



ENHANCING EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES OF GRADUATES OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION STUDIES THROUGH ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION IN TWO UNIVERSITIES IN NIGER STATE

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ABSTRACT

Employment is a relationship between two parties regulating the provision of paid labour services. Getting employed in a profitable organisation is one of the most herculean tasks faced by librarians. This societal problem could be drastically reduced if librarians are introduced to entrepreneurial ventures that bear relationships with their chosen career while in school. Librarians' work is very demanding and multi-dimensional. Since they serve as information providers or information brokers, their services are needed virtually in all organizations. Thus, they are continuously expected to update their job knowledge and renew their job related skills to enable them compete effectively in our changing society. Therefore, entrepreneurship education is key to acquiring the needed skills. This paper therefore seeks to bring to the limelight the concept of employment and entrepreneurship education, characteristics of entrepreneurship, areas librarians are mostly marketable, benefits of entrepreneurship education to librarians, problems associated with entrepreneurship education. It therefore recommended among others that University curriculum should be improved to include relevant entrepreneurial courses that will enhance students' skills, both practical and theoretical. More so, there is need for LIS schools to prepare future Nigerian LIS entrepreneurs through diverse career paths and adapt to



changing economic situations.

Keywords: Employment opportunities, Entrepreneurship, Entrepreneurship education, Graduates, Library and Information Studies

Introduction

Nigeria is faced with myriad of problems among which are graduate unemployment, poverty, crime, banditry and other social vices, which are as a result of economic meltdown or unsustainable development in the country, which needs urgent attention. In order to overcome this menace, the Federal Government of Nigeria introduced entrepreneurship education in our tertiary institutions for national transformation among which are the provision of employment opportunities, increase in Gross Domestic Product (GDP), improved standard of living as well as under-dependency on white collar job by the universities' graduates (Olorundare & Kayode, 2014).

To achieve this and the need to close gap of unemployment of graduates in Nigeria especially in Niger State resulted in the establishment of *Centre for Entrepreneurship Development*, Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University, Lapai in 2011. The vision statement of the centre is to be a world class entrepreneurship development center reputed for promoting self-reliance and wealth creation among IBBUL graduates and the citizenry. Its mission is to be committed to the production of world class graduates grounded in value-and-income generating skills for self-sustenance and social- economic development of nations, by leveraging on our core competences in research, teaching, and community service. On the other hand, the Federal University of Technology, Minna Entrepreneurship Centre was established in April 2017 with a commitment to empowering people and serving humanity. The core vision of the centre is to be the leading Centre of Excellence in transforming mind and hands of people positively through entrepreneurial education, training and providing holistic business development and support services to Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs).

The assertion that entrepreneurship education is key to self-employment is an understatement. The importance of entrepreneurship education globally cannot be over emphasized. Zhou and Xu (2012) asserted that the importance of entrepreneurship education as part of the global sphere became exceptionally clear in 1998 when the UNESCO World Conference advocated for the development of entrepreneurial skills through higher education. According to Othman and Nasrudin (2016), entrepreneurial education is perceived to develop students' attitude to work independently and initiate enterprise ventures of their own. Musa and Tsafe (2019) opined that entrepreneurship education prepares an individual's ability to manipulate ideas and turn them into reality. These include creativity, innovation, initiative, and bearing of risk. It is also the ability to manage project in order to achieve objectives.

Library and Information Science (LIS) is a field that is often exposed to several agents of change which include politics, technology, education, and business. In view of this, professionals in this field must acquire training(s) that will enable them to be well equipped in all facets of human endeavour for life sustenance. Employment index has gone down drastically in Nigeria



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due to a lot of factors. Graduates in the field of Library and Information Science among other professionals found it difficult to be employed. Obona, Andeshi and Udang (2023) submitted that the need to curb unemployment especially among the graduates necessitated the introduction of entrepreneurship education in tertiary institutions (universities, polytechnics and colleges of education) by the Federal Government of Nigeria through the National Universities Commission (NUC), National Board for Technical Education (NBTE), and National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) to prepare them to be self-employed after graduation. A great entrepreneur must be able to effectively communicate, sell, focus, learn, and strategize. An ability to continuously learn is not just a key entrepreneurial skill, but also a very valuable life skill.

One needs to state emphatically here that entrepreneurship education fosters entrepreneurial activities, which include job creation for the youths and economic development of the nation, among others. Through entrepreneurial education and training, individuals are being provided with the ability to recognize commercial opportunities, self-esteem, knowledge and skills to act on them. It includes instruction in opportunity recognition, commercializing a concept, managing resources, and initiating a business venture. Dike (2019) stated that graduate unemployment is very high in Nigeria because they lack the relevant skills employers need as well as for self-employment, which can be provided through business and entrepreneurship education. Library and Information Science (LIS) students have a lot of opportunities opened for them after graduation such as marketing of information resources, reprography services, information brokerage, printing, and publishing.

Librarians need to grow and develop in their professional career. Through entrepreneurship, they can create sources of funding themselves in self-development programmes. Hence, entrepreneurial librarians must have the ability to use their energy and intellect to reinvent and enhance their work to provide services to faculty and students and to preserve the collections. They must possess innovative skills, not necessarily as an inventor but one that can make a difference, see what others cannot see and be able to carve out a new niche in the marketplace. Librarians, by collecting, organizing, storing and providing access to information, serve as change agents, helping organizations and individuals access and use information in order to develop just, egalitarian and more successful societies.

Concept of Employment

In Economics, **employment** refers to the state of having a job or being employed. If one has to employ someone, they must pay them. The person who hires people is known as employer, and the person who is getting paid for providing the services is known as employee. Employers may include individuals, business, as people can work for themselves and run their own businesses as self-employed individuals. Employment is an agreement between an employer and an employee that the employee will provide certain services. In return, the employee is paid a salary or hourly wage. Although employees can negotiate certain items in an employment agreement, the terms and conditions are primarily determined by the employer.

In addition, employment can be further defined as a paid work agreement between an



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employee and employer. The employer typically controls what the employee does and where the employee works. Most states have at-will employment, which means that employment ends at the prerogative of the employer or the employee. An employment agreement for an individual employee can be verbal exchange, written email, or job offer letter. The offer of employment can be made in an interview or written in a formal, official employment contract.

It is worth mentioning that provided the employer keeps to its agreement with the employee, and the employee wishes to work with the agreement, the employment typically continues. Federal and state laws also direct the employment relationship and decrease employer autonomy as a way to avoid abuse of power. Laws governing employment in state and federal establishments do change from time to time. In this vein, employers are expected to acquaint themselves of current state and federal government regulations. In a situation where a disagreement arises between an employee and employer in the private sector, the employees can bring the issue to their manager, go to human resources manager, and/or talk to top management to seek redress. It is against the law for any employer to discriminate based on race, sex, age, religion, ethnicity, disability etc.

Importance of Employment

The significance of employment cannot be underestimated. When a person is employed, their living standards increase because they have access to money. It is because the employed individual puts a lot of effort into achieving their objectives that help to improve the business of the employer or enhances the efficiency of the company. Then it accelerates commercial transactions and attracts additional investment to the market. People receive compensation for their work. The primary causes of societal disturbance are lack of food and money. When people get money for their hard work and efforts they feel happy. They start spending time with family and relatives and begin taking part in initiatives for the advancement of society.

In contrary, when people lack the necessary funds or when they do not receive what they deserve, they feel cheated and petty by the private or public systems. Thus, they begin engaging in corruption. However, if an individual is employed, he/she will not think of getting engaged in corruptive activities. Therefore, employment plays an important role in reducing the level of corruption. Employment serves as both a direct and indirect measure of poverty reduction. People who live below the poverty line get benefits immediately from employment in terms of security and finances. When someone is employed, they indirectly learn how to live and survive.

However, people living above the poverty line, learn from others in the workplace, which they can later educate their kids to make them successful and respectable members of society, and thus become role models for their children. In the process of development and for maintaining law and order in society, employment has its place for fuller utilization of resources.

Concept of Entrepreneurship Education

Entrepreneurship as a concept is a term used to describe the underlining spirit or force towards the establishment of a new business venture or significant improvement of an existing



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business organization or improving the managerial techniques for effective achievement of organizational objectives. It is the process by which individuals either on your own or in organization pursue opportunities without regard to the resources they currently control (Ogar & Affiong, 2022). It is also seen as fundamentally important part of modern economic and social life (Stokes et al., 2010). According to Eke et al. (2011), entrepreneurship is a programme that inculcates creative, innovative, productive and managerial skills needed in business enterprises for self-reliance and national development. Fundamental to entrepreneurship is innovation, which translate to new methods of production, new markets, or the setting up of a new organization or the breaking up of an existing one (Ejiogu & Nwajiuba, 2012). In other words, entrepreneurship is an acquisition of skills and ideas for the creation of employment for oneself and other people.

Entrepreneurship education provides opportunities for students to develop an entrepreneurial mindset (Daniel, 2016) in order to learn skills to embrace, assess, and navigate new opportunities (Lackeus, 2015) in a dynamic and changing environment (Ratten & Usmanij, 2021). In 2022, entrepreneurship education offers classroom pedagogy for preparing students to tackle everyday complex and contemporary issues such as those associated with the restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Educational leaders need to consider the teaching environment required to prepare themselves and their students for new challenges presented by pandemic adjustments and rapid technological advancements (Mesquita & Vieira, 2020). Entrepreneurship education provides an opportunity for students' capabilities to be fostered to be adaptable, resilient, innovative, resourceful and persevering (Lackeus, 2015) not only to cope with their disrupted schooling but to tackle the environmental, sociological, political and economic challenges they will face in their futures. An entrepreneurial education encourages and prepares students to find creative and innovative solutions to improve environmental sustainability (Rieckmann, 2020), transform social issues (Tapsell & Woods, 2010), and create successful small and medium businesses that can increase employment opportunities (Nseobot et al., 2020).

After critically studying the above definitions, we can summarize by concluding that entrepreneurship is a function which involves the exploitation of opportunities which exist within a market. Therefore, one can redefine entrepreneurship as self-employment of any sort: the activity that involves identifying opportunities within the economic system; the creation of new organizations; the willingness and ability of an individual to seek out investment opportunities in an environment and be able to establish and run an enterprise successfully based on the identifiable opportunities.

In LIS as a field, there is a need for a paradigm shift not only to the information needs, services and literacy of clientele using ICT processes, but also to the need for (LIS) to equip undergraduates to be self-reliant, self-employed and employers of labour upon graduation. This therefore resulted to the introduction and inclusion of *Entrepreneurship Education* in the curriculum of all the tertiary institutions in Nigeria as a compulsory course for all students by the Federal Government of Nigeria in 2006 with effect from 2007/2008 academic session.

The introduction of *Entrepreneurship Education* in higher institutions of learning was adopted and implemented to all students irrespective of areas of specialization (Akinboade, 2014;



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Onuma, 2016) This effort, according to Yahya (2011) aimed at fostering entrepreneurship culture among students, address problem of growing graduate unemployment and under employment, generate and manage knowledge and other competencies for building the requisite entrepreneurial human capital for national development, stressing that LIS is key to the development of higher educational institutions in Nigeria as they develop gradually towards addressing the country's development agenda.

Ejiogu and Nwajiuba (2012) defined entrepreneurship education as an integral part of general education aimed at preparing individuals for self-employment, occupational fields, and effective participation in the world of work. It seeks to provide students with the knowledge, skills and motivation to encourage entrepreneurial success in a variety of settings (Ismail et al., 2011). It is also viewed as a new approach in imparting knowledge and know-how to students. Osuala (2009) conceptualized it as a specialized training given to students of vocational and technical education to acquire skills and management abilities and capabilities for self-employment rather than being employed for pay. It promotes the growth of new business and also contributes to nation building through its ability to provide individuals with relevant self-reliance skills. Its objectives are to:

1. provide meaningful education for the youth which will make them to be self-employed and also encourage them to derive profit and be self-dependent;
2. provide small and medium scale industries with the opportunities to receive qualified graduates who will receive training and tutoring in the skill relevant to the management of the business centers;
3. provide graduates with required training in skills that will make them meet the manpower needs of the society;
4. provide graduates with enough training on risk management to make uncertainty almost possible and easy;
5. stimulate industrial and economic growth of rural and less developed areas
6. provide graduates with specialized training that will make them creative and innovative in identifying new business opportunities; and
7. provide graduates with the training and support necessary to help establish small and medium scale business.

Issa et al. (2014) categorized various LIS-based entrepreneurial courses/opportunities to include: libraries and information centers business; publishing and printing business; information brokerage business; courier services business; vendor business; library consultancy; and ICT-based businesses. Since entrepreneurship education was introduced as a result of the rising unemployment challenges in the society, its curriculum contents must be designed and responsive enough to stem the rate of unemployment amongst Nigerian graduates and youth; as well as curb social vices, such as kidnapping, banditry, armed robbery, internet fraudsters, and oil theft.



IBBUL Entrepreneurship Centre

The Centre was named *Entrepreneurship and Counselling Centre* (ECC) by the former Vice Chancellor of the University, Prof. Ibrahim Kolo- a professional counselor. At inception, the administrative office of the Centre was located in Kobo Campus on temporary basis, with its pioneering Director, as Prof. Frank C. Carew of the Department of Guidance and Counselling, for the first three years (2012-2014). Presently the centre is headed by Prof. Abubakar Sadiq Ibrahim Gudugi. He was appointed in 2020 by the present Vice- Chancellor, Prof. A. K. Adamu. The appointment of Prof. Nasir M. Maiturare-a professional actuary-as the University Vice- Chancellor in December 2014 set the stage for the splitting of ECC into two separate autonomous entities: *Centre for Innovation and Entrepreneurship Development* (CIED) and *Guidance and Counselling Centre*, headed by Dr. A. A. Saliu of the Department of Business Administration as the Co-ordinator. Dr A. A. Mawoli succeeded Dr. Saliu who appraised the structure and operations of the centre to identify functional areas and/or skills acquisition programmes that need to be resuscitated. This led to the formulation of policy and operational guidelines of the CIED.

Among its cardinal goals are to ensure that all IBBUL undergraduate students register, study, and pass a General Studies course on Entrepreneurship Development (Theory) and (Practical) before graduation. They will collaborate with the Directorate of GST to teach GST 202 and GST 201, and with the Department of Business Administration and PG School to teach PGS 701. Students will be registered with CIED at 100 and 200 levels for intensive hands-on training. They will join Faculty Entrepreneurship Clubs to learn practical skills from certified seasoned students. They will receive guidance and counseling on career choice and planning. IBBUL will also promote interdisciplinary research on entrepreneurship through academic journals like Lapai Academic of Scientific Innovation and Lapai Academy of Artistic and Administrative Innovation.

Products and Services of the Centre

The *Centre for Entrepreneurship Development* of IBBUL produces the following products and services. Among these products are: soap, perfume, livestock, toiletries, pomade, disinfection, pottery, high-quality paints, and services like tying, printing, scanning, and photocopying. These products are sold to students, staff and their families, visitors of the University, Lapai community and other communities around Lapai axis, and Niger State as well.

History of Entrepreneurship Development Center, FUT, Minna

The Federal University of Technology Entrepreneurship Centre, Minna (FUTEC) Nigeria aims to be a global community of best-in-class start-up organizations. It exists as both a refuge and a resource for the trailblazers working to grow entrepreneurial ecosystems around the world. The Centre's top priorities include fostering entrepreneurial ideas in students, staff, and small businesses through effective training, collaborating with private sectors, policymakers, and NGOs, and transforming the University into an entrepreneurial hub. Activities of the Centre include: trainings, coaching, competitions, mentorship and business incubation, community services, exhibition and demo events.



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The Centre has a brand '*AcadoPreneurship*' which means turning academic ideas into viable businesses ventures and runs the FUTEC business incubation Hub with over 200 incubators in the ICT, Agriculture and Agro- Allied services and production sectors. Coaching is 3 months programme which involves training and coaching designed to strengthen the entrepreneurial and business management competencies of start-ups to be able to start up their business properly. The Centre strives through a robust ecosystem support system. It has built beneficial relationship with financial institutions, policy agencies, SME's, research groups and national and international bodies. A key activity of the Centre is the Business Idea Competition which holds twice every semester with a prize of a 'space in the FUTEC Incubation Hub'.

The *Business Idea Competition* is aimed at bringing students with innovative business ideas together and turning the various ideas into realities. Presently the Centre runs a water production plant in a work-study model, a driving school and Shea business hub. Since inception of the business Incubation Hub, over 20 businesses have been registered and are being supported through mentorship. The Centre is host to an e- learning platform for entrepreneurs' education 'SME sabi.com'. The Centre has over 30 staff that has been trained in experimental method of entrepreneurship. The Centre is currently headed by Prof. Caroline Alenoghena from the Telecommunication Engineering Department of the University.

Conclusion

The importance of entrepreneurship education towards self-employment will greatly boost the chances of being employed or self-employed among the young people. Securing a lucrative job after graduation is a major problem among LIS graduates. Librarians need to acquire more knowledge and skills to handle and manage information effectively in this information and knowledge age. This will perfectly put them in a better position to work in any organization. The skills needed could only come through entrepreneurship education. Acquiring these skills would expose librarians to other vocations of their choice aside their profession. One would expect then that securing job within their chosen profession or outside it could not be so difficult any longer.

Recommendations

Based on the foregoing, the following recommendations are made:

1. University curricular should be improved to include relevant entrepreneurial courses that will enhance students' skills, both practical and theoretical.
2. Competent resource persons should be invited to give lectures on different types of vocations
3. Management of the University should give financial support to Entrepreneurship Center, for its survival.
4. State-of- the-art equipment should be provided for entrepreneurship centres for the production of quality products and services.
5. Excursions should be arranged for students to visit industries and companies where some of these products and/or services are made and provided.
6. LIS students should be given proper orientation to reinforce practice-based teaching and



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learning. They should also continue to encourage creativity using new technologies, new skills and explore new opportunities in LIS entrepreneurship.

7. There is need for LIS schools to prepare future Nigerian LIS entrepreneurs through diverse career paths and adapt to changing economic situations.

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