result in table 4 reveals that the depth of engagement of school children in entrepreneurial activities was a positive and significant relationship with their age ($r = 0.1210$), educational level ($r = 0.2342$), dependency on parents (0.4785) and children's attitude towards entrepreneurial activities (0.3785) and at 0.05 level of confidence.

In the same vein, the correlation analysis result in table 5 shows that the depth at which children's parents engage their wards in entrepreneurial activities has a positive and significant relationships with parent's age (0.1436), educational level (0.4270), income per month (0.2960) and parent's attitude towards entrepreneurial activities (0.4832). However, the income per month ($r = 0.2960$) has a positive but significant relationship. This is to be expected as majority of the parents earn very low income and therefore affect the way they see entrepreneurial activities, most of them see this as a way of financial support for them.

5.0 Summary and Conclusion

The continuous high rate of unemployment in Nigeria was observed to have been the primary force behind parents' willingness in making their children participates in various entrepreneurial developments. This idea of involving children in entrepreneurship and schooling at the same time, is gaining ground and is more preponderant in Kwara State especially Ilorin Emirate council. The neighbouring States such as Oyo, Niger, Osun and Kogi are suddenly buying into this idea, probably due to the success being recorded in Kwara State. This idea remains a paradigmatic approach to the challenges of unemployment in Nigeria. One of the fallout of the success of this approach is that there are many fashion designers which culminate in the reduction of cost of producing sewn dresses.

Consequently, sellers of made-to-fit dresses bring clothes for sewing to Ilorin, Kwara State. In the vein,, the encouragement from the state government for these children upon completion of their apprenticeship ensures that many children are getting more involved in entrepreneurship development. Majority of parents were observed to involve their children not for the financial economic gain but a ploy to get the children prepared for tomorrow. Being self-reliant ensures the production of entrepreneurs who in turn employ or train others for the future. The children's positive attitude towards entrepreneurship is an indication that they agreed with their parents about their plans for better tomorrow. One major observation was that the enthusiasm to learn the trades overwhelms the children's school learning.. Their academic results were observed not to have been affected by

entrepreneurial activities they were involved in.

Boriffice (2008) and Dionco-Adetayo's (2006) researches affirmed that the favourable attitudes of both parents and children towards entrepreneurial involvement in 'Epe in Lagos and Osun States could revolutionize rural development. Finally, parents were happier for this development because it curtailed their children from roaming the streets aimlessly and in participating in vices peculiar to children of their ages. In fact, by the time most children got home after a tedious daily task, they merely eat and retire to bed. The success of this novel approach to solving unemployment should, however, be complemented by the Federal, States and Local Governments by providing the needed financial supports for these children to take off once they complete their apprenticeship.

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Table 1: Distribution of Respondents (Children and Parents) on Socio-economic Characteristics

	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Children age		
6 – 9	72	51.4
10 – 13	56	40.0
14 and above	12	8.5
	140	100
Sex:		
Male	98	70
Female	42	30
	140	100
Condition of living		
Living with natural parents	105	75
Living with foster parents	35	25
	140	100
Parents' age		
Below 30 years	29	20.7
30 – 40 years	47	33.5
40 – 50 years	400	28.5
Above 50 years	24	17.1
	140	100
Educational background		
No western education but Qur'anic	30	21.4
Below primary and Qur'anic	40	28.5
Primary	40	28.5
Secondary	20	14.2
Tertiary	10	7.1
	140	100
Occupation		
Agriculture	48	34.3
Non-agriculture	92	65.7
	140	100
Income level		
Low (less than....)	44	31.4
Moderate ()	69	49.3
High (more than.....)	27	19.3
	140	100

Source: Field survey, 2012.

Table 2: Distribution of Children by Attitudinal Responses towards Participation in Entrepreneurial Activities (EAs)

S/N	Attitude Statement	Strongly Agree (5)		Agree (4)		Undecided (3)		Disagree (2)		Strongly Disagree (1)	
		F	(%)	F	(%)	F	(%)	F	(%)	F	(%)
1.	I got interested because I will be on my own business.	35	25.0	85	60.7	5	3.5	10	7.1	5	3.5
2.	My parents convinced me it will mitigate unemployment when I finish school.	40	28.5	79	56.4	7	5.0	12	8.5	2	1.4
3.	I enjoy the apprenticeship because my friends are there.	18	12.8	40	28.4	8	5.7	70	50	4	2.8
4.	I earn little money even while training, so I like it.	27	19.2	59	42.1	17	12.1	30	21.4	7	5.0
5.	I see it as being proactive to high rate of unemployment.	21	15.0	82	58.5	14	10.0	14	10.1	9	6.4
6.	I consider it worth the while; it is paying off.	29	20.7	77	55.0	11	7.8	20	14.2	3	2.1
7.	I am not too pleased because it affects my education.	12	8.5	30	21.4	19	13.5	70	50.0	9	6.4
8.	It is going to assist my parents/guardian to manage our home.	28	20.0	84	60.0	7	5.0	13	9.2	18	5.7
9.	I will encourage others to imbibe this.	18	12.8	89	63.5	5	3.5	20	14.2	8	5.7
10.	I am comfortable combining school with apprenticeship.	22	15.7	8.1	57.8	7	5.0	20	14.2	10	7.1

Source: Field survey, 2012. Note: Multiple responses were recorded. F=Frequency. %=Percentage.

Table 3: Parents Attitudes towards Involvement of their Children in Entrepreneurial Activities (Ea's)

S/N	Attitude Statement	Strongly Agree (5)		Agree (4)		Undecided (3)		Disagree (2)		Strongly Disagree (1)	
		F	(%)	F	(%)	F	(%)	F	(%)	F	(%)
1.	My children are involved in EAs to fill gap between finishing school and getting government employment.	18	12.8	78	55.7	32	22.8	9	6.4	3	2.1
2.	It is a very good way of complementing government's effort of providing jobs.	20	14.2	80	57.1	20	14.2	10	7.1	10	7.1
3.	It has assisted us as parents because they make income even while in school.	16	11.4	30	21.4	40	28.5	40	28.5	14	10.0
4.	The apprenticeship (EAs) is affordable and encouraging.	21	15.0	89	63.5	90	6.4	10	7.1	11	7.8
5.	It has helped to reduce children's involvement in crimes.	30	21.4	82	58.5	17	12.1	8	5.7	3	2.1
6.	It is a very important way to teach children to be self-employed.	21	15.0	79	55.0	30	21.4	10	7.1	2	1.4
7.	I fully support the idea because they have something to rely on.	18	12.8	88	62.8	24		7	5.0	3	2.1
8.	It is ensuring that children have creative mind.	12	8.5	60	42.8	60	42.8	7	5.0	1	0.7
9.	They are coping with going to school and learning under EAs.	23	16.4	99	35.0	23	16.4	30	21.4	15	10.7
10.	It is child abuse and exposes children to hazards	7	5.0	23	16.4	40	28.5	49	35.0	21	15.0

Source: Field survey, 2012. Note: Multiple responses were recorded.
 F=Frequency. %=Percentage.

Table 4: Summary of Correlation Coefficient Showing Linear Relationship between the Children's Level of Involvement in EAs and Children Socio-economic Characteristics

Selected characteristics	Co-efficient of correlation (r)	Co-efficient of determination (r ²)
Age	0.1210*	0.0146
Educational level	0.2342*	0.0591
Parental dependency	0.4785*	0.2289
Attitude towards EAs	0.3785*	0.1432

*Significant at P > 0.05

Table 5: Summary of Correlation Coefficient Showing Linear Relationship Between the Level at which Parents Involve their Children in EAs and Children Socio-economic Characteristics of the Parents

Selected characteristics	Co-efficient of correlation (r)	Co-efficient of determination (r ²)
Age	0.1436*	0.0206
Educational level	0.4270*	0.1823
Income per month	0.2960*	0.0876
Number of children	0.4394*	0.1930
Attitude towards EAs	0.4832*	0.2334

*Significant at P > 0.05