



Challenges of managing functional entrepreneurship education (E.E.) in public universities for Graduates entrepreneurial practice in Rivers State

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Abstract

The study investigated challenges of managing functional E.E. in public universities and graduates' entrepreneurial practice in Rivers State. The study which adopted descriptive survey research design was guided by two research questions and two hypotheses. The population of the study comprised of 16, 234 lecturers and full-time PGS who benefit from E.E. programme in the three public universities in Rivers State. A sample of 1, 623 respondents representing 10% of the population was drawn through stratified random sampling technique. A questionnaire entitled: "Challenges of Managing Functional Entrepreneurial in Public Universities and Graduates' Entrepreneurial Practice in Rivers State Questionnaire (CMFEEPUGEPQ)" developed by the researcher was used for data collection. The questionnaire which was properly validated had a reliability index of 0.85 obtained through Cronbach Alpha method. Mean, percentages, standard deviation and rank order were used to answer the research questions, while z-test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Results of the study revealed that the challenges of managing functional E.E. in public universities in Rivers State include among others: paucity of funds; inadequate infrastructure; inadequate E.E. lecturers and inadequate E.E. Curriculum. The study showed that the challenges of university graduates' entrepreneurial practice include among others: high cost of office/shop space; insecurity/ harsh business environment; and inadequate entrepreneurial skills. Based on the findings, conclusion was made and the following were among others recommended: government should review the E.E. programme in public universities in Rivers state; and university graduates should be supported with start- up capital and other necessary input for entrepreneurial practice.

Keywords: entrepreneurship education, practice, public universities

Introduction

Change is one thing that is constant in life. Because we live in a dynamic universe, this suggests that everything in life is susceptible to change. In order to address the requirements of society, the notion of change allowed for reforms, inventions, and inventiveness. The educational system undergoes periodic adjustments, particularly when it is determined that it no longer meets the demands of society or provides answers to social issues. As frequently as necessary, the educational system and its curricular material are evaluated. Education in entrepreneurship is one of the most significant improvements and innovations introduced to our educational system in recent years. The necessity for entrepreneurship education stems from the economic and social risks posed by our society's rising unemployment rate. Entrepreneurship education (E.E.) is seen as an acceptable answer to the society's multifaceted employment and underemployment development concerns. According to Umaru (2014) ^[17], E.E. will significantly decrease crime by engaging our kids effectively and eradicating hunger and poverty.

The adoption and execution of the E.E. program in our educational system, particularly at the university level, is fraught with difficulties. Entrepreneurship education is seen as a crucial tool for national development since it equips students with the skills, information, abilities, and competences necessary to become self-employed and independent. This will cut unemployment, increase productivity, and maintain economic development over time. Functional E.E. might be defined as any E.E. program that teaches a pupil all the skills necessary for independent living. Emphasis is placed on selecting information that is tangible and applicable, as opposed to theoretical and abstract. Functional E.E. may also be seen as an E.E. program that educates users with the knowledge and skills required to execute productive jobs and promotes entrepreneurial success in a number of situations (Ottih, 2014; Asagu & Adagba 2014) ^[15, 4].

Universities, in particular, are recognized as the most important institutions for disseminating higher education, which are essential pillars of contemporary society. According to Peretomode (2008) ^[16], the fundamental foundations for accomplishing development and enhancing the talents of young people are higher education institutions. Therefore, giving E.E. at universities is mostly for economic empowerment. Involving public universities as interventionist mechanisms to combat young unemployment, which is among the biggest threats to social stability posed by E.E. and other factors, cannot be overemphasized. As an economic empowerment instrument, entrepreneurship education is meant to refocus, reorient the students' attention from job search to employment creation when they graduate. According to Ojeifo (2013) ^[12], education in entrepreneurship is organized to meet the following goals:

1. To minimize the high poverty rate.
2. To offer young graduates with sufficient training and assistance to build careers in small and medium-sized businesses.
3. To instill in teenagers and adults a tenacity that would allow them to persevere in whatever commercial endeavor they undertake.
4. To provide adolescents with a functional education that would allow them to be self-employed and independent.
5. Function as a catalyst for economic development and progress.
6. To facilitate a seamless transition from a traditional to a contemporary industrial economy.

To give young graduates with proper training that would allow them to find unique business prospects with creativity and innovation.

Provide graduates of postsecondary institutions with proper training in risk management.

Create or develop job opportunities

Reduce rural-urban migration.

These ambitious goals of E.E. cannot be attained without effective program administration in our colleges. Management entails accomplishing objectives via the efforts of others. It is the activity of planning, organizing, and managing the operations of the fundamental components of personnel, materials, machines, techniques, money, and markets, as well as providing direction and coordination to human activities in order to reach predetermined goals. Management entails the use and manipulation of human, financial, technical, and natural resources for the

achievement of predetermined objectives. The administration of functional E.E. in Nigerian public universities is complicated by a number of reasons. These issues have hampered the program's efficiency and efficacy in achieving its goals, as well as the amount to which students would have benefitted from the program and entered entrepreneurial activity after high school. Looking inside and doing a comprehensive evaluation of the program throughout the years, one is not quite satisfied that these high goals are being met, or that they are being met at a very sluggish rate. This is proven by the increasing young unemployment rate, youth unrest, cybercrime, abduction, and insecurity, all of which are connected to youth unemployment. This sentiment stems from the fact that E.E. is intended to promote entrepreneurial activity among our university graduates, but sadly, many of them prowl the streets seeking for nonexistent white-collar employment rather than participating in any kind of entrepreneurial practice. After many years of frustration, some university graduates would go and learn a trade from roadside craftsmen and people without academic degrees.

Since entrepreneurship education has been introduced in our public colleges for over a decade, it seems that the unemployment rate of university graduates in Nigeria has not changed much. For survival, it is becoming more usual for university graduates to study or acquire skills from roadside craftspeople. This is inconsistent with the goal of incorporating E.E. into our educational institutions. This condition does not sit well with the researcher, therefore he or she decided to conduct a study to determine the difficulties of managing functional entrepreneurship education at public institutions and graduates' entrepreneurial activity in Rivers State.

Statement of the Problem

The unemployment rate among university graduates has increased throughout the years. This has led in several socioeconomic issues, such as a rise in poverty, armed robbery, abduction, ritual murder, cybercrime, etc. The Federal Government launched E.E. and made it a mandatory curriculum in Nigerian colleges because it was concerned about the nation's troubles and how these problems might be resolved. This initiative aims to reorient the mindset of university graduates from job-seeking to job-creating, and from government dependency to government independence. Graduates of this program are expected to become financially independent by launching and cultivating a company of their own. They are urged to engage in entrepreneurial endeavors. An evaluation of the program indicates that it has had little influence on its alumni. After several years of executing the E.E. program, it seems that the unemployment rate has not decreased, but rather is increasing daily. Every day, socioeconomic issues worsen, and many of our university graduates find it difficult to engage in entrepreneurial endeavors. This scenario is alarming and disheartening, particularly in light of the fact that parents are investing additional funds to retrain their children after university graduation. This condition bothers the researcher, indicating that there is a problem. Consequently, the purpose of this research is to evaluate the difficulties of managing functional E.E. in public universities and graduates' entrepreneurial activity in the state of Rivers.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to investigate the challenges of

managing functional entrepreneurship education in public universities and graduates' entrepreneurial practice in Rivers State.

Specifically, the objectives of the study are to:

1. Examine the challenges of managing functional E.E. programme in public universities in Rivers State.
2. Determine the challenges faced by university graduates' in entrepreneurial practice in Rivers State.

Research Questions

The following research questions which were answered in this study guided the study.

1. What are the challenges of managing functional E.E. in public universities in Rivers State.
2. What are the challenges faced by university graduates' in entrepreneurial practices in Rivers State.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. There is no significant difference between the mean scores of lecturers and full-time PGS on the challenges of managing functional E.E. programme in public universities in Rivers State.
2. There is no significant difference between the mean scores of lecturers and full-time PGS on the challenges of university graduates entrepreneurial practice in Rivers State.

Literature Review

Theoretical Literature Review

This research is based on Adam Smith's human capital theory (HCT) from his 1776 book *The Wealth of Nations*. According to Alabi (2016)^[2], the theory focuses on the skills and knowledge acquired by humans and their application in production economics. The idea posits that a person's capacity to do labor tasks allocated to him is dependent on the skills and information he has learned via education and training provided to the individual in order to explore the abilities he/she was born with. Due to the fact that humans purposefully collect capital, the HCT serves as the foundation for national wealth, economic progress, and development. They are the primary explorers and exploiters of all other natural resources. In addition, they are the planners of economic growth and sustainable development.

According to Anyakola (2017)^[3], human capital creation is the deliberate and ongoing process of gaining and growing the number of individuals who possess the essential information, education, skills, and experience for the economic and political growth of a nation. In all economies, it is considered that those with a greater level of education are, on average, more productive. Providing E.E. at the university level is deemed a wise investment because it will change the mindset of students and equip them with knowledge and skills that will help them become more productive members of society, become self-reliant and job creators, thereby reducing the unemployment rate in the community.

Conceptual Literature Review

According to Iheoma, Igwe, and Emeh (2021), entrepreneurship education is training meant to build and promote students' entrepreneurial skills and competencies. Its introduction into our educational system was intended to

promote the self-creation of employment after graduation, creativity, and economic growth for the benefit of the whole society. For Nigeria to overcome the myriad obstacles impeding the country's real growth and development, our educational system must include a viable entrepreneurship curriculum. According to Obi and Japhet- Nwapi (2019)^[11], functional education is the form of education in which the student may use what he has learned and generate something of value. It is a pragmatic or practical education as opposed to a rhetorical, theoretical, or ornamental one (Etesike, 2012)^[7]. The objective of functional entrepreneurship education is to create entrepreneurial mindsets, attitudes, and abilities, as well as the production of entrepreneurial ideas and the desire to start a firm, expand or nurture it, and use new ideas to improve upon it. Education in entrepreneurship does not seem to have sufficiently addressed the problem of unemployment and young discontent. Numerous graduates who profited from entrepreneurial courses at our public colleges throughout the years are now unemployed and powerless. This suggests that the entrepreneurship education supplied by our public colleges is ineffective and does not effectively prepare graduates to become self-employed, independent, and job creators. Accordingly, Chukwurah and Attah (2019)^[6] recommended that postsecondary institutions improve the teaching and learning of entrepreneurship education. The administration of the university should oversee the implementation of a viable entrepreneurship education program. This may be accomplished by ensuring that students acquire the necessary entrepreneurial skills and are appropriately encouraged to launch their own businesses upon graduation.

In Nigeria, entrepreneurship education, which is seen as the most effective way of addressing societal issues such as unemployment, poverty, abduction, cybercrimes, young unrest, and the accomplishment of sustainable development, faces several obstacles. These obstacles have restricted the problem's efficiency and efficacy. According to Obi and Japhet-Nwapi (2019)^[11], managing functional entrepreneurship education for sustainable national development is hindered by a lack of infrastructural facilities, inadequate capital, a determination of who teaches entrepreneurship education, and a de-emphasis on practical delivery. Iheoma, Igwe, and Eneh (2021)^[9] identified endemic corruption, political instability, lack of motivation, paucity of funds, lack of trained/skilled manpower, low image of entrepreneurship education, inadequate data, and infrastructure deficiency as the numerous challenges facing the management of entrepreneurship education in Nigerian public tertiary institutions.

Effective administration of functional entrepreneurship education faces the following challenges, according to Anashie and Ijou in Oliobi (2017)^[14]:

1. Inadequate government and non-governmental organization (NGO) financing.
2. Inadequate and ineffective program-wide planning, oversight, and assessment.
3. Insufficient instructional materials, equipment, and infrastructure facilities.
4. Insufficient qualified employees.
5. Insufficient incentive for teaching and non-teaching personnel, affecting staff productivity, retention, innovation, and creativity.

Due to a shortage of entrepreneurial centers, there is a greater focus on theoretical than practical expertise.

7. The system has a high degree of corruption and a very bad maintenance culture.
8. Weak business climate, access to credit/loans, deteriorating infrastructure, widespread poverty, inflation, political instability, and insecurity of lives and property, all of which impede commercial operations.
9. The absence of an entrepreneurial curriculum in elementary and high education curricula, and
10. Inability to react to a changing business environment.

All of the aforementioned elements have influenced students' readiness for entrepreneurial practice following graduation from college. Since they are not appropriately trained and encouraged, the majority of our university graduates find it difficult to engage their time and money in entrepreneurial endeavors. According to Forsman (2014)^[8], students want to be self-employed, employers of labor, and their own bosses after graduation; yet, university entrepreneurship education does not offer them with the resources they need nor a strong network of venture capitalists. In a similar vein, Okah (2009)^[13] noticed that there was a lack of support mechanisms for spin-off enterprises, which resulted in a lack of entrepreneurial aid, consulting support services, and financial support for university graduates seeking to establish a new company.

According to Agbonlabor (2016)^[1], young school graduates lack the majority of the entrepreneurial skills and capital necessary to launch and sustain a firm after graduation. Cost of renting store is relatively expensive particularly in Port Harcourt and other major cities in Nigeria. Due to the high inflation rate, the cost of acquiring goods or materials for the firm is likewise quite expensive. Instability, a high interest rate, and unfavorable legislative frameworks are further obstacles that prevent recent college graduates from engaging in entrepreneurial activity. Lack of access to credit/loan, absence of tax refunds, mass poverty, high level of inflation, technical infringement, and political instability are some of the causes and expressions of the absence of entrepreneurship education assistance among university graduates (Nwosu and John, 2018)^[10].

Ayatse suggests the following techniques for a functional entrepreneurship education that would boost graduates' entrepreneurial practice and sustained individual and national development: (2013: p.1).

1. As part of the national economic development initiatives, there should be some type of authentic school-work related learning integrated into certain disciplines. This will include incorporating more practical and technical

training into the curriculum; the introduction of an apprenticeship program will equip recent graduates with the skills and experience necessary for a more successful entrepreneurial launch.

2. There should be school-based companies in which students find viable businesses, develop, construct, and manage small businesses by using schools as mini-incubators.
3. The school should partner with the government to construct an entrepreneur internship program by pairing students with locally successful businesspeople who have well-established educational programs.
4. Government should create an enterprise college with the purpose of cultivating the unique talents necessary for entrepreneurship.
5. The government should establish an economic-friendly climate for young entrepreneurs via tax refunds, low-interest loans, and different sorts of incentives; and
6. There should be sufficient incentives for vocational and technical school graduates. This will encourage students to launch their own firms after graduation.

Methodology

The study used a descriptive survey approach. The population of the study included 16,234 teachers and full-time postgraduate students (2,234 instructors and 14, 000 full-time postgraduate students who benefitted from the E.E. programme in the preceding ten years). There are three public universities in the state of Rivers (Source: Academic Planning Units of the universities, 2022 Report). A stratified random sample of 1,623 respondents (223 professors and 1,400 full-time post graduate students) representing 10% of the population was selected. The researcher utilized a questionnaire named Challenges of Managing Functional Entrepreneurship Education in Public Universities and Graduates' Entrepreneurial Practice in Rivers State Questionnaire (CMFEEPUGEPQ) to gather data. The 18-item questionnaire was organized using a modified four-point Likert scale with strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree options. Using the Cronbach Alpha technique, a reliability index of 0.86 was calculated for the instrument. There were a total of 1,623 questionnaires distributed, and 1,604 were collected. Mean, percentages, standard deviation, and rank order were utilized to answer the study questions, while the z-test at a significance level of 0.05 was employed to assess the hypotheses.

Results

Research Question One: What are the challenges of managing functional entrepreneurship education in public universities in Rivers State?.

Table 1: Mean scores, percentages, standard deviation and rank order analysis of the response of lecturers and students on the challenges of managing functional entrepreneurship education in public universities in Rivers State.

	Challenges of managing functional entrepreneurship education in public universities in Rivers State	Lecturers N = 219						Full-Time N=1, 385						Mean Set	Rank Order	Decision
		SA	A	D	SD	\bar{X}_1	STD	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{X}_2	STD			
1.	Paucity of funds	82 (37%)	93 (42%)	21 (10%)	23 (11%)	3.07	0.71	554 (40%)	568 (41%)	112 (8%)	151 (11%)	3.11	0.68	3.09	7 th	Agree
2.	Inadequate infrastructure/facilities	96 (44%)	80 (37%)	35 (16%)	08 (3%)	3.21	0.66	568 (41%)	540 (39%)	153 (11%)	124 (9%)	3.13	0.67	3.17	6 th	Agree
3.	Inadequate entrepreneurship education lecturers.	90 (41%)	86 (39%)	28 (13%)	15 (7%)	3.15	0.68	651 (47%)	582 (42%)	120 (9%)	32 (2%)	3.34	0.61	3.25	2 nd	Agree
4.	Poor motivation of lecturers leading to	80	93	24	22	3.05	0.73	456	572	110	247	2.89	0.70	2.97	8 th	Agree

	frequent strike actions	(36%)	(43%)	(11%)	(10%)			(33%)	(41%)	(8%)	(18%)					
5.	Corruption	99 (45%)	84 (38%)	11 (5%)	25 (12%)	3.17	0.67	662 (48%)	584 (42%)	122 (9%)	17 (1%)	3.36	0.60	3.27	3 rd	Agree
6.	Lack of emphasis on practical activities	76 (35%)	92 (42%)	34 (15%)	17 (8%)	3.04	0.75	640 (46%)	576 (42%)	125 (9%)	44 (3%)	3.31	0.63	3.18	4 th	Agree
7.	Inadequate power supply	80 (36%)	102 (47%)	11 (5%)	26 (12%)	3.08	0.70	640 (46%)	536 (39%)	150 (11%)	59 (4%)	3.27	0.65	3.18	4 th	Agree
8.	Inadequate entrepreneurship education curriculum	86 (39%)	108 (49%)	16 (7%)	9 (4%)	3.24	0.64	670 (48%)	600 (43%)	104 (8%)	11 (1%)	3.39	0.59	3.32	1 st	Agree
9.	Demonstration of inadequate interest on entrepreneurship education by students.	29 (13%)	42 (19%)	55 (25%)	93 (43%)	2.03	0.78	128 (9%)	165 (12%)	382 (28%)	710 (51%)	1.79	0.76	1.91	10 th	Disagree
10.	Insufficient time allocated for teaching of entrepreneurship education.	32 (15%)	45 (21%)	57 (26%)	85 (38%)	2.11	0.76	142 (10%)	188 (14%)	350 (25%)	705 (51%)	1.83	0.74	1.97	9 th	Disagree
	Aggregate mean and standard deviation					2.91	0.71					2.94	0.66			
	Criterion mean = 2.50															

In the sequence of first to eighth in table 1, the weighted mean scores for items 1 through 8 were more than the criteria mean of 2.50. They were acknowledged as the obstacles to managing effective entrepreneurship education in Rivers State's public colleges. The aggregate weighted mean scores of 2.91 and 2.94 for lecturers and full-time PGS, respectively, which are greater than the criterion mean, indicated that the respondents shared a similar perspective regarding the difficulties of managing a functional entrepreneurship

education in public universities in the state of Rivers. Therefore, the problems of administering a functioning E.E in Rivers State's public universities are as follows: insufficient funding; inadequate infrastructure/ facilities; inadequate E.E lecturers; poor motivation of lecturers resulting to frequent strikes; corruption; lack of emphasis on practicals; inadequate power supply; and inadequate E.E. curriculum.

Research Question Two

Table 2:

	Challenges of university graduates' entrepreneurial practice in Rivers State.	Lecturers N = 219						Full-Time N=1, 385						Mean Set	Rank Order	Decision
		SA	A	D	SD	\bar{X}_1	STD	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{X}_2	STD			
1.	High Cost of office/shop spaces.	88 (40%)	90 (41%)	18 (8%)	23 (11%)	3.11	0.69	615 (44%)	498 (36%)	104 (85%)	168 (12%)	3.13	0.71	3.12	6 th	Agree
2.	Insecurity/harsh business environment	90 (41%)	86 (39%)	24 (11%)	19 (9%)	3.13	0.67	602 (43%)	504 (36%)	100 (7%)	179 (13%)	3.10	0.72	3.12	6 th	Agree
3.	Lack of start- up capital.	104 (47%)	92 (42%)	8 (4%)	15 (7%)	3.30	0.61	700 (51%)	520 (38%)	80 (5%)	85 (6%)	3.32	0.63	3.31	1 st	Agree
4.	Lack of adequate entrepreneurial skills	96 (44%)	90 (41%)	14 (6%)	19 (9%)	3.20	0.65	654 (47%)	528 (38%)	90 (7%)	113 (8%)	3.24	0.64	3.22	4 th	Agree
5.	High cost of wares/equipment needed for entrepreneurial practice	94 (43%)	92 (42%)	16 (7%)	17 (8%)	3.20	0.65	622 (45%)	515 (37%)	92 (7%)	156 (11%)	3.16	0.69	3.18	5 th	Agree
6.	Inadequate fiscal/economic policies	100 (46%)	88 (40%)	18 (8%)	13 (6%)	3.26	0.63	642 (46%)	520 (38%)	96 (7%)	127 (9%)	3.21	0.66	3.24	2 nd	Agree
7.	Inadequate infrastructural facilities	98 (45%)	98 (45%)	9 (4%)	14 (6%)	3.28	0.62	618 (44%)	536 (39%)	94 (7%)	137 (10%)	3.18	0.68	3.23	3 rd	Agree
8.	Lack of interest for entrepreneurial practice	28 (13%)	42 (19%)	61 (28%)	88 (40%)	2.05	0.72	115 (126 (430 (714 (1.74	0.74	1.90	8 th	Disagree
	Aggregate mean and standard deviation					3.07	0.66					3.01	0.68			
	Criterion mean = 2.50															

According to table 2, the weighted mean scores for items 1 through 7 in the rank order of first to sixth were higher than the criteria mean of 2.50. Respondents agreed that these are the obstacles to university graduates' entrepreneurial activity in Rivers State. The eighth-ranked item had weighted mean scores that were lower than the mean criteria score, hence it was excluded. The comparably close mean scores of 3.07 and 3.01 for professors and full-time PGS, respectively, show that respondents held comparable perspectives about the obstacles to university graduates' entrepreneurial activity in Rivers State.

Therefore, the challenges of university graduates'

entrepreneurial practice in Rivers State include the following: high cost of office/shop spaces; insecurity/harsh business environment; lack of start-up capital; lack of adequate entrepreneurial skills, high cost of wares/equipment needed for entrepreneurial practice; inadequate fiscal/economic policies; and inadequate infrastructural facilities.

Test of Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of lecturers and full-time PGS on the challenges of managing functional E.E. programme in public universities in Rivers State.

Table 3: z-test analysis of difference between the mean scores of lecturers and full-time PGS on the challenges of managing functional E.E programme in public universities in Rivers State.

Status	N	\bar{X}	STD	Df	z-cal.	z-crit.	Level of sign.	Decision
Lecturers	219	2.91	0.71	1,602	0.587	± 1.960	0.05	Ho ₁ Not Significant
Full-Time PGS	1,385	2.94	0.66					

According to the data in table 3, the mean scores of lecturers and full-time PGS were 2.91 and 2.94, respectively. A deeper examination of their mean scores revealed that they are remarkably similar. In addition, with 1,602 degrees of freedom and a significance threshold of 0.05, the computed z-value of 0.587 is much lower than the crucial z-value of +1.960. Thus, the null hypothesis was not rejected. This indicates that there was no significant difference in the mean

scores of lecturers and full-time PGS about the problems of managing a viable E.E. program at Rivers State public universities.

HO₂: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of lecturers and full-time PGS on the challenges of university graduates' entrepreneurial practice in Rivers State.

Table 4: z-test analysis of difference between the mean scores of lecturers and full-time PGS on the challenges of university graduates' entrepreneurial practice in Rivers State.

Status	N	\bar{X}	STD	Df	z-cal.	z-crit.	Level of sign.	Decision
Lecturers	219	3.07	0.66	1,602	1.245	± 1.960	0.05	Ho ₂ Not Significant
Full-Time PGS	1,385	3.01	0.68					

According to the data in table 4, the mean scores for professors and full-time PGS were 3.07 and 3.01, respectively. It seems that there was little variation in these mean scores. In addition, at a significance level of 0.05 and 1,602 degrees of freedom, the computed z-value of 1.245 is less than the z-critical or table value of + 1,960. Thus, the null hypothesis was not rejected. This indicates that there was no statistically significant difference between the mean ratings of lecturers and full-time PGS about the difficulties of university graduates' entrepreneurial activity in the state of Rivers.

Discussion of Findings

Results from the study showed that, the challenges of managing functional E.E. in public universities in Rivers State include the following: paucity of funds; inadequate infrastructure/facilities; inadequate E.E. lecturers; corruption; lack of emphasis on practicals; inadequate power supply; and inadequate E.E. curriculum. It is unfortunate that E.E. is not given adequate attention in public universities in Rivers State considering the targets of the programme. The programme is not adequately sponsored by government. The lack of funds to purchase necessary equipment/ materials, hire instructors/ lecturers and adequately motivate the lecturers. Entrepreneurship education is supposed to impact both theoretical and practical skills to its recipients. But unfortunately, the programme is deficient in practical activities, hence graduates of the programme lack practical entrepreneurial skills necessary for entrepreneurial practice. The way E.E. is managed in public universities in Rivers State has made it difficult for the goals of the programme to be adequately achieved and for us to have functional E.E. programme. This observation is in line with Chukwurah and Attah (2019) ^[6] who suggested that tertiary institutions should upgrade the teaching and learning of E.E. so that students can be equipped with enough practical skills and theoretical knowledge for proper entrepreneurial practice after their graduation from school. The universities lack modern equipment/ materials needed for functional E.E. programme. They lack the collaboration with organised private sector who can provide instructors, mentorship and practical experiences needed by the students at various

intervals. Inadequate power supply is a serious challenge in the general development of Nigeria. Modern machines, computers and other equipment require adequate power supply for their effective utilization. Public universities in Rivers State do not have enough machines and modern facilities for functional E.E. programme and the few that they have are not adequately utilized due to lack of adequate power supply. The situation has been worsened by high cost of diesel which makes it difficult for universities to put on their generator for long hours.

Corruption and mismanagement of public funds is another serious issue affecting the management of functional E.E. There is diversion of public funds to personal accounts by those in authority and inflation of costs of materials supplied or other infrastructural developments. There is also poor motivation of lecturers. The lecturers are not well paid, promotion areas and allowances are not paid on time. Incentives such as car and housing loans are not provided. These affect their morale and willingness to effectively teach their students (Obi and Japhet- Nwapi, 2019) ^[11]. Most of the lecturers handling entrepreneurship education courses are not experts in such areas and do not deliver their courses appropriately; The class size of E.E. courses is equally very large since it is a general studies course; thus making it difficult for effective teaching and learning to take place.

The E.E. curriculum should be revisited. There is the need to introduce enough practical activities in the programme with provisions for industrial attachments, internships and mentorships. Universities should do their best to encourage their graduates to go into entrepreneurial practice in order to reduce unemployment rate. Authorities of public universities should have memorandum of understanding with the organized private sectors and industries around them on the best ways they can collaborate to enhance the quality of E.E. programme and consequently entrepreneurial practice of university graduates. According to Iheoma, Igwe And Eneh (2021) ^[9], this will enhance functional E.E. programme and economic growth and development in Nigeria.

The study identified the challenges of university graduates' entrepreneurial practice in Rivers State as: high cost of office/shop space; insecurity/harsh business environment; lack of start-up capital; lack of adequate entrepreneurial

skills; inflation high cost of wares/equipment needed for entrepreneurial practice, inadequate fiscal/economic policies; and inadequate infrastructure. The cost of renting shops or office space in Port Harcourt is very high. It is unaffordable by many young graduates who want to go into entrepreneurial practice. There is high rate of insecurity occasioned by frequent bugling of shops/offices, area boys everywhere collecting money from business operators and high cost of living. All these limit the rate at which university graduates go into entrepreneurial practice.

Poverty rate in Nigeria is very high. Many families can not afford to raise start-up capital to their children that want to go into entrepreneurial practice after graduation from school and government is not providing such funds. This is a problem that hinders entrepreneurial practice by university graduates in Rivers State. This is worsened by knowledge and skills poverty. Many university graduates do not possess adequate knowledge and entrepreneurial skills. In support of this finding Forsman (2014)^[8] stated that students want to be self-employed, employers of labour and bosses of their own after their graduation but the E.E programme in their universities did not provide them with knowledge and skills resources to assist them, neither did they provide them with strong network for venture investors.

There is also lack of good roads, water, electricity, adequate network and other infrastructural facilities that can encourage people to start and grow their businesses. The cost of doing business in Nigeria is so high because of these infrastructural deficits and it limits university graduates from entrepreneurial practice. Also the huge amount required to purchase tools, technical equipment or even the cost of purchasing wares that one will display in his/her shop is very high and can not be afforded by most university graduates in Rivers State. Our fiscal and economic policies do not favour young entrepreneurs. There is high interest rate (double digit), high exchange rate and double taxation here and there factors discourage university graduates from going into entrepreneurial practice.

Conclusion

Entrepreneurship education programme has come to stay. Government and university authorities should do their best to ensure that this all important programme is functional and effective. University graduates should be able to go into entrepreneurial practice in order to contribute to job creation, economic growth and development without which entrepreneurship education programme becomes a waste of time and resources. Therefore, all the challenges of managing functional E.E. programme in public universities and university graduates' entrepreneurial practice should be addressed as quickly as possible. This will enhance the productive capacity of our nation, economic growth and sustainable development.

Recommendations

The following suggestions were made based on the results;

1. Government should review the entrepreneurship education programme in public universities in Rivers State.
2. University graduates should be supported with start-up capital and other necessary inputs for entrepreneurial practice.
3. Fiscal and economic policies should be reviewed by

government in order to encourage university graduates' entrepreneurial practice.

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